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Using Social Media to Reach Millennials: The More Social Media Tools ≠ Better

Alisa Lynn Agozzino
Ohio Northern University

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine links between organization-public relationships and Millennial students' active social media behavior. The Millennial Generation is a key target audience who many public relations practitioners are certainly trying to reach. Social media tools are emerging as technology medium must-haves for public relations practitioners. This study looked at the collision of the new social media tools and the Millennial audience within the four models of public relations (Grunig and Hunt, 1984) through the relationship management framework lens. Four research questions and hypotheses were posed. Millennial students from two Midwestern universities were randomly selected to complete a survey on their relationship with the top 10 most social companies/brands as named by Ad Age, as well as the engagement with social media tools in general and specifically with those top 10 companies/brands. A total of 1,062 participants completed the survey. The break down of gender for the sample was consistent with the demographic makeup of both campuses as a whole with 43.6% male (n= 463) and 56.4% female (n= 599) completing the survey. Findings highlighted that Millennials engage with e-mail and social networking (e.g., MySpace/Facebook) more than other social media tools. For all companies/brands except CNN and Dell, as participants' general use of social media tools increased, their wanting to continue a relationship with the company/brand also increased. However, when Millennials were exposed to a variety of social media tools by each company/brand, no significant correlations were found for wanting their relationship to continue with that particular company/brand. No significant differences were found between gender and interaction with social media tools.

Literature Review

The Internet has become a major player in the public relations field within the last decade. The World Wide Web has served as a key contributor in how organizations and their publics develop mutually beneficial relationships, an important characteristic for public relations. With emerging social media tools such as Web 2.0, blogs, podcasts, wikis, and RSS technologies becoming more highly discussed topics within the field, the Internet itself has become a public relations toolbox that holds all the newest social media tools for every public relations practitioner. Celsi (2008) encouraged public relations (PR) professionals to begin thinking of ways to lead their agencies and organizations toward the future. Celsi pointed out that "the tools in the social media arsenal can promote our companies and employees as experts" (p. 12). Furthermore, social media tools could make or break hiring of public relations firms in the future. For example, Hitachi Data System's (HDS) recent hiring of the PR firm Ogilvy rather than Hill & Knowlton was based on social media. According to Shah's (2007) cover story in *PRWeek*, HDS spokesperson Steve Zivanic was adamant about public relations agencies adopting more social media practices, an opinion which led to his decision in choosing Ogilvy over its competitor.

Public relations practitioners are not the only people who need an understanding of social media within the field. PR educators in the United States are being advised by public relations practitioners to consider adopting social media into the curriculum. Public relations students around the country are seeking guidance on understanding this new media behavior and its application to the wider public relations world. Hood (2007) commented on the increasing need for a more consistent social media presence in academia. In her article in *PRWeek*, Hood explained that educators need to begin making changes to the traditional programs in order to accommodate the growing trend of social media within the PR field. Hood challenges those teaching in the public relations field. "We all need to be much more active about making sure that it [better understanding for students of new social media] happens, so that the industry continues to attract the best, and they [students] are equipped with the tools they need to do the job as it continually changes" (Hood, 2007, p. 11).

Social media are changing public relations careers, whether the field is ready or not. Scott (2007) pointed out how social media have changed the look of public relations, beginning with the rise of the Web:

> PR is no longer just an esoteric discipline where great efforts are spent by companies to communicate exclusively to a handful of reporters who then tell the company's story, generating a clip for the PR people to show their bosses. Now, great PR includes programs to reach buyers directly. The Web allows direct access to information about your products, and smart companies understand and use this phenomenal resource to great advantage. (p. 11)

Literature on how practitioners are using social media is scarce at this point, primarily because social media is in its infancy. It is helpful to further analyze the existing public relations literature to support the thought structure concerning how these emerging communication technologies fit alongside and/or within existing traditional communication tools. For decades, professionals and scholars alike in the field of public relations have turned to the foundational block of relationship building in order to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between the public and the organization. Hallahan (2008) asserted that one way to demonstrate a company/brand commitment to key publics was to make technology-based access available. In

an effort to expand the knowledge in building key relationships, the current study looks at a particular technology-based medium, namely social media, to understand better what effect these social media tools have in establishing relationships. Because of its extensive use of technology, the Millennial Generation was chosen as the target public. Although others have looked at key publics through the relationship management lens (Yang, 2005; Banning & Schoen 2007; Brønn, 2008; O'Neil, 2007; Ristino, 2007; Hong, 2008; Vorvoreanu, 2008), none have looked specifically within a generational demographic. Hence, the current study contributes to a theoretical body of knowledge in the public relations field by providing acute in-depth understanding into the personal commitment relationship dimension, specifically with a younger demographic, the Millennial Generation.

Social media tools have provided new ways for key publics to build and maintain relationships with companies/brands. Much work remains to be done in the academic realm to further examine the variety of relationship dimensions that may be able to work to the organizations' advantage in building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with key publics.

Relationship and Public Relations

The study of the relationship between the organization and its public within the public relations field is a growing area of research (Yang, 2005; Banning & Schoen 2007; Brønn, 2008; O'Neil, 2007; Ristino, 2007; Hong, 2008; Vorvoreanu, 2008). The organization-public relationship approach to PR provides fruitful insights concerning the concept of building and maintaining organization-public relationships. The linkage of the organization-public relationship approach to public relations is natural as most scholars agree that in the definition of public relations, *relationship* is key. Broom (2009) defines public relations as "the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends" (p. 3). Ristino (2007), in his article pertaining to public relations within the health services, speaks of the importance of managing and enhancing relationships with those they serve. "The communication activities are based on a two-way symmetrical communication process that ensures that publics served and the organizations serving them build long lasting, mutually beneficial relationships" (p. 79).

Beneficial relationships with the public are important for the survival of an organization. Public relations practitioners must build and maintain strong relationships between the organization and its public to lead to a desired behavior by the public for the organization and vice-versa. In O'Neil's (2007) study examining the association between relationship factors and strength and duration of donor support for a local food bank, she found that although strong public relationships were not associated with the amount donated, they were associated with years of support, happiness to continue donating, and willingness to recommend others to donate. O'Neil (2007) stated, "The findings of this study are useful in that they demonstrate that long-term, successful public relationships impact behavior" (p. 102).

Whether internal or external, relationships are needed in order to get key audiences to act in a desirable way. In order to communicate successfully with target publics, public relations practitioners must revert to communication basics. According to Newsom and Haynes (2008) the basics include "message, public, and medium" (p. 109). Of particular interest to this study is the medium. Whether traditional or social, the medium a public relations practitioner uses is key to effectively building and maintaining public-organization relationships. One study that has been conducted is Vorvoreanu's (2008) Web site experience analysis. In her analysis of nine corporate

Web sites, she examined student-public relationship beyond usability, but actual experiences as interpreted by the key public. In other words, was the relationship, in the way the student-public viewed it, how the organization intended to be perceived? Vorvoreanu's study offered readers suggestions on how to improve the public's Web site experience. This study is one that aims to confirm that the student-public and organizational relationship is the same and not one that is misconstrued through the medium.

Throughout studies that focus on public-organization relationships, all contain multidimensional factors that contribute to the understanding of those relationships. Of particular interest to this study is personal commitment. In one study conducted by Banning and Schoen (2007) on a museum's relationship with its key publics, the researchers found that the relationships could help determine both those who were likely to continue membership with the museum, as well as those who would not. "The information gained in the use of the three relationship sub-scales can help practitioners reinforce successful programs or change ineffective public relations initiatives, rather than simply measure the amount of communication produced in a newspaper or magazine" (p. 439). Personal commitment to the museum was a vital part of this study to discover those who would continue their relationship with the museum.

Social Media Tools Defined

Eyrich, Padman, and Sweetser (2008) gathered information from practicing public relations practitioners and discovered that "overall, practitioners have adopted nearly six different social media tools professionally" (p. 413). These six tools included e-mail, intranet, blogs, videoconferencing, podcasts, video sharing, and personal digital assistants (PDA's). McLaughlin (2009) argued that Facebook and Twitter needed to be added to the social media must-have list. As mentioned in McLaughlin's article, Telindus, an IT services firm, suggested that denying access to Facebook and Twitter could be the deal breaker for 18 to 24 year olds seeking employment. Both Facebook and Twitter are also important to an organization trying to reach its niche public. In an article on why to use these powerful social media tools, Williams (2009) stated, "Remember, social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter are all about building relationships. The key to your success is creating value-added content that will connect you more deeply to your existing customers and create new relationships as well" (p. 25).

Gender Differences Within Technology/Social Media

With most new technology, a period of adaptation and apprehension exists initially as it takes flight. Considerable attention has been given to the influence of gender with new technology adoption. Studies have shown that females have lagged behind in many aspects of new technology from their use to their confidence or ability to use the technology (Dempsey, 2009; Spotts, Bowman, & Mertz, 1997; Wood & Li, 2005). Yet recently, scholars in a variety of fields have gathered evidence to show how that gap is narrowing, or in some cases, disappearing altogether (Dresang, Gross, & Holt, 2007; Li, Glass, & Records, 2008; Rainer, Laosethakul, & Astone, 2003).

Looking specifically at the Millennial market for gender differences is especially relevant within the current study. Dresang, Gross and Holt (2007) found in their study of computers and what they called net-generation children very few differences among gender. Although their study points at a closing gap for gender differences within computer use, the scholars do not provide concrete reasons for this closing. They suggest further studies are needed in order to offer more conclusive direction.

Social Media Shaping Public Relations Field

At the annual International Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) conference in October of 2008, it was apparent that the public relations field is evolving and social media is at the heart of the movement. In an interview conducted with Bill Balderaz (personal communication, June 24, 2008), President of Webbed Marketing, he shared some very important qualities that are currently beginning to shape the field of public relations. First he shared how difficult it is becoming to reach consumers through the traditional media channels of newspapers, television, and telemarketing. Social media is the way of the future, he claimed, and predicted that by 2012 more money will be allocated to online budgeting items (social media tools) than more traditional (television, newspaper, radio, etc.) PR mediums. He commented on the ease of using social networking sites and starting a blog, but noted that if not properly maintained that the media site can quickly lose credibility, a point that is supported in the literature (e.g., Breakenridge, 2008; Li & Bernoff, 2008; Scott, 2007).

Brian Solis, Principal of Future Works PR, was quoted in Breakenridge (2008) giving hope and encouragement for utilizing the social media tools in the PR industry.

> Social media is an opportunity to break the stereotype, to become experts, and create conversations directly and indirectly. This is our chance to evolve public relations into a more valuable branch of marketing, making everyone smarter and hopefully more passionate in the process. (p. 266)

Solis is not alone with this thinking. MarketingSherpa (2009) surveyed social media marketers and public relations professionals about their opinions of their social media effectiveness. Their research concluded that over half of the professionals who completed the survey believed that social media marketing is effective at influencing brand reputation, increasing awareness, improving search rankings, and increasing Web site traffic. These components are all valuable assets to any public relations practice. Vocus (2009) reiterates some of MarketingSherpa's points in its whitepaper highlighting the impact of social media. Vocus's study provides indicators of impact, sharing points of influence between social media and public relations. Highlighted points include: reaching further with a message, generating sale leads, gauging customer satisfaction and increasing brand recognition. Vocus (2009) stressed, "Social media has removed the filters between your company and the public" (p. 1).

It is doubtful that public relations will completely step back into its traditional roots, but instead will look forward to moving ahead with the new social media tools. Gillin (2007) points out that "mainstream media has become so dependent on social media, in fact, that is hard to imagine that professional news organizations would let this channel go away" (p. 198). Social media is going to be here for the long run, so public relations practitioners are charged to capitalize on this emerging and growing trend of reaching target audiences.

Tying Social Media and Public Relations to Millennials

One of the key components to this study is tying public relations social media tools to youth, or more specifically, the Millennial Generation or Generation Y. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the literature that has been produced on the subject, the following section provides some facts from the most comprehensive study of the Millennial Generation and social media.

Pew Internet & American Life Project team of Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, and Smith (2007), released a comprehensive study of teens and social media. The 36-page document is full of statistical support for why this younger audience is grabbing hold and increasingly utilizing

social media tools. In a previous study the researchers noted that they sensed a trend emerging. Teens were leading the way into the Web 2.0 era. "Online teens have access to tools that can gain them widespread attention and notoriety in ways that simply were not possible under the traditional mass media model" (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007, p. 1). In January of 2009, Jones and Fox extended the Pew study by looking specifically at the generations that are online. Although Jones and Fox's definition of Gen Y or the Millennial Generation is broader than many others' definition (born between 1977 to 1990, ages 18 to 32 in 2009), the study provided an array of salient information.

First and foremost, Jones and Fox (2009) provided statistics which confirmed that 87% of the Millennial Generation is indeed online. Furthermore, not only is this demographic on the Internet, they are creating content and participating with the social media tools in place. Social networking within this demographic is phenomenal when taking into consideration the Millennial Generation as compared to all online adult users. Jones and Fox (2009) found that over half (67%) of Millennial users had a profile on a social network, a striking increase over what the overall adult users (35%) report.

Although blogging can be a significant part of social networking, it is not always synonymous with it. Jones and Fox (2009) found that 20% of Millennials blog separately from social networking. This percentage is double their Gen X (ages 33 to 44) counterparts, 10% of whom report ever having created a blog. Creating a blog is one thing, but reading is another. Forty-three percent of all Millennials have read others' online blogs. Again this is a 9% jump from Generation X, who has reported only 34% reading of others' blogs.

Videos are popular for this demographic as well. Although only 52% of online adults reported having watched a video online, Jones and Fox (2009) reported that 72% of online Millennials say they have done so.

Current investigation

When research came to a point of engagement with studying different practices of public relations, Grunig and Hunt's (1984) four models of public relations were developed to help practitioners become better equipped with the *when* and *how* to use their communications skills to solve public relations problems. The current study is being presented within these four models of public relations through the relationship management framework lens. The question of how public relations practitioners are using social media tools to effectively reach Millennial audiences will be addressed through these guiding foundational blocks.

The following research questions and hypotheses are advanced:

RQ[1]: Do Millennial students interact with one particular social media tool over another?

H[1]: Millennial students who indicate they interact with company/brand e-mail will generate the most committed relationship over all other company/brand social media tools.

RQ[2]: What is the relationship between a Millennial student's commitment to maintaining a relationship with one of the top 10 most social company/brand and the interaction of the Millennial student with a social media tool of that company/brand?

H[2]: Those Millennial students who have had a relationship with the top 10 social brands via social media tools will be more likely to have a favorable perception of that company/brand.

RQ[3]: To what extent is a Millennial students' favorable perception of the organization positively associated with his or her active social media behavior?

H^3:   Millennial students' satisfaction with the relationship they have with one of the top 10 social brands will be positively associated with the company/brand through a social media outlet.

RQ^4:   To what extent, if any, is there a difference between gender and each social media tool?

H^4:   Millennial males will be more likely to interact with social media tools than Millennial females.

Methodology

In selecting companies or brands to be investigated in targeting Millennials from a public relations perspective in this study, no list with this exact criteria emerged. However, one list dubbed by *Advertising Age* as the "Most Social Brands of 2008," rose to the top. This list is intriguing and relevant because it outlines the brand or branded company product that is mentioned most often in social media. Brands were chosen based on the conversation volume on a variety of social networking, blogging and microblogging sites according to Klaasen's (2009) article. "This survey stuck to a pretty rudimentary metric—it measures mentions, not the sentiment of those mentions or the word parings" (Klaasen, 2009, p. 1). Sheer volume of conversations on social media tools is what caused each of these top 10 companies/brands rise to the top. The top 10 list includes: iPhone, CNN, Apple, Disney, Xbox, Starbucks, iPod, MTV, Sony, and Dell.

Participants

Students from two Midwestern universities were selected to complete the survey. Location, proximity of universities, and similar demographics of the student body at both universities provided an opportunity for a larger number of Millennial students to be surveyed.

The population of this study consisted of Millennial students from both Midwest universities. Participants were selected because most fit the Millennial demographic. Those students who noted they were 17 or younger (n=1) or 25 or over (n=3) in the demographic section of the survey were eliminated from study. A total of 1,062 participants completed the survey. The break down of gender for the sample was consistent with the demographic makeup of both campuses as a whole with 43.6% male (n= 463) and 56.4% female (n= 599) completing the survey. At both universities, participation was elicited through a cluster sample of classes that had enrollments greater than 25 students. Because of the large number of participants needed to have strong sample size, only classes with enrollments greater than 25 were used to draw from for the cluster sample. A self-administered paper survey was utilized. For this particular study, Bruning and Galloway's organization-public relationship scale was selected. Bruning and Galloway's (2003) 24-question scale aims to measure the respondent's relationship with a particular organization, in this case the relationship between the Millennial college student demographic with the top 10 social media brand organizations. The scale is composed of five dimensions. Although all dimensions provide useful information, the personal commitment dimension was the focus for this particular study. Respondents were asked to specify their level of agreement with each of the 24 questions on the scale by indicating their preferences on a 7-point Likert scale anchored from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Bruning and Galloway's (2003) scale was selected because of its ability to measure the relationship between an organization and each organization's public or target audience. In addition to Bruning's 24 questions, six additional questions were asked to help address the research questions and hypotheses. Two questions were asked in order to gain insight from students regarding their

familiarity with social media tools in general and the top 10 organizations in general. One question was asked to discover student familiarity with one or more of the top 10 organizations' interactions with themselves as Millennial students via social media tools. The final three questions were asked in order to collect demographic information about the Millennial students who completed the survey. Questions about sex, age, and race were asked in an effort to provide the study with demographic statistics.

Findings and Discussion

Research Question #1

The first research question posed aimed to answer with what, if any, social media tools Millennial students interact. The responses to this close-ended question were categorized and the frequencies of the responses were aggregated. The percentages for each of the categories were calculated relative to the total set of responses generated. As indicated in Table 1 (Appendix A), the most popular response was e-mail (97.2%), followed closely by social networking sites (94.1%). Other social media tools which participants reported for interacting included personal digital assistants (79.1%), video sharing (69.0%), blogs (21.1%), micro blogs (15.4%), and podcasts (11.2%). Only 0.5% of participants reported never using any of the social media tools listed. A list emerged by asking Millennial students to select all social media tools with which he or she would interact. Because students were allowed to select more than one type of social media, the question did not force participants to select one tool over another, allowing for multiple social media tools to emerge as highly interacted with by Millennial students. Relatively consistent with Lenhart and Fox's (2009) study for the Pew Internet data, which reported that 94% of those from age 18 to 32 use e-mail, this social media tool was also selected as the most highly interacted social media tool by participants at 97.2%. Closely following at 94.1%, social networking as a social media tool was also reported as highly interacted with by Millennial students. The popularity of the social networking social media tool did not come as a surprise, especially after recent research on social networking sites such as Facebook has proclaimed its rising popularity (Outlaw, 2009; Vasquez, 2008). Knowing that Millennials are using social networking tools is encouraging to those public relations practitioners who are considering or are beginning to reach out to this key audience through this social media tool.

Most interesting, inconsistent with what others have found, is the interaction Millennials reported with both blogs and podcasts. Jones and Fox (2009) report that 43% of this generation engage with blogs. In this study, only 21.1% of Millennial students reported interacting with blogs. Because this percentage is rather low, the finding raises several questions. One significant question is whether blogs are becoming less popular within this Millennial Generation. This finding suggests that blogs are not as popular as others have reported. Another question is what characteristics make blogs more or less engaging? Possibly because of the recent growth of blogs as reported by Technorati (2009), information is becoming not only overwhelming but also difficult to trust. Although some research has found that Millennials are suited for blogging because of its unique capability of allowing for content contribution, being leery of where their information is being posted and who is accessing that information is becoming more of an issue (McConnell & Hubba, 2007).

Another noteworthy finding that emerged in the study is the 11.2% of Millennial students who reported interacting with podcasts. Recent studies suggest that the audio podcast is one of the rising social media tools that is expected to have exponential growth in upcoming years. Indeed research says that 25% of Millennials are already using podcast, which contradicts the

finding of this study. (EMarketer, 2008; Jones & Fox, 2009). Similar to blogs, questions arise about this significant decline of Millennials who report interacting with podcast. Findings suggest that podcasts as a social tool are not the best way to target this generation. Besides the 0.5% of participants who reported not interacting with any social media tool, podcasts were reported as the least interacted with social media tool.

One note of interest pertaining to the first research question regards those participants who selected interacting with no social media tool. Only five of 1093 students who participated in the study reported that they did not engage with any social media tool. This finding supports the idea that Millennial students are indeed interacting with a variety of social media tools. Public relations practitioners should find this result encouraging while thinking strategically for ways to reach this target audience through these different social media tools. Although all social media tools did not register with above-average percentages of interaction, most Millennials reported interacting with a variety of tools.

Hypothesis #1

The first hypothesis states, "Millennial students who indicate they interact with company/brand e-mail will generate the most committed relationship over all other company/brand social media tools." First, an independent samples t-test was run for each social media tool with a usage response over 50% of the sample who had been engaging with social media tools (yes/no) and wanting their relationship to continue with each company/brand (1 = strongly wanting the relationship to continue, 7 = strongly not wanting the relationship to continue). Results in Table 2 (Appendix B) indicated that hypothesis one is partially supported. Secondly, in order to determine if having contact via social networking tools had varying effects on wanting the relationship with each company to continue, a series of factorial analyses of variance (factorial ANOVA) were run. As indicated in Table 3 (Appendix C), all other top 10 social media companies/brands (Xbox, Starbucks, MTV, Sony and Dell) resulted in no significant interaction effect for any of the comparisons between the social media tools and strongly wanting the relationship with the company to continue.

Millennials are using social media tools, some more than others as supported by research question and hypothesis one, to receive messages from companies and organizations. As discussed previously, Millennial students are bombarded with millions of messages. Targeting those messages through the appropriate tool is essential to the success of a positive relationship. Windahl, Signitzer and Olson (2009) stated, "When a sub-audience is defined as a segment, the communication planner must find channels and messages that fit it. But not all segments can be reached through matching channels, that is, through channels whose audience equals the planner's target group" (p. 231). In order to investigate further if Millennials were gravitating more to e-mail than other social media tools of the particular company/brand while also staying strongly committed to a particular company/brand, hypothesis one was advanced. To find a thorough answer, both t-tests and a factorial ANOVA were run. T-tests were run to find if there were significant differences between each of the top social media tools as discovered in research question one. The four social media tools (e-mail, video, PDA, social networking) that were investigated all had over 50% of participants report that they had interacted with the social media tool. Apple, Disney, and Xbox reported significant differences for all four social media tools between those Millennials who had interacted with the company/brand's social media tool and wanted their relationship to continue and those who had not interacted. CNN reported

significance for all but PDA. Sony and Starbucks reported significance for only e-mail. MTV and Dell reported no significant difference between any of the four social media tools.

Only guesses can be made at this time as to why some companies/brands reported significant differences between those Millennials who had wanted their relationship to continue and those who had not. One guess could be that perhaps some may do better than others at being authentic. Authenticity is crucial within social media. Another guess, the issue of transparency and authenticity continues to be a relevant issue in social media. As Scott (2007) discussed previously in the literature review, some companies attempt to pull off corporate generated material as consumer generated material. Millennials can detect this issue of authenticity and often feel betrayed and belittled when companies or brands try to blur the social media authenticity lines. Before the emergence of social media tools, the brand had to build itself. Yet another guess as to why some companies/brands reported significant differences between those Millennials who had wanted their relationship to continue and those who had not could revolve around the issue of the differences between traditional and social media tools. Millennials may prefer to see more traditional communication (television or radio) instead of social media communication from particular companies/brands. MTV was one of the companies in which no significant difference between any of the social media tools was found and Millennials wanting to continue their relationship with MTV for a long time. This could be due to the fact that MTV, as it states in its name, is known for its more traditional form of communication—television. Millennials may prefer building their relationship with MTV through more traditional means rather than social means. This is not to say that Millennials are not interacting with the social media tools, but rather that their preference for this particular company may still lie in more traditional tools.

Although a variety of the social media tools reported main effects between tools (the significant t-test results), a factorial ANOVA was run in the current study to explore those tools that were considered highly engaged in by Millennials (e-mail, video, PDA, social networking) and their wanting the relationship to continue with each of the top 10 most social companies/brands. In looking at each social media tool individually compared to the combination of two of the top four social media tools, results indicated that only in the case of Apple, CNN, and Disney did the combination of multiple tools have significant interaction effects between e-mail and social networking, social media tools, and wanting their relationship to continue with Apple, CNN, and Disney. After examining the data, the researcher went back to the t-test means to compare each individual tool mean with the combined mean to determine which was the lowest. This helped determine which tool, or combination of the tools, provided the strongest relationship. Interestingly, Apple, CNN and Disney all reported different results for the strongest relationship. Yet, because e-mail (97.2%) was advanced as the social media tool to generate the most committed relationship between the company/brand and the Millennial student, hypothesis one is partially supported. Even though the Apple, CNN, and Disney results of the current study all reported different preference of company/brand social media tool(s) for Millennials, of the tools that were significant, e-mail was part of those that Millennials responded to as interacting with the most while remaining the most committed to the company/brand. Furthermore, the t-test serves as a guide for both the companies/brands and public relations practitioners who question using social media tools to attract Millennial students. E-mail showed a significant difference between Millennials who had received an e-mail and those who had not and wanting their relationship to continue with each company/brand in six out of the eight companies/brands. PDA showed the least promise to commitment to the company/brand of the

four social media tools looked at in this hypothesis, having only three of eight companies/brands show significance between those who had interacted with PDA and those who had not.

Research Question #2

Research question two asked, "What is the relationship between a Millennial student's commitment to maintaining a relationship with one of the top 10 most social company/brand and the interaction of the Millennial student with a social media tool of that company/brand?" A chi-square test was run for exposure to company/brand social media outlet (yes/no) and commitment to that social media company/brand. Results indicated out of the eight social media companies/brands, six had significant differences between the participants who had and those who had not been exposed to the company/brand social media outlet and his or her level of commitment to that particular social media company/brand.

The current study reports Apple, Disney, Xbox, Starbucks, MTV, and Sony all having significant difference in the commitment level between those who had been exposed to company/brand social media tool and those who had not. Results support the argument that those Millennial students who had indicated that they had personally interacted with a company/brand via a social media tool(s) were more committed to maintaining a relationship with that particular company/brand than those Millennials who reported never having interacted with the company/brand via social media. Those Millennials who had actually interacted with the company/brand by using the social media tools most likely had some type of vested interest with the company/brand, thereby already establishing some type of relationship with the company/brand. It would suggest that if Millennials are interacting with companies, these users desire some type of relationship, usually positive, with that particular company/brand.

Interestingly, this study found that for CNN and Dell the reverse proved to be true in exploring the relationship between a Millennial student's commitment to maintaining a relationship with one of the top 10 most social company/brands and the interaction of the Millennial student with a social media tool of that company/brand. Commitment to maintaining a relationship with CNN and Dell was not different for those participants who had been exposed to social media and those who had not. The researcher can only speculate why this finding emerges. CNN is a company that supplies news to millions worldwide. Millennials may interact with CNN's social media tools, but not be committed to maintaining a relationship with the company because of the nature of news and how it can be communicated in a variety of ways. For example, although the researcher in this study follows CNN on Twitter, the researcher is not strongly committed to maintaining a relationship with CNN because of the preference to get news through the local television news channel for a local angle or national news from the NPR podcast so one can run while listening (multi-tasking Millennial).

The results of this study raise additional questions about why Dell and CNN have different experiences with Millennials than other top companies/brands. This is very interesting data for public relations practitioners who work for both CNN and Dell, two widely respected companies. These top companies are reaching this Millennial market via social media tools, but questions addressing why there is no commitment to some companies with whom Millennials are engaged via social media tools needs to be further examined.

Hypothesis #2

The second hypothesis in the current study states, "Those Millennial students who have had a relationship with the top 10 social brands via social media tools will be more likely to have

a favorable perception of that company/brand." An independent samples t-test was run for interaction with a brand/company through social media tools (yes/no) and wanting a relationship with the brand/company to continue for a long time. Results indicated that there were significant differences for six of the eight media brands/companies for exposure to the brand/company social media tool and wanting the relationship to continue with the company (Table 4, Appendix D). For all companies/brands except CNN and Dell, results indicated that as participants' usage of social media tools increased, their wanting to continue a relationship with the company/brand also increased. Millennials indicating that they somewhat agreed to strongly agreed that they wanted to continue their relationship with the company/brand for a long time was used to determine if they had a favorable perception of the company/brand. Apparently, according to the data, those students who have had a relationship with CNN and Dell via that particular company's/brand's social media tools do not have a favorable perception of CNN or Dell. Even after interacting with CNN and Dell via social media tools, it is surprising that those Millennials did not have a favorable perception. Reasons for this disconnect are unknown; however, the data clearly indicate a lack of relationship with Millennials for these two companies. What makes CNN and Dell the anomaly to the list of top 10 most social brands is unknown and intriguing. The support for hypothesis one is especially positive news for public relations practitioners who aim to engage this niche market of Millennials via social media tools. If, for the most part, Millennials have favorable perceptions of those companies/brands with which they interact via social media tools, public relations practitioners need to look at ways to interact with the Millennial target audience in order to build stronger, more favorable relationships.

Research Question #3

The third research question asked is, "To what extent is a Millennial student's favorable perception of the organization positively associated with his or her active social media behavior?" Pearson's product-moment correlations were used to analyze this research question. Pearson's product-moment correlations are used in situations were the independent and dependent variables are interval or ratio level measures (Reinard, 2008). In this study a correlation was run for active social media behavior (number of tools used: no tools = 0 to all tools listed selected = 7) and wanting a relationship with a brand/company to continue for a long time (strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 7). Results indicate that there are significant correlations for all eight media brands/companies between active social media behavior and wanting the relationship to continue with the company/brand. Table 5 (Appendix E) presents the correlations between active social media behavior and Millennial students wanting their relationships with each company/brand to continue for a long time. Correlations were significant at the .001 level.

This question did not look at the social media usage from each particular brand as in research question two, but instead Millennials' social media usage in general. The significant correlations support the idea that the more these technological Millennials interact with social media, the more they tend to favor the top 10 social companies/brands. Based on the results from research question two, this positive correlation was somewhat expected. The companies/brands that were selected as the top 10 most social brands were selected because of their innate use of engaging audiences with social media. Those Millennials who use social media should seemingly positively correlate with these brands based on the simple fact that they are engaging with tools that have made these companies/brands rise to the top of the list. The more tools with which Millennials engage, the more opportunity they have to exposure to one or more of these

companies. Furthermore, the more social media tools that Millennials use, the more comfortable they likely are with interacting with each company/brand because of the company's/brand's extensive use of the social media.

Hypothesis #3

The third hypothesis in the current study states, "Millennial students' satisfaction with the relationship they have with one of the top 10 social brands will be positively associated with the company/brand through a social media outlet." A correlation analysis was run for the number of social media tools (e.g., 0 = no tools, 1 = 1 social media tool contact, etc.) to which participants were exposed by each company/brand and wanting their relationship to continue for a long time (1 = strongly agree to 7 = strongly disagree) with each respective company/brand. Results indicated no significant correlations for the number of social media tools that participants were exposed to by each company/brand and wanting their relationship to continue with that company/brand for a long time. As indicated from the results in Table 6 (Appendix F), the number of social media tools Millennials were exposed to by each of these companies did not relate to those same Millennials wanting to maintain a relationship with the company/brand for a long time.

Although the results for Sony reached significance, none of the other companies/brands indicated a significant correlation between the number of social media tools that participants were exposed to by each company/brand and a desire for their relationship to continue with that company/brand for a long time. This finding supports the literature (Flanagin and Metzger, 2008: Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007; Mazzarella, 2006) on the Millennials in regard to finding the fine line between engaging and tuning out completely. Attracting and maintaining their attention continues to be a challenge for public relations practitioners who are desperately trying to reach this key market. While Millennial students have a more favorable perception of most of the top 10 social companies/brands if they have had relationship with them through a social media tool, as borne out by hypothesis two, as those social media tool interactions increase, it does not necessarily increase their satisfaction with that particular company/brand. Data from the current study support the idea that more types of social media usage does not increase user satisfaction with the relationship with a company/brand. These results are consistent with existing research that encourages public relations practitioners to engage in only those social media tools that they are willing to devote the time, resources and effort into making succeed (Gillin, 2007; Li and Bernoff, 2008; Scott, 2007). This study further supports the recommendation of engaging in only those social media for which public relations practitioners are ready because engaging in multiple social media tools does not seem to increase the chances of successfully establishing a mutually beneficial relationship with the Millennial Generation.

Research Question #4

Research question number four asked, "To what extent, if any, is there a difference between gender and each social media tool?" A chi-square test was run for gender (male/female) and each of the seven media tools. As shown in Table 7 (Appendix G), results indicated that out of the seven social media tools, none had significant differences between the gender and each particular social media tool that was explored in the study.

This supports other scholars (Dresang, Gross, & Holt, 2007; Li, Glass, & Records, 2008; Rainer, Laosethakul, & Astone, 2003) who argue that this gap has drastically narrowed over time and is in some cases non-existent. This is good news for public relations practitioners who are

trying to target the Millennial market with social media tools and have concerns about gender differences. Each of the seven social media tools was examined for gender differences, and all data gathered indicate no difference between gender for any of the seven social media tools.

Hypothesis #4

In looking at communication technologies, specifically social media, very few studies have been conducted for each tool individually in regards to gender preference. Many studies have shown that females have lagged behind in many aspects of new technology from their use to their confidence or ability to use the technology (Dempsey, 2009; Spotts, Bowman, & Mertz, 1997; Wood & Li, 2005). Based on previous research, hypothesis four was advanced, "Millennial males will be more likely to interact with social media tools than Millennial females." Results found that Millennial males were not necessarily more likely to interact with any of the seven social media tools set forth by the study than Millennial females. Although this finding is surprising, it should be also promising to public relations practitioners that are trying to reach the Millennial demographic. Constructing key messages to send through the best social media channels can be difficult enough, let alone trying to utilize different channels to reach different genders. Results from the current study support others (Dresang, Gross, & Holt, 2007; Li, Glass, & Records, 2008; Rainer, Laosethakul, & Astone, 2003) who argue that the gender/technology gap is narrowing, or in some cases, disappearing. Millennials are known for their tech savvy ways, and these findings assert that gender does not make a difference on which social media tools Millennials will use and not use.

Future Research Directions

Although the current findings respond to a need to conduct original research in the area of public relations, this study only begins to address the void in the communication and marketing literature. At the annual International Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) conference in October of 2008, it was apparent that the public relations field is evolving and that social media is at the heart of the movement. In an attempt to assist public relations practitioners, specifically those who are or thinking of using social media tools, this study intended to both add to the communication and marketing literature as well as assist current practitioners in the field.

The current investigation looked at only one dimension—personal commitment—of Bruning and Galloway's (2003) public-organization relationship scale. However, as previously mentioned, the scale is composed of five dimensions: anthropomorphic, personal commitment, professional benefit/expectation, community improvement, and comparison of alternatives that could be further examined. Solid findings from the current study offer a more complete understanding into an individual's personal commitment with a company/brand, yet much more information can be gleaned from looking at each of the different dimensions individually and collaboratively.

In addition to Millennials, several other generations exist. A follow-up study examining the personal commitment of each of the other generations could offer public relations practitioners insight into building relationships with not only the Millennial Generation, but also how those relationships with Millennials differ from the other generations via use of social media tools. By comparing and contrasting the behaviors of all generations, future studies could help answer this compelling question.

This particular study looked intently on channel usage related to indentifying social media use and the way that this relates to brand loyalty and continued interest in continuing

relationships. What it doesn't look at is message content that is disseminated through those channels. Additional research should be conducted in order to analyze messages that are sent through these social media channels and how those messages relate to Millennials wanting to continue their relationship with the organization.

Finally, while this study allowed the researcher to investigate Millennials' interaction with social media tools of specific companies, research is also needed to investigate *what* makes Millennials engage with one particular social media tool over another. The current study found that Millennials heavily engage with social networking sites (e.g., MySpace and Facebook). What makes Millennials engage with social networking sites more than other social media tools such as blogs, micro-blogs, or podcasts? To extend the current study, a future qualitative study could divulge a better understanding through open-ended questions as to why Millennials prefer social networking sites and e-mail to microblogging and podcasts. Likewise, researchers might also examine the various social media tools that Millennial engage with the most and how those tools change over time.

Conclusion

Beneficial relationships with the public are important for the survival of an organization. Public relations practitioners must build and maintain strong relationships between the organization and its public to lead to a desired behavior of the public for the organization and vice-versa. Rather than focusing on all dimensions of the organization-public relationship (anthropomorphic, personal commitment, professional benefit/expectation, community improvement, and comparison of alternatives), this study specifically concentrated on the personal commitment relationship to the company/brand. Hence, the current study contributes to a theoretical body of knowledge in the public relations field by providing acute in-depth understanding into the personal commitment relationship dimension, specifically with a younger demographic, the Millennial Generation.

In addition, this study is important to the field of public relations because of its contribution to the body of literature focusing on social media tools and contribution to the knowledge of public relations practitioners. The literature review for this study sufficiently exemplifies the growth of social media within the field. The current study enhances that body of literature by supporting other's testimonies (Gillin, 2007; Hallahan, 2008; Li and Bernoff, 2008; Scott, 2007) of the importance of a social media presence for organizations to build relationships with key publics. Currently, the literature supports organizations being familiar with and using many social media tools, but current findings indicate that organizations that utilize one tool well is more essential than using several social media tools. As this study showed, Millennial satisfaction does not increase with the variety of tools, yet for most companies/brands a social media presence did matter with Millennials' favorable perceptions of that particular company/brand.

Public relations practitioners are yearning for in-depth knowledge of social media tools and how they can best play into their relationship building with key markets. In October, the cover of *PRWeek*, a monthly magazine targeted to practitioners, read *Social Media Survey 2009*. The seven-page article by Maul (2009) outlined important issues in social media such as what was being used most frequently industry-wide (social networking) to ethical issues of using social media. One focus of the article discussed the importance of being able to accurately measure how social media impacts an organization. This study helps practitioners fulfill some of this need, particularly within the Millennial market. Findings from this study can help public

relations practitioners allocate resources to social media tools that are most frequently being interacted with by Millennials. For the companies/brands that were emphasized in the study, further knowledge can be gleaned from public relations practitioners from those particular organizations in regard to social media tool usage and their company/brand. Lessons in which social media tools are being used and even which combination of tools is strongest for each company/brand can be gathered and used for future allocation of time and resources.

Communication scholars of the early 1900s remember the days of media effects with terms as "magic bullet theory" or the "hypodermic needle theory" to describe the times when mass communication was assumed to have great effects on the public through one message through one medium to the entire public (Windahl, Signitzer & Olson, 2009). Findings in this study suggest that Millennials demand specific mediums to have their messages arrive to them. When public relations practitioners do not take into consideration targeting their messages, those messages fall upon the mass society as a blanket with only hopes of the targeting audience being able to pick up the message. Millennials are unlike any other generation in the way they that they have surrounded themselves with new ways to build relationships: through a communications medium (Tapscott, 1996). Social media tools have provided new ways for key publics to build and maintain relationships with companies/brands. Much work remains to be done in the academic realm to further examine the variety of relationship dimensions that can all work to the organizations' advantage in building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with key publics. However, the current study helps shed some light on how public relations practitioners are using social media tools to effectively reach the Millennial audiences.

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Appendix A

Table 1

Response Frequency of Millennial Interaction with Social Media Tools

Social Media Tool	f	% of Total
E-mail	1063	97.2
Social Networking Site (e.g., MySpace/Facebook)	1030	94.1
Personal Digital Assistants (e.g., mobile phone)	865	79.1
Video Sharing (e.g., YouTube)	755	69.0
Blogs	231	21.1
Micro Blog (e.g., Twitter)	169	15.4
Podcasts	122	11.2
None	5	0.5

Note. Participants were asked to select all social media tools with which they interact. Several could have been selected by one participant. n=1094

Appendix B

Table 2

Differences Between Millennial Interaction With and Without a Social Media Tool and Wanting Relationship With Brand/Company to Continue for a Long Time

Brand		Social Media Tools Used			No Social Media Tool Used			
Social Media tool	n	*M*	*SD*	n	*M*	*SD*	*t*	
Apple								
E-mail	416	2.30	1.28	660	3.18	1.48	-10.058***	
Video	231	2.41	1.38	846	2.96	1.48	-5.123***	
PDA	230	2.47	1.42	847	2.94	1.47	.477***	
Social Networking	282	2.35	1.29	795	3.02	1.50	-6.692***	
CNN								
E-mail	62	3.39	1.42	1015	4.01	1.46	-3.292**	
Video	129	3.60	1.54	948	4.03	1.44	-3.164*	
PDA	27	3.74	1.61	1050	3.98	1.46	.561	
Social Networking	48	3.33	1.59	1029	4.01	1.45	.033*	
Disney								
E-mail	77	1.18	2.30	1000	1.39	3.33	-6.346***	
Video	169	2.67	1.34	908	3.37	1.39	-6.052***	
PDA	20	2.55	1.76	1057	3.27	1.39	-2.285***	
Social Networking	82	2.46	1.29	995	3.32	1.39	-5.411*	
Xbox								
E-mail	150	2.47	1.37	927	3.76	1.33	-10.987***	
Video	121	2.44	1.28	956	3.73	1.36	-9.869***	
PDA	43	2.28	1.24	1034	3.64	1.39	-6.282***	
Social Networking	84	2.31	1.24	993	3.69	1.37	-8.905***	
Starbucks								
E-mail	87	2.84	1.45	990	3.59	1.44	-4.651***	
Video	19	3.11	1.63	1058	3.58	1.45	-1.276	
PDA	14	2.86	1.29	1063	3.53	1.45	.-1.738	
Social Networking	86	3.66	1.47	991	3.51	1.45	.915	
MTV								
E-mail	55	4.16	1.62	1022	3.97	1.49	.955	
Video	161	3.91	1.51	916	3.99	1.50	-.577	
PDA	30	4.03	1.77	1047	3.97	1.49	.213	
Social Networking	101	4.01	1.76	976	3.97	1.47	.240	
Sony								
E-mail	151	3.18	1.20	926	3.47	1.32	-2.533*	
Video	98	3.21	1.39	979	3.45	1.29	-1.698	
PDA	63	3.33	1.27	1014	3.43	1.31	-.589	
Social Networking	69	3.33	1.46	1008	3.43	1.29	-.618	
Dell								
E-mail	378	3.60	1.61	699	3.55	1.50	.496	
Video	156	3.63	1.57	921	3.55	1.54	.623	
PDA	80	3.55	1.58	977	3.56	1.54	-.082	
Social Networking	202	3.70	1.62	875	3.53	1.52	1.428	

Note. Lower numbers in mean category indicate wanting the relationship to continue more. ***$p < .000$ **$p < .01$ *$p < .05$

Appendix C

Table 3

Factor Loadings for Millennial Interaction with E-mail, Video, PDA, and Social Networking for Wanting Relationship With Company/Brand to Continue for a Long Time

Brand	Factor Loadings			
Social Media tool	E-mail	Video	PDA	Social Networking
Apple				
E-mail	.074	.612	.029*	
Video	.074		.575	.140
PDA	.612	.575		.282
Social Networking	.029*	.140	.282	
CNN				
E-mail	.168	.656	.017*	
Video	.168		.133	.140
PDA	.656	.133		.808
Social Networking	.017*	.140	.808	
Disney				
E-mail	.553	.501	.011*	
Video	.553		.901	.222
PDA	.501	.901		.124
Social Networking	.011*	.222	.124	
Xbox				
E-mail	.054	.359	.132	
Video	.054		.398	.720
PDA	.359	.398		.356
Social Networking	.132	.720	.356	
Starbucks				
E-mail	.504	.766	.365	
Video	.504		n/a	.627
PDA	.766	n/a		.880
Social Networking	.365	.627	.880	
MTV				
E-mail	.109	.401	.334	
Video	.109		.202	.919
PDA	.401	.202		.063
Social Networking	.334	.919	.063	
Sony				
E-mail	.924	.368	.541	
Video	.924		.207	.934
PDA	.368	.207		.738
Social Networking	.541	.934	.738	
Dell				
E-mail	.245	.481	.365	
Video	.245		.227	.644
PDA	.481	.227		.919

Social Networking	.365	.644	.919

Note. n/a = SPSS not having enough participants to run test *p < .05

Appendix D

Table 4

Differences Between Interaction With Brand/Company Through Social Media Tool(s) and Wanting Relationship With Brand/Company to Continue for a Long Time

Brand	Social Media Tools Used		No Social Media Tool Used		
	M	SD	M	SD	t
Apple	2.40	1.394	3.42	1.453	11.479**
CNN	4.00	1.633	3.89	1.494	1.96
Disney	2.46	1.389	3.46	1.377	10.483**
Xbox	2.46	1.469	3.87	1.300	14.831**
Starbucks	2.55	1.567	3.66	1.419	9.473**
MTV	3.74	1.634	3.98	1.533	2.178*
Sony	3.18	1.384	3.44	1.346	2.832**
Dell	3.49	1.676	3.53	1.517	.449

Note. n = 1091 **$p < .01$ *$p < .05$

Appendix E

Table 5

Pearson Correlation Matrix for Millennials Favorable Perception and Active Social Media Behavior

	(r)
Apple	.032
CNN	.036
Disney	.009
Xbox	.063*
Starbucks	.019
MTV	.074*
Sony	.061*
Dell	.057*

Note. n = 1094 *$p \geq .05$ (one-tailed)

Appendix F

Table 6

*Pearson Correlation Matrix for Personal Interaction with Social Media Tools of
Company/Brand and Millennial Students' Desire to Continue a Relationship with Each
Company/Brand*

Social Media Tools Interaction		
Brand	*r*	*p*
Apple	.524	ns
CNN	.125	ns
Disney	.077	ns
Xbox	.541	ns
Starbucks	.911	ns
MTV	.125	ns
Sony	.055	reached significance
Dell	.464	ns

Note. n = 1091

Appendix G

Table 7

Differences Between Engagement of Social Media Tools Among Male and Female Millennial Students

Social Media Tool	χ^2	p
Blogs	1.002	ns
E-mail	1.120	ns
Micro Blog (e.g., Twitter)	1.431	ns
Podcasts	.000	ns
Personal Digital Assistants (e.g., mobile phone)	.838	ns
Social Networking Site (e.g., MySapce/Facebook)	.312	ns
Video Sharing (e.g., YouTube)	.483	ns

Note. Female: n = 598, Male: n = 463

Crisis Communication: Differences in Online Media, Blogs and Interactive Comments

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Abstract

When a company is in crisis, historically its public relations professionals are concerned with how this will be portrayed by the media. Today, the widespread adoption of interactive, peer-to-peer media technologies has led to additional concerns. Compared with traditional news coverage, bloggers add a new and dynamic dimension to dealing with a crisis. Generally, traditional journalists have been trained in the journalistic values of "balance" and "fairness," while bloggers do not necessarily share the same formal journalist training. Bloggers may or may not adhere to the same journalistic values, and in fact, many blogs are quite opinionated. This leads to questions about whether there are important differences between how companies are portrayed in the news vs. blogs during a crisis. Additionally, the audience itself can participate in public conversations about the crisis through interactive media technologies, such as online comments on news sites or blogs. The "comments" that readers post after reading a news or blog story are important because they can provide some indication of the effect the news or blog story has on readers' attitudes toward the company in crisis. This present study contributes to knowledge of online crisis communication, using one of the largest crises of 2010: the Toyota vehicle recalls. The study used content analysis to compare news coverage and blog coverage of the Toyota recall crisis. Research questions included:

- (How) is news coverage different than blog coverage of the Toyota crisis?
- (How) do comments that appear at the end of news stories differ from comments that appear at the end of blog posts?

Introduction

In the not too distant past, dealing with media coverage of a crisis was one of the major challenges for crisis communication experts. Whether or not it was ever really possible to "manage" or "control" a crisis in the past, it has become increasingly difficult (Sullivan, 2009). Today, online communication technologies have multiplied these challenges as users are no longer passive receivers of messages from professional gatekeepers, but are empowered to generate content, influencing and amplifying conversations that can have greater reach and speed than was previously possible. According to González-Herrero and Smith (2008):

"In this environment, trust is the new currency and people expect authentic, transparent conversation in a human voice, not company messages delivered in a corporate tone. Mainstream media still have an important voice in that discussion – in what we can call the 'many-to-many' model – but they do not dominate the discussion to the extent they used to."

Blogs are one means for those formally relegated to the "audience" to now generate their own content. Public relations practitioners have quickly embraced the need to build relationships with bloggers, to the extent that the term "blogger relations" has now been added to a long list of capabilities in the public relations toolbox. While it is possible to list some common characteristics that vary between news media and blogs (indicating that there may be important differences in how each approaches covering a crisis) only a few studies have empirically compared the two in a crisis context (e.g., Kim & Lee, 2010; Liu, 2010).

The ability to post online comments, often found at the end of news stories or blog posts, is another form of user-generated content. While researchers are beginning to address how to respond to bloggers during a crisis, most studies stop short of examining the comments that follow media or blog crisis coverage. Given that a basic principle emerging among social media expert PR practitioners is to listen before responding, it is important to empirically examine whether or not there are important differences between news and blog commenters before determining the best way to respond. Also, comments provide some indication of what effect the crisis information communicated through the news or blog has had on the audience that is commenting.

The purpose of this research is to investigate whether there are empirical differences between media and blog coverage of crises based on opinion, tone, crisis responsibility and sources, and whether there are differences between the tone and civility of the reader comments themselves, depending on whether they appear on blogs or news sites.

If there are significant differences between traditional news coverage, and blogs and comments, this may indicate the need to add to the current stream of crisis literature with strategies that take the inherent differences of the audiences and social media conventions into consideration.

Literature Review

Crisis Communication

There is a rich public relations literature on crisis communication. According to a meta-analysis of crisis communication research in public relations (Avery, Lariscy, Kim & Hocke, 2010), the majority of studies conducted during the past two decades have been based on the theories of two scholars: William L. Benoit and W. Timothy Coombs.

Benoit's (1995, 1997) 14 image restoration strategies available to organizations include responses such as: mortification, corrective action, denial, shifting blame, and minimization. Coombs' crisis communication research includes the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) (e.g., Coombs, 1995, 2007), which categorizes how people attribute the cause of the crisis into two dimensions: controllability (controllable, uncontrollable) and locus of control (internal, external). Coombs' SCCT organizes 10 of the most common crisis response strategies (e.g., apology, justification) into four categories. The denial and diminishing categories seek to change people's perceptions of the crisis by distancing an organization from crisis responsibility. The rebuilding and bolstering categories focus on changing people's perceptions of the organization facing the crisis (Coombs, 2007, pp. 138-141).

Studies are just now beginning to explore how online channels are affecting crisis communication. Specific to blogs, Jin & Liu (2010) recently developed a blog-mediated crisis communication model. Their model focuses on how crisis managers should respond to external blogs in a crisis situation because these "are the blogs that crisis managers have the least amount of control over and, thus, have the potential to yield the most significant reputation damage" (p. 432). Jin & Liu (2010) provide recommendations for identifying the most influential blogs during a crisis situation, monitoring them, and selecting an appropriate crisis response strategy, based on Coombs' SCCT research.

News

When comparing news vs. blog coverage, there are both long-standing, and newly emerging, conventions that distinguish the two genres, making it possible to develop hypotheses about how they may differ.

Andrews (2003) defines journalism as, "the imparting of verifiable facts to a general audience through a mass medium" (p. 63). Historically, journalism has adopted a set of news values and conventions. Lowrey (2006) notes that news values have traditionally included "accuracy, fairness and objectivity" (p. 480). He also highlights the editing role typically found in news organizations, which is an important part of striving to achieve accuracy (p. 484). Schudson (1995) describes news as typically "negative, detached, technical and official" (p. 9). According to Blood (2003), the journalist's goal is to "to assemble a fair, accurate and complete story that can be understood by a general audience" (p. 61).

Objectivity, Fairness & Balance. Historically, the conventions of news writing have been centered on the ideas of professionalism and objectivity. Objectivity refers to a journalist's attempt to separate facts from values and or opinions while reporting (Reese, 1997, p. 424). Matheson (2004) points out that journalistic practices that fall outside of the core are kept at the margins of the profession by separating and labeling them as "opinion" or "reviews" (p. 446). Although the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) removed objectivity from its code of ethics, the standards behind objectivity have been replaced by the conventions of fairness and balance (Reese, 1997, p. 424). Objectivity was removed from the SPJ Code of Ethics based on the idea that a story could not be objective even if every statement in it had been objectively verified. The argument is based on the principle that "producing news requires editing and editing inevitably involves nonobjective judgments. The results of such nonobjective judgments make objective news not possible" (Figdor, 2010, p. 27). Although objectivity is no longer in the SPJ code of ethics, journalists still continue to use similar standards such as accuracy, balance and fairness to guide them in creating neutral reports (Reese, 1997, p. 424).

Professionalism. Professionalism refers to a journalist's attempt to maintain a strong ideal of service to society (Soloski, 1997, p. 141). What currently separates journalists' reports from citizens reporting the news themselves, through vehicles such as blogs, is mainly the idea that journalists are professionals, striving to "maintain a strong ideal of service to society through a service seen as a universal good" (Soloski, 1997, p. 141). Those who make up the category of a true journalist can be argued to include only those who have been trained at an accredited school where they have "learned, mastered and accepted the standardized and professional norms and procedures of the profession" (Soloski, 1997, p. 141). "Unlike blogs which may be written by as little as one person, the "news work environment includes not only reporters but also editors, whose job involves ensuring that information reaching the public is ethically sound" (Friend et al., 2000; Keith, 2005) (Singer, 2007, p. 81).

Tone. According to Schudson (1995), "news tends to be bad news." Because of its professional values, news "tends to emphasize conflict, dissention, and battle; out of a journalistic convention that there are two sides to any story, news heightens the appearance of conflict even in instances of relative consensus." (p. 9)

On the other hand, Ettema, Whitney & Wackman (1997) note that there are "a variety of literature that suggests that the corporate-capitalist ownership of news media predisposes news to routinely uncritical treatment of corporate and governmental power sources" (p. 35).

Sources. Conventional journalism tends to rely on official, elite sources. News "is official, dependent on legitimate public sources, usually highly placed government officials and a relatively small number of reliable experts. News is as much a product of sources as of journalists; indeed, most analysts agree that sources have the upper hand" (Schudson, 1995, p. 11).

Schudson argues that professional journalistic norms lead to news that is negative, detached, technical and official, and notes that official sources sometimes become the subjects of news:

"We can distinguish between routine news from official sources that occupies most of the paper most of the time and the more occasional news in which official pronouncements are questioned or undermined by accidents, scandals, leaks (from other officials), or the ironic reservations of journalists themselves. In any event, officials remain the subject of news as well as its source, even though news often entangles them in negative coverage." (p. 11)

Blogs

A blog can be defined as "a frequently updated Web site, with posts arranged in reverse chronological order, so new entries are always on top" (Blood, 2003, p. 61). Many blogs allow readers to comment on posts. Additionally, blogs often are specialized by a set of interests or opinions, and can be written by one author or several (Hermida & Thurman, 2007, p. 8).

Not all blogs are the same, and blogs have not existed for long. Both of these facts make it difficult to point to a long history of norms and conventions. However, some common characteristics have begun to emerge.

Opinion. While news articles generally try to achieve fair, balanced, and even objective coverage, opinions are a commonly mentioned feature when describing blogs. "'Journalistic blogging doesn't have to be objective or impartial as long as the point of view is transparent and facts are presented unambiguously" (Kramer, 2004).

According to Lasica (2003), "Weblogs adhere to a different set of values. Bloggers value informal conversation, egalitarianism, subjective points of view, and colorful writing over profits, central control, objectivity and filtered prose" (p. 71).

Other Developing Norms. In addition to allowing bloggers a place to express partisan views (Lowrey, 2006, p. 477), blogs also provide a platform for sharing personal experiences that may not have an outlet in other venues. This also gives blogs a sense of authenticity (Matheson, 2004, p. 452).

Most bloggers currently are not paid for their efforts (Lowrey, 2006, p. 483), although this continues to evolve. Many bloggers do not have formal journalism training, lack editorial oversight, and do not necessarily adhere to journalistic conventions (Lasica, 2003, p. 70).

However, Lowrey (2006, p. 478) reports that supporters believe blogging can contribute to open, intelligent and productive discussion (e.g., Lasica, 2003). Lowrey (2006) describes bloggers as new competition to news journalists, which can cause each medium to redefine and differentiate what each does well. For example, Lowrey (2006) suggests that "one socially beneficial reaction to blogging has been to strengthen journalists' claims over the tasks of gathering news and ensuring accuracy. Journalist have the resources to conduct these tasks in a thorough, consistent way - most bloggers do not" (pp. 493-494).

Additionally, because blogs often are devoted to following a particular story over a longer period of time than journalists are able to, "the blogging phenomenon has made it more obvious that journalists tend to drop stories prematurely and move to fresh topics" (Lowrey, 2006, p. 494). Blogs, on the other hand, tend to focus on highly specialized content (Lowrey, 2006, p. 477).

Lasica (2003) describes bloggers who offer commentary on mainstream news reports as a web of "fact checkers," who can encourage journalists to write even more transparent and accurate stories (p. 71). Similarly, blogs have been credited for their speed in reporting events, and the depth and thoroughness with which a network of bloggers can following up on a story compared to an individual journalist (Matheson, 2004, p. 452).

On the other hand, these advantages come with trade-offs. Lasica (2003) points out that getting the story out quickly often is more important to bloggers than waiting for an editor to approve the story (p. 71). Some bloggers believe this editing process will happen through the comments of the blogosphere, instead.

Tone. Some emerging blog norms can be associated with the tone of blogs, including: the idea of blogs challenging mainstream journalism, and the opportunity for bloggers to provide instant critique (Matheson, 2004, p. 452). Matheson (2004) states that there are "certain general conventions to the genre, including an ephemeral and informal quality, with little attempt to impose a hierarchy on material, and often irreverent commentary or opinion accompanying the links" (p. 449).

Quote Sources. Liu (2010) compared newspaper and blog coverage and found that online newspaper articles included an average of seven official quotes, whereas blog posts contained two official quotes, on average.

Beyond Liu's study, the literature comparing blogs and journalism has little to say a about sources, except that we might expect bloggers to challenge traditional journalism's reliance on elite sources. Over time, the result could be an increase in the use of non-elite sources, either in news reports, blogs, or both (Lowrey, 2006, pp. 293-294). However, it is difficult to find information about how the average number of quotes compares in news vs. blogs articles.

Carter (2005) states that "blogs challenge the notion of authorship. Seemingly, rather than a model in which the author's writings are themselves a contribution, the blog author weaves a tapestry of links, quotations, and references amongst generated content." Carter's observations highlight the point that while we tend to think of news story "sources" primarily as quotes from individuals, blog sources are often likely to be links to other documents. In fact, according to Carter's interviews, bloggers considered a post that did not include sources as a higher quality post than one that did include sources. This is because blogger interviewees said that the highest quality blog post focused on providing new information or extensive commentary, rather than quoting or linking to non-original content. "When asked to specify a particular post that they had written that they judged to be high quality, respondents usually chose posts that had much lower link and quote densities than average for their blog" (p. 3).

Comparing News & Blogs

Blurring Boundaries. It is important to acknowledge that there is not a firm boundary between news and blogs. Blogs are incredibly diverse, and may range from a journalist blogging on behalf of a news organization to a non-journalist blogger who writes about a specialized topic that has little to do with traditional news.

Andrews (2003) states that "it is fair to say the vast majority of blogging does not qualify as journalism." He offers examples of narrowly focused blogs that reach a niche audience, and notes that "the blogs that do contain bona fide news are largely deriviative, posting links to other blogs and, in many cases, print journalism" (p. 63). Lowrey (2006), however, contends that "bloggers and journalists stake out much of the same turf." He describes an overlap between their roles of selecting information and commenting on it (p. 478).

Lasica (2003) maintains that bloggers and journalists have a "symbiotic" relationship, in that bloggers need mainstream media material to comment on, and in turn, their comments can generate new mainstream media story ideas (p. 71). Matheson (2004) suggests that a healthy competition between news and blogs will likely lead to changes in the conventions of both genres over time.

Blood (2003) captures this discussion well by suggesting that "in any discussion about Weblogs and journalism, the first question to ask is: Which Weblogs?" (p. 61).

Similar Studies

Two other studies were particularly relevant to this current research. Lui (2010) also compared how elite newspapers and top-ranked blogs covered crises. She found that online newspapers quoted more official sources than blogs, and that blogs cover crises more subjectively than online newspapers. Blogs were more likely to use negative frames than online newspapers. Conversely, online newspaper articles were more likely to use neutral frames. Two differences between Liu's study and this research are that Liu analyzed political blog coverage, while this study uses a broader cross-section of blogs likely to be viewed by a general consumer audience, and that this present study also analyzes the reader comments at the end of the news articles and blog posts.

Kim and Lee (2010) also compared blog vs. online newspaper coverage during a crisis, although they focused on how journalists and bloggers (who represented the public, in Kim and Lee's study) expressed emotion. They also investigated perceptions of crisis responsibility, and found differences between blog and news coverage. While blog coverage was most likely to

blame Samsung for the Samsung Oil Crisis, news coverage was more likely to place responsibility on outside parties such as the Korean government.

Study Hypotheses

        Based on a review of news and blog conventions, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1:   Blog coverage will be more opinionated than newspaper coverage

H2:   Blog coverage will be more negative than newspaper coverage

H3:   Blog coverage will blame Toyota more than newspaper coverage

       H3a: Newspaper coverage will praise Toyota more than blog coverage.

H4:   Newspapers will include more overall sources than blogs.

       H4a: Newspapers will include more "official" Toyota quotes than blogs.

       H4b: Newspapers will include more (non-Toyota) quotes that are supportive of Toyota, than blogs.

       H4c: When blogs do include quotes, the percentage of non-Toyota quotes will be higher for blogs than for newspapers.

       H4d: When blogs do include quotes, the percentage of non-Toyota quotes that are critical of Toyota will be higher for blogs than for newspapers.

Online Comments

    There has been little research conducted regarding online comments in a crisis communication context. Comments are one indication of stakeholder response to a crisis. McDonald, Sparks and Glendon (2010) agree that stakeholder response is an under-researched area, yet particularly important to crisis managers and outcomes.

    Coombs and Holladay (2010) offer perhaps the most relevant research related to this present study's interest in online comments by examining stakeholder online reaction to a crisis. They used the Amazon Kindle crisis, where Amazon erased copies of George Orwell's book, *1984* (which had been sold without proper copyright) without advanced warning to consumers. The authors analyzed 210 stakeholder comments on a company-run forum, in direct response to apologies from a spokesperson and Amazon's CEO. While Coombs' and Holladay's (2010) research questions, relating to how stakeholders received the apology and how this event affected purchase intent, were different than this present study's questions about the tone and civility of online comments found on news sites external to an organization, Coombs' and Holladay's research contributes to an overall shift in the focus of crisis communication research "from a sender perspective" to a "receiver/stakeholder perspective" (p. 208).

    What discussion does exist in the literature and popular media about comments reveals both excitement about the opportunity to engage with audiences, as well as some concern about the wisdom of doing this. González-Herrero and Smith (2008) offer the following advice for managing online communication during a crisis: "Consider whether chat tools should be used to foster dialogue – or suspended, due to the delicate nature of such situations and the anonymity that most of these tools allow" (p. 151).

    Minneapolis journalist Jason DeRusha wrote on his Twitter account on Jan. 13, 2011, "I've always thought that reporters should engage with commenters online. Questioning that now, even on my own blog."

In an article called, "*Comments please: How the British news media is struggling with user-generated content,*" Hermida and Thurman (2007) learned through interviews that UK news site executives are concerned about how user-generated content reflects upon their news organization brands. According to the researchers, "news organizations have an identity that is defined by their professional content." They found that "news organizations are increasingly shifting towards moderating UGC."

These last three examples demonstrate a need to empirically examine the nature of comments in crisis situations to determine how best (and whether) to include and/or respond to them.

Research Questions

Because there is less research available on which to base predictions about online comments, we asked the following as directed research questions. We wondered whether, if blogs were indeed more negative than news articles, the tone of blog comments would reflect these differences in conventions.

RQ1: Will blog comments be more negative than news comments?
RQ2: Will blog comments be less civil than news comments?

Method

This study used content analysis to explore the similarities and differences between news and blogs, and in the comments that followed articles in each type of medium.

Toyota Crisis Background

A timeline for the Toyota recall, provided by the news organization MSNBC, lists August 28, 2009 as the first event of the crisis. This date marks a high-profile incident that drew national media attention to Toyota's potential issues. California Highway Patrol Officer Mark Saylor and three other family members were killed when the 2009 Lexus ES350 they were driving accelerated out of control, reaching top speeds of more than 100 mph. One of the occupants called 911 and reported they were unable to brake or slow down the vehicle. All four died. This accident led to an investigation by Toyota, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and local authorities.

Out of 19 crisis events recorded on MSNBC's timeline between August 2009 and July 2010, 13 of them occurred between January 21 and February 24, 2010.

Sampling Plan

Articles were selected from two top national U.S. newspapers: the *New York Times,* representing one of the nation's most elite newspapers, and the *Wall Street Journal,* with the largest circulation in the U.S. The blogs used in this study were identified using the Technorati.com list of top 25 blogs as ranked on January 2, 2011 (see Results section for a full list).

Some studies focus on a specific type of blog, such as news or political blogs (e.g., Jin & Liu, 2010). Many news blogs are written by professional journalists, and while writing in the form of a personal blog may allow some additional leeway for opinion when compared to writing for a news organization, the similarity between newspapers and news-oriented blogs also may mask differences between the two types of media, given the total universe of blogs. When

facing a crisis, organizations are subject to scrutiny from all types of blogs, not just news blogs. The goal of this study was to capture the conversation in the blogosphere more generally.

The articles analyzed were found by searching for "Toyota recall" on each news or blog site during the six-week period between January 21, 2010 and March 4, 2010. This timeframe was selected because the majority of crisis events occurred between these dates (and allowed additional time for articles to be published relating to February 24 crisis event).

For news stories and blog posts, the entire article served as the unit of analysis. Due to the volume of articles found within the search period, the decision was made to code just the headline and first paragraph for the majority of the variables (e.g., article tone), using the rationale that these two elements set the stage for the rest of the article, and analyzing the headline and lead will likely capture the essence of the article. For comments following an article, each comment was coded individually (rather than as a set for each article). The reason for this is that a news article or blog post typically tends to be written by one, or possibly two, authors, making it reasonable to evaluate whether the headline and lead as a whole are primarily positive, negative or neutral, for example. An article that generates 150 comments, on the other hand, represents the views of multiple authors. There are likely to be positive, negative and neutral sentiments within all large sets of comments, so analyzing them as one total set is less informative than investigating them individually.

Because one single article could generate hundreds of comments, the decision was made to code 10 percent of the comments. After reading each article, coders drew a number from 1 to 10, and with a random start (e.g., "4"), then chose every 10th comment to code (e.g., 4, 14, 24…) until there were no longer any more comments (e.g., the coder would stop at 24 if there was not a 34th comment). The comments for each article were chosen with a unique random start. For example, after reading the next article, coders would then draw a new number (e.g., 8) for the comments that followed the new article. Some articles did not include any comments at the end, or less than ten. If a coder chose a random start of "5," for example, and there were only 5 comments, the fifth comment was coded. If there were only four comments, however, no comments would be coded for that particular article.

Inter-Coder Reliability

Three independent coders read and coded the newspaper and blog articles and comments. To assess reliability, 10% of the full sample was coded by all three coders. The online software tool ReCal ("Reliability Calculator") (Freelon, 2010) was used to calculate Krippendorff's alpha (2007). The reliability for the majority of the variables was within the .70 to .95 range (see Table 1 below), with the exception of the "praise" and "supportive quote" variables.

For the question asking whether the headline praised Toyota, none of the coders found any headlines that included praise. Therefore, there was no variance between their work, and intercoder reliability could not be calculated. For the same question about the first paragraph of the article, two of the three coders found just one instance of a leading paragraph that they felt mildly praised Toyota, but these two paragraphs were different between the two coders, leading to a low reliability. The case was similar in counting the number of supporting quotes.

Table 1 Reliability (Krippendorff's alpha)

	Headline	**First Paragraph**	**Sources**	**Comments**
Opinion	.932	.867		
Tone	.917	.935		.896
Blame	.692	.707		
Praise	0*	-.003**		
Civility				.741
# Sources			.951	
# Toyota Quotes			.947	
# Non-Toyota Quotes			.882	
# Critical Quotes			.878	
# Supportive Quotes			.196**	

* No variation (no praise found in headlines among coders) – reliability could not be calculated
** Low reliability influenced by extremely low amount of praise or supportive sources found by coders

Study Variables
    The independent variables in this study were: *Article Type* (newspaper vs. blog) and *Comment Type* (newspaper vs. blog).
Dependent Variables - Articles
    Presence of Opinion. Coders were asked whether or not headlines and first paragraphs of articles conveyed an opinion about Toyota (also described to coders as making a judgment toward Toyota). This variable was measured as the presence (1) or absence (0) of an opinion.
    During training, the researchers acknowledged that issuing a recall is generally negative news, but differentiated between the factual content of the news, and the way the author chose to portray the event. A headline that did not include the presence of an opinion would be written in a factual, accurate, balanced, objective manner (e.g., "Toyota Avalon Recall Affects 400000 Cars*"*). A headline that *did* convey an opinion would have an "edge" to it that would be likely to skew readers' views one way or another (e.g., *"Again?! Toyota issues recall of 400000+ cars in U.S. and Canada*). For this item, coders were asked to think from a journalists' or authors' perspective (rather than from the reader's or consumer's perpective) to help distinguish the concept of opinion vs. tone.
    Tone. Coders were asked whether the tone <u>toward Toyota</u> in an article headline or first paragraph (coded as two separate items) was: extremely positive (1), somewhat positive (2), neither positive nor negative/neutral (3), somewhat negative (4), or extremely negative (5), based on a 5-point Likert scale.
    Because this study emphasized coverage of the Toyota recall crisis that affected the company specifically, coder training emphasized that if an article was positive or negative, but did not contain sentiment directed *toward Toyota* (a negative headline about Ford, for example), it should be coded as "3" neither/neutral.

To differentiate "tone" from "opinion," coders also were instructed to consider how they, or the general public, would feel toward toward Toyota after reading the respective headline or first paragraph. In this case, while the headline, "*Toyota Avalon Recall Affects 400000 Cars*," is written in a factual, non-opinionated manner from a journalistic standpoint, it is bad news for the company from a consumers' perspective.

Blame. To gain a basic sense of what type of crisis reaction the public may perceive that Toyota used, as mediated by news and blog coverage, coders were asked (thinking from the reader's point of view) to indicate to what extent the articles (headlines and first paragraphs, respectively) blamed Toyota for the crisis (0=did not blame Toyota; 1=mildly blamed Toyota; 2-strongly blamed Toyota).   The codebook elaborated blame in this study to include conveying a sense of wrongdoing, or responsibility for the crisis.

Praise. Similarly, coders were asked to what extent the headline praised Toyota (0=did not praise; 1=mildly praised Toyota; 2=strongly praised Toyota). The codebook elaborated praise in this study to include headlines or first paragraphs that defended Toyota.

Sources and Quotes. Coders looked at the entire article (not just the headline or first paragraph) to count quotes. The *number of sources* was measured by counting the unique number of quotes (of one sentence of more) included in an article. (If the same Toyota spokesperson was quoted twice within one article, it would be counted as one "source" for that article. If, however, a Toyota spokesperson and a different Toyota dealer were quoted in one article, these would constitute two different individuals, and would be coded as two sources.

More specifically, coders tracked the *number of Toyota quotes* from unique Toyota individuals within each article, as well as the *number of non-Toyota quotes* from unique non-Toyota individuals within each article. Among just those quotes from non-Toyota sources, coders reported how many were *critical* towards Toyota, and how many were *supportive* towards Toyota (e.g. "Toyota is recovering from the recall crisis").

Dependent Variables - Comments

Comment Tone. Consistent with article tone, *comment* tone toward Toyota was measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1=extremely positive; 2=somewhat positive; 3=neither positive nor negative/neutral; 4 = somewhat negative; 5 – extremely negative).

Comment Civility. Comment civility was measured as the presence (1=uncivil) or absence (0=civil) of rude, insulting or vulgar language. The codebook stated that for this study, an uncivil comment goes beyond simple disagreement or minor criticism.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Coders analyzed a total of 221 articles (*109 on news sites; 112 on blogs*), and 834 reader comments (*363 on news sites and 471 on blogs*). (The comments coded represented 10% of the total number of comments that appeared at the end of the 221 articles.) Table 2 lists the specific newspapers and blogs included in this study, as well as the number of Toyota recall-related articles and comments found in each source.

Table 2

Source	# Articles	# Comments*	Source	# Articles	# Comments*
New York Times	76	258	*Kotaku*	1	2
Wall Street Journal	33	105	*Lifehacker*	1	4
Boing Boing	1	7	*Mashable*	3	6
Business Insider	23	24	*Mediaite*	3	0
BuzzFeed	27	0	*The Daily Beast*	3	3
CNN Political Ticker	1	0	*The Huffington Post*	40	378
Gawker	2	5	*The Next Web*	2	6
Gizmodo	1	5	*TechCrunch*	1	3
Hot Air	2	28	*Vulture*	1	0

* The number of comments coded represents 10% of the total number of comments

The following blogs did not include any posts or comments related to the "Toyota recall:" *Deadline.com, Engaget, Ezra Klein, Jezebel, Popeater, ReadWriteWeb, The Daily Dish, TMZ.com and Think Progress.*

Newspaper vs. Blog Articles
Opinions (H1)

We hypothesized that blog coverage would be more opinionated than newspaper coverage (**H1**). We used crosstabs and Pearson's Chi-Square to test for differences between newspaper articles and blogs, given that opinion was measured at the nominal level [i.e., absence (0) vs. presence (1) of an expressed opinion].

For newspaper *headlines*, 26 out of 109 were coded as "opinionated" (23.85%), and for blog headlines, 32 out of 112 were coded as "opinionated" (28.57%). This difference was <u>not</u> significant (Pearson's Chi-Square = 0.635, $p \leq .260$ using Fisher's Exact Test for 2x2 tables). (See Table 3.)

Table 3: *Chi-Square Results for Headline "Opinion"*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)	N
					221
Pearson's Chi-Square	0.635[a]	1	.425		
Fisher's Exact Test				.260	

[a]. The minimum expected count is 28.61. (26 out of 109 news headlines were coded as "opinionated.")

Similarly, for newspaper *leads* (first paragraphs), 32 out of 108 were coded as "opinionated" (29.63%), and for blog leads, 44 out of 112 were coded as "opinionated" (39.29%). This difference was <u>not</u> significant (Pearson's Chi-Square = 2.267, p ≤ .086 using Fisher's Exact Test for 2x2 tables). Therefore, the first hypothesis was not supported. (See Table 4.)

Table 4: *Chi-Square Results for First Paragraph "Opinion"*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)	N
					220
Pearson's Chi-Square	2.267[a]	1	.132		
Fisher's Exact Test				.086	

a. The minimum expected count is 37.31. (32 out of 108 news first paragraphs were coded as "opinionated.")

Tone & Blame (H2-H3)

The second hypothesis predicted that the tone of blog coverage would be more negative than newspaper coverage of the Toyota crisis (**H2**). We also hypothesized that blog coverage would place the blame for the crisis on Toyota more than newspaper coverage would (**H3**). Because a specific crisis response that blames an organization would generally be considered negative for the organization, we suspected there may be a correlation between the dependent variables (tone and blame) for hypotheses 2 and 3a.

As Table 5 shows, these dependent variables were moderately correlated with one another. Therefore, MANOVA was chosen to analyze whether the dependent variable means for headline tone, first paragraph tone, headline blame and first paragraph blame were significantly different depending on whether they appeared in news or blog articles. MANOVA can deal with multiple dependent variables within one analysis, reducing the likelihood of inflated Type I error that can occur as a result of multiple tests conducted on one dependent variable at a time, especially if those dependent variables are moderately correlated with one another. Moderate correlation is defined as about a |.60| correlation by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007, p. 268).

Table 5: *Test for Correlation between Dependent Variables (Tone and Blame)*

	2	3	4	M	SD	N
1. Headline Tone	.517**	.526**	.407**	3.76	.750	221
2. First Paragraph Tone	-	.333**	.615**	3.77	.811	221
3. Headline Blame	.333**	-	.560**	0.57	.662	221
4. First Paragraph Blame	.615**	.560**	-	0.67	.664	220

To analyze whether the tone of coverage about Toyota was more negative, and blamed Toyota more, in the headlines and first paragraphs of blogs than of news articles, we ran a MANOVA with one independent variable (article type = news vs. blog) and four dependent

variables: headline tone, first paragraph tone, headline blame and first paragraph blame (see Table 6).

Table 6: *Multivariate Analysis of Variance: Tone and Blame*

	Wilks' Lambda	F	df	Sig.	Effect size (η_p^2)
Multivariate					
ArticleType	.932	3.905	(4, 215)	.004**	.068
Univariate					
ArticleType					
Headline Tone		**8.87**	(1, 218)	.003**	**.039**
First Paragraph Tone		9.20	(1, 218)	.003*	.041
Headline Blame		5.55	(1, 218)	.019*	.025
First Paragraph Blame		11.63	(1, 218)	.001**	.051

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); N = 220
 * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); N = 220

The results of the MANOVA and individual ANOVA comparisons were significant. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 (tone) and Hypothesis 3a (blame) were both supported. Specifically, the tone of blog articles was more negative in headlines ($M_{news} = 3.65$; $M_{blogs} = 3.88$) and first paragraphs ($M_{news} = 3.58$; $M_{blogs} = 3.95$) than the tone of news articles, measured on a 5-point Likert scale with "1" being extremely positive and "5" being extremely negative. The amount of blame toward Toyota for the crisis also was greater in blog headlines ($M_{news} = 0.44$; $M_{blogs} = 0.70$) and first paragraphs ($M_{news} = 0.54$; $M_{blogs} = 0.80$) than in news articles, measured on a scale with 0 indicating "doesn't blame Toyota," 1 indicating "mildly blames Toyota," and 2 indicating "strongly blames Toyota."

Praise (H3a)

We were unable to statistically analyze the hypothesis that newspaper coverage would praise Toyota's handling of the crisis more than blogs would (**H3a**), given the low reliability of this variable. However, given that coders agreed more than 98% of the time that there was little to no praise in both news and blog articles, it is reasonable to assume that this hypothesis predicting a difference between the two media would not have been supported. This finding also highlights the lack of praise for a company in crisis in both online news coverage and blogs.

Number of Sources & Nature of Quotes (H4)

Because an article that includes a greater number of sources overall also necessarily includes a greater number of Toyota, non-Toyota and/or critical quotes in some combination, it made sense to check to what extent these quote-related dependent variables were correlated (see Table 7).

Table 7: *Test for Correlation between Dependent Variables*
       (Overall # Sources, Toyota Quotes, Non-Toyota Quotes, Critical Quotes)

	2	3	4	M	SD	N
1. Overall # Sources	.580**	.855**	.665**	2.23	2.51	226
2. Toyota Quotes	-	.253**	.420**	0.91	1.59	226
3. Non-Toyota Quotes	.253**	-	.709**	1.89	2.61	226
4. Quotes Critical of Toyota	.420**	.709**	-	0.68	1.28	226

As Table 7 shows, these dependent variables were moderately correlated with one another. Therefore, MANOVA was chosen to analyze whether the mean number of sources, Toyota quotes, non-Toyota quotes and critical quotes was significantly different in news vs. blog articles.

Table 8: *Multivariate Analysis of Variance: Tone and Blame*

	Wilks' Lambda	*F*	*df*	*Sig.*	*Effect size* (η_p^2)
Multivariate					
ArticleType	.785	14.818	(4, 216)	.000**	.215
Univariate					
ArticleType					
Total # Sources		45.95	(1, 219)	.000**	.173
Toyota Quotes		3.28	(1, 219)	.072	.015
Non-Toyota Quotes		50.34	(1, 219)	.000**	.187
Critical Quotes		11.00	(1, 219)	.001**	.048

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); N = 221
 * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); N = 221

Hypothesis **4**, predicting that newspapers would include more overall sources than blogs, was supported: *# of sources* ($M_{news} = 3.34$; $M_{blogs} = 1.25$), *# of Toyota quotes* ($M_{news} = 1.13$; $M_{blogs} = 0.74$). However, while the mean number of quotes from Toyota representatives was higher in newspaper articles than blogs, consistent with Hypothesis **4a**, this difference was not statistically significant (see Table 8).

We were unable to statistically analyze the "quotes supportive of Toyota" portion of Hypothesis **H4b**, given the low reliability of this variable. However, given that coders agreed more than 95% of the time that there were little to no quotes that were supportive of Toyota in news or blog articles, it is reasonable to assume that this portion of the hypothesis predicting a difference between the two media would not have been supported.

Hypothesis **4c** predicted that when blogs <u>do</u> include sources, the percentage of non-Toyota sources will be higher for blogs than for newspapers. While there was a statistically significant difference in the number of non-Toyota quotes found in newspaper vs. blog articles, the direction of this hypothesis was not supported. Based on the means, (*# of non-Toyota quotes* ($M_{news} = 3.08$; $M_{blogs} = 0.82$), it appears that only 26.84% of newspaper quotes represented Toyota's "side," compared to 47.44% of blog quotes representing Toyota's "side." So if blogs (which included less quotes) were to use quotes, they tended to use them from Toyota sources in greater proportion than did newspaper articles. Conversely, 73.16% of newspaper articles included non-Toyota quotes, compared with only 52.56% of blog articles.

However, of the non-Toyota quotes included in articles, only 31.82% of the non-Toyota quotes were critical of Toyota in newspapers compared with 51.22% of the non-Toyota quotes in blogs being critical of Toyota. The difference between the mean number of *critical quotes* found in newspaper vs. blog articles ($M_{news} = 0.98$; $M_{blogs} = 0.42$) was statistically significant (see Table 8). Therefore, **H4d** predicting more critical quotes in blog than newspaper articles was supported.

Newspaper vs. Blog Comments
Comment Tone (RQ1)

To answer the research question about whether blogs will be more negative than news comments (**RQ1**), we ran an analysis of variance (ANOVA) with "comment type" (newspaper vs. blogs comments) as the independent variable, and "comment tone," measured on a 5-point scale ranging from extremely positive (1) to extremely negative (5), as the dependent variable.

The results indicated that there was <u>not</u> a significant difference between the tone of newspaper and blog comments (($F(1,831) = 0.170, p \leq .680$) (see Table 9). The means of both types of comments were somewhat negative ($Mean_{NewsComment} = 3.29$, $SD = 1.05$; $Mean_{BlogComment} = 3.32, SD = 0.90$).

Table 9: *Analysis of Variance Results for "Comment Tone"*

	F	*df*	*Sig.*	*N*
				832
Comment Tone	0.170	(1, 831)	.680	

Comment Civility (RQ2)

Our second research question asked whether blogs comments would be less civil than newspaper comments (**RQ2**). Because this dependent variable was measured at the nominal level [i.e., absence (0) vs. presence (1) of an uncivil comment], crosstabs and a Chi-Square test were used to detect any significant differences.

For newspaper comments, 17 out of 362 were coded as "uncivil" (4.70%), and for blog comments, 39 out of 471 were coded as "uncivil" (8.28%). This difference <u>was</u> significant (Pearson's Chi-Square = 4.193, $p \leq .027$ using Fisher's Exact Test for 2x2 tables), although the effect size (Phi = .071) is considered to be small (Lipsey, 1990).

Table 10: *Chi-Square Results for "Comment Civility"*

	Value	*df*	*Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)*	*Exact Sig. (1-sided)*	*Effect Size (Phi)*	*N*
						833
Pearson's Chi-Square	4.193[a]	1	.041*		.071	
Fisher's Exact Test				.027*		

[b]. The minimum expected count is 24.34. (17 out of 362 newspaper comments were coded as "uncivil.")

[c].

Discussion & Conclusion

Discussion of Results

Opinion. Despite the conventions that journalists strive for impartiality, while blogs are appropriate venues for opinion, the first hypothesis **(H1)** predicting that blog coverage would be more opinionated than news coverage, was not supported. While blogs did include more opinions than newspaper articles, the difference was not statistically significant. This finding conflicts with Liu's study, which did find that blogs were more subjective than news articles.

There are several possible explanations for this finding. The most likely concerns the nature of the blogs in the study. Liu's study used political blogs, which would be expected to be more partisan (and thus, less objective). The general blogs used in the present study included those that were similar to news blogs (e.g., *Huffington Post),* those that served as news aggregators of other news sites and blogs (e.g., *BuzzFeed),* and larger, more professional blogs with paid staff members (e.g., Gizmodo), thus having some characteristics in common with traditional journalism. It would be useful to compare different types of blogs with traditional news coverage to better understand the types of nuances found in the blogosphere.

Tone and Blame. Our predictions that blog headlines and leads would be more negative **(H2)** and would place blame on Toyota for the crisis **(H3)** more than news headlines and leads was supported.

Sources Quoted. Consistent with our expectations, newspapers did include more sources than blogs **(H4).**

In terms of the number of Toyota sources used, news stories quoted an average of 1.13 Toyota sources, while blogs articles quoted an average of 0.74 Toyota sources. This difference was not statistically significant. It could be that our hypothesis expecting online newspapers to include more Toyota sources was not supported because it only makes sense to quote a limited number of Toyota sources in any one article. It also could be, contrary to our prediction, that newspapers and blogs are equally likely to allow Toyota to tell its side of the story during a crisis. More investigation would be necessary to definitively answer this question.

We hypothesized that blogs would include a larger percentage of non-Toyota sources than would news articles, but this was not supported. Our rationale for this hypothesis was based on the expectation that news articles would be more "balanced" (e.g., 2 Toyota sources and 2 non-Toyota sources) than blogs (e.g., 0 Toyota sources and 2 non-Toyota sources). However, it *appears* from the numbers reported in the results section that articles that included quotes made it a priority to at least include a Toyota quote, possibly followed by one or more non-Toyota quotes. Because news articles used more sources overall, a greater percentage of news quotes were from non-Toyota sources (M=3.08) compared with blogs (M=0.82). This appears to be because the article had already met the benchmark of including one Toyota source, and then went to additional non-Toyota sources for additional information.

Our expectation that blogs would include more non-Toyota sources that were critical toward Toyota compared to news articles was supported.

Comment Tone & Civility. Although we did write our research questions in a directed manner (asking whether blog comments would be more negative and less civil than news comments), we were interested to know whether comments would reflect the tone of the sites where they were posted (e.g., would posts on theoretically more "opinionated" and "negative" blogs be less civil and more negative than those found on theoretically more "measured" news sites), or whether people would tend to comment in a similar way, regardless of the characteristics of the venue where they were posting.

Our findings indicated that there were no significant differences between comment tone (comments were somewhat negative on both news and blog sites). However, consistent with the direction of our second research question, there were significantly more uncivil comments on blogs than news sites. We would recommend conducting experimental research in the future to create news and blog stimuli that exactly reflected the desired conditions (e.g., blogs that include opinion vs. news articles that do not include opinion), which could better isolate the potential effects we were interested in investigating..

Limitations

One limitation of this study is that for the "tone" variable (measured on a 1-5 Likert scale ranging from extremely negative to extremely positive), the midpoint representing "neither negative nor positive" applied to articles and comments that coders consider to be "neutral," as well as those that were irrelevant to Toyota (e.g., a news story headline that later referenced the Toyota recall, but with a headline that only mentioned GM, or an off-topic comment). This did not make a material difference in our analysis, as we were most interested in whether blogs included more negative articles than newspapers, for example, and the scale used was sufficient to answer this question. However, it may be more informative in future studies to include a "not applicable" category, so as not to overestimate the number of "neutral" articles and comments in the sample.

Another limitation of this study is the variation of Toyota recall-related coverage in the top 25 blogs, with some including a large number of articles, and others including very few or no Toyota articles. On one hand, we made the intentional decision to use well-read *general* blogs for this study, to represent a cross-section of what general consumers may be reading in the blogosphere as a whole. On the other hand, while we knew that many blogs would have narrow topic focuses, we were still surprised at the low numbers of Toyota recall-related blog articles in many of the top 25 blogs, given that this large crisis affected so many consumers in the U.S.

We did consider doing a general "Toyota-recall" search of all blogs, and analyzing a random sample of the results (which would likely lead to analysis of a small number of posts from a very large variety of blogs, rather than more posts from a smaller number of blogs.) The problem with this strategy was finding a "parallel" procedure for newspaper coverage. It is possible to conduct a Lexis Nexis search for newspaper coverage of the "Toyota recall," for example, but often, the articles selected no longer include the related comments. Searching for the same articles on the individual newspaper sites often leads to articles that are no longer available, or that require paying for the archived article (which may or may not still include the original comments). The "top newspapers/top blogs" approach selected for this study addressed these issues, as we were able to confirm in advance that the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* did provide access to articles that still included comments, and that there were sufficient numbers of comments for analysis. (We observed that while some daily newspapers include an active community of readers who regularly comment, other newspapers rarely receive reader comments in their hard news story sections).

Lui and Jin (2010) do offer suggestions that could be adapted to enhance the blog population for this study (which will be discussed in the Future Research section below).

Future Research

Lui and Jin (2010) acknowledge that it is impossible to track every external blog. Therefore, they recommend that crisis managers focus on blogs that are most influential to key publics. They define influential external blogs as "any blog that initiates and/or amplifies a crisis for an organization. These blogs may be ones that organizations monitor as part of their regular issues management process or may be new ones that emerge during a specific crisis" (p. 434). Lui and Jin recommend identifying influential blogs not only by blog rankings and the target audience's awareness of the blogs, but also by number of posts about the crisis.

Therefore, one solution would be to add to this study by including highly ranked, well-known auto blogs that include multiple posts about the Toyota crisis as an additional basis of comparison (although we believe it is still important to include general blogs as well, because the target audience, in this case, is so broad, that many may not read these specialized blogs).

Implications & Final Recommendations

1) **The results of this study suggest the need for crisis managers to maintain perspective.** Recently, we've seen several examples where companies quickly reversed their original decisions based on feedback from a vocal online contingent (e.g., Motrin pulled an advertisement directed towards moms, Gap pulled its new logo). While there are circumstances when this type of response may be warranted (e.g., it gets picked up by the mainstream media), it is important to keep in mind that what may be a vocal minority online may or may not be an important public with a relevant point related to your brand.

James Donnelly, vice president of crisis management at Ketchum public relations, expresses a similar sentiment in his response to a blog post called, "New Realities Emerging in Crisis Communication." Donnelly states:

> "Yes, insta-information and social networks spread these situations like wildfire. But, unless it's an uber-crisis (Deepwater Horizon, Toyota recalls), I'm not sure that crisis situations have the same effect on the public as they did a decade ago. Back in those stone ages, there were focal points through three TV news networks and a few national agenda-setting publication.

It was interesting to note that for this study, even among the nation's top 25 blogs, the majority were not focused one of the largest crises of the year, which directly affects many in the U.S. and around the world.

Author Keith Trivitt responded to Donnelly's comment by saying:

"You make a good point about the lack of true focal points within the media reshaping how people perceive and react to a crisis and a company's response. Do you think we have reached that point of so much media saturation, overreaction, coverage, etc. of crises and events that people have largely become numb to their effect and impact, unless, like you say, they are of the "uber-crisis" variety?"

This exchange may offer content worth researching in the future.

2) ***The results of this study suggest that crisis managers should proceed with caution when considering directly engaging with commenters during a crisis situation.*** Organizations have taken different approaches as to how to deal with negative online comments, including ignoring them, allowing the online community to come to its defense and respond for the organization, encouraging the commenter to "direct mail" the organization and move the conversation offline, and responding directly. Given that this study found that comments were somewhat negative and at least 1 in 20 was uncivil, it makes sense to proceed with caution before engaging directly. The "best" approach may continue to evolve as companies develop norms and as audiences develop expectatations. We're seeing a shift from controlled corporate communication to "authentic, openness & transparency," which *could* lead to increased acceptance of some negative comments being authentic and not necessarily problematic for audiences' attitudes toward organizations (e.g., Domino's Pizza directly apologizing for its poor quality product).

3) ***The results of this study suggest the need for crisis managers to maintain focus.*** At the beginning of this study, we asked whether our rich literature of crisis communication strategies is sufficient in a Web 2.0 world, or whether these strategies need to be adapted and/or expanded. Liu and Jin (2010) have taken one step toward evolving crisis communication strategies to include social media. This present study contributes to the crisis communication literature by providing some initial support for aspects of Liu and Jin's Blog-Mediated Crisis Communication Model, which suggests that crisis managers focus on the most influential blogs as defined by ranking, target audience attention, number of posts, and role of blog in initiation/amplification of the crisis. Among the Top 25 blogs in this study, for example, two – the *Huffington Post* and *Business Insider* – included at least some original content (as opposed blogs that simply aggregate content from other sources, such as *BuzzFeed)* and generated a large number of reader comments.

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Teaching Teamwork to Public Relations Students: Does It Affect Content Quality in the Classroom?

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Abstract
Teamwork permeates the field of public relations, yet in public relations classes, teaching team skills often is not a top priority. This experimental study looked at the impact of teaching teamwork to students in a university capstone public relations class in addition to their public relations curriculum. Results showed that incorporating teamwork skills into the classroom is effective and worthwhile. Students can improve the quality of their work by learning and practicing teamwork skills throughout the semester.

Introduction and Purpose

Teamwork permeates the field of public relations. Hinrichsen (2001) suggests that one of the biggest advantages of working in a public relations agency is the opportunity to interact with a creative team of professionals who understand the complexity of the field, "Many of the most skilled practitioners work in agencies, and the collegial atmosphere can be stimulating and motivating" (p. 452). Graham (1991) cites teamwork as one of the 10 crucial steps public relations firms can take when planning for their future viability, "In a firm with teamwork, high-profile 'stars' don't put themselves above other people for their own egos, their own involvement or their own promotion" (p. 41). He recommends drawing the best employees of the firm together, no matter what their status, to maintain a spirit of teamwork within an agency.

Organizations increasingly rely on teams to remain successful and solvent. The question is, Are college graduates prepared to work in teams in the business world? Business leaders have noted that recent college graduates are technically proficient in their chosen field (i.e., engineering or teaching), yet they lack the group dynamic skills necessary to function in a team setting. These new employees display "limited self-awareness, leadership, interpersonal communication and conflict management skills" (Bailey, Swiercz, Seal, & Kayes, 2005, p. 40). The need for undergraduates who can work in teams is clear. However, the most effective way for university students to learn these vital team skills continues to be a matter of debate (McCorkle et al., 1999).

In public relations classes, teaching team skills often is not a top priority. Instead, public relations curriculums in universities focus primarily on theory and practical product development skills. Students learn to write media releases, brochures, web copy, and strategies to effectively pitch story ideas to media outlets. Ultimately, students are exposed to team dynamics through group projects, in which they are divided into teams. "Teamwork" is often part of a public relations campaigns class, a capstone course for public relations students. Campaign classes offer future professionals "real-world communicative and planning skills [in an environment where they can] base their strategies on substantive case studies, sound research, and theoretical underpinnings" (Ahles & Bosworth, 2004, p. 50). Yet, the skill that is "not typically taught in any great detail in undergraduate public relations or advertising is how to work effectively as a member of a problem-solving team in the workplace" (p. 42).

Teamwork is integral to effective public relations. Yet, how do graduating seniors enrolled in university journalism and/or public relations programs acquire these teamwork skills? Most students gain exposure to working in groups during public relations capstone courses where seniors conduct a semester-long campaign for a client. Benigni and Cameron (1999) assert that the most important purpose of these capstone courses is to prepare students for the "real world" (p. 50). Yet, when students are placed in teams during these capstone classes to conduct public relations campaigns, they seldom receive specific instructions about how to function effectively as a team (Ahles & Bosworth, 2004). Benigni and Cameron (1999) agree, "In public relations and advertising curricula, rarely if at all is an entire course or seminar dedicated to the topic of teams or team relationships in the workplace" (p. 43).

Several studies in the literature point out that while teamwork is required in many university classes, few professors do much more than simply assign students to teams. Part of the problem may be the lack of resources for professors who want to teach teamwork. Siciliano (1999) says, "Unfortunately, little information exists for the faculty member who is not familiar with teamwork skills or techniques and who does not have several weeks of class time to spend on teamwork training" (p. 261). Yet, teaching teamwork skills can help students learn and

demonstrate effective team behaviors. Hansen (2006) points to the literature, which indicates that students generally respond well to team assignments geared to the acquisition of team skills. These include assignments specifically designed to teach leadership, group decision making, and communication skills. Other research has shown that student attitudes about teamwork are positively related to teamwork effectiveness. Research demonstrates that there is a need for undergraduates to learn effective team skills. Indeed, Siciliano (1999) points to research that shows business encourages the development of teaching methods that incorporate teamwork skills.

What is not known is whether directly teaching teamwork skills in a capstone public relations campaigns class can benefit students and their clients. Instead of just being assigned to teams, will students who are actually taught team-building skills produce higher quality, professional-level work compared to students who do not receive this training? The purpose of this study it to determine to what extent students in university capstone public relations classes who receive teamwork training produce quality, professional-level work compared to students who do not receive this training.

Methodology

This quasi-experimental small group research study compared a public relations capstone class in which students received teamwork training with a public relations capstone class in which the students did not receive teamwork training. The course, taught at California State University, Northridge, in the Department of Journalism, is titled JOUR 398, the Public Relations Practicum, and is considered the capstone class of the public relations curriculum in the Department of Journalism. The Public Relations Practicum is structured to resemble a public relations agency. Students form three- or four-person teams, select a nonprofit organization and throughout the semester serve as the organization's consultant. Teams hold regular meetings with their clients and create a comprehensive public relations strategy that includes a press kit/portfolio and a media relations component. The subjects in the experiment were undergraduate students in their senior year who majored in journalism with an emphasis in public relations. The normal enrollment for this class averages 20 students. The experiment ran for one semester, spring 2009.

The Monday class, which met from 10 a.m. to noon every week, had 20 students, and the Wednesday class, which met from 10 a.m. to noon every week, had 23 students. Many of the students were in their final semester of college, with a few one or two semesters away from graduation. All of the students had successfully completed the necessary course prerequisites to enroll in this class. This included an introductory course in public relations, a news writing course, and a public relations writing course. Several, but not all, of the students had also completed a senior-level public relations techniques class, or were taking the class concurrently.

Participants in both groups ranged in age from the early and mid-20s, with one outlier age 35 (a returning student).

The process of selection of the research sample was as follows: Throughout the month of October 2008, all journalism students, including those in the public relations emphasis, received advisement from a journalism department faculty member. The researcher personally advised 102 students in that month. Those who were ready to enroll in the public relations capstone class, J398 Public Relations Practicum, received a permission number from the researcher. The students had two choices: They could enroll in the Monday class, which met weekly from 10 a.m. to noon, or the Wednesday class, which met weekly from 10 a.m. to noon. Both class

sections were taught by this researcher. Since the classes were similar, the students usually chose the section based on their schedule availability.

 The final press kit assignment served as a culmination of the knowledge gained in class. Each team was required to create a press kit throughout the entire semester, handing in one mandatory component of the press kit on a weekly basis. The professor critiqued these assignments and returned them to each team the following week. It was the team's responsibility to make the necessary corrections and edits. This edited version then became part of the final press kit/portfolio.

This study involved one experimental group that received teamwork training (the Monday class) and one control group that did not receive the training (the Wednesday class). The experimental group was given intensive training in teamwork throughout the course of the spring 2009 semester. This involved adding three components to the class: teamwork textbooks and quizzes, teamwork lectures, and hands-on teamwork counseling.

Usually, students enrolled in the capstone public relations class are not required to purchase a textbook. However, the experimental group was asked to purchase *Building Teams, Building People* by Thomas R. Harvey and Bonita Drolet (2006). This book focuses on 17 characteristics that describe effective teamwork. When these characteristics exist, according to Harvey and Drolet, an effective team emerges. In contrast, if the 17 characteristics are not present, the teams tend to be weak. This book was chosen because of its ease of use and accessibility to students not familiar with working effectively in teams. It also provides several examples of successful teamness. In addition, the 17 characteristics comprising the Harvey/Drolet construct were validated in a dissertation by Corkrum (1997). He found that "the literature supports inclusion of all seventeen characteristics of the Harvey/Drolet construct as indicators of teams and effective teamwork" (abstract).

The other required textbook was *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life* by Marshall B. Rosenberg (2008), a communications model that is easy to understand and implement. It gives individuals the necessary tools to change the way they communicate. The book helps readers develop a vocabulary of feelings and needs to help them express themselves in a nonconfrontational way, while providing insight into the needs of others. The two parties communicating develop a shared foundation designed to create better relationships. This book was chosen by this researcher to help students develop better communication skills.

Students in the experimental class received a weekly reading assignment from one of these two books. To help ensure that they read the assignments, a 10-point quiz on the assigned book chapter was given each week. A total of 11 quizzes were given (the lowest score was dropped) for a total of 100 points—one sixth of the students' grade.

In addition to lectures on how to create successful public relations strategies and quality public relations tools, this researcher gave weekly lectures on working more effectively in teams. During weeks 2, 3, and 4 of the semester, a full hour was devoted to teamwork training, including lectures and role playing/exercises. The subsequent weeks involved at least 15 minutes to one-half hour of teamwork training during the second hour of each class.

Throughout the semester, students were encouraged to talk to the professor/researcher if they were experiencing difficulties with the team. The team then received further instruction on working effectively in teams.

The public relations activities of the control capstone public relations class were structured exactly as those public relations activities of the experimental group. However, they received absolutely no instruction about teamwork. They were randomly assigned teams on day

one, and given the expectations of the class in terms of working with the client and the production of a press kit/portfolio. (It should be noted that the control group reflects how the university capstone class had been taught by the researcher for the past 4 years.)

While teamwork was expected, teamwork training was not part of the curriculum. Consequently, the class was not required to read the textbooks, did not participate in any quizzes, was not exposed to any teamwork lectures, and was not encouraged to talk about its team problems. The professor only gave advice to the its regarding their personal issues when approached. In general, the concept of teamwork was never discussed. Instead, the focus was purely on the task at hand—creating and executing a public relations strategy and press kit for a nonprofit client.

According to Tuckman (1999), educational researchers often find it difficult to randomly assign students to treatments given enrollment parameters. This holds true for the researcher's study. While the students were able to choose which practicum class to attend, the randomness of this choice may be suspect; perhaps the student wanted to be with his or her friends, for example, and so chose a particular class. While these two classes were not originally filled through a systematic process, which, says Tuckman, could "create a bias, invalidating research results," the researcher "still must be concerned about validity when working with intact, possibly nonequivalent groups" (p. 172). To address the problem of possible nonequivalence in two intact groups, a pretest is mandatory. It provides a basis for initially comparing the groups, given the lack of random assignment, "where intact groups serve as experimental and control groups, the research can partially control for selection bias by demonstrating their initial equivalence on relevant variables" (Tuckman 1999, p. 175).

A pretest was administered to both intact groups of students the first day of class. The pretest was pilot tested using two groups of students who had completed a similar course. The posttest was designed to help determine to what extent students produced quality work in classes where teamwork was taught compared to classes where teamwork was not taught. The researcher retained an independent panel of three judges consisting of two public relations professors and one public relations professional. These three panel members assessed the students' final class projects, which were press kits that they completed in their teams. The press kit required eight public relations pieces, including, but not limited to, a public relations strategic plan, backgrounders, biographies, fact sheets, pitch letters, media alerts, news releases, flyers, brochures, website copy, newsletter copy, social media copy (i.e., MySpace, Facebook), and media list. Each member of the panel reviewed the public relations press kits created by the university capstone class teams. There were 11 press kits in total—five from the experimental class and six from the control class. The judges received a rubric (Appendix A) prior to reviewing the press kits, and then completed the Instrument to Evaluate Quality of Student Work (Appendix B).

Findings

A pretest was administered to both intact groups of students the first day of class (Appendix C). Table 1 contains a description of the findings from this pretest with the mean score comparison of the two groups and the significance of the differences between the averages in each of the categories.

The pretest results show three areas of significant differences in the experimental and control populations. Using the student t test to compare the characteristic statistics of the two populations, the grade point average, years in school, and prior teamwork training were

significantly higher in the control group than the experimental group. The overall grade point average was higher for the control group and the grade point average in the major coursework was higher for the control group. The control group had significantly more years in school work than the experimental group. Finally, the control group had received more self-described formal group training than the experimental group.

Table 1

Results From the Pretest Comparing Characteristics of Experimental Class to Control Class

	Experimental	Control	*t* test
What is your overall grade point average (GPA)?	2.7 GPA	2.9 GPA	Significant
What is your GPA in your journalism major?	2.7 GPA	3.2 GPA	Significant
How long have you been attending college (include all schools you attended)?	4.0 years	5.3 years	Significant
Have you ever received any formalized teamwork training?	10% of class	30% of class	Significant
Have you ever had a public relations internship	40% of class	40% of class	Not significant
Average age	23 years	23 years	Not significant

The differences shown in the pretest include actual experience in a teamwork setting as well as indicators of general abilities for public relations work. These statistics suggest that the control group was more self-directed, disciplined, and achievement oriented than the experimental group. The control group sought and found opportunities to learn and implement teamwork outside of the classroom setting and independently of this course. Since the experimental group and control group showed significant differences at the beginning of this experiment, one could expect those differences to extend throughout the study. Of note is the generally higher grades achieved and the prior experience in teamwork training.

To determine to what extent students who receive teamwork training produce quality work, the researcher retained an independent panel of three judges consisting of two public relations professors and one public relations professional to judge the final projects produced by the experimental class. At the end of the semester, these three panel members assessed the students' final class projects, which were press kits that they completed in their teams. The judges received a rubric prior to reviewing the press kits, and then completed the Instrument to Evaluate Quality of Student Work. The grades were assigned by independent subject matter experts using a standard A to F grading system. The graders used + or – with the letter grade to indicate subtle differences in the quality of work. The grades were translated into a numeric system for the statistical analysis. The numerical equivalent for each letter grade is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Grade System Used for the Instrument to Evaluate Quality of Student Work in Experimental Class

Letter grade	Numerical equivalent
A+	5.33
A	5.00
A-	4.66
B+	4.33
B	4.00
B-	3.66
C+	3.33
C	3.00
C-	2.66
D+	2.33
D	2.00
D-	1.66
F+	1.33
F	1.00

The data were analyzed looking at the frequency, average score, and standard deviation of the grades assigned to each student in the experimental group. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of the average grade earned by all members of the experimental team in the six areas evaluated.

Table 3

Findings From Instrument to Evaluate Quality of Student Work in Experimental Class

	Parameters	Average grade	Standard deviation
1	Public relations content	3.27	0.799
2	Grammar, spelling, and punctuation	3.27	1.163
3	Creativity	3.22	0.773
4	Geared to the target audience	3.87	0.999
5	Geared to the target media outlets	3.60	1.126
6	Letter grade	3.13	0.928

As outlined in the rubric , the judges used five parameters to evaluate the press kits created by the teams in both the experimental and control classes. Press kits, which are also known as media kits, are the cornerstone of public relations tools. They include both informational and promotional material designed to support the public relations efforts of an individual or organization. They are distributed to members of the media during press conferences, to support an event (such as a grand opening or a CD launch), or simply as

background information to help raise awareness of a product, person, or company through the media. In the past few years, public relations professionals have started to post materials prepared for a press kit directly onto the client's website. Using the same informative tools, public relations professionals can communicate their messages directly to the target audiences, rather than using media outlets as intermediaries. Whether the press kit is assembled and physically handed to the media, or posted directly on the web, the criteria for a quality product remains the same. The parameters determining quality include public relations content, grammar, spelling, and punctuation, creativity, and whether the information is appropriately geared to the target audience and target media outlets.

The purpose of public relations is to raise awareness of a person, product, or service to the target audiences. The press kits created by the JOUR 398 students were designed to be used by a nonprofit organization. Several tools were used to accomplish this task. These included media releases, which resemble news stories and are written to be placed directly into the newspaper; biographies, which include the educational and professional background of important individuals in an organization; backgrounders, which encompass information about the company, including its history, mission statement, products and services, community involvement and vision; and fact sheets, which are backgrounders condensed to one easy-to-read page. Other elements that can be included in a media kit include brochures, position papers, speeches, and photographs.

When judging the public relations content, the public relations professionals were looking at the range of materials included in the media kit, and the overall quality of the content. The press kits for these classes required at least eight different public relations pieces. The judges evaluated whether the eight public relations pieces were included, whether the materials were relevant to the organization and its message, whether the quality was good enough to use in a real-world setting, if the content of the public relations pieces was appropriate to the goals of the organization, and whether the media would find the press kit useful. Evaluating the content of the press kits produced by the experimental class, the scores from the three judges averaged 3.27, which translates to between a C and C+. This grade reflects the judges' collective opinion that the press kits read like they were written by students, not professionals. The public relations writing skills and strategic thinking were considered adequate. According to the judges, these press kits could only be used in a real-world setting with heavy editing.

The second parameter used to judge the press kits was grammar, spelling, and punctuation. This component in public relations is stressed throughout every writing class in the Department of Journalism, and, in fact, is a stated learning objective for the students. In addition, the professional worlds of journalism and public relations demand excellence in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. This parameter of the press kit for the experimental class also produced an average grade of 3.27, which translates to between a C and C+. According to the rubric, this grade reflects several errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation, as well as several typographical errors.

Creativity, the third parameter, is a much more nebulous performance indicator to grade. What is a creative press kit to one judge may be routine for another. To provide some guidelines, this researcher described exceptional creativity as a:

> Press kit that demonstrates a high degree of creativity, positioning the client in unique and innovative ways. This creativity may involve development of new themes for programs or services, identifying new target audiences or creating new media opportunities. The press kit shows that the student team is thinking "outside the box."

"Positioning the client in unique and innovative ways" means creating a meaningful and compelling image to communicate to the organization's target audiences—those publics that "are an identifiable group of people with attributes in common that can affect the well-being of an organization" (Treadwell & Treadwell, 2005, p. 107). Through the use of public relations, organizations seek to first, raise awareness of their organization, and second, persuade the target audiences to develop positive attitudes or behaviors about their product and/or service. Creativity plays a key role in this public relations objective because creating a unique and appealing image can oftentimes persuade the target audiences to act favorably toward the organization. In a crowded media marketplace, where so many organizations are fighting to be heard, creativity can help an organization rise above the din. In addition to creating material to traditional target audiences, a creative public relations strategy will also look for new target audiences that could make a positive impact on the well-being of an organization. This creativity could also be expanded to the search for new media outlets. This is particularly important with the waning of traditional media, such as newspapers, and the advent of the Internet. Blogs, social networking sites, and online magazines and newspapers are now used by public relations practitioners to raise awareness of their clients.

The three judges who evaluated the press kits gave the experimental class an average score of 3.22, which is close to a C and represents the lowest score of the five parameters. This score reflects the perception by the judges that the teams demonstrated average creativity. They did not think outside the box in terms of the aforementioned guidelines, and did not present new and innovative ideas. The students did an average job for their nonprofit clients.

The fourth parameter was whether the material was geared to the target audiences. In the public relations plans mandated by the researcher and included in the press kits, the students were required to identify the optimal target audiences for their clients. To evaluate this parameter, the judges first read which target audiences were identified by the team, and then decided whether the material created by the students was appropriate for that target audience. For example, a teen audience would not necessarily respond to references to obscure pop stars in the 1960s. On the other hand, baby boomers may be quite familiar with these references. Thus, these references would be considered geared to the target audience of baby boomers.

The judges gave the fourth parameter—geared to the target audience—an average score of 3.87, which is the highest score of all five parameters. This translates into a letter grade between a B- and a B. According to the rubric, most target audiences were identified clearly in the plan, and the writing was geared mostly to the target audiences. This higher grade reflects the fact that the experimental groups understood and identified their client's target audiences, and created materials geared to them.

The final parameter judged was whether the press kit was geared to the target media outlets. When identifying target audiences, the public relations professional looks for five attributes: their demographics, including age, sex, income, occupation, and location; their attitudes, including how they feel about the organization; their knowledge, how much they know about the organization; their behavior, including how they act toward the organization and its product and services; and finally their media use, including what they read, view, and listen to (Treadwell & Treadwell, 2005). Understanding the media use is very important because the public relations professional seeks to raise awareness of the organization via media outlets frequented by the target audience. To illustrate, it would be unlikely for a teenage audience to read an AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) publication. However, a teenager would possibly read an article in *Glamour* magazine or ESPN news. Taking that a step further,

the teenager would more likely seek information on a social networking site than in a newspaper. In evaluating this parameter, the judges gave an average score of 3.60, which is the second highest scored parameter and translates just below a B- or a high C+. According to the rubric, this means the judges thought that most of the appropriate target media outlets were identified in the plan, and the writing was mostly geared to these target media outlets.

The judges took the five criteria into consideration when giving each project a final grade. In addition to the criteria, they looked at the projects from a holistic perspective, taking all factors plus their professional experience into consideration. Their average score for the class projects letter grade was 3.13, which was lower than any of the individual parameters and was close to C.

Quality of Work Produced by the Control Group

To determine to what extent students who do not receive teamwork training produce quality work, the researcher retained an independent panel of three judges consisting of two public relations professors and one public relations professional to judge the final projects produced by the control class. At the end of the semester, these three panel members assessed the students' final class projects, which were press kits that they completed in their teams. The judges received a rubric (Appendix A) prior to reviewing the press kits, and then completed the Instrument to Evaluate Quality of Student Work (Appendix B). Table 4 presents the average grade and standard deviation for the quality of work produced by the control group.

Table 4

Findings From Instrument to Evaluate Quality of Student Work in Control Class

	Parameters	Average grade	Standard deviation
1	Public relations content	3.65	0.681
2	Grammar, spelling, and punctuation	3.94	0.725
3	Creativity	3.54	0.872
4	Geared to the target audience	3.50	0.787
5	Geared to the target media outlets	3.72	0.696
6	Letter grade	3.65	0.718

The judges used five parameters to evaluate the press kits created by the teams in both the experimental and control classes. Evaluating the content of the press kits produced by the control class, the scores from the three judges averaged 3.65, which translated to just below a B-. This grade reflects the judges' collective opinion that the press kits were almost professional in quality—demonstrating good public relations writing skills and good public relations strategic thinking skills. The portfolios included at least seven different public relations pieces. The press kits could be used in a real-world setting with a paying client if lightly edited.

The second parameter used to judge the press kits was grammar, spelling, and punctuation. This parameter of the press kit for the control class produced an average grade of 3.94—the highest score of any of the parameters. The 3.94 score translates into just below a B.

According to the rubric, this grade reflected some errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation, but nothing glaring. There were also some typographical errors.

Creativity was the third parameter, and the three judges who evaluated the press kits gave the control class an average score of 3.54, which is between a B- and a C+. This score reflects the perception by the judges that the teams demonstrated between above average and average creativity. The students had started thinking outside the box in terms of creativity and presented a few new and innovative ideas to the client.

The judges gave the fourth parameter—whether the material was geared to the target audiences—an average score of 3.50, which translates into a letter grade between a B- and a C+. According to the rubric, between some and most target audiences were identified clearly in the plan, and the writing was geared between mostly and sometimes to the target audiences.

The final parameter judged with the control group was whether the press kit was geared to the target media outlets. In evaluating this parameter, the judges gave an average score of 3.72, which translates into a grade between a B and B-. According to the rubric, this means the judges thought that most of the appropriate target media outlets were identified in the plan, and the writing was mostly geared to these target media outlets.

The judges took the five criteria into consideration when giving each project a final grade. In addition to the criteria, they looked at the projects from a holistic perspective, taking all factors plus their professional experience into consideration. Their average score for the class projects letter grade was 3.65, which matched exactly the grades the press kits received for content. This score translates into just below a B-.

Quality of Work Produced by the Experimental vs. Control Group

To determine to what extent students who did and did not receive teamwork training produce quality work, the researcher retained an independent panel of three judges consisting of two public relations professors and one public relations professional to judge the final projects produced by the experimental class. The researcher compared findings from the experimental class with the control class. The data were compared looking at the average grades assigned for the experimental and control groups in the six categories shown in Table 5 representing the differences in the production of quality work between the two groups. The control group was graded higher than the experimental group in five of the six categories. However, pretest results show that the control group consistently had a higher grade point average in all class work and in the core coursework required for journalism majors. Therefore an analysis of covariance was performed to determine the effect of the initial difference in grades, found in the randomly assigned groups, on the quality of work produced as assessed by the independent judges. The result of the analysis of covariance is that the experimental group showed a significant improvement in the quality of the work produced in five of the six categories due to the effectiveness of teamwork training.

The confidence level in Table 5 is a measure of the likelihood that the difference in the mean value is not due to the random assignment of a student to a group but is the result of some causal factor.

The judges used five parameters to evaluate the press kits created by the teams in both the experimental and control classes. The initial results of the grades assigned by the judges were higher scores for the control class in four of the five parameters, including public relations content; grammar, spelling, and punctuation; creativity; and geared to the target media outlets. Since the members of the control group and the experimental group were randomly assigned, it was by mere chance that the control group's pretest grades were on average higher in their

journalism courses; in addition, the control group had a higher average grade in all of their university coursework. To determine the effect of a higher aptitude and skill reflected in the higher coursework grades, an analysis of covariance using the journalism grade as the covariant was performed. The analysis of the covariance compensates for any systemic bias in the samples and removes the effects of preexisting individual differences in the samples that might skew the results, leading to a misinterpretation of the results and an understating of the effect of the control variable. Using the analysis of covariance, the researcher calculated an adjusted average grade for the control group and the experimental group. The result of this analysis, shown in Table 5, is that the experimental group has a higher adjusted average grade in all five categories. The results of the analysis of covariance were significant to the 99th percentile in all but one category. The higher adjusted average scores reflect the added value of the teamwork training in producing quality work after removing the variability associated with the preexisting individual differences reflected by the significantly higher pretest averages in journalism and all university level coursework.

Table 5
Differences Between Experimental Class and Control Class in Producing Quality Work

Characteristic	Observed average experimental	Observed average control	Adjusted average experimental	Adjusted average control	F test	Confidence level
Public relations content	3.27	3.65	3.67	3.31	8.97	Significant
Grammar, spelling, and punctuation	3.27	3.94	3.76	3.54	1.38	Not significant
Creativity	3.22	3.54	3.69	3.15	22.95	Significant
Geared to the target audience	3.87	3.50	4.28	3.15	7.48	Significant
Geared to the target media outlets	3.60	3.72	4.06	3.34	19.60	Significant
Letter grade	3.13	3.65	3.58	3.27	7.48	Significant

Before presenting the findings for differences relative to the students in the experimental and control groups producing quality work, it is important to note that the pretest administered to both intact groups of students on the first day of class showed three areas of significant differences. Using the student *t* test to compare the characteristic statistics of the two populations, the grade point average, years in school, and prior teamwork training were significantly higher in the control group than the experimental group. The overall grade point average was higher for the control group and the grade point average in the major coursework was higher for the control group. The control group had significantly more years in school work than the experimental group. Finally, the control group had received more self-described formal group training than the experimental group. To address this variation, an analysis of covariance was performed to determine the effect of the initial difference in grades, found in the randomly assigned groups, on the quality of work produced as assessed by the independent judges. The

analysis of the covariance compensates for any systemic bias in the samples and removes the effects of preexisting individual differences in the samples that might skew the results, leading to a misinterpretation of the results and an understating of the effect of the control variable. Using the analysis of covariance, the researcher calculated an adjusted average grade for the control group and the experimental group. The result of this analysis is that the experimental group had a higher adjusted average grade in all five categories—public relations content; grammar, spelling, and punctuation; creativity; geared to the target media outlets; along with the final letter grade. Only the difference between the two groups in grammar, spelling, and punctuation was not significant.

Conclusions

Results from this study show that incorporating teamwork skills into a university capstone public relations class is effective and worthwhile. Students can improve the quality of their work by learning and practicing teamwork skills throughout the semester.

Teaching team building is a worthwhile investment for both the professor and students. Although incorporating teamwork skills into the public relations curriculum requires extra preparation time for professors and additional study time for students, the skills learned can ultimately be transferred to the professional setting.

The importance of being a productive team member in a professional setting has always been in the back of the researcher's mind while she taught the capstone public relations class. Observing the lack of teamwork skills demonstrated by at least one group each semester proved disheartening and worrisome. If these students could not work effectively in a team in a classroom setting, how would they ever be able to function in the real world? In fact, the impetus for this research topic originated from years of frustration watching student teams literally fall apart. In the beginning of the semester, the students would work well in their teams. Yet by the middle of the semester, one, two, even three out of five teams would start to implode, as evidenced by infighting, an inability to work with their nonprofit client, and constant complaints to the professor protesting how a teammate was not pulling his or her weight. One semester, two team members entered into a screaming match that spilled out into the hallway—much to the embarrassment of the professor and classmates. By the end of the semester, only one or two teams would be functioning well; the remaining teams had disintegrated with team members losing interest in the project and each other. The researcher came to the realization that while the capstone class looked good on paper, promising to give students real-world experience in the confines of a supervised university course, it did not live up to its full potential. More students than not left the class feeling miserable, inadequate, and frustrated. This was vividly revealed in the reflection papers they turned in on the final day of class.

The researcher was not sure of a possible solution until completion of doctoral coursework that focused on teamwork and the importance of teaching team building. It became apparent that the origin of the problem may be attributed to a lack of teamwork training. Subsequent questioning of students confirmed this premise. Graduating seniors in the journalism department studying public relations had several classes where they were required to work in teams, yet very few, if any, had received formal teamwork training. This held true not only for courses in their major, but for their general education requirements as well. This lack of teamwork training became apparent to students when they found themselves working in teams that demonstrated a lack of mutual trust, no sense of relationship, high levels of stress, low toleration of errors, inflexibility, and hidden conflict. When faced with team members who were

confrontational or did not pull their weight, these students did not know what action to take. This not only led to problems completing coursework, but a strong dislike for working in teams. Indeed, the researcher cannot count the times when students, after learning that the class involved teamwork, would let out a collective moan. This dislike for teamwork is also reported in the literature. Hansen (2006) notes that student dissatisfaction and frustration arise due to such issues as "lack of leadership, scheduling conflicts, lack of team development, free-riding or social loafing, and students who prefer to work alone" (p. 12).

From these observations, and after a year of intensive teamwork training, the researcher hypothesized that teaching students teamwork would give them the tools they need to produce quality work. Findings from this Nonequivalent Control Group Quasi-Experimental Design study indicate that knowledge is empowering. One question that comes to mind is, How difficult is it for college students to not only learn teamwork skills but actually put them into practice? The answer may lie in the tools used to teach teamwork. This researcher found the text, *Building Teams, Building People* by Harvey and Drolet (2006), to be a practical tool that not only explained the characteristics of effective teams, but included examples with which the students could identify. This straightforward, hands-on approach took the mystery out of teamwork and provided practical advice when teams became mired down in conflict or mistrust. In addition, lectures that tied in teamwork to the public relations environment added to this knowledge base—helping students understand how these newfound skills related to both classroom activities and the public relations agency experience. The researcher also observed that obtaining these teamwork skills added to the students' confidence levels. The students in the experimental class appeared to be less apprehensive about entering the workforce, knowing that they had a much better understanding of teamwork dynamics than they had prior to taking the class.

This leads to the next question, At what point in the college experience should teamwork skills be taught? The researcher finds it interesting that so many professors assume students know how to work in teams. This may, in fact, be a false assumption. The one group of students who no doubt have more exposure to teamwork is athletes involved in team sports such as football, soccer, and baseball. These students most likely grew up playing sports and understand the concept of teamwork. Even students who are not on college teams often have a background in Little League or AYSO soccer play as youngsters. Yet it is huge leap to equate learning how to play as a team in childhood sports to working as a team in an academic setting. While some of the concepts are similar, teamwork in college and the work setting is far more complex and nuanced. Whether or not students know teamwork skills coming into college, the fact remains that they will most likely be placed into teams from the moment they start the university career. For this reason, students should be exposed to teamwork skills in their freshman year. A class dedicated exclusively to learning how to work in teams would be invaluable to students across all disciplines and majors. They could use this knowledge as they progress through their classes and perhaps actually enjoy the teamwork experience rather than dread it.

Theoretically, a professor trained in teaching teamwork skills would lead the freshman team-building class. However, if creating this type of class is not realistic due to budget cuts or curriculum issues, then the next best strategy would be for professors to incorporate team-building skills into their curriculum. In an ideal world, this would occur in the lower division classes. Yet is it realistic to ask university professors to teach team-building skills if they have never been exposed to this subject? Indeed, university professors educated in a particular field of study (i.e., journalism, public relations, marketing, and so forth), may not have had any formal training or exposure to teamwork. Thus, they may lack the skills and/or knowledge to actually

teach teamwork skills to their students. This is confirmed by a study from Witmer, Silverman, and Gaschen (2009) which found that dealing with student teams is a challenge for professors who teach service learning classes. Could professors, themselves, benefit from teamwork training? Academia is filled with extracurricular responsibilities that involve teamwork on various committees—from the university setting down to department work groups. Teamwork is a reality in the university setting. Knowing how to get things done in a team environment, such as moving initiatives and programs forward, is a key skill for success and may even impact the ability to obtain tenure. By understanding how to work effectively in teams, professors could not only help their students but help their own careers as well.

University professors who incorporate teamwork into their curriculum may want to seek out specialized teamwork training where they can learn how to both successfully participate in teams, and how to teach teamwork to their students. There are also several instructional books that focus on teamwork if instructors want to gain a greater understanding of teamwork and team building. In addition, the literature is filled with cases and classroom studies focusing on practical pedagogical suggestions. Sicilano (1999) provides a template specifically for faculty who are unfamiliar with incorporating teamwork into their classes. Roebuck (1998) details a six-step instructional activity sequence designed to be repeated several times per term. Given the value of teaching teamwork in the university setting, taking advantage of continuing education opportunities to learn more about how successful teams operate would be a worthwhile investment.

Working in teams is a reality—both in the university setting and the professional environment. Instead of functioning in a state of denial where professors simply assume that students know how to work in teams, it is time to recognize that students need to be taught teamwork skills to effectively work in teams. Once this reality is acknowledged, then steps can be taken to ensure that students are exposed to these crucial life skills.

In considering the findings of this study, it is important to note its limitations and suggest recommendations for future research. In terms of limitations, the size of the experimental and control groups was small, numbering 23 students. While the students randomly enrolled in each class, they may have made subjective decisions when enrolling in the class—such as wanted to be in the same class as a friend. The subjects would easily talk to students in the other section, and find out that one class was receiving teamwork training and the other class was not—leading to data contamination. The study was limited to only one semester, and the study duration was less than 4 months. Finally, because the researcher taught both sections, continuity was strengthened but the possibility of bias was introduced.

The researcher suggests that this Nonequivalent Control Group Quasi-Experimental study be performed in the future over several semesters at a number of other universities with similar public relations programs. The same methodology should be incorporated—including using the same team-training techniques and measurement instruments—to see if the findings can replicated and further validated. It would be optimal if the class instructors had some sort of teamwork training prior to teaching the capstone class, so they would be better equipped to train the experimental class.

In addition, the concept of teaching teamwork to university classes beyond public relations, marketing, advertising, and communications departments should be explored. The need for teamwork skills permeates most industries in America and worldwide. As companies continue their growth on the Internet, and as virtual teams continue to flourish, teamwork training may prove to be a boon for businesses. Exploring whether teaching teamwork is

effective across several disciplines would also be beneficial. Indeed, "the team-building and teamwork area is a rich area for scholars and should continue to be investigated" (Hansen, 2006, p. 15).

Finally, it would be interesting to explore two additional areas of teaching teamwork. First, it may prove valuable to study the differences between men and women with regard to the outcomes of teaching teamwork in university capstone public relations classes. This stems from the hypothesis that boys tend to be exposed more to team sports in their elementary through high school years than girls, although many girls are involved in organized team sports, such as soccer and basketball. But playing team sports exposes young people to teamwork, where they must learn to work as a team. Do the lessons they learn during these team sports experiences give them an advantage in the university classroom? Do they have a foundation of teamwork experience coming into college that helps them function more effectively in a team? This is a particularly intriguing question given the fact that, according to the researcher's experience, the vast number of public relations students are women. If this is true, what are the implications for teaching teamwork to the primarily female student population?

Second, as the Internet continues to revolutionize the way the world conducts business, it is important to look at teaching teamwork skills in an online team environment. Indeed, virtual teams have become a mainstay in a variety of organizations. This trend is also seen in academia, where more and more classes are being taught online—thus creating the need for students to work in virtual teams. This new paradigm also requires scrutiny in terms of whether teaching teamwork skills to students in a virtual setting enhances the teamwork experience. Do these students need more training? What are the special challenges that arise when students are required to work in teams? There may, in fact, be an urgency to this second area of research as the Internet continues to change the way the world—and public relations professionals—do business.

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Appendix A
Grading Rubric For Public Relations Press Kits

Objective/Criteria	Performance Indicators				
	Exceptional (A)	*Exceeds Expectations (B)*	*Meets Expectations (C)*	*Below Expectations (D)*	*Failing Expectations* (F)
Public Relations Content	Professional, high-quality, press kit, which demonstrates exceptional public relations writing skills and exceptional public relations strategic thinking skills. This portfolio is comprehensive, with at least eight different public relations pieces. The press kit could be used in a "real world" setting with a paying client.	Almost professional press kit, which demonstrates good public relations writing skills and good public relations strategic thinking skills. This portfolio includes at least seven different public relations pieces. The press kit could be used in a "real world" setting with a paying client if lightly edited.	Press kit reads like it has been written by students, not professionals. Demonstrates adequate public relations writing skills and adequate public relations strategic thinking skills. This portfolio has at least six different public relations pieces. The press kit could only be used in a "real world" setting with heavy editing.	Press kit reads like it has been written by freshmen college students, not seniors. Writing skills are in inadequate, with little evidence of public relations strategic thinking skills. The press kit could only be used in a "real world" setting with heavy rewriting and editing.	Press kit reads like it has been written by high school students who had never taken a public relations skills class. Writing skills are extremely poor, with no evidence of public relations strategic thinking skills. The press kit could never be used in a "real world" setting.
Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation	No problems with grammar, spelling or punctuation. There are few if any typographical errors.	Some errors in grammar, spelling or punctuation, but nothing glaring. Some typographical errors.	Several errors in grammar, spelling or punctuations. There are also several typographical errors.	Glaring errors in grammar, spelling or punctuation. There are also glaring typographical errors.	Too many problems with grammar, spelling, punctuation and typos. It is almost unreadable.

Creativity	Press kit demonstrates a high degree of creativity, positioning the client in unique and innovative ways. This creativity may involve development of new themes for programs or services, identifying new target audiences or creating new media opportunities. Press kit shows the student team is thinking "outside the box."	Press kit demonstrates above average creativity. The press kit shows the student team is starting to think "outside the box" and presents a few new and innovative ideas.	Press kit demonstrates average creativity. The press kit shows the student team is not thinking "outside the box" and does not present new and innovative ideas.	Press kit demonstrates below average creativity. The press kit reflects mundane ideas that could have been taken from a textbook or off of a website. No creativity in evidence.	Press kit demonstrates no creativity. There is no evidence to show that the students tried to think of anything new or different to present to the client.
Geared to the target audience	Target audiences are identified clearly in the plan. The writing within this press kit is geared to the identified target audiences.	Most target audiences are identified in the plan. The writing is geared mostly to the target audiences.	Some of the possible target audiences are identified in the plan. Some of the writing is geared to them.	Few of the possible target audiences are identified in the plan. The writing is not geared to them.	None of the possible target audiences is identified in the plan. The writing is not geared to anyone.

Geared to the target media outlets	Target media outlets are identified clearly in the plan, and will realistically reach the target audiences. The public relations tools in the press kit are geared to supporting the needs of target media outlets.	Most of the target media outlets are identified in the plan. The writing is geared mostly to these target media outlets.	Some of the target media outlets are identified in the plan. Some of the writing is geared to these target media outlets.	Few of the possible target media outlets are identified in the plan. The writing is not geared to these target media outlets.	None of the possible target media outlets is identified in the plan. The writing is not geared to any target media outlets.

Appendix B
Instrument to Evaluate Quality of Student Work

This questionnaire has been prepared so you can indicate to what extent students in the two sections of the public relations university capstone class produced quality work.

You will review the public relations press kit created by each team in the two sections of the public relations university capstone class. The press kits are anonymous and do not indicate whether or not the students were taught teamwork.

Please give a letter grade on each of these aspects of the press kit based on the parameters set forth in the rubric:

A. Exceptional
B. Exceeds Expectations
C. Meets Expectations
D. Below Expectations
F. Failing Expectations

1. _____ Public relations content.

2. _____ Grammar, spelling and punctuation.

3. _____ Creativity.

4. _____ Geared to the target audience.

5. _____ Geared to the target media outlets.

I would give this press kit the following overall letter grade:

A. Exceptional
B. Exceeds Expectations
C. Meets Expectations
D. Below Expectations
F. Failing Expectations

Letter Grade: _____

Appendix C
Pretest of the Study Population

1. What is your overall grade point average (GPA)?

   _____

2. What is your GPA in your journalism major?

   _____

3. How long have you been attending college (include all schools you attended)?

   _____

4. Have you ever received any formalized teamwork training? __ yes __ no

   If yes, please explain.

   _____

   _____

5. Have you ever had a public relations internship? __ yes __ no

   If yes, please explain.

   _____

   _____

Please supply the following information This information will only be used in helping describe this group of respondents.

6. Are you male or female? _____

7. What is your age? _____

8. What is your ethnicity? _____

The Effects of Social Media as a Public Relations Tool in Political Communication:
12th September Constitutional Referendum

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Abstract
A series of constitutional amendments met the approval of 58 percent of Turkey's electorate in the September 12th referendum. This study examines how the political parties used internet and social media to spread their messages on September 12, 2010. This paper considered the political messages of two opposite parties: the ruling Justice and Development Party and the Republican People's Party during the Constitutional referendum campaign and analyzed interviews with campaigns staff of both parties and their Web sites.

Internet

Internet is reframing different areas of our societies. It is contributing to both the diffusion and instrumentation of new digital systems of social and political organization and mobilization (Criado & Fuentes, 2007). Internet is the latest in a series of major mass communication technology innovations, and in this sense, it could be contemplated as an extension of the mass media (Dahlgren, 2001).

The Internet made a qualitative movement in the fields of research, opinions, attitudes and political news until it became the most important communication channel which plays a prominent role in changing the system of values (Ayed, 2005).

Newly available Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), such as the Internet and mobile phones, offer opportunities for political parties to develop new information relationships with the electorate as well as with their MPs(Member of Parliament), party members and internal staff members. For example, ICTs can be used for information exchange in multiple (media) forms with a variety of people and independent of time and location; targeted information provision to specific user groups (narrow casting) or even personalized information provision to individuals; and interaction with the electorate asynchronous or in real time. Further possibilities to make use of ICTs are to predict voting behavior (e.g. via instant polls), or, even more negatively, to quickly spread rumors, incidents or negative statements, which may lead to an uncontrollable influence on political image or opinion development (Sunstein, 2001).

On-line versions of television, radio, news services and daily newspaper constitute a considerable degree of net activity. These on-line adaptations mostly reproduce the (would be) leader/candidate orientation while covering the campaign, providing information, making opinion and setting the electoral agenda, extending the one to-many logic of the mass media, with the addition of hypertext, archival and interactive capacities. In this line, Internet does not necessarily introduce innovation in the electoral dimension of the communicative functions of the democratic political leadership process (Mechling, 2002).

Empirical analyses of candidate and party websites have become a staple in the research on computer-mediated political communication. In particular, scientists are concerned with the question of whether e-campaigning *substitutes* or *replicates* typical patterns of offline electioneering. With regard to the style and content of political home pages,1 this question has led to two theoretical positions. Supporters of the 'innovative model', called here the *innovation hypothesis*, believe that the media-specific features of information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as hypertextuality, interactivity, multimedia and information capacity, contribute to a fundamental change in the way politics is presented to the public. Specifically, these scholars expect e-campaigning to become more disengaged from typical offline patterns of electioneering, and that this thus offers an opportunity to revitalize those rational ideals of democratic discourse thought to be lost in modern political communication (Schweitzer, 2008).

By the increasing use of internet and it becoming a widespread phenomenon, the internet and web sites in particular offer a different method in providing information about the political process and providing an active connection to the political process. In this regard, the internet has a set of advantages in political marketing.
These are (Bowers-Brown and Gunter,2002:169):

- With a developed web site and its features, parties can expand their "marketing areas" and access the potential supporters and voters in places where physical existence is low or cannot be visited by the party members in different means.

- A web site can function as a multimedia source by providing index that cannot be obtained from anywhere else.
- Web pages offer direct connection. Web pages can easily be updated and be developed as the primary choice medium for up-to-date information. Providing direct data dimension of web sites encourages client feedback where party goal is obvious. The direct connection also will make a "supporter" database possible.
- The internet technology enables targeting specific groups. For example; customized page index and personal sites.
- The internet is a "pulling" technology instead of being a "pushing" technology. This means that the preferred web content is mainly dependent to the accessible data. Web content owns "the client control" and can be administered with the online attendance of the clients.
- Web sites can be "interactive" and brings the users a possibility of correlating with internet providers by giving data towards the experience and needs. Thus it gives the opportunity to develop a "client" or "voter" based service to provide (Criado&Fuentes,2007).

For campaigns, the Internet is a low-cost medium that allows two-way communication; anyone with Internet access can connect, organize, and share their ideas and opinions. The use of discussion forums, weblogs (commonly known as blogs), and online discussion groups, allow ongoing dialogues between the candidate, campaign staff, volunteers, and supporters. The Internet's virtual nature enhances the number and diversity of people participating in campaign discussions, creating "global conversations that previously would have occurred only in local groups and conferences." Campaigns are utilizing e-mail and blogs to rally and communicate with their supporters and solicit donations (Rice, 2004).

Internet in Turkey

Rapid development of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has affected enormously all countries of the world. Like many countries, Turkey recognizes ICT as a sector as well as the driving force of economic and social change.

Turkey's Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) market is anticipated to surpass slightly more than US$ 26 billion in 2010, up from the US$ 24.6 billion for 2009 which was nearly 4% of GNP in 2009. The share of information technologies in this market is around 7 billion dollars while that the communication technologies 17.5 billion dollars. Turkish ICT sector is expected to show an increase of 6.5% in the year 2010 compared to the previous year.

According to survey on ICT Usage in enterprises carried out in 2009 by Turkish Statistical Institute Turkstat, 90.7 % of enterprises use PC and 88.8 % of enterprises have access to the Internet. These proportions were increased as directly proportional with size of enterprise. Proportion of enterprises having web page was 58,7% in January 2009.

The government plays a positive role in leading and creating the momentum for greater ICT usage and spending. The government has spent US$ 590 million for ICT investment in 2009 and has planned to spend US$ 675 million in 2010. There will be a projected increase in government spending on ICT sector in coming years.

In Turkey, there are 7.7 million internet subscribers' at the second quarter of 2010. Beside, the number of 3G subscribers has reached 11.4 million. The number of GSM subscribers has reached to 64 million at the end of 2009 in Turkey, as the number of fixed telephone subscribers is around 17 million (Turkoglu, 2010).

Social Media

Social media is best understood as a group of new kinds of online media, which share most or all of the following characteristics: participation, openness, conversation, community, connectedness (Mayfield, A). Basic forms of social media are: social networks, blogs, wikis, podcasts, forums, content communities, micro blogging.

Social media allow consumers to share their opinions, criticisms and suggestions in public (Eberle, 2010). Because of its ease of use, speed and reach, social media is fast changing the public discourse in society and setting trends and agendas in topics that range from the environment and politics to technology and the entertainment industry (Asur & Huberman).

As of January 2009, the online social networking application Facebook registered more than 175 million active users. To put that number in perspective, this is only slightly less than the population of Brazil (190 million) and over twice the population of Germany (80 million)! At the same time, every minute, 10 hours of content were uploaded to the video sharing platform YouTube. And, the image hosting site Flickr provided access to over 3 billion photographs, making the world-famous Louvre Museum's collection of 300,000 objects seem tiny in comparison (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social media offers numerous opportunities for public relations practitioners to interact with the public while adopting new forms of technology and integrating them into their everyday lives. These advances in technology have experienced widespread use among public relations practitioners. As more forms of social media emerge, it is beneficial for public relations practitioners to understand how to use these tools as they relate to their jobs. In particular, practitioners working for nonprofit organizations can benefit from adopting social media due to their often-limited monetary resources (Curtis et.al, 2010).

In Curtis et. al. research analysis of the respondents *(N=409)*, nearly all *(n=404)* indicated that they used some form of social media compared to only 5 who indicated that they did not use any of the 18 forms of social media that were specified in survey. The average number of social media tools used by one practitioner was 4.99 *(SD=2.82)*. Of the 18 types of social media, the following frequencies were most reported: 97.8% *(n=400)* used e-mail, 54.5% *(n=223)* used social networks, 51.1% *(n=209)* used video sharing, and 48.4% *(n=198)* used blogs. Other forms of social media such as instant messaging *(n=55: 13.4%)*, photo sharing *(n=111: 27.1%)*, text messaging *(n=51: 12.5%)*, and wikis *(n=74: 18.1%)*, among others.

The potential impact of social media on public relations is phenomenal. In international empirical examination of public relations practitioners on the impact blogs and other social media are having on public relations practice once again finds these new media are dramatically changing public relations and the way it is practiced. Results of this study find about two-thirds believe blogs and social media have enhanced what happens in public relations and that social media and traditional mainstream media complement each other. More than half of the study's respondents (61%) believe the emergence of blogs and social media have changed the way their organizations (or their client organizations) communicate. Findings suggest these changes are more prominent in external than internal communications. Many (72%) believe social media complement traditional news media, and an even higher number (89%) think blogs and social media influence coverage in traditional news media. Most (84%) believe blogs and social media have made communications more instantaneous because they encourage organizations to respond more quickly to criticism (Wright & Hinson, 2008).

Askeroğlu, in his master thesis named "The Role of Social Media in Marketing-based Public Relations Applications" conducted a survey on 391 persons determined by quoted random

sampling method. In this study, by researching how often the internet users use the internet and how effective is the social media on users, its importance in terms of brands was tried to be emphasized. According to the results obtained from the survey, most of the participants of the survey stated that they find the social media more effective than the traditional media and the campaigns made via the social media more effective. They also noted that they followed the campaigns made via the social media they social media affected their decision of purchase. Almost half of the participants stated that they find the publicity campaigns made through the social media reliable. As it can clearly be understood here, the social media has become now a new medium to be used for the business firms to access their consumers (Askeroglu, 2010).

Assistant Professor Doctor Abdullah Özkan, head of the Political Communication Institute TASAM, says these about the situation of the social media: "Social media has changed over the position of the institution of politics as command maker and the position of the politician as the commander. It thought them to listen to public/voter, receive their proposals and ask their opinions. It integrated the public more to into the politics and made them associates in decision- making mechanism. Our politicians prefer holding a public demonstration, hanging flags or putting up posters on walls instead of benefiting the expert information that the political communication offers and joining the success that the communication management will bring. Although a large proportion of our political parties insist on continuing the old habits, seeing social media is started to be used slowly in recent years is pleasing. The political parties', politicians and political leaders' creating accounts on Facebook and Twitter and having blogs are positive progress but not enough.

Social media needs to be managed by experts. Moreover, it is a "must" for the institution of politics to see the social media as a strategic power about informing/ persuading the voters. The means of social media can be used effectively if only this perspective can be gained" (Ozkan, 2010).

Social network has a great importance in drawing the social media the attention. Different use and networks containing different contents have various themes for people to spend hours in virtual environment (Vural & Bat, 2010).

The aim of this research was to understand the effects of social media as a public relations tool in political communication in Turkey. Therefore, to find the answers to the research questions Constitutional referendum, September 12, 2010 case has been examined.

After the military coup of 12 September 1980, the military junta drafted a new constitution which was also accepted through a referendum. In 2010, Turkish parliament adopted a series of constitutional amendments which did not achieve the required majority (67%) for implementation. However, the majority (330 votes- 60%), accepted to present the amendments to the electorate in a referendum.

27 articles were voted in this referendum. Government presented all the articles in a single package and the voters would say YES or NO to all the amendments. This was the main problem stated by the opposition parties. The themes were as follows; Coup leaders and military personel; Economic and social rights; Individual freedoms; Judicial reforms.

Turkish constitutional referendum, 2010		
Yes or no	Votes	Percentage
✓ Yes	21,788,272	57.88%
No	15,855,041	42.12%
Valid votes	37,643,313	98.11%
Invalid or blank votes	725,852	1.89%
Total votes	38,369,165	100.00%
Voter turnout		73.71%
Electorate		52,051,828

The 12th of September 2010 Turkey Referendum

The 12th of September 2010 Turkey Referendum was historic not only in political arena, but in Public Relations experience in political campaign process in Turkey.

A common consensus among the people of Turkey for a long time is that the 1982 constitution is undemocratic and does not meet the needs of social, political and democratic developments. It is inherited from and product of the coup d'Etat in 1980. Therefore, there is an urgent demand to draft and prepare a new civil constitution which is democratic and far away from the influence of military.

Since the AK (Justice and Development) Party came to power in 2002, there have been several attempts and initiatives to draft a civil constitution by both the government and non-governmental civil organisations. After the general election in summer 2007, the AK Party formed an independent commission to prepare and work on the draft of civil constitution. The commission is comprised of outstanding and respected scholars of law like Ergun Özbudun, Zühtü Arslan, Levent Köker, Yavuz Atar and Serap Yazıcı. However, these genuine attempts and initiatives were cut short because of harsh critics raised by the opposition party and other parties represented in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Instead, in 2010, the government proposed a package in order to make partial amendments of the current constitution. All political parties objected and were not involved in debates over the package in the parliament even pro-Kurdish Party, the BDP (Peace and Democracy Party) did not participate in the meetings. When the package passed and endorsed with minor changes by the parliament, it was taken to the referendum. The referendum campaigns headed by mostly political parties and some civil organisations and leading personalities, a turned to be a vote of confidence for the government. While the government gave more priorities to the contents of package, opposition parties and like minded organisations and political figures focused on the government's policies, political performances. Consequently, the referendum campaigns polarised the voting behaviours of people and put the constitutional amendments and debates in the secondary position.

Electoral Campaign

Turkey is set for a national vote on Sept. 12, the sixth referendum the country has held since 1960. In the referendum a government-backed reform package will be voted on that incidentally comes on the 30th anniversary of the Sept. 12, 1980 coup d'état. The final result was 57.88 percent in favor to 42.12 percent against with 73.71 percent of registered voters participating. The referendum was yet another electoral triumph for Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the latest in a series stretching back to 1994 when he was first elected Mayor of

Istanbul from the Welfare Party. Since then, Erdogan has won two parliamentary elections, two municipal elections and two constitutional referenda.

Political parties have separated into two camps ahead of the referendum. Those who support the package are campaigning for "yes" votes for the 26-article constitutional amendment package, while those against are treating the referendum as an early general election. The arguments used by political parties in their referendum campaigns show that Turkey is experiencing the most colorful referendum process in its history.

Only the government Justice and Development Party (AK Party) is explaining the changes in the package. The other parties are making a point not to use any slogans or discourse that directly relates to the content of the package. The highest budget for the referendum campaign was also raised by the AK Party.

Erdogan invested his considerable political capital into the campaign by holding rallies in more than a third of Turkey`s provinces, conducting numerous TV interviews and personally directing the massive nationwide effort by the formidable JDP organization to ensure a `yes` vote (Aliriza & Koenhemsi, 2010).

"*Our noble nation must not vote on the government's work or on the parties' political programmes but on the future of Turkey,*" indicated the Head of Government Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who recalled that the text reduced the powers of the legal and military hierarchy. The Prime Minister repeats that the referendum is a democratic tool and not a political one and insists on the fact that by voting "*yes*" the Turks will be making the choice "*of the path to democracy*" (Deloy, 2010).

In the past two elections, the AK Party had emphasized the "nation" as the major element in its campaign. The same emphasis goes for the referendum, as the AK Party uses the slogan, "Our love is the nation, the decision is yes," as it is the most frequently used campaign phrase. The AK Party also has devised slogans locally used on a province-basis such as "Erdoğan is coming, Bursa says yes" [which rhymes in the original Turkish].

The AK Party also uses the themes of freedoms and democracy for the referendum campaign. It employs the slogan "Yes to democracy and every freedom" to stress this point. It has published a 40-article guide that summarizes the changes the package will bring. The thematic slogans used in the package include "Yes to stopping child abuse," "Yes to protection of personal data," "Yes to burying blacklisting in history," "Yes to expanding the freedom to go abroad," "Yes to trying coup stagers," "Yes to strengthening and ensuring judicial impartiality," "Yes to ending the practice of trying civilians in military courts," "Yes to the right of individual applications to the Constitutional Court," "Yes to membership in more than one union," "Yes to the of right of collective contracts for public servants," "Yes to transforming from the law of power to the power of law" and "Yes to moving from the law of the superiors to the supremacy of the law."

CHP focuses on AK Party performance

The opposition parties, the People's Republican Party and the National Action Party (MHP) led by Devlet Bahceli support most of the articles in the constitutional reform but reject those affecting the control of the legal institutions. They fear that the text will increase the government's power over justice by increasing the number of members of the Constitutional Court and by giving Parliament and the President of the Republic the power to appoint some of them. They also maintain that the AKP may, with this new Constitution, take over the levers of

power by placing its supporters in key positions across the country and affect the principle of secularity that has governed Turkey since 1923.

"We shall say "no" to the changes, the Constitutional Court's decision did not satisfy our requests," declared the new leader of the People's Republican Party, Kemal Kilicdaroglu. His party also chose to undertake a campaign with the slogan *"Saying "No" can be a good thing"*, a phrase which cannot be translated effectively from Turkish since it includes a pun.

The main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) is mostly opting for evaluating the past eight years of the AK Party in power rather than the package itself in its campaign speeches. The CHP has stated many times that it will support the package if the two articles in it that introduce changes to two judicial bodies are taken out. For this reason, it cannot build any arguments against the remaining articles. Thus, most of the campaigning is focused on these two articles. The CHP's slogan is "Say No to ensure the continuation of the contemporary, secular and democratic republic," trying to make it appear as if these values would be destroyed by the package. The party is mostly appealing to its secular grass roots as in previous elections.

The CHP slogans emphasize what the opposition party perceives as the shortcomings of the government. "Dying in mud-brick houses is not destiny," a reference to this year's devastating Elazığ earthquake in which 51 died. The high death toll was blamed on weak houses in the area made of mud-bricks. The CHP also emphasizes the possible economic outcomes of the package, using the slogan "Does the constitutional amendment package create jobs? No to the referendum." The CHP also accuses the government party of trying to take over the judiciary and create a caste of allied judges. In various other slogans it refers to the package as a "poison pill" and "AK Party coup d'état." It also underlines an article in the package that establishes an arbitration council to decide on strikes, which some have criticized as having the potential to ban union organized strikes. The CHP slogans also argue that the amendments are half-hearted attempts to protect the current Constitution of 1982, which was drafted after the Sept. 12, 1980 military takeover. "Say no for a richer, freer and safer Turkey," one of the CHP slogans says. The CHP also employs the double-use of the word "hayır," which means "no" in Turkish and also "good, beneficial" -- incidentally used more often by religious conservatives. One such slogan is "Oyunuz hayırlı olsun," which would mean "May your vote benefit you," but also "May your vote be with a no," if the first meaning of the word is taken.

MHP relates referendum to separatist violence

The Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) is building its referendum campaign on terrorism and the government's democratic initiative, also frequently called the Kurdish initiative. The MHP is clearly at odds with its own grassroots voters that polls indicate are gravitating towards yes votes. Like the CHP, the MHP also doesn't go much into the content of the package to avoid deepening the already existing differences in opinion with its traditional voter base. The MHP uses terrorism and martyrs killed in clashes with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to make an emotional appeal. "One No [Goodness] is Enough for Your Country," one MHP slogan says.

BDP's confusion

The pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), which would normally be expected to support most of the articles in the package, announced its decision to boycott the referendum. Most of its voters, polls indicate, are supporting the package. However, the BDP cannot openly support the package due to political woes. It uses the slogan "Neither a yes nor a no, boycott the

package." The BDP administration is for the first time vying for the support of Kurdish citizens who live in big cities such as Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir. One slogan it employs is "We will not say one language, one nation [a reference to an earlier phrase used by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan]. We will not go to the ballot box on Sept. 12."

BBP not happy, but supportive

The Democrat Party (DP) has developed a large number of slogans. The most attention-getting one is "Don't step on a mine, hit no [on the ballot]." The Democratic Left Party (DSP) is also against the package and uses the slogan "No to the AK Party's September 12". The Grand Unity Party (BBP) is one of the three parties along with the AK Party and the Felicity Party (SP) that support the package. It uses the slogan "Not enough but yes" to indicate that although it does not find the changes included in the package adequate, it still thinks the changes are worth supporting.

For its part the Party for Peace and Democracy (BDP) is rather in support of the constitutional reform. Its leader Yalçın Topcu declared that all of the political parties should support the government's work to amend the present Fundamental Law (Deloy, 2010).

Research Design

The purpose of the research is to understand the effects of social media as a public relations tool in political communication in Turkey.

The questions of the research are as follows:

Q_1 : How do political parties contact with citizens online during political campaigns?

Q_2 : How do citizens get information while making political decisions?

Q_3: Does social networking shape political decisions of the citizens?

Web consumption among different age groups and genders is not similar. This fact led us to following hypotheses:

H_1: Sex effects the extent that a citizen is influenced by social networks in political decision making.

H_2: Age effects the extent that a citizen is influenced by social networks in political decision making.

Therefore, the starting point of this research has been stated as the following hypothesis:

H_3: Social media influence citizens' political decision making.

Methodology

The research consists of two stages: qualitative and quantitative, and aimed at showing the fact that Turkish audience is being influenced by the social media while undertaking its political decisions. The research consisted of 3 steps. Step 1 and 2 were designed to answer the first research question while step 3 was designed to find answers to second and third questions.

The first two stages of the research were designed to answer the following research question

Step 1 included the examination of the search engine data to understand the Internet based political communication which can be called examination of the "web traffic". This kind of research helps researchers to understand the political communications by parties, politicians, individual officials and activists. In this step online characteristics of the 2010 Constitutional Referendum was examined through the link data obtained using the search engine "Google".

Step 2 included interviews with the representatives of the two main Turkish parties; the ruling party AKP (Justice and Development Party), Zeynep Karahan Uslu and vice president of

the Information and Communication Technologies Department of the main opposition party CHP (Republican People`s Party). One of the main questions asked were whether they used Internet as a PR tool in their political communication during the 12th September Constitutional Referendum, which provided insights how political parties perceived and used Internet in their PR activities.

Step 3 applied quantitative research and included the examination of the effects of social networks on citizen decision making through a Web-based survey. This kind of surveys are frequently used in the field since research on Internet-based phenomena are often conducted via instrumentation facilitated or made possible by the Internet.
The participants (N=378) were citizens; the youngest of whom were 18 year olds as the voting Age in Turkey is 18. Female participants were 60.3% while male participants were 39.7 %.

Limitations
The aim of this research was to understand the influence of social media on target audience during the referendum campaign. Even though broader understanding of this phenomenon was achieved there was a number of limitations to this study as well. They include: reliability issue arose from the usage of a search engine; moreover, application of different search engines can provide different results; Interviews were limited to the two representatives of the main parties; survey was limited to participants who received the online invitation to reply, and voluntarily participated.

Findings
As an outcome of this research significant conclusions were driven. Upon entering on Google search engine the statements in parentheses, the below quantitative information was collected. Links on referendum "12th September Referendum": 143.000; "12th September Referendum"+online news: 540,000;   Facebook results "12 September Referendum": 4.420; Facebook account opened under the name: 123; Twitter results "12th September Referendum"+ Yes: 12; YouTube Videos "12 September Referendum": 398.
As a summary of the content of the links, the following statements were generated: The ruling party AKP (JDP- Justice and Development Party) and the opposition party CHP (RPP- Republican Peoples Party) used web mainly as a propaganda tool. Randomly selected links were presenting the standing points of the parties, instead of the changes coming with the constitutional amendments. Informative links were almost 1/1000 of those involving propaganda.
Step 2 has been very helpful to understand how different Web was used to engage with citizens online during political campaigns. Concerning the interviews it can be seen that, JDP intentionally used web to stress the bad reputation of 1980 military junta constitution to promote 2010 amendments. The interview with the RPP representative showed that RPP did not have a solid web strategy but used web to criticize judicial reforms. They stated that the ruling party used the amendments to set the base for intervening judicial system.
It was seen during the interview of the JDP representative that the party had a range of online activities and its own official website which provided: Information about the party, possibility of subscription to membership, data downloads, interactive Communication (AKCC), links to related media, access to the archive.
As a PR facility, the face to face communication technique has been heavily used during the referendum campaign. Significance has been given to all party`s statements and actions

encapsulating open air domains, internet, social media in parallel with incorporated marketing communication approach.

AKIM (AKCC) is professional channel between citizens and party management of JDP. This structure records all requests, claims and opinions that are incoming to the Party via phone, fax, email, post or person and conveys these to related ministry, party body or MP. From the establishment of the system in 2003 till the end of 2010 approximately 1. 300.000 forms have been answered. That fact can be used as an evidence indicating how efficiently this system has been operating. During the referendum period, the messages sent by the public were stored in the archives for later analysis. Along the course of the referendum, though they did receive varying messages, most of them were quite positive. AKIM stands for one of the many feedback outlets benefitted by JDP. JDP is the only party in Turkey applying such structure.

Other platforms for online activities of the ruling Justice and Development Party were also using the majority of social networks to spread information. Along with the main functions of these platforms additional features included games and UGC (User Generated Content). Such features were applied in order to create better understanding of the amendments which would take place after the approval of the Constitutional package during the Referendum. Furthermore, UGC enabled peer communication between the citizens and provided a broader area for expressing their ideas and exchange their opinions concerning Constitutional changes.

It was seen during the interview of the JDP representative that the party had a range of online activities and its own official website which provided: Information about the party, possibility of subscription to membership, data downloads , interactive Communication (AKCC), links to related media, access to the archive.

Online activities of the RPP were similar to those of its opponents. RPP also used provided a wide range of information and applications in their official website.

Other platforms for online activities of RPP used social networks, provided access information, membership function, downloads, games, links to related media, user generated content, special videos, visual and textual contents and interactive communication.

Social media domain has been preferred and the remaining scopes likely to be favored during a referendum campaign were singled out. On Facebook and Twitter, special videos, visual and textual content have been effectively used. For instance, the inquiries and comments posted by citizens on Facebook have been replied by the chairman of the RPP Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu on a daily basis.

The referendum campaign was narrower than an electoral campaign in scope in terms of content. Social media have been quite heavily used along the course of the referendum campaign. Taking this into consideration, it is viable to say that feedbacks have not only been satisfactory in terms of quantity and quality but also beneficial.

The findings of step 3 showed that 32.0% of the participants used Internet between 3 to 5 hour per day, the daily internet usage rate of 27.0 % was 6-8 hours, while 20.4 % used internet 1-2 hours, and 19.3 % of participants used it more than 9 hours.

Among the duration of internet usage the daily social media usage accounted for : 36.5 % of citizens used social media during 1-2 hours, 27.5 % - less than1 hour, 25.9% - 3-5 hour, 5.8 % - 6-8 hour and 4.2 % more than 9 hour. 84.1 % of participants of this survey attended to the 12th September referendum while 15.9% of them did not.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaigns the Likert scale was applied. Among other dimensions of campaign effectiveness the informativeness was measured. The

results were as shown below: 33.6 % of citizens found the campaign not fully informative, while 26.5 % of them found that the campaign was not informative.

To the question whether social media impacted the citizens political decisions the respondents anwered as follows: 30.7 % not effected, 27.5 % not fully effected, 25.1 % effected, 15.1 % never effected and only 1.6 % of them too much effected.

The relationship between the followed media outlet and the political campaigns encountered in social media

Participants who have followed the official web sites (P: 0,035) and youtube (P: 0,017) were mostly finding information about JDP and its activities while those individuals who have followed the Facebook (P: 0,000) and youtube (P:0,002) were exposed to the information about CHP and its campaigns. Furthermore, no significant relationship was found between the other political parties and social media outlet followed by participants.

The relationship between the content the participants were exposed to and when they encountered political parties in social media

Participants who encountered with AKP exposed to party focused content (P: 0,00) while participants who encounter with CHP exposed to propaganda (P: 0.024).

Conclusion

The rise of the use of internet in the whole world provided several opportunities in getting to know the politics of parties, reaching the candidates and delivering the views. And in this way, it strengthens the political communication and interaction. Web2.0 tools which were included as a planned process of Strategic Public Relations have been effective in the political communication in 2008 United States presidential elections.

Web sites are very important and have many characteristics that make them attractive for public relations (Esrock & Leichty, 1998). In Turkey on 3rd of November 2002 elections usage of the internet technology was limited in the field of political communication. However, during general elections on July 22, 2007 using new media in campaigns has increased to a great degree. So, this study examined the use of social media as a public relations tool in political communication and how the political parties used technological sources to spread their messages on September 12, 2010 Referendum. During this period the political parties preferred to use micro sites for `Yes`, `No` campaigns as a successful application of public relations. All political parties carried out their public relations campaigns in their own websites and the other internet based platforms besides the conventional media.

This research gave the necessary insights on how political parties contact citizens online during political campaigns. The conducted research in the first step showed that political parties contacted citizens online during political campaigns using the following instruments: Official websites, social media including blogs, micro blogs, social networks, and video blogs. Through the research it has been understood that political parties in Turkey do not use the whole potential of the social media and use it at rather beginner level. The last but not the least outcome of this research is understanding that online PR does not replace traditional offline PR in Turkey. Therefore these both PR activities have to be used in line with each other and convey the unique and easily understandable by the target audience message to attain the most effective results.

The answer to the second question about how citizens get information while making political decisions, came out as; 84,9% of participants get information from TV while 78,8% get from internet and 74,9 is also get information from newspapers.

This result shows that internet is a second source of information while newspapers continuous to be the most trusted traditional media tool for dissemination of information in political issues. However, it began losing its strategically importance as a media outlet in Turkey. It is been replaced by evolving internet based resources. As an example, 88,6 % of participants get information from online newspapers while 46.3% - from YouTube and 38,1% - from facebook.

15,6% of the audience use tweeter, 11,6 % - political party`s website, 6,6% - Friend feed, 1,6% use other social media in their political decision making process.

The survey step answered the third question and gave positive results for the hypotheses.

H_1: Gender effects the extent to which citizens are influenced by social media in political decision making. The results of the current research have shown that women are more effected by social media than men in political decision making. Thereby, the H_1 was confirmed. On the other hand the result of the 12th September referendum showed that gender had no effect on political decision. The items used in this study can be found in the appendix.

H_2: Age effects the extent to which citizens are influenced by social media in political decision making. Age is not a significant variable for political decision making in social networks, therefore, the findings rejected H_2. In contrast, in the 12th September Referendum age was an important criteria in being influenced by social media during referendum campaigns.

H_3: Social media influence citizens' political decision making. Social media does not affect citizens' political decision making as much as it effects their daily life decisions.

Moving from the hypothesis, the third question is answered as "the social networking shapes political decisions of the citizens".

The research conducted in this paper had limited resources, but still led to some useful results and conclusions on online political communication. It has also uncovered many areas that need additional study, and for further research in the areas of social media, networking and its interrelationship with politics. Therefore it is recommended to conduct broader scale research on the topic in the following studies.

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Appendix

Test Statistics(a)

	How much are you affected by the social media while you make a political decision?
Mann-Whitney U	*14,972.500*
Wilcoxon W	*26,297.500*
Z	*-2.122*
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	*0.034*

a. Grouping Variable: Sex

Test Statistics(a)

	How much were you affected from social media while making your decision related with the 12 September referendum?
Mann-Whitney U	*16,001.000*
Wilcoxon W	*27,326.000*
Z	*-1.100*
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	*0.271*

a. Grouping Variable: Sex

Test Statistics(a)	
	How much are you affected by the social media while you make a political decision?
Mann-Whitney U	*14,972.500*
Wilcoxon W	*26,297.500*
Z	*-2.122*
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	*0.034*
a. Grouping Variable: Sex	

Test Statistics(a,b)

	How much were you affected from social media while making your decision related with the 12 September referendum?
Chi-Square	*9.749*
df	*3*
Asymp. Sig.	*0.021*

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Age
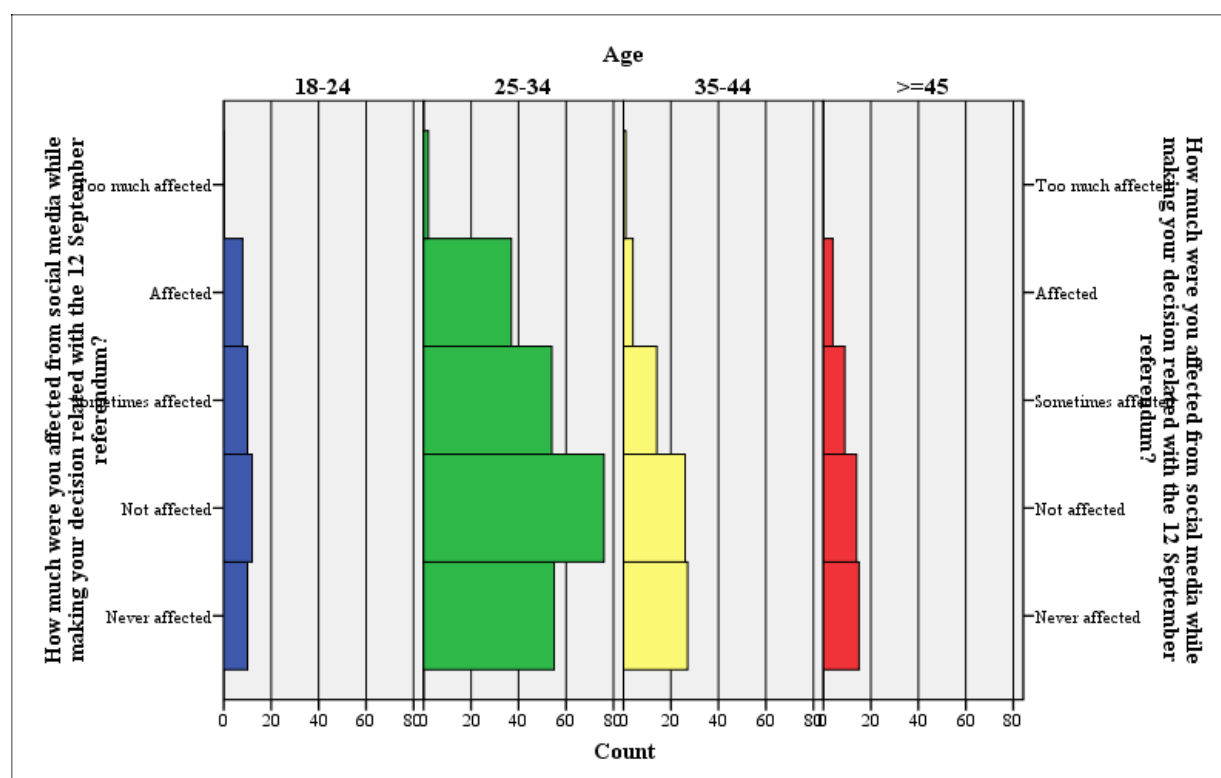
A "Missing Chapter" in Public Relations Education:
The Intersection Between Public Relations and Entrepreneurship Education

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Abstract

Effective public relations skills are a valuable asset for the small business owner, but these skills are not taught or developed in the contemporary public relations curriculum. This paper plays an advocacy role for the expansion of entrepreneurship education into the public relations curriculum, beginning with the introductory course. This work is supported by a grant from the Coleman Foundation Faculty Entrepreneurship Fellows Program.

Introduction

The economic recession the United States has been facing over the past couple of years has created the conditions necessary for a more careful scrutiny of the economy and how it works. One vital sector to the national economy has been the growth and development of small businesses. By any measure, small businesses are a vital part of the economy and its structure. One study placed small businesses as representing 99.7% of all employer firms in North America (Shinnar, Pruett, & Toney, 2009).

A recent report by the Small Business Administration (2009) reveals additional economic indicators to the list of important contributions made by small businesses. Small businesses and new independent firms are responsible for half of net job creation, they have some of the highest productivity levels, they produce half of all new innovations and they help fuel changes in markets. Nearly one-half of all working men will have been self-employed for a time before retirement. Creating small businesses are an essential way for immigrants, women, and minorities to enter into the economy and to improve their economic status.

For institutions of higher education these economic realities suggest that small business issues and entrepreneurship are appropriate areas for all students to learn about, not just those in business schools. College students are interested in and willing to learn about small business and entrepreneurial issues. Research into student interests reveals as many as two-thirds of college students intend to become entrepreneurs at some time during their lives. More that one-half of non-business majors have also indicated an interest in taking an entrepreneurship course to help prepare for such opportunities (Shinnar, Pruett, & Toney, 2009). The student of today has been identified as more entrepreneurial in outlook than past generations and responsible for many new business start-ups (Levenburg, Lane, & Schwarz, 2006).

The growth and integration of entrepreneurship programs into higher education is under way, but there many ways to improve upon current trends. The number of programs in entrepreneurship including majors, minors, and certificate programs "have more than quadrupled, from 104 in 1975 to more than 500 in 2006" (Kauffman Panel on Entrepreneurship Curriculum in Higher Education, 2008, p. 6). In addition to complete programs, there has been growth in the number of entrepreneur courses offered by colleges and universities, from 250 in 1985, to more than 5,000 today (Kauffman Panel on Entrepreneurship Curriculum in Higher Education, 2008). Since 2003, the Kauffman Foundation as spent $60-million to promote entrepreneurship courses and programs (Wasley, 2008). Rankings of universities of colleges have also started including recognition for entrepreneurship programs as a separate discipline topic in addition to traditional business school areas such as marketing and accounting (Levenburg, Lane, & Schwarz, 2006).

An appropriate place for entrepreneurship education to intersect with communication, mass communication, or journalism programs is in the introduction to public relations course. Effective public relations skills are a valuable asset for the small business owner, but these skills are not widely taught or developed in the contemporary public relations curriculum or in entrepreneurship programs. This paper explores the absence of entrepreneurship education within the public relations educational environment. It recommends that the introductory course in public relations include research and recommendations for the effective use of public relations by small businesses and other entrepreneurial enterprises. This paper offers a draft outline of a "missing chapter" in the introduction to public relations textbook, public relations for entrepreneurs. This paper plays an advocacy role for the expansion of entrepreneurship education into the public relations curriculum, beginning with the introductory course. This paper was

supported, in part, by a grant from the Coleman Foundation Faculty Entrepreneurship Fellows Program.

Public Relations Education Goals and Content

Reviews and evaluations of public relations curriculum have focused primarily on the "fit" between the academic program and the needs of practicing public relations professionals. Reports by the Commission on Public Relations Education, for example, have identified changes in the professional landscape for public relations practitioners, and have made recommendations for curricular models to support that professional aspiration. They have published four reports including curricular guidelines since 1975. These models recommend a list of courses, critical topics, and issues facing public relations professionals today. They are designed to fulfill the objective of "connecting public relations education more closely with the practice" (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2006, p.12). A recent report identifying global public relations practices also reinforces the view that undergraduate cousework or programs "are designed to prepare future practitioners" (Toth & Aldoory, 2010, p. 2).

This focus is understandable and necessary for the improvement of the profession and to help it become better defined. In fact, a primary goal of *The Professional Bond* report is improve the way "public relations education prepares today's student to match practitioners' criteria for entry and growth in the field" (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2006, p. 11). This emphasis, however, limits other aspects of public relations education and research. In the process of developing the academic resources for a practitioner focus, supporting research and data is directed towards that professional aspiration and less often towards generating data for use in other related contexts, such as the public relations needs of small organizations (Evatt, Ruiz, & Triplett, 2009).

Public relations education has been in transition over the past 15 or more years as approaches to the study and practice of public relations has evolved and the needs of students and practitioners have been transformed. Public relations education has embraced the understanding that it "is a communication discipline that requires practitioners and scholars to be familiar with the humanities, fine arts, social sciences, government, and business management, as well as legal, scientific and technical issues" (Heath, 1991, p. 186). The interdisciplinary focus for public relations has brought new content and students into the classroom.

Public relations course content has evolved to a focus that goes beyond creating the communication technician, "to a focus that would prepare graduates for positions that involve strategic planning, administrative and problem-solving duties" (Benigni, Lariscy, & Tinkham, 2002, p. 7). The expansion of the public relations curriculum means that it should continue to reinvent and adapt itself to the future professional needs of its students.

Students enroll in public relations courses for many reasons, not only to pursue a goal of working for a public relations agency, a major corporation, or to be a full-time public relations practitioner. They enroll in courses such as the introductory class in public relations for a variety of reasons, including the public relations major, humanities or general education requirements, a supplement to business courses, or elective needs in sports, education, arts, or sciences (Neff, 2002; Benigni, Lariscy, & Tinkham, 2002).

The introduction to public relations course is generally the entry level course in a public relations program. The content for such as a course is usually focused on issues regarding the theory, origin and principles of public relations (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2006). This course description is broad but includes a variety of topics. An inspection of the table

of contents for a few current introduction textbooks reveals the following list of potential topics or chapter headings (Wilcox & Cameron, 2012; Guth & Marsh, 2012; Heath & Coombs, 2006):

- What is Public Relations?
- Jobs/Careers in Public Relations
- A History of Public Relations
- The Publics/Audiences in Public Relations
- Communication Theory and Public Opinion
- Ethics and Social Responsibility
- Research and Evaluation
- Planning Strategies
- Tactics in Public Relations
- Multimedia Message Development
- Digital Issues in Public Relations
- Crisis Communication
- Public Relations and Marketing
- Cross-Cultural Communication
- Legal Issues
- The Future for Public Relations
- Public Relations Departments and Firms
- Risk and Public Relations
- Social Media
- Meetings and Events
- Radio and Television
- Entertainment, Sports, Tourism
- Public Affairs and Government
- Global Issues
- Nonprofits
- Health Public Relations

Most introductory textbooks include a background/history to the practice of public relations, an introduction to relevant communication theories, some of the tools used in public relations practices, and a few of the more specific contexts where public relations might be practiced. This limited review of many introduction to public relations texts on the market does not reveal any specific discussion of public relations for the small business owner or entreprenuer.

Entreprenuership Education and the Introduction to Public Relations Course

The rise of entreprenuership education is a reflection of both the economic reality of small businesses and the need to adapt higher education goals to include entreprenuership as part of the preparation of students for future success. Linking public relations education to the objectives of entreprenuership education makes sense after an understanding of what entreprenuership is.

Definitions of entreprenuership and entreprenuers hint at the natural connection to communication efforts, and in particular, public relations practices. Wooldridge (2009) defines an entreprenuer as "somebody who offers an innovative solution to a (frequently unrecognized) problem." The Kauffman Panel on Entrepreneurship Curriculum in Higher Education (2008), describes entreprenuership as "the transformation of an innovation into a sustainable enterprise

that generates value" (p. 5). The Coleman Foundation defines entreprenuership as "Self-employment through business ownership which has significant elements of risk, control and reward" (Coleman Foundation, 2011).

The pedagogical similarities between public relations and entrepreneurial education show common features that make them classroom allies. Public relations education is defined by its interdisciplinary focus and its combination of theory and practical perspectives that train future practitioners. These same skill sets are within the realm of the entrepreneur. As the Kauffman Foundation has explained, the product of the entrepreneurship education "must give students the practical, how to technical skills to create, manage, assess, and sustain new enterprises. Among other things, they need to learn to devise a product, create a business plan, find new resources, build a company, market their innovation, and so forth" (Kauffman Panel on Entrepreneurship Curriculum in Higher Education, 2008, p. 8).

Entrepreneurship education has also been linked to the goals of general education as an educational opportunity to develop valued skills. As an pedagogical tool, it has been described as promoting student teamwork skills, fostering innovative thinking, demonstrating risk taking strategies, teaching students about cultural values, economic issues, and legal practices. Entrepreneurship is also offered as a discipline connected to many parts of the higher education environment. It has relevance to the student of history, literature, political science, health care, environmental sciences, art, music, in addition to the expected link to business and education (Kauffman Panel on Entrepreneurship Curriculum in Higher Education, 2008; Shinnar, Pruett, & Toney, 2009; Wasley, 2008).

To expand entrepreneurship education to students outside of the business classroom is an advantage for students and universities. Although a majority of entrepreneurship initiatives in the United States are offered within business schools, a much larger number of students have an interest in starting businesses and see this as a possible direction after graduation (Levenburg, Lane, & Schwarz, 2006). Non-business majors have expressed their interest in taking an entrepreneurship course and statistics ranging from two-thirds to 70% of college students believe that they might become entrepreneurs during their lifetimes (Shinnar, Pruett, & Toney, 2009). The world of work also requires us to expect students to experience multiple careers over their lifetimes, and that anyone would be a small business owner, not just the M.B.A. or business undergaduate major (Wasley, 2008).

Incorporating Entrepreneurship into the Introduction to Public Relations Course

Public relations education is commonly defined with respect to its diversity of disciplinary relationships. Heath (1991) reports that "public relations is a communication discipline that requires practitioners and scholars to be familiar with the humanities, fine arts, social sciences, government, and business management, as well as legal, scientific and technical issues" (p. 186). He also advises that we should not conduct our research or professional practice without regard to business management concepts (p. 187). The integration of entrepreneurship into the introductory public relations course suggests that certain aspects of being an entrepreneur mean utilizing public relations concepts and skills.

One of the few research projects to provide a public relations context to small business creation and the entrepreneurial approach was published in 2009 by Evatt, Ruiz, and Triplett for the International Association of Business Communicators. *Thinking Big, Staying Small*, provides an investigation into the public relations needs and understandings of small businesses. Their research supports the suggestion that public relations education has not reached entrepreneurs.

Their study revealed that there is limited published research on the "communication functions, efforts, and needs of the small organization" (Evatt, Ruiz, & Triplett, 2005, p. 12). This study explores what small businesses think about the public relations function and the most important public relations skills. This advice is a valuable template to use in outlining the "missing" chapter for the introduction to public relations textbook.

Small business owners defined public relations broadly. In fact, their description of public relations functions are consistent with the broad, management oriented perspective our contemporary educational and professional literatures recommend. In the study, public relations was considered an integral part of an organization, a function that was proactive and reactive, socially aware, with an emphasis on relationship building, without overemphasizing publicity seeking behaviors. Because of the small size of these organizations, public relations was identified as a responsibility of the CEO or other leader of the organization, such as the owner or president. It was also not uncommon to think of the leader and the organization as one in the eyes of some stakeholders (Evatt, Ruiz, & Triplett, 2005).

The results of this study help to identify potential areas where a "missing" chapter could focus, either to provide enterpreneur-specific content or to provide a way to integrate the course content from elsewhere in the introduction to public relations text to the enterpreneurship chapter. The public relations functions identified in this study include the following list of activities defined as public relations related (Evatt, Ruiz, & Triplett, 2005, p. 72):

- Mediation.
- Complaint resolution.
- Marketing strategy to differentiate and show uniqueness.
- Joining professional and business organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce.
- Targeting the right audiences.
- Accountability.
- Public speaking.
- Newsletters.
- Selective news releases and articles.
- Web sites with both interactive and proactive material.
- Becoming active in the community for no reason but to contribute positively.

In addition to this list of activities, the study also identified specific tactics that small business owners identified as public relations specific (Evatt, Ruiz, & Triplett, 2005, p. 73):

- Partnerships/collaborations with other groups/organizations.
- E-mail lists.
- Special events, including when needed, protests and rallies.
- Building community relationships.
- Speeches and presentations to local community groups.
- Volunteer services.
- Personal contacts, including phone calls.

This study, along with other recommendations for small business utilization of public relations, can provide guidance for how we should frame an introduction to public relations chapter. It should be integrated into the rest of the textbook, referencing existing content along with unique perspectives guided by entrepreneurial practices.

Outlining the Small Business Chapter for Introduction to Public Relations
        The small business chapter would be similar to other introduction to public relations chapters on more specific public relations topics, like nonprofit organizations, political public relations, corporate models, entertainment, sports, or tourism public relations. It would not be a theory driven chapter, nor would it be a focus only on a more specific tactic(s). It might also be integrated as a part of a larger chapter on career or context discussions concerning pubic relations practices. This content could also be more creatively integrated throughout a textbook with the intention of showing how a small business or leader could use public relations training throughout their professional development. A small business specific textbook for use in entrepreneurship courses or as a handbook for new entrepreneurs or small business owners would also be a valuable way to communicate this integration of public relations and the small business. Finding some way to give the public relations student an introduction to entrepreneurship would widen their understanding of the public relations function. This same process would make the introduction to public relations course more relevant and valuable to an entrepreneurship program and draw together students from a more diverse set of academic perspectives and objectives in higher education.
        In broad terms, the "missing" small business chapter might include some of the following general sections or topics:

- What is an Entrepreneur?
- Leadership and Public Relations Expectations
- Relationship Building and the Small Business
- Local Public Relations Tactics of Entrepreneurs
- Small Business Stakeholders
- Advertising, Marketing, and Public Relations: Making Choices
- Social Media and Online Resources for a New Business
- Social Responsibility and Community Building with a Small Business
- Employees as a Public Relations Asset

There are other topics or ways to organize this information into useful sections. The objective is to bridge these two areas and show their common features and contributions they make to each other.

Conclusion
        The economic reality we live in reveals that small businesses, started by individuals or small groups, are a major engine for our economy. Responsible for more employment, productivity, innovation, and growth, they move us forward. The growth of entrepreneurship activity by students and the expansion of entrepreneurship programs in higher education, call out for resources across disciplinary lines to help promote one of the most important economic resources we possess.
        The introduction to public relations course and the public relations discipline can serve majors, minors, and other students who will benefit from the integration of public relations with small business creation. Small companies can grow, and with public relations training even future management can be taught how public relations might serve their organization. The Public Relations Society of America is an active promoter of the idea that public relations includes: "Counseling management at all levels in the organization with regard to policy decisions, courses of action and communication, taking into account their public ramifications and the organization's social or citizenship responsibilities" (Public Relations Society of America, 2010).

The more the public relations educator can connect with future entrepreneurs and small business innovators, the public relations profession will enhance its status and value to business. The small business entrepreneur is often responsible for creating the "symbols, ideologies, languages, beliefs, rituals, and myths, aspects of the more cultural and expressive components of organizational life" (Aldrich, 2005, p. 468). With the introduction to public relations course, future entrepreneurs may also be "trained in strategically solving public relations problems" (Berkowitz & Hristodoulakis, 1999, p. 100). To embrace that and to harness entrepreneurship through effective public relations efforts is of benefit to educators, public relations practitioners, and big and small business leaders everywhere.

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Stating Organizational Values As An Approach to Obtaining Strategic Legitimacy: An Examination of Corporate Use of Organizational Values on Fortune 500 Web Sites

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Abstract

Organizational legitimacy has remained an enigma for public relations practitioners attempting to put the concept into practice for their organizations and clients. From an academic standpoint, surmounting the theoretical arguments and taking the concept from abstraction to practicality is a difficult task. Using a content analysis of Fortune 500 Web sites and Web content, this study identifies and examines the strategic legitimation efforts within the top organizations in the U.S. The paper also discusses the strategic and institutional perspectives of organizational legitimacy and places them clearly in their respective places within the realm of public relations scholarship.

Stakeholders want to establish and maintain relationships with businesses they feel are legitimate. The rationality of this statement has made obtaining organizational legitimacy a top priority for organizations that want to survive in today's business environment. Despite its obvious importance, the practical development of organizational legitimacy has remained at a standstill because of uncertainty among researchers in the fields of sociology, psychology, and business about how to make to concept useful. This often-mentioned, yet ill-developed concept is in dire need of a rebirth and reformulation that places it squarely in its most useful place – public relations scholarship and practice.

In its simplest form, organizational legitimacy represents the state of equilibrium that exists between an organization that is part of the highly scrutinized business landscape and the external constituents that control its survival through the power of public opinion. The recipe for equilibrium begins at the point of values, which must be overtly implied through the organization's strategic legitimation efforts and interpreted by the public as meeting expectations. Put simply, individuals judge the legitimacy of an organization based on whether or not they perceive that the organization possesses values similar to their own. The issue for most organizations is determining the appropriate behaviors and messages that imply these values.

Since obtaining organizational legitimacy relies on communication and strategic behavioral responses to environmental feedback, it fits seamlessly within the issues management paradigm. This is an area that most public relations practitioners agree functions to create harmony and agreement among organizations and their constituencies. Using a quantitative content analysis of Fortune 500 Web sites and Web content, this paper examines the strategic legitimation efforts of companies that are communicating and defining their values to create equilibrium among their external stakeholders. This paper also discusses the strategic and institutional perspectives of organizational legitimacy and, through an application of each of these perspectives to their relevant areas within an issues management context, provides the framework for the practical development of organizational legitimacy for public relations practice.

Organizational Legitimacy

Since stakeholders want to establish and maintain relationships with companies that are legitimate, organizations must determine the recipe for achieving this status in the minds of their constituents. Organizational legitimacy, despite being a familiar and often-used term, carries with it an aura of complexity and a highly philosophical stream of literature that makes it an irrelevant concept for public relations practitioners. Suchman (1995) conducted a thorough examination of this literature and found that organizational legitimacy is divided between the strategic (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Parsons, 1956) and institutional perspectives (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Suchman (1995) argued that the institutional perspective represents society's view of legitimacy. This view comes from the appropriate and rational manner in which an organization within a particular industry should operate. Institutional legitimacy provides a detailed view of how members of society use dialogue and the power of public opinion to create rational market or industry-wide standards that prescribe the specific behaviors an organization must enact to be perceived as legitimate. Researchers in this paradigm argue legitimate behaviors are those that

are rational and appropriate according to societal standards that emerge through collective discussion (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Conversely, the strategic perspective conceptualizes how legitimacy is actualized within the specific organization through the use of strategic communication and behavioral efforts to acquire societal support (Suchman, 1995). This systems-based perspective emphasizes the use of communication and active involvement with external publics to establish legitimacy from the organization's point of view. According to the strategic paradigm, the achievement of legitimacy is viewed as an organizational resource that allows the organization to continue its operations.

Most of the academic discussion surrounding organizational legitimacy has been focused on advocating the precedence of one perspective over the other. The search for a universal, one-size-fits-all perspective has been problematic for researchers attempting to move organizational legitimacy from a point of theoretical abstraction to a practical concept. Holtzhausen (2000) argued that "it is only through the use of multiple paradigms and methodologies that public relations practitioners and scholars can become 'bricoleurs,' patching together sets of principles that allow them to provide solutions to a particular problem in a concrete situation" (p. 111). Taking this assertion into consideration, this paper seeks to identify the most useful positions for both perspectives of organizational legitimacy within the field of public relations, and more specifically, in the area of strategic issues management.

Coupled together, the strategic and institutional perspectives of legitimacy represent opposing forces between society and the organization. Institutional legitimacy symbolizes society's take on how organizations should act to be deemed as legitimate, which means adhering to collectively accepted values. Motivated by their own value systems, members of society judge organizations and determine ways in which they must act to match societal value systems. On the strategic end, organizations attempt to establish legitimacy by communicating that they possess recognizable values that match those of society.

Strategic Issues Management

Strategic issues management (SIM) is defined as "the management of organizational and community resources to advance organizational and community interests and rights by striking a mutual balance with stakeholders and stakeseekers" (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p.15). Heath and Palenchar identified SIM as an area of public relations that serves a mix of organizational functions that assist in strategic business planning, monitoring issues in the external environment, and determining societal standards for responsible behaviors. SIM efforts ultimately attempt to obtain balance or equilibrium between an organization and its publics through a process of proactive identification of potential threats. These threats are carefully analyzed and approached with change and action strategies, which are later evaluated to improve the process and strategy as a whole (Jones & Chase, 1979).

Bridges (2004) provided a conceptual framework for SIM that centered on systems theory (Weick, 1969), legitimacy gap theory (Sethi, 1979), and rhetorical theory (Heath, 2000). Systems theory views organizations as smaller systems that must use communication and strategic outputs to respond to issues in the larger environment. Sethi's (1979) legitimacy gap provides a theoretical description of the issues faced by an organization by defining them as discrepancies between public perceptions of an organization's behavior and its expectations for that organization.

Rhetorical theory is based on the assumptions "that both words (or other symbolic communication) and events (or other corporate behaviors) have different meanings to different participants in a dialogue and that dialogue creates an understanding of the meanings various groups attach to events or other facts and eventually proposed solutions to a contested issue" (Bridges, 2004, p.64). Heath and Palenchar (2009) use rhetorical theory to explain how issues may also arise through a misinterpretation of an organization's behaviors, which must be resolved through dialogue between the organization and concerned public.

Values

Individual Values

Values permeate every aspect of our existence as human beings. They represent each of our personal bottom lines (Posner, Kouzes, & Schmidt, 1985) while encompassing the preferable manner in which we should act. They command our behaviors, communication, needs and attitudes, and serve as the standards we use to morally judge others (Rokeach, 1973). Even though values remain one of the most significant and pervasive forces behind individual and organizational action, they remain difficult to operationalize.

 Rokeach (1973) defined a value as "an enduring belief that a particular mode of conduct or that a particular end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end states of existence" (p.5). Rokeach distinguished between modes of conduct, which he labeled as instrumental values, and end states of existence, which he labeled as terminal values. In other words, an instrumental value, which is represented by various actions on the part of an individual or organization, is a determinant for achieving a terminal value that is used to characterize the individual as a whole.

Organizational Values

Researchers have defined organizational values as "the means and ends that matter most to organizations" (Dobni, Brent Ritchie & Zerbe, 2000, p.91). Using Rokeach's definition for individual values, Argandoña (2003) argued that values represent desirable modes of behavior that guide organizational choices and decisions in a manner that achieves desirable end states of existence for the organization. Just like individual values, the core values of an organization are like a blueprint for its behaviors. They often hold the highest priority (Van Rekom, Van Reil, & Wierenga, 2006) and come together to help form an organization's culture (Schein, 1990).

The modern business environment consists of organizations attempting to coexist with highly demanding stakeholders. The actions of the organization, which are preceded and determined by specific values, are judged according to whether they adhere to societal standards, which are also preceded and determined by a specific set of values. Due to the unavoidable disconnect between organizations and their stakeholders, communicating values and, even more importantly, behaviors that imply these values, become ways in which organizations can promise to uphold the standards set them in their external environments.

Connecting Issues Management, Organizational Legitimacy and Values

Many definitions of public relations are centered on the themes of mutual adaptation and support (Heath, 2000), and relationships (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2000; Kent & Taylor, 2002) that lead to a balance between the organization and its publics. Public relations helps an organization to achieve this goal of balance so it can survive in a turbulent environment. The

theme of equilibrium or balance between organizations and their publics is extremely apparent in strategic issues management.

The idea of balance represents an ideal outcome between organizations and their constituents. What is missing is a conceptual framework that identifies what balance actually means, how it can be threatened and, most importantly from a practical standpoint, how it can be achieved. The scholarship on organizational legitimacy fills in this gap and allows these concepts to be developed on a practical level.

Public relations scholars have recognized the importance of organizational legitimacy for several years (Boyd, 2000; Metzler, 2001; Patel, Xavier, Robina & Broom, 2005; Roper, 2002) and it has been recently posited to be the central theme of most strategic issues management activities (Heath and Palenchar, 2009). Despite its obvious importance to the field, organizational legitimacy has until now been nothing but an abstract expression that lacks any substantive application to the field and, more importantly, any real benefit to practitioners. Researchers attempting to develop organizational legitimacy past this theoretical level have faced several methodological challenges in testing, and then perhaps applying, the concept.

The theoretical assumptions of systems theory explain how an organization must use strategic communication and outputs to establish balance or congruence in its larger external environment. This congruence is represented as organizational legitimacy, which can be viewed as the ideal point of intersection between organizational behaviors and favorable public interpretation of those behaviors.

Issues, such as those described by Sethi (1979), are viewed as discrepancies based on public perception and interpretation of an organization's behaviors and the expectations the public has for that organization. From the societal view, expectations for an organization are driven by societal values. From the organizational perspective, those expectations are met by organizational behaviors and messages that imply these same values. When these values match, an organization is deemed as legitimate.

Rhetorical theory is closely related to the institutional perspective of organizational legitimacy. Both are based on the assumptions "that both words (such as values) and events (or other corporate behaviors) have different meanings to different participants and that dialogue creates an understanding of the meanings various groups attach to events or other facts and eventually proposed solutions to a contested issue" (Bridges, 2004). Heath and Palenchar (2009) also use rhetorical theory to explain how issues may also arise through a misinterpretation of an organization's behaviors, which must be resolved through dialogue between the organization and concerned public.

From a strategic issues management perspective, issues that arise in the organization's external environment can be viewed as legitimacy gaps or disparities between *implied* values – behaviors and communication from the organization – and the value-driven standards held by members of society that are used to *evaluate* organizations. In order to spark the academic debate about the role of organizational legitimacy in public relations practice, there is a need to examine how current organizations are communicating their values to the public. The current strategic legitimation efforts of modern organizations represent one half of the puzzle that represents balance between organizations and society. The current exploratory study will attempt to identify the strategic legitimation endeavors of the top businesses in the U.S. to unravel the true nature of strategic organizational legitimacy in the current business environment. It seeks to identify how various organizations interpret societal expectations and communicate their culture and values back to their publics.

The following research questions were developed based on this review of the literature:
    RQ1: What are the most frequently used value clusters among Fortune 500 companies?
    RQ2: What the most frequently used value clusters among organizations in the different organizational   types?
    RQ3: Do Fortune 500 corporations attempt to define their values?

Methods

The study consisted of a systematic analysis of the contents of Websites of the 500 top-earning US corporations as determined by the 2010 *Fortune*'s Fortune 500 online list (http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune500/2010/). Content analysis of Web sites is an excellent way to identify and measure an organization's values because Web content represents "the organization's actual position" or espoused values of the organization (Scott, 2002, p.46). This methodology also enables the identification of an organization's strategic legitimation efforts through its own descriptions of how the organization lives its values.

Research Design

In the quantitative portion of the study measurement of (1) the presence or absence of various factors within the Website, as described below and (2) where on the Website those variables were found, constituted the dependent variables in the study. No change agent or other independent variables were introduced. The researchers analyzed the manifest and latent content of the Web sites through the use of a structured coding sheet. Coders were also asked to list, or cut and paste in, words and value statements that the corporations claimed as their corporate values on their Web sites.

Categories

As no similar study has ever been done, the researchers developed categories for this research study based on their research questions. The variables that were coded were (1) ranking in the Fortune 500, (2) type of business or purpose of the company, (3) whether corporate values were listed on the Website and (4) where they were listed, (5) specific values, (6) whether the term "value" is defined for stakeholders and, if it is, (7) what that definition was.

Throughout this paper the researchers have referred to "Web content" in addition to "Website." Today's corporations put many documents on their Websites that are not part of the site, but can be downloaded from it. The coders looked at all of these in determining where corporate values are listed. Examples include annual reports, corporate social responsibility reports, sustainability reports, codes of ethics and codes of business conduct.

Coding Procedures

Using the 2010 *Fortune*'s Fortune 500 online list as the starting point, coders were directed to record the presence or absence of various indicators, or the placement in the site of variables of concern to the researchers. All of the quantitative coding was nominal (the presence or absence of variables such as values; the type of organization; the placement within the Website).

Because the population analyzed consisted of only 500 corporate Websites, and the number of variables was small, two trained coders were used. The coders were introduced to and discussed the categories prior to the start of a coding pretest, and then coded the same 25 corporate Websites. The factors found in those 25 sites were then discussed, and the same sites were recoded, and then again discussed. At this point the coding sheet was adapted for what the

coders were finding, particularly in terms of type of organization and where the information was placed within the site. Coding took place over a two-week period with an overlap of 60 sites (based on Hayes & Krippendorf, 2007) to again check for inter-coder reliability.

Inter-coder Reliability

Of the two coders used to analyze the Websites and Web content, one was a researcher and the other was a graduate student. The first coder analyzed approximately 56% of the organizational Websites and Web content and the second analyzed approximately 44% of the Websites and Web content. Inter-coder reliability ranged from .84 to 1.0 using Krippendorff's alpha (Hayes & Krippendorf, 2007). No test of intra-coder reliability was conducted because of the intensity of the training and the short duration of the coding period.

The data were recorded, transferred into SPSS 18 for PC and analyzed by running frequencies and cross tabulations.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative information on the values found on each Website was noted by the coders and listed by company number. An additional qualitative content analysis was conducted on a random sample of the 500 corporations to determine specific values that the various types of organizations listed as ones they held. Of the 145 corporations selected, only 103 had values listed on their Websites. To determine the values, the researchers developed value clusters based on related words used on the Web sites. The value clusters were determined to be: fairness; honesty/integrity; openness/transparency; diverse/inclusive/opportunity; trustworthy; responsible/reliable/dependable/commitment; innovative/continuous improvement/ adaptable/creative; accountable; customer-centered (including respect, support and service); ethical/do the right thing; efficient/performance/results/productive; CSR (community and/or environment); quality/accurate/excellence; experienced/trained/ teamwork/talented (employees); those organizations that say they have or follow their values but don't list anything specific; and an "other" category, the most frequently used word being "value" as in "a good value."

Results

The first research question attempted to identify the most frequently used value clusters among Fortune 500 companies. The quantitative analysis of the study demonstrated that the top 500 organizations in the U.S. actively communicate the value clusters of honesty/integrity (48%), customer-centered (46%), diversity (37%), innovation (29%), experience and training (30%), quality (25%), responsibility (16%), accountability (16%), ethical (14%), other (13%), efficiency (12%), trust (10%), openness (9%).

The second research question attempted to identify the most frequently used value clusters among the six organizational types of retail, service, manufacturing, transportation, technology and agricultural businesses. The findings presented in Table 1 reveal the top three most frequently identified value clusters in each organizational sector.

The last research question asked if Fortune 500 corporations attempt to define their values, meaning do they provide detailed descriptions that describe organizational behaviors that imply their values to the public. Table 2 reveals how the qualitative analysis identified specific descriptors and discussion of behaviors used by the organization to imply each of their value clusters. These definitions provide stakeholders with a specific explanation about how each value is translated into action on behalf of the organization.

Table 1

Most Frequently Found Value Clusters among Organizational Types

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Organizational Type	Value Clusters (in order of popularity)
Retail	Responsibility, Accountability, Efficiency
Service	Quality, Customer-centered, Efficiency
Manufacturing	Efficiency, Quality, Experience/Training
Transportation	Ethical, Diversity, Experience/Training
Technology	Responsibility, Ethical, Innovation
Agriculture/Food	Openness, Accountability, Responsibility
Financial	Fairness, Trust, Efficiency
Pharmaceutical	Quality, Openness, Ethical
Energy	Trust, Diversity, Openness

Table 2

Definitions of Values According to Organizational Websites

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Cluster	Other descriptors	Behaviors that imply the value
Honesty	Honesty/Integrity	Employees are personally accountable for high standards and being honest in all they do; keep their promises
Customer-centered	Respect, support, service	Customer is first; respond to their needs and expectations
Diversity	Inclusive, opportunity diverse	Respect diverse talents, perspectives and experiences because they foster growth & new ideas
Innovation	Adaptable, creative, constant improvement	New ideas; adapt to changes in environment or customer needs and desires; apply creative ingenuity to make them better, faster, first
Ethical	Do the right thing	Earn people's trust; be open and fair; keep commitments; reputation is a source of organizational pride
Efficiency	Performance, results, productive	Focus on goals and produce the best product/service available

Trustworthy	Trust	Goes with honesty and respect to help build internal and external relationships; often used with mutual trust
Experience & Training	Teamwork, talented	Encourage employee development through coaching and training; work together, hire the best, committed to success of employees
Quality	Accuracy, excellence	Exceed expectations; products are best-in-class in terms of value received and dollars paid; personal endorsement of product
Responsibility	Responsible, reliable, risks dependable, committed and benefits	Weigh short-term and long-term
Accountability	Accountable	To shareholders, customers and each other; often used with "holding each other accountable
Openness	Transparency	Tell the whole story, not just what makes them look good
Fairness		Related to justice; Often used in close proximity to honesty, respect and integrity
CSR	Community and/or environment	Respect physical and social environment
Other	Value, profit, winning growth	All related to the success of the organization or what customers get for their money
Say have values	No values listed	These are organizations that refer to their values but give no idea about what those values might be

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Discussion

    The scope of this study was to take a detailed look at the strategic legitimation efforts of the modern organization by examining how the most profitable corporations in the U.S. communicate their values on their Web sites. The rationale for this study was to provide another necessary component for conceptualizing organizational legitimacy into a practical concept for

public relations practice. By identifying the values used by organizations, and how they define these values to the public, this paper is moving one step closer to identifying how organizations can be perceived as legitimate by their constituencies.

Theoretically, organizational legitimacy represents equilibrium and balance between organizations and society. This paper has combined various areas of extant research to formulate the idea of congruence or balance as a level of similarity between the values of an organization and the values of society. What has been missing from the puzzle is a practical and in-depth explanation of organizational values in terms of how they are used and communicated by organizations, which represents organizational legitimacy from the strategic perspective.

The study revealed an admirable list of values that are communicated by Fortune 500 organizations. Honesty/integrity was identified as the most frequently implied value cluster among Fortune 500 companies. This finding demonstrates that management in the organizations view honesty/integrity as a significant terminal value across all markets and industries.

For example, Northrup Grumman defined integrity as a significant terminal value defined as being "personally accountable for the highest standards of behavior, including honesty and fairness" in all aspects of the organization's operations, as well as "being committed to being responsible citizens and employees." Another company, Tyson Foods, defined integrity by an acknowledgment "that trust and respect enable us to go beyond expectations."

The business literature echoes the need to focus on integrity as a significant terminal value. Paine (1994) described an integrity-based management approach as one that is centered on ethics and strives "to define companies' guiding values, aspirations, and patterns of thought and conduct" (p.107). According to this article every action that an organization undertakes leads to that organization being perceived as having a high level of integrity.

The current study identified that organizations in different industries emphasize different value clusters. For example, it is no surprise that service organizations actively tout adherence to values such as quality, customer-centeredness and efficiency. Service organizations are judged according to the caliber of service being provided, and being a service organization implies being customer-centered or providing a service that meets the needs of the consumer. High-quality service organizations must also be efficient in terms of the service provided and the use of resources to achieve their mission as an organization.

This study also revealed that companies in the technology industry promote an adherence to being ethical. This finding corresponds with current debate about how technological advancement of social media and communication technologies impinge on individual privacy. Society has placed a higher expectation on technology companies to be ethical in terms of how they deal with customer data and private information, and the results of this study demonstrate how organizations are attempting meet these expectations.

The value clusters of openness, accountability and responsibility were frequently implied on the Web content of agriculture and food companies. This finding is indicative of a new theme in society where these organizations are highly scrutinized for their lack of transparency regarding the ingredients in their products and the cleanliness of their manufacturing facilities. The agricultural industry has suffered health and safety disasters that have resulted in a period of increased regulation and social demand for more transparency and accountability. These companies are actively promoting their adherence to openness, accountability and responsibility in an attempt to maintain legitimacy. Pepsico, for instance, in their values statement indicates they "care for our customers, our consumers and the world we live in," and that they "sell only

products we can be proud of." Smithfield Foods, which is currently under scrutiny by animal welfare groups, notes that they seek "to produce safe, high-quality, nutritious food" and "to advance animal welfare."

The study also identified that organizations in the energy and oil industry are currently communicating more values than any other industry at this point in time. With past crises such as the Exxon Valdez and BP oil spills, these companies are faced with high levels of public scrutiny and distrust, both of which challenge their legitimacy in the public forum. Conversely, customer-centeredness is the one value that is communicated the least by energy and oil companies, which reveals an area of improvement in the communication and strategic business plans of these organizations.

This data also revealed that Fortune 500 companies use approximately 17 different value clusters to tout their organizational legitimacy to the public. While there is a lack of definitional specificity in terms of what these values actually mean to the organization and how they shape behaviors, some interesting definitions were revealed from the analysis of the data.

A minority of corporations very clearly set out the values they lived by, by not just listing a series of words, but by telling the reader how those values were a strategic part of the corporation. Some statements were simple, such as that from Cisco Systems, a technology company that stated "we put core values like these into practice on the job every day; doing the right thing is just part of our DNA." The retail giant Macy's was another company that clearly stated how it saw its values. Its values "are the drivers of our Company's goal to provide a work environment that is inclusive, respectful, safe and healthy – one that fosters wellbeing, energy and creativity. Each one of us is responsible for ensuring that our actions and words help to build and maintain such an environment." Prudential Financial states "our core values are the principles that guide us in our work every day to help our customers achieve financial prosperity and peace of mind." Apple writes that it will "demonstrate honesty and high ethical standards in all business dealings. Treat customers, suppliers, employees, and others with respect and courtesy. Protect the confidentiality of Apple's information and the information of our customers, suppliers, and employees. Ensure that business decisions comply with all applicable laws and regulations."

Several corporations such as HCA, a medical services company put its values into simple "we" statements for the reader: "We recognize and affirm the unique and intrinsic worth of each individual. We treat all those we serve with compassion and kindness. We act with absolute honesty, integrity and fairness in the way we conduct our business and the way we live our lives. We trust our colleagues as valuable members of our healthcare team and pledge to treat one another with loyalty, respect, and dignity."

McDonalds uses the same style on its Web site with a list of "we" statements: We place the customer experience at the core of all we do. We are committed to our people. We believe in the McDonald's System. We operate our business ethically. We give back to our communities. We grow our business profitably. We strive continually to improve.

Duke Energy uses a similar format, but connects the "we" statements to its already stated values. This organization defined *caring* as "looking out for each other and striving to make the environment and communities around the company better places to live" and *integrity* as "always doing the right thing, honoring commitments and admitting when the company is wrong." Openness is a value that Duke Energy defines as being "open to change and to new ideas from our co-workers, customers and other stakeholders" that ultimately allow the company to "grow the business and make it better."

The value cluster of customer-centeredness was most frequently defined as putting customers first and responding to their needs and expectations. Taking this definition into consideration, organizations that want to be viewed as customer-centered need to obtain high levels of feedback from their consumers. That input must then be used to shape the operations and direction of the organization in order to be meaningful. Innovation was also a value cluster defined in the study as responding to environmental pressures and customer needs.

Organizations in the study defined quality in terms of exceeding the expectations of their consumers and by providing products and services that give a high value for the amount of dollars paid (cost of the product). People in our society often believe that "you get what you pay for" and businesses are responding.

Responsibility was defined by many corporations as a careful calculation between short-term and long-term risks and benefits and was related to corporate social responsibility. Researchers have established the theoretical foundation for what it means to be socially responsible (Carroll; 1991; Schwartz & Carroll, 2003). Our study has identified that CSR is viewed as a value by the American public and corporations. As a value, CSR guides the socially responsible behaviors of the organization while also serving as standards upon which the responsibility of those behaviors is judged. When looked at as a terminal value, CSR becomes the precedent for all organizational action and it serves to guide every behavior of the organization.

From the public perspective, CSR gives a caring, human-like attitude to an organization. This perspective is based on the personal values of members of society. It can be argued that social irresponsibility has been based on a refusal to adopt these human-like values and the difficulty involved in translating these values into organizational policy and action.

Openness involves what organizations defined as "telling the whole story." This concept can be translated into what the academic literature has labeled as transparency. Rawlins (2009) defined transparency as "the deliberate attempt to make available all legally releasable information – whether positive or negative in nature – in a manner that is accurate, timely, balanced, and unequivocal, for the purpose of enhancing the reasoning ability of publics and holding organizations accountable for their actions, policies, and practices" (p.75).

Both openness and transparency should be considered a process that allows stakeholders and publics to scrutinize an organization on their own terms, or according to the information they want to obtain (Coombs & Holladay, 2009).   These researchers argued that transparency begins by paying increased attention to public demands and by utilizing more efficient communication in the transparency process. In other words, organizations that are guided by the value of openness must communicate with external publics to obtain feedback about what information the public wants to know.

Implications for Public Relations Practice

The practicality of organizational legitimacy is based on a collective understanding of the functions and definitions of values. When looking at the interaction between organizations and society, members of society communicate their values through their expectations for the organization. In turn, organizations must communicate adherence to society's value-driven expectations through the use of visible behaviors and communication that imply these values. The equilibrium that is inherent in definitions of organizational legitimacy and public relations rests on the effectiveness of this process.

Organizations attempting to use strategic legitimation efforts must do more than just make claims about the terminal values they possess or what type of organization the corporation's

management thinks it has. Rather than this focus on terminal values, society wants to know how the organization is operating in terms of its actions and policies, and how those translate into meeting its value-driven expectations. The values of the organization that really matter are ultimately determined by society through their perceptions of both communication and visible behaviors of the organization.

Organizations presenting a simple list of single worded values should change their strategy to providing value statements or clusters that contain detailed information about which values are terminal, or most important for shaping how the company operates, as well as information about instrumental values such as what modes of conduct or specific actions and policies are enacted to serve as a basis for their claim of possessing terminal values. It is one thing for a corporation to claim that it believes in diversity, but it is much more effective for it to show its hiring or equal opportunity policies, or even the demographics of its employees.

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Exploring the Effects of Organization-Public Relationship Outcomes and Communication Coorientation on Organizational Reputation in a Higher Education Setting

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship among the organization-publics relationship (OPR) outcomes, communication coorientation, and organizational reputation in a higher education setting. The study not only explored a more comprehensive framework for factors influencing reputation, but also examined the perceptions of multiple publics (students, faculty, staff, and university leadership in a southern university, as well as registered voters in the local community).

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship among the organization-publics relationship (OPR) outcomes, communication coorientation, and organizational reputation in a higher education setting. This study is important in two ways. First, it is one of the first studies that explored a more comprehensive framework for factors influencing reputation. In the last two decades the concept of organizational reputation has received increasing attention from scholars, practitioners and the general population. Public relations literature suggested a linkage among reputation and organization-public relationship (OPR) outcomes, but only a limited number of studies explored it. Another concept, communication coorientation, although important, has rarely been applied to relational research, let alone its linkage to organizational reputation. Second, this study is one of the few that examined the perceptions of multiple publics. Using different methods (interviews, focus group and survey), this study employed data that came from a wide variety of sources including the students, faculty, staff, and university leadership in a southern university, as well as registered voters in the local community.

Results for the different groups of stakeholders varied, but overall data supported the findings from previous research that there was a positive relationship between relational variables and reputation. All relational outcomes and the overall quality of the relationship had a positive correlation with organizational reputation. This result supports the proposition that OPRs are an important factor in creating and/or maintaining the value of the organization. This is especially important for public relations professionals who are trying to establish their position as part of the management team and show their contribution to the organization's reputation, and potentially, its overall success.

The study also explored the effects of communication coorientation on OPR. An underlying assumption was that effective communication, as reflected in high *agreement*, *understanding*, *accuracy* and *congruency*, would have a positive effect on OPRs and their outcomes. Overall, *understanding* emerged as a factor having the biggest effect on OPR and its outcomes, while *agreement* had no impact at all. This result suggests that it is important for two parties to share their definitions of various issues and recognize existing problems and opportunities. Effective communication can potentially be a key to achieving good relationships and that in turn contributes to the reputation. Organizations should employ coorientation research into their public relations practice to make sure that they and their publics share the same definitions of various issues and problems, before embarking on expensive campaigns.

In the last two decades, the concept of organizational reputation has received growing attention from scholars, practitioners, and the general population. Various reputation rankings have been created, evaluating a wide range of organizations, from corporations (*Fortune* 500 Most Admired Companies, 2009), hospitals (*US News* America's Best Hospitals, 2009), to universities (*US News* National Universities Ranking, 2009). From a financial point of view, the market value of companies has been increasingly moving from tangible to intangible assets. In a 2003 study by Cap Gemini Ernst & Young (Schreiber, 2008), 80-85% of the market value of the S&P 500 companies came from intangible assets. Organizational reputation is widely believed to be such an intangible asset (Aqueveque & Ravasi, 2006; Barney, 1991; Ferguson, Deephouse & Ferguson, 2000; Fombrun, 1996), which results from the interactions and experiences between an organization and its constituencies over a period of time (Mahon, 2002). A survey of some of the world's leading CEOs and organization leaders during the 2004 World Economic Forum in Davos showed that corporate reputation was "a more important measure of success than stock market performance, profitability and return on investment" (*Corporate brand reputation,* 2004).

Despite the growing interest in reputation, it is only in recent years that communication scholars started researching this concept from the public relations perspective. One line of that research involves the relational approach. A limited but constantly growing number of studies show positive effects of relational outcomes on organizational reputation (Bronn, 2007; Yang, 2005, 2007). Another trend in research showing the contribution of public relations to achieving organizational goals is utilizing the coorientation model to establish the effects of communication on various aspects of public relations practice, such as fundraising or media relations (Kelly, 1998; Kelly, Thompson & Waters, 2006; Sallot, Steinfatt & Salwen, 1998; Waters, 2009). Following Ferguson (1984), coorientational variables are being used in research devoted to Organization-Public Relationships (OPRs). She suggested that the "coorientational measurement model should prove quite useful in conceptualizing relationship variables for [symmetrical communication] paradigm focus" (p. 17). This is because coorientational approach examines both sides of the relationships, rather than just the public's side, as is often the case in OPR studies.

It can be assumed that effective communication, as reflected in coorientation (e.g. high understanding, agreement and/or accuracy, McLeod & Chaffee, 1973), and maintaining quality relationships are interrelated. However, due to the lack of evidence from research, the direction of that linkage has not been established. For that reason, it is proposed in this exploratory study that coorientation variables have an effect on OPRs, and as such, they have an impact on organizational reputation.

As mentioned before, intangible assets constitute up to 85% of the organization's market value. This may be particularly true with universities, which face more and more competition in pursuing potential students, faculty, and donors. A review of the literature shows that reputation is a positioning factor for universities (i.e. a factor contributing to organization's value proposition and establishing its position in the marketplace), enabling them to recruit and retain students, seek after faculty members, and secure charitable giving (Sung & Yang, 2008, 2009). A southern urban university examined in this study is in that very position. Just in the city where its campus is located, there are four other universities, including the only Tier 1 university in the city. Apart from competing for money, students, and best instructors, the University is also actively pursuing funding and support to obtain Tier 1 status.

This study is important in two ways. First, it is one of the first studies that has explored a more comprehensive framework for factors influencing reputation. As mentioned before, the concept of organizational reputation has received increasing attention and public relations literature suggested a linkage among reputation and OPR outcomes, but only a limited number of studies explored it. Another concept of communication coorientation, although important, has rarely been examined in relational research, and its linkage to organizational reputation has been considered even less.

Second, this study is one of the few that examined the perceptions of multiple publics. Using different methods (interviews, focus group and survey), this study employed data that came from a wide variety of sources including the students, faculty, staff, and university leadership in a southern university, as well as registered voters in the local community.

Literature Review

Organization-Public Relationships

Since the introduction of relationship as a new construct in public relations theory and practice by Ferguson (1984), a large body of public relations research and literature has been

devoted to this concept. Public relations textbooks include the idea of mutually beneficial relationships being essential to the PR practice (Broom, 2009). Ledingham and Bruning (1998) proposed that the very term "public relations" suggests that PR research and practice should "focus on an organization's relationships with its key publics, concern itself with the dimensions upon which the relationship is built, and determine the impact that the organization-public relationship has on the organization and its key publics" (p. 56). Organization-public relationships are also in the center of the seminal theory in public relations research – the Excellence Theory, which resulted from the IABC Excellence Study (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

According to Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru and Jones (2003), who reviewed 748 abstracts or articles published in *Public Relations Review, Journal of Public Relations Research and Public Relations Research Annual*, the OPR concept is the second most often used paradigm in public relations studies within the theory development classification, accounting for 10 percent of reviewed texts. This supports Ledingham's (2003) view that relationship management meets standard criteria to become a general theory of public relations.

Scholars have examined OPR in various ways, including attempts to define the construct itself (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Huang, 2001; Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham & Bruning,1998), its dimensions (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997, 2000; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Grunig & Huang, 2000), measurement (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Huang, 2001; Ki & Hon, 2007a, 2007b, 2009), types of organization-public relationships (Hung, 2005; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998), cultivation strategies (Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ki & Hon, 2009), relationship management models, such as SMARTS (Ledingham, 2003), as well as the contribution of OPR to organizational effectiveness as reflected in achieving organizational strategies (Ni, 2009) and organizational reputation (Yang, 2007).

Definitions of OPR. Despite an abundance of relationship literature, no one widely accepted definition of OPR exists. Ki and Shin (2005) reviewed 38 articles devoted to OPRs and found that only four of them provided definitions for OPR by the article's author(s). Twelve other articles referenced OPR definitions from other sources, while the remaining 22 papers did not offer any definition, whether by author(s) themselves or through reference to other authors.

The lack of a consistent definition is an obstacle in developing a valid measure that could be used in OPR research and indeed further scholars' efforts to establish relationship management as a general theory of public relations. It also might create criticism that various scholars are not in fact researching or measuring the same phenomenon.

For the purposes of this study, the following definition of OPRs was used: "the degree that the organization and its publics trust one another, agree on one has rightful power to influence, experience satisfaction with each other, and commit oneself to one another" (Huang, 1998, p. 12).

Relational outcomes. Many studies attempted to identify dimensions of OPRs (Broom et al., 2000; Ferguson, 1984; Grunig, Grunig & Ehling, 1992; Grunig and Huang, 2000; Huang, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison & Lesko, 1997). Both Huang (2001) and Hon and Grunig (1999) proposed four relational dimensions that represented the construct of OPR: *trust, control mutuality, commitment,* and *satisfaction*, as well as identified two types of relationships – *communal* and *exchange*.

The review of research related to OPRs revealed that the most used tool to measure them is that created by Hon and Grunig (1999). They describe c*ontrol mutuality* as the extent to which parties concur "who has the rightful power to influence one another" (p. 3). *Trust* exemplifies the

degree of confidence one party has in the other one and its readiness to open itself to the other party. *Satisfaction* shows the degree to which "each party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 3). According to Hon and Grunig (1999), *commitment* shows the extent to which one party sees the relationship as worth cultivating.

In terms of the two types of relationships, *exchange relationship* occurs when one party provides resources to the other one based on the fact that the other party has given some benefits in the past or is expected to do so in the future. On the other hand, *communal relationship* occurs when both parties provide resources as a result of a concern for the well-being of the other – even if they get nothing in return. According to Hon and Grunig (1999), "for most public relations activities, developing communal relationships with key constituencies is much more important to achieve than would be developing exchange relationships" (p.3). The reliability scores from the pilot studies suggested that the scales were "good measures of perceptions of relationships, strong enough to be used in evaluating relationships" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 5).

OPR and organizational reputation. Public relations practitioners have been challenged to demonstrate the value of public relations to their organizations (Hon, 1997). As a result, both professionals and researchers looked for the key factors that would allow them to prove public relations effectiveness at the organizational level. Two of the suggested focal concepts were OPRs and organizational reputation. Griffin (2002) and Hutton, Goodman, Alexander and Genest (2001) observed that reputation management became popular with public relations practitioners as a means to show the economic value in the function of public relations.

Yang (2005) claimed that "the concepts of organization-public relationships and organizational reputation can be integrated within a theoretical framework of public relations effectiveness" (p. 2). He further proposed to integrate those two concepts in a model, drawing from other researchers who have suggested the effect of organization–public relational outcomes on organizational reputation (Coombs, 2000; Fombrun, 1996; Grunig & Hung, 2002; Grunig et al., 2002; Knox, Maklan, & Thompson, 2000; Yang & Grunig, 2005). To date, there is a very limited body of scholarship regarding this association; however, an increasing number of scholars are involved in the research of this approach. Among others, Yang (2005, 2007) and Bronn (2007) demonstrated a positive relationship between relational outcomes and organizational reputation. Those results are important, as they can lead public relations professionals to an understanding of how the organizational reputation is formed. Furthermore, they redefine the concept of reputation as being a reflection of existing relationships and organizational efforts to achieve positive outcomes or, as Yang and Grunig (2005) put it, the "by-product of organization-public relationships management," rather than a concept dismissed by many practitioners as mere "image creation" (Hutton, 1999; Hutton, Goodman, Alexander & Genest, 2001).

Conceptualizing Reputation

The growing scholarship on reputation has led to numerous conceptualizations of corporate reputation (Helm, 2005). Management scholars conceptualized reputation as a resource for the company, and as such, something that can be managed and that creates a competitive advantage (Dowling, 2006; Fombrun, 1996). Other approaches concentrated on corporate social responsibility, issues management, branding of the products, and services. Finally, some studied reputation as the evaluation of financial investment (Mahon, 2002).

Various definitions and conceptualizations of reputation are also present within the public relations literature. One of the popular approaches considered organizational reputation as a collective phenomenon (Sung & Yang, 2009). Bromley (2000) explained that "reputation is a collective phenomenon, and consensus underpins collective action…. Collective reactions … depend on 'consensus,' meaning total or substantial conformity in the distribution of beliefs and agreement on how to react" (p. 245). Similarly, Schreiber (2008) echoed Grunig and Hung (2002) and Yang and Grunig (2005) stating that reputation consists of the "collective representations shared in the minds of multiple publics about an organization over time" (p. 1) and is developed through a complex interchange between an organization and its stakeholders (Rindova & Fombrun, 1999).

Another approach to organizational reputation is the differentiation between primary and secondary reputation, based on direct experiences with an organization or lack thereof (Bromley, 1993; Grunig and Hung, 2002). Secondary reputations are more superficial, stereotypical, and conform to preexisting ideas. Following this line of thought, different results should be obtained from groups with and without direct experience with any given organization. It also supports the suggestion that the quality of relationships impacts reputation, as they are based on certain levels of experience and involvement.

Coorientation Model

Coorientation models were first used in psychological research regarding the orientation of two people to the same object. Newcomb's (1953) symmetry model was adapted by McLeod and Chaffee (1973) who made an assumption that behavior is a result of more than just a person's internal thinking; it is also influenced by the person's orientation toward other people and perceptions of the views others hold. Thus, behavior is defined in the context of relationships and is a product of personal perceptions about an issue and estimates of what others think about the same issue. Broom and Dozier (1990) adapted the coorientation model to corporations and publics, to represent the two sides of an organization–public relationship.

The coorientation model is built of four elements: (1) the organization's views on an issue, (2) the public's views on the issue, (3) the organization's perception of the public's views and (4) the public's perception of the organization's views. Resulting from a combination of those elements are four coorientational variables: *understanding*, *agreement, accuracy,* and *perceived agreement (congruency).*
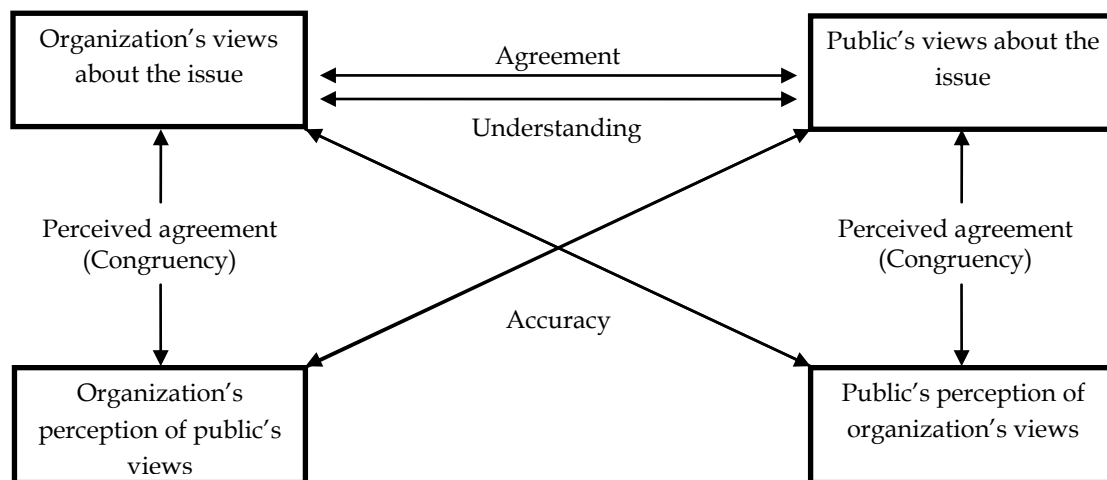
Figure 1. Coorientation model (adapted from Broom, 2009)

Agreement is the extent to which the organization and the public have similar views (either cognitions or opinions) on the issue. Most authors only use the term agreement in their discussion of the coorientation model (Broom & Dozier, 1990; Kelly, 1998; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2009). However, some authors have added another construct: *understanding*. Broom (2009) described it as a measure of "the similarities in the definitions held by two or more persons" (p. 206). According to Grunig and Hunt (1984) and Broom (2009), it is important to differentiate between the two constructs and to measure them both, in order to establish feelings about an issue (independent of situation) a party holds and its definition of the situation. This in turn can help "clarify the relationship between attitudes and opinions" (Broom, 2009, p.203). The *perceived agreement* (*congruency*) is the extent to which organization's views are in concert with their estimate of the public's view on the issue and vice versa, consistency between public's view and its perception of organization's view. Finally, *accuracy* is the extent to which one side's perceived views of the other party concur with the other party's actual views.

Based on the above-mentioned constructs, four coorientation states can be identified: *consensus, dissensus, false consensus,* and *false conflict*. In the *consensus* state the organization and public agree with each other and they are aware of such agreement. In the case of *dissensus* - the two sides disagree and are aware of the disagreement. When *false consensus* is present, the organization believes that publics agree, while the publics do not, or vice versa. Finally, *false conflict* (also called *pluralistic ignorance*) means that one of the sides wrongly thinks there is a conflict (Broom & Dozier, 1990; Kelly, 1998).

Application of coorientation model in public relations research. Public relations scholars proposed to apply the coorientational model to the study of relationships in the past (Ferguson, 1984). For example, Grunig and Stamm (1973) suggested that the coorientation model could be used for communication between an organization and another social collective.

Despite those suggestions, it is only in recent years that the coorientation model has been gaining more attention in public relations research. While the literature review reveals a limited number of articles devoted to coorientation, the application of the coorientation model is quite diverse and ranges from mutual perceptions of journalists and PR practitioners regarding their news values to perceptions of Slovenians and Croatians of the issues existing between their countries (Kelly, Thompson, & Waters, 2006; Kopenhaver, Martinson, & Ryan, 1984; Sallot, Steinfatt, & Salwen, 1998; Vercic, Vercic, & Laco, 2006; Waters, 2009).

To date, there are no studies attempting to directly link OPR outcomes to coorientation model variables. Waters (2009), similar to Seltzer and Mitrook (2009), combined the two constructs by applying the coorientation model to the OPR questionnaire, thus testing *agreement*, *accuracy*, and *perceived agreement (congruency)* on the quality of OPR between a non-profit organization and its donors. However, his study did not examine the linkage between the quality of that relationship and coorientation variables themselves. Thus, the results were only focused on the state of the relationship and perceptions of it by two parties, but did not discuss if and how the coorientation variables potentially influence the quality of that relationship. For that reason, the current research is exploratory and looks for the potential linkage between characteristics of OPRs and coorientation model's variables and the direction of those potential linkages.

Research Objectives

This study aimed to explore how the types of relationships with publics and relationship outcomes are related to the reputation of the organization as perceived by three stakeholder groups– students, faculty and staff – as well as the external public, comprised of registered voters in the local community. The study also explored whether effective communication as reflected in high *understanding*, *agreement*, *accuracy,* and *perceived agreement* was positively related to reputation, both directly and indirectly, as a predictor of the OPR outcomes. This would allow for creating a model and establishing directionality of the relationship among those three concepts (OPRs, coorientation, and reputation). The study also sought to support the view that direct experience and involvement have an effect on reputation by comparing the results between internal stakeholders (students, faculty and staff) and the external public.

Research Questions

RQ1: How are organization-public relational outcome indicators, i.e., a) trust, b) control mutuality, c) commitment and d) satisfaction, correlated with organizational reputation, as measured by Yang and Sung's (2009) questionnaire?

RQ 2: How do organization-public relational outcome indicators, i.e., a) trust, b) control mutuality, c) commitment and d) satisfaction, correlate with any of the coorientation model constructs (understanding, agreement, congruency, and accuracy)?

RQ 3: How are any of the coorientation model constructs (understanding, agreement, congruency, and accuracy) correlated with organizational reputation?

RQ 4: How will a) relationship outcomes, b) organizational reputation, and c) coorientation model constructs vary by public types (e.g., students, faculty members, staff, and the registered voters)?

Method

Sampling

The student sample was a convenience sample (Nardi, 2003), recruited from the currently enrolled students through an email invitation. The survey was sent to 27,990 students and accessed by 1079 students, with 774 surveys actually completed (response rate 4%). Average age was 24.67, which is close to the average age of the overall University student population as of May 2008, which is 24 years. 12.5% participants were freshmen, 13.2% sophomore, 18.4% juniors, 21.5% seniors, 35% graduate and 0.05% post baccalaureate. The highest participation from graduate students could result from their understanding of research process and difficulty in obtaining study participants, as evidenced by numerous emails from those participants (no email response was required to participate in the study).

The faculty sample was a convenience sample. Faculty members were contacted through an email invitation. The survey was sent to 1387 and accessed by 134 participants, with 109 questionnaires completed (9.6% response rate). The average age of respondents was 47.35. The average employment at the University was 9.2 years, with tenure ranging from 2 months to 42 years. The most represented college was the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (N=24, 25%), followed by the College of Education (N=12, 13%), Natural Sciences and Mathematics (N=12, 13%) and College of Business (N=7, 7%).

The staff sample was a convenience sample. The survey was accessed by 58 and completed by 36 participants (5.8% response rate). The average participant's age was 45.45, with an average employment time of 10 years.

The sample for external public, operationalized as registered voters in the local community, was a snowball sample (Nardi, 2003) recruited through internet discussion forums and social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and a local discussion forum. The survey was accessed by 89 and completed by 75 participants. Respondents indicated that they knew of the University either from their own or their family or friend's educational experiences, or simply the fact that they lived in the city where campus is located.

To establish organizational views for the coorientation model, the University senior leadership, including the President, all Vice Presidents, and the Deans were invited to complete the questionnaire through an email. Since contact information was available for only one member of the Board of the Regents, the email invitation also asked for help with forwarding the invitation to the remaining members. The potential sample size was 37. The survey was completed by nine participants (24% response rate).

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. In order to construct the communication coorientation questionnaire, relevant issues pertaining to the relationships among a southern public university and its internal publics were identified through individual interviews and a focus group. The reputation and relationship variables were measured using quantitative methods. The final set of questionnaires was administered online to students, faculty, staff, registered voters in the local community, and the senior leadership of the university. Student, faculty, staff and voter questionnaires consisted of closed-ended statements pertaining to the subject's relationship with the university and perceived reputation of the university. Demographic questions were also asked. For the student, faculty and staff samples, a set of coorientation statements was included. The senior leadership survey consisted solely of those coorientation statements. Data was collected after obtaining the approval of the university IRB.

Qualitative Data

To assure that the preliminary coorientation findings were truly representative of the general views among three internal publics, faculty senators, student senators, and staff council members were invited to participate in interviews or focus groups as elected representatives of each respective study group. All of the faculty senators and all of the staff council members were recruited through an email invitation. Out of 60 faculty senators, 11 responded and participated in an interview. Out of 30 staff council members, six responded and participated in an interview. Out of 30 student senators, seven participated in the focus group. In order to narrow down the scope of potential answers, the interview/focus group questions were based on six factors of reputation based on Fombrun's Reputation Quotient: *emotional appeal, products and services* (in this case educational services), *vision and leadership, workplace environment, social and environmental responsibility* and *financial performance*. The same questions were asked in all interviews and the focus group. The answers were written down in hand on answer sheets word by word. If the answer was unclear or complex, the researcher asked for it to be repeated or paraphrased.

To analyze data, pattern coding method was used. Pattern codes "are explanatory or inferential codes that identify an emergent theme, configuration or explanation" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69). Once the interviews and the focus group were completed, the answers were read multiple times to deduct the meaning most accurately. Next, the data were organized according to emerging themes, as well as whether they were "definition" or "call to action" statements. The latter distinction was important to be able to identify *understanding* and

agreement statements. Ten most frequently mentioned issues were chosen for the final student and faculty survey respectively, while only six themes were identified from the staff responses.

Measurements

    Organization-public relationships. As proposed by Yang (2005, 2007) and Bronn (2007), a version of the PR Relationship Measurement Scale developed by Hon and Grunig (1999) was used to measure relational outcomes. Since previous studies show that the respondents typically do not fill out the 52-question version completely (Brunner, 2005), a shortened version of the questionnaire adapted to the context of a university was used (Ni & Wang, in press). It consisted of 4 subscales measuring only the relational outcomes using the total of 19 items (6 items for *control mutuality*, 4 items for *trust*, 4 items for *satisfaction*, and 5 items for *commitment*). It did not measure the types of relationships. One reason for that is that there is an ongoing discussion regarding the validity of the distinction between *communal* and *exchange relationships.* Two of the *commitment* statements were reversed items and once the surveys were closed, the negative indicators were reversed. The answers to the items measuring each relational outcome were averaged, so that "mean" scores for each of four outcomes could be calculated. Finally, all items were averaged, resulting in an overall OPR mean score. The mean scores for each subscale and the entire scale were calculated separately for each public. All Cronbach's alphas were above .7, indicating strong reliability of the instrument. They are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Cronbach's alphas for organization-public relationship outcomes scale and subscales.

	Control Mutuality	Trust	Satisfaction	Commitment	OPR
Students	.900	.848	.910	.865	.952
Faculty	.912	.906	.937	.905	.969
Staff	.836	.810	.870	.743	.919
Voters	.872	.775	.790	.880	.935
Total	.897	.850	.907	.865	.952

    Reputation. The lack of consensus regarding what constitutes reputation results in a relative lack of appropriate measurement tools for reputation (Helm, 2005). A few existing research papers most often utilize Fortune 500 Reputation Index or Fombrun's Reputation Quotient (Berens & van Riel, 2004; Schreiber, 2008). Bromley (2002) compared existing methods of assessing and comparing corporate reputations such as league tables (e.g. Fortune 500), reputation quotients (e.g. Fombrun's "Reputation Quotient" (RQ)), benchmarks (e.g. utilizing a version of the Fortune method) and case study methods. Although he criticized league tables and traditional measurement approaches, he accepted that "carefully constructed psychometric assessments can generate scientifically acceptable data" (p. 49).

    Drawing from Grunig and Hung (2002), Yang and Grunig (2005) and Fombrun, Gardberg, and Sever (2000) who have "defined 'reputation' as a collective construct that describes the aggregate perception of multiple stakeholders about a company's performance" (Chun, 2005, p. 102), a version of Fombrun's Reputation Quotient (RQ) was used in this study. RQ was developed based on multiple pilot studies and focus groups. It measures an organization's reputation by testing "how a representative group of stakeholders perceives companies on 20 underlying attributes that constitute the six pillars of reputation" (Fombrun & Gardberg, 2000, p. 2). Those six dimensions were emotional appeal, product and services, vision

and leadership, workplace environment, social and environmental responsibility, and financial performance. Fombrun's final instrument's Cronbach's alpha was .75.

In their study of student-university reputation, Sung and Yang (2009) used a modified version of RQ. They adapted seven items from the Harris-Fombrun Reputation Quotient, two "emotion" items and five "university management" items, and added four new items: two items for "perceived media reputation" and two items for "perceived academic reputation." The final survey resulted in four dimensions of academic reputation with 11 measurement items. The mean score was used to construct composites for those corresponding dimensions; the Cronbach's alpha of academic reputation was .86, indicating high reliability. This shows that the modified RQ was a good method of measuring academic reputation and therefore recommended to be used in this study. While most of the subscales' Cronbach's alpha scores were above.7, the score for the Perceived Media Reputation scale was .686, and even lower when calculated for individual publics (.335 for the staff and .531 for the voters). Because the overall reliability was within desired range, the two items constituting Perceived Media Coverage were not deleted. All reliability scores for the reputation measure used in this study are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Cronbach's alphas for the reputation measure across publics

	Emotion	University Management	Perceived Academic Reputation	Perceived Media Reputation	Reputation Quotient
Students	.715	.796	.817	.696	.897
Faculty	.767	.818	.860	.760	.917
Staff	.639	.759	.710	.335	848
Voters	.737	.812	.904	.531	.914
Total	.719	.797	.826	.686	.899

Communication coorientation among the senior leadership, students, faculty and staff was measured using a questionnaire constructed separately for students, faculty and staff. The final statements, derived from interviews and the focus group, were classified as either *understanding* or *agreement* statements, depending whether they defined an issue or called for an action. To measure *understanding* and *agreement*, a Difference Score (D Score), which reflects the distance in views among individuals in a given public and the organization's leadership, was calculated by subtracting the average score of the senior leadership from the average score of the respective publics for each question. The absolute value of the D score quantified *understanding* or *agreement*. *Accuracy* was also measured through D scores, which were calculated for the average scores for one party's prediction of another party's views and the actual views of that other party. Similarly, *congruency (perceived agreement)* was established by calculating D scores for one party's views and their predictions of the other party's views (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

D-scores for coorientation statements were calculated for each specific public, which provided indicators of the *understanding*, *agreement*, *perceived agreement*, and the *accuracy* in estimating the views of the other side.

Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the linkages among OPR outcomes, communication coorientation, and organizational reputation in the context of a university. The

study included internal and external publics of the organization. To calculate the results, correlation analyses and one-way Anova with post-hoc analyses were conducted for the overall study group (all publics), as well as for separate groups of publics.

General Findings

The quality of OPR and organizational reputation were measured on a 7-point scale, with the score of 4.0 as a neutral point. The *overall quality of OPR* among the university and its publics, represented as the average of all four relational outcomes, was evaluated as positive (M=4.96, SD=1.06). All relational outcomes also received scores above neutral (*control mutuality*: M=4.35, SD=1.20; *trust*: M=4.94, SD=1.20; *satisfaction*: M=5.11, SD=1.28; *commitment*: M=5.60, SD=1.13). Overall, the *reputation* of the University was assessed as above average as well (M=5.02, SD=.97), with the highest mean score for the *perceived academic reputation* (M=5.34, SD=1.19) and the lowest on the *emotion* subscale (M=4.72, SD=1.33).

Coorientational variables were measured for the internal University public that included students, faculty, and staff. The D-scores were calculated, where 0 indicated perfect *agreement, understanding, accuracy* or *congruency* respectively, while 6 indicated complete *disagreement* or lack of *understanding, accuracy* or *congruency* respectively. Overall, positive results were obtained for all coorientational measures, ranging from M=1.33 (SD=.57) for *understanding*, followed by *accuracy* (M=1.25, SD=.46) and *agreement* (M=1.22, SD=.50) to M=1.05 (SD=.86) for *congruency*. See Table 3 for the descriptive of all constructs. Results for individual internal publics are discussed later in this chapter.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for OPR outcomes and RQ scales and subscales for the *overall study group (all publics)*

Scale	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reputation Emotion	982	1.00	7.00	4.7254	1.32942
University Management	982	1.00	7.00	5.0833	1.00806
Perceived Academic Reputation	982	1.00	7.00	5.3416	1.19000
Perceived Media Reputation	982	1.00	7.00	4.8220	1.21523
Reputation	982	1.00	7.00	5.0177	.97183
Control Mutuality	980	1.00	7.00	4.3602	1.18377
Trust	982	1.00	7.00	4.7660	1.16900
Satisfaction	982	1.00	7.00	5.0354	1.23383
Commitment	982	1.00	7.00	5.6033	1.13080
OPR	982	1.00	7.00	4.96722	1.05233
Agreement	915[*]	.23	4.22	1.2199	.50439
Understanding	915[*]	.24	3.60	1.3334	.57313
Accuracy	915[*]	.39	3.19	1.2510	.45898
Congruency	915[*]	.00	5.40	1.0544	.86574

[*]The voters did not complete coorientation survey.

OPRs and Organizational Reputation

RQ1 sought to establish the relationships among relational outcomes and organizational reputation. In order to answer this question, a series of correlation analyses was conducted. All *relational outcomes* as well as the *overall quality of OPR* show a significant positive relationship with *organizational reputation* (see Table 4). The effects for *control mutuality* (r=.637, p < .01) and *trust* (r=.693, p < .01) were moderate, while the effects for *satisfaction* (r=.719, p < .01), *commitment* (r=.720, p < .01) and *overall relationship quality* (r=.775, p < .01) were strong. Moreover, the effects of *relational outcomes* on *organizational reputation* were generally strongest for the faculty and student groups when compared to those for the staff and voter groups (see Table 4).

Table 4. Correlations between the *relational outcomes* and the entire OPR Scale and the *organizational reputation* across publics.

	Control Mutuality	Trust	Satisfaction	Commitment	OPR
UH Students	.640**	.685**	.711**	.662**	.762**
UH Faculty	.705**	.800**	.740**	.799**	.825**
UH Staff	.606**	.612**	.664**	.566**	.722**
Voters	.509**	.603**	.676**	.683**	.705**
Overall sample	.637**	.693**	.719**	.720**	.775**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

OPRs and Coorientation

RQ2 aimed to examine the linkage among OPR outcomes and the coorientation model constructs. Results of correlation analyses are presented below. No statistically significant effects were found for *agreement*. The effects of *accuracy* and *congruency* on *OPR outcomes* and *OPR quality* were very weak, with correlation ranging from .102 to .259 (p<0.01). The effect of *understanding* was moderate (r=.436, p<0.01) on all OPR outcomes (Table 5).

Table 5. Correlations between OPR outcomes and OPR quality and the coorientational variables for *the combined study groups (student, faculty and staff)*.

	Control Mutuality	Trust	Satisfaction	Commitment	OPR
Understanding	.435**	.402**	.415**	.282**	.436**
Agreement	.000	.015	.022	.052	.024
Accuracy	.156**	.169**	.197**	.122**	.180**
Congruency	.259**	.242**	.182**	.102**	.225**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

When analysis was performed for individual publics (Tables 6-8), the strongest effects were observed for the faculty, with moderate to strong effects for *understanding* (r=.609, p<0.01) and *accuracy* (r=.609, p<0.01). Only two significant effects were observed for the staff. There was a weak to moderate correlation between *understanding* and *commitment* (r=375, p<0.05), as well as between *congruency* and *control mutuality* (r=378, p<0.05). Across the three groups, *agreement* was not found to be related to any of the OPR outcomes or quality.

Table 6. Correlations between OPR outcomes and OPR quality and the coorientational variables for *student group*.

	Control Mutuality	Trust	Satisfaction	Commitment	OPR
Understanding	.422[**]	.375[**]	.389[**]	.205[**]	.410[**]
Agreement	-.009	.012	.019	.045	.015
Accuracy	.106[**]	.113[**]	.145[**]	.028	.116[**]
Congruency	.251[**]	.232[**]	.165[**]	.116[**]	.227[**]

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7. Correlations between OPR outcomes and OPR quality and the coorientational variables for *faculty group*.

	Control Mutuality	Trust	Satisfaction	Commitment	OPR
Understanding	.587[**]	.623[**]	.581[**]	.448[**]	.609[**]
Agreement	.046	.053	.072	.042	.059
Accuracy	.504[**]	.541[**]	.518[**]	.434[**]	.609[**]
Congruency	.289[**]	.308[**]	.297[**]	.174	.295[**]

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8. Correlations between OPR outcomes and OPR quality and the coorientational variables for *staff group*.

	Control Mutuality	Trust	Satisfaction	Commitment	OPR
Understanding	.158	.160	.314	.375[*]	.302
Agreement	.177	.118	.092	.003	.123
Accuracy	.219	.194	.315	.327	.320
Congruency	.378[*]	.190	.044	.140	.161

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Reputation and Coorientation

To address RQ3 and explore the relationship among coorientational variables and organizational reputation, a series of correlation analyses was conducted. The results are presented in Table 9. *Agreement* had no significant effect on *reputation*. Very weak but significant effects were found between the *organizational reputation* and *congruency* (r=.183, p<0.01) and *accuracy* (r=.113, p<0.01), while the effect of *understanding* (r=.343, p<0.01) was weak to moderate.

When the results were analyzed for individual publics, no significant effects were found for the staff sample. Weak effects of *congruency* (r=.170, p<0.01) and *understanding* (r=.320, p<0.01) on *organizational reputation* were observed in the student group. Finally, faculty group showed weak effect of *congruency* (r=.241, p<0.05) and moderate effects of *understanding* (r=.500, p<0.01) and *accuracy* (r=.450, p<0.01).

Table 9. Correlations between organizational reputation and coorientational items by publics.

	Agreement	Understanding	Accuracy	Congruency
Students	.018	.320[**]	.066	.170[**]
Faculty	.045	.500[**]	.450[**]	.241[*]
Staff	-.75	.214	.151	.222
All internal publics	.01	.343[**]	.113[**]	.183[**]

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Differences among Groups

　　　RQ4 called for an examination of the differences in the results across the publics. To compare the relational outcomes, organizational reputation and coorientational measures, a one-way Anova with post-hoc tests was conducted for all groups and variables. Only one significant difference was found for all groups for the relational outcomes and reputation scores. Faculty was more committed to their relationship with the University than the students (F (3,976), MD= .31, p=0.043).

Table 10. Anova results for *commitment.*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11.899	3	3.966	3.097	.026
Within Groups	1249.805	976	1.281		
Total	1261.705	979			

Table 11. Post hoc results (Tukey) for *commitment.*

(I) GROUPING	(J) GROUPING	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Voters	Staff	-.33993	.23575	.473	-.9466	.2668
	Students	-.15152	.14719	.732	-.5303	.2273
	Faculty	-.45821	.17882	.051	-.9184	.0020
Staff	Voters	.33993	.23575	.473	-.2668	.9466
	Students	.18841	.19294	.763	-.3081	.6849
	Faculty	-.11828	.21803	.949	-.6794	.4428
Students	Voters	.15152	.14719	.732	-.2273	.5303
	Staff	-.18841	.19294	.763	-.6849	.3081
	Faculty	-.30669*	.11672	.043	-.6071	-.0063
Faculty	Voters	.45821	.17882	.051	-.0020	.9184
	Staff	.11828	.21803	.949	-.4428	.6794
	Students	.30669*	.11672	.043	.0063	.6071

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Student, faculty and staff group were also combined into one internal public and compared to the external public (voters). The internal public evaluated the perceived academic reputation higher than the voters (F (1, 980), MD=.349, p=0.023).

Table 12. Anova results for *Perceived Academic Reputation*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7.276	1	7.276	5.160	.023
Within Groups	1381.920	980	1.410		
Total	1389.196	981			

Differences were also found for some of the coorientational variables (see Tables 13-14). Students exhibited a higher level of *agreement* (F (1,801), MD= -.26, p=0.013) but lower level of *understanding* (F (1, 801), MD=.31, p=0.009) than the staff. The same observation was made for the faculty, who received higher scores in *agreement* (F (1, 133), MD= -.34, p=0.003) and lower in *understanding* (F (1,133), MD=.33, p=0.013) than staff. Despite this difference, all three groups are in high *agreement* (students: M=1.22, SD=.5; faculty: M=1.14, SD=.47; staff: M=1.48, SD=60) and *understanding* (students: M=1.34, SD=.57; faculty: M=1.36, SD=.58; staff: M=1.03, SD=.56) with the university senior leadership.

Table 13. Significant ANOVA results for coorientational variables for the internal publics

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Agreement	Between Groups	2.943	2	1.471	5.845	.003
	Within Groups	229.588	912	.252		
	Total	232.530	914			
Understanding	Between Groups	3.218	2	1.609	4.941	.007
	Within Groups	297.007	912	.326		
	Total	300.226	914			

Table 14. Post-hoc results for coorientational variables for the internal publics

Dependent Variable	(I) Grouping	(J) Grouping	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Agreement	Staff	Students	.26231*	.08918	.013	.0437	.4810
		Faculty	.34157*	.09991	.003	.0966	.5865
	Students	Staff	-.26231*	.08918	.013	-.4810	-.0437
		Faculty	.07926	.05175	.310	-.0476	.2061
	Faculty	Staff	-.34157*	.09991	.003	-.5865	-.0966
		Students	-.07926	.05175	.310	-.2061	.0476
Understanding	Staff	Students	-.31345*	.10143	.009	-.5621	-.0648
		Faculty	-.33455*	.11363	.013	-.6132	-.0560
	Students	Staff	.31345*	.10143	.009	.0648	.5621
		Faculty	-.02111	.05885	.938	-.1654	.1232
	Faculty	Staff	.33455*	.11363	.013	.0560	.6132
		Students	.02111	.05885	.938	-.1232	.1654

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Discussion and Conclusions

The organization-public relationships between the university and its publics, students, faculty, staff, and the general population of the city where the university is located, were evaluated positively by those publics, as was the reputation of the university. The quality of organization-public relationships had a positive correlation with organizational reputation. Interestingly, *agreement* did not correlate with any of the relational outcomes, the overall relationship quality or organizational reputation. *Accuracy* and *congruency* had very weak or weak correlations with all *relational outcomes*, the *overall relationship quality*, and *organizational reputation*. However, *understanding* seemed to have somewhat moderate

correlations with all these variables. The strongest correlations across all variables were observed for the faculty sample. Finally, some differences were observed between study groups. Faculty's commitment was higher than that of students, internal publics assessed *perceived academic reputation* higher than external publics, and faculty and students scored higher on *agreement* but lower on *understanding* than the staff.

OPR and Reputation

Previous research involving OPRs and organizational reputation suggested that there was a positive relationship between relational variables and reputation. Data collected in the course of this study supported those findings. All relational outcomes, *control mutuality, trust, satisfaction* and *commitment*, had a positive correlation with organizational reputation. The overall quality of the relationship also was positively related to reputation. This study confirms that the relational approach toward reputation is a valid line of research, as it was suggested by scholars before (Bronn, 2007; Grunig & Huang, 2000; Grunig & Hung, 2002). The results are in concert with earlier findings by Sung and Yang (2008, 2009), who studied the relationship of OPRs and reputation in a university setting, as well as Yang (2005), who used this approach in a corporate setting. The study also confirmed high reliability of two instruments used – the university version of the OPR scale and the academic reputation scale developed by Sung and Yang (2009).

Coorientation and OPRs

Going beyond supporting previous studies on OPR and reputation, this study is one of the first that examined the effects of communication coorientation on OPR. An underlying assumption was that effective communication, as reflected in high *agreement*, *understanding*, *accuracy* and *congruency*, would have a positive effect on organization-public relationships and their outcomes. The results only partially supported this assumption. There was no evidence that agreement influenced any of the relational outcomes or the overall relational quality. The effect of *accuracy* and *congruency* on relational outcomes was positive, but very weak. Finally, *understanding* showed a weak effect on *commitment* and a moderate influence on *control mutuality, trust, satisfaction* and the *overall quality of the relationship*.

The above analysis was also conducted for the segmented internal publics: students, faculty and staff, revealing an interesting trend. Only two out of 20 possible effects were present for the staff public. *Congruency* had a small positive effect on *control mutuality* and *understanding* had a small positive effect on *commitment*. The effect of *agreement* was not evident for the student group. Data did show very weak positive effects of *accuracy* and *congruency*, as well as a moderate effect of *understanding* on OPRs and their outcomes. Finally, *agreement* did not display a significant effect on relational measures for the faculty, either. However, the most interesting result is that the effects of the remaining coorientational variables on OPRs for faculty were much higher than those for the other two publics. In particular, *understanding* and *accuracy* had a strong influence on the *overall quality of relationship, control mutuality, trust* and *satisfaction*. The effect on commitment was less pronounced.

One explanation for this result is that the faculty is a more invested party than students and staff. Students might perceive their relationship with the university as temporary, thus the effectiveness and content of communication is not as critical as for the faculty. On the other hand, despite the common long-term relationship factor, the nature of faculty and staff's employment and the resulting relationship with the university is different. From the interviews with the staff representatives it could be concluded that this public was generally more content

with its experience at the University. Important factors included state benefits, access to facilities such as wellness center and daycare. Moreover, various decisions made by the university leadership, such as the pursuit of Tier 1 status, admission criteria or access to research funds, do not generally influence staff members as much as they do students or faculty. In contrast, many decisions made by the leadership directly impact faculty, their academic careers, opportunity to conduct research and publish. Therefore, as one of the faculty interviewees put it, it is important that "the leadership communicates with, not to" that group.

Overall, *understanding* emerged as a factor having the biggest effect on organization-public relationship and its outcomes, while *agreement* had no impact at all. This result suggests that it is important for two parties to share their definitions of various situations and recognize existing problems and opportunities. This is in concert with the Excellence Theory, which saw the value of public relations as a function "using symmetrical communication programs to develop and maintain quality relationships with these strategic publics" (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002, p. 548). The role of persuasion, or the desire to make the public agree with an organization, is not the essence of two-way and symmetrical communication. Rather, in many cases, it is more important for both parties to sit down and have an open discussion, which might facilitate collaborate decision making later on (J. Grunig, 2000, 2006).

The excellence theory further proposed that organizations should cultivate high quality relationships with strategic publics through symmetrical communication in order to gain publics' support for achieving organizational goals. Moreover, it is essential that the goals of publics become a part of the organizational goals once quality relationships are established. Recognizing what those goals are and how publics and organizations view their relationship with the other party is a result of *understanding*. While it is desirable to achieve *agreement*, this study suggests that *agreement* is not as critical a factor as *understanding* to a quality relationship. In other words, the parties can agree to disagree and still enjoy a healthy relationship that both want to maintain.

Coorientation and Reputation

Another explorative aspect of this study was to examine the linkage between coorientational variables and reputation. No significant effects of *agreement* on reputation were found. *Congruency* and *accuracy* had a very weak positive effect on *reputation*, while *understanding* had a weak to moderate effect. Once again, when publics were analyzed separately, no effects were present in the staff sample. The student sample showed weak effects for *understanding*, *accuracy* and *congruency*. However, faculty showed some moderate to strong effects of *understanding* and *accuracy* on *reputation*. The effect of *congruency* was weak.

Since reputation, as conceptualized in this study, is a second order factor potentially mediated by OPRs, more sophisticated tests are required to establish coorientation's effects on reputation.

Behavioral Relationship vs. Symbolic Relationship - Differences among Public Groups

When discussing reputation, some scholars add the distinction between a primary and a secondary reputation (Bromley, 1993; Grunig & Hung, 2002). Those authors propose that primary reputation is based on direct experience and involvement with an organization, while secondary reputation is based on third-party information. The relationships based on actual interactions that result in actions and two-way communication are referred to as substantial or behavioral and those based on corporate images, such as advertising, are referred to as symbolic

(Wan & Schell, 2007). Following this rationale, one of the assumptions of this study was that the reputation and the quality of the relationship evaluations of the internal publics of the University, students, faculty and staff, would differ from those of the external public. However, this was not supported by the data. No differences were found for the overall quality of the relationship, or relational outcomes and more importantly for the overall reputation quotient. The effects of relational outcomes and the overall relationship quality on the reputation were slightly less pronounced for the general population, when compared to the faculty and students. However, the same observation, as for the general population, has been made for the staff. One explanation for the lack of differences can be that the general population sample was not representative of the voters. On the other hand, this result can be at least partially attributed to the efforts of the new university leadership in their pursuit of the Tier 1 status, as well as the successes of the University football team, which have coincided with the period of data collection, significantly increasing the coverage of the University in the media. Therefore, the external perceptions of the university might overlap more with the internal perceptions at this point than would have occurred at other times.

As mentioned earlier, the researcher expected some differences between internal and external publics on the means scores for OPR outcomes and reputational variables. The results confirm this assumption only to a small extent. One difference was related to the mean scores of *perceived academic reputation* scale. Internal public assessed that reputation slightly higher than the external public did. This result certainly fits into the assumption that internal publics would value their experience with the organization more, and the educational context of the study is reflected in the fact that the difference applies to the academic aspect of the reputation quotient. Further studies are required, but it is possible that the reputation quotient instrument should be revised to include different weights for different factors, depending on the types of organizations and settings.

The second difference among publics was observed for the commitment variable. Faculty sample exhibited a significantly higher level to that of the student sample. No significant differences were observed for any other sample pairings. This result is in concert with other instances of faculty yielding higher results in several tests, which suggests that faculty is the most invested public of the University, and sees their relationship as a long-term one. It also indirectly supports direct experience and involvement's effects on reputation. Ki and Hon (2007b) proposed that commitment is the one factor on OPR scale that truly represents the quality of the relationship, as they believe that some relational outcomes are actually antecedents to others. According to Jo (2003), control mutuality and trust predict satisfaction, which in turn is a predictor of commitment. Other scholars suggested that trust might be a predictor of commitment (Kwon & Suh, 2004; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). This study contributes to the suggestion that more research utilizing relational outcomes, testing causal linkages among them, is required.

The final difference was observed for the coorientational variables. While all internal publics scored high on *agreement* and *understanding*, both students and faculty scored higher on *agreement* and lower on *understanding* than staff. From the organizational structure perspective, the staff has a better access to information and decisions pertaining to their employment, benefits, etc. Therefore, they might exhibit a higher *understanding* of the identified issues than students or faculty. However, staff does not necessarily support the leadership and its actions, thus their attitude, expressed through *agreement*, is less supportive than that of faculty and

students, who mainly perceive university from the academic perspective and are more in favor of the leadership direction.

Practical Implications

While reputation literature widely acknowledges that a substantial part of the reputation is intangible, few studies attempted to identify those intangible factors. This study verifies Yang's (2005) and Sung and Yang's (2008, 2009) proposition that organization-public relationships are an important factor in creating and/or maintaining the value of the organization. This is especially important at the time that public relations professionals are trying to establish their position as part of the management and show their contribution to the organization's success. Showing that good relationships are necessary to high reputation, a goal that most organization leaders strive for, brings PR practitioners closer to the management table. Practitioners should not just cultivate the relationships but strategically select objectives and tactics that will enhance the commitment level among its publics.

Another important implication is that effective communication can potentially be a key to achieving good relationships and that it contributes to the reputation. Organizations should employ coorientation research into their public relations practice to make sure that they and their publics have the same definitions of various issues and problems, before embarking on expensive campaigns. Symmetrical, two-way model of communication should be a part of organizational communication approach, in order to achieve maximum level of *understanding*, *accuracy* and *congruency*, as factors related to both the quality of the relationships and the reputation.

Limitations

A major limitation was the sampling procedure for the external public. Due to the lack of financial and human resources, recruitment was limited to internet sites and extended professional and personal networks. Ideally, a larger, random sample should have been used. Moreover, the interview and focus group questions could have been pretested for clarity, to assure consistency of the answers and to avoid confusion.

The sample size for some of the publics was also an issue. Only nine out of 37 members of the senior leadership participated in the survey. The staff sample was also relatively low. Moreover, a consideration should be made whether this audience is indeed one uniform public, as it encompasses administration, technical support and other functions. Those groups might differ in their experiences with the University and their perception of what issues influence their relationship with the University and their evaluation of its reputation.

Suggestions for Future Research

The research scope could be expanded to systematically identify and include all stakeholders of the university, including donors. It would also be beneficial to obtain similar data for a number of universities and possibly compare them to existing reputation rankings and other data, in order to place the results in a wider context.

Another line of research could involve a longitudinal study, which would control for incidental spikes in media coverage and other temporary factors. A long term study would allow for monitoring how changes in the quality of the relationships and in communication coorientation affect organizational reputation over time.

Finally, since reputation, as conceptualized in this study, is a second order factor potentially mediated by OPRs, more sophisticated tests are required to establish coorientation's effects on reputation.

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Make It Work:
The Migration from Merger to A New Communications Methodology

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Abstract

In this project, the researcher analyzed the integration of the communication processes within two of the nation's largest telecommunication service providers, AT&T and BellSouth Corporation, following the merger of the two corporations. The structural variations of the respective departments were a primary organizational concern with direct influence on the performance and effectiveness of the combined corporate communications function going forward. Culture change, outsourced relationships, and technology overload were identified as potentially disruptive factors that could be mitigated by taking steps to minimize internal constraints, enhance communications flows, and develop effective decision making patterns. This study utilized case study methodology, in-depth interviews, and participant observation from the researcher's position as a media spokesperson for BellSouth, and director of public affairs for AT&T. It further incorporated in-depth interviews with communications practitioners from Delta Airlines, USAA, Southern Progress/Time, Inc., and Edelman Public Relations. The combined perspectives provide insight for corporate practitioners charged with integrating corporate cultures and varying structural alignment with regard to effective communication with key internal and external publics.

Introduction

The communication processes and delivery methods that accompany corporate merger and acquisition activities (M&A) become very complex the minute an intention becomes known in the marketplace, whether it is widely known or not. An initial organization(s) feeds the internal and external systems of public information or interest in a proposed M&A but ultimately interested parties can literally come from the woodwork or, at least, be represented by labor unions, consumer organizations, competitors, employee associations, municipalities, etc. By the time final legal documents are signed, sealed, and delivered, some of the stakeholder groups are actually folded or represented in some fashion during the M&A integration.

The designated communicator(s) for M&A may release only pre-packaged statements and background or could be part of the limited group of decision-makers or selection team. The ideal structure, of course, is the more participatory one but the corporate communication organizational structures are wildly varied, company to company.

This project afforded the researcher a unique opportunity to participate in a communicator role before, during, and after the integration of the nation's two largest telecommunications companies. The acquisition of BellSouth Corporation by AT&T provided a great many research opportunities with regard to relationship and issues management, and the organizational structure of corporate communications. The researcher was afforded the opportunity to study the migration to a new communications methodology by way of a corporate merger. Employees from BellSouth's media relations team moved into a new regional public affairs department for AT&T South.

The larger case study included perspective as the acquisition progressed in real time, cleared regulatory and judicial reviews, gained FCC approval, and integrated a new region of customers, internal and external, into a new company, not to mention the next steps over the integration of practical processes that accompanied the merger of data, operational systems, employee workforces, corporate reputation and identity.

Literature Review

Pressures take a toll on the workforces during a merger, acquisition, or organizational transition and at these times the more effective communication practitioners find themselves trying to balance the marketplace reality with efforts to reduce uneasiness in the workplace (Bordia, et al., 2006). Public relations, public affairs and overall communication management include "the overall planning, execution, and evaluation of an organization's communication with both external and internal publics – groups that affect the ability of an organization to meet its goals" (p.4, Grunig, 1992a). Communication is the behavior of individual groups or organizations that moves messages to or from other people (p.6, Grunig & Hunt 1984), and is at the heart of Max Weber's development of organization theory (p. 19, Cheney, Christensen, Zorn, & Ganesh, 2004). It is this communication process, or flow of information, that establishes the structures that have the potential to aid future interaction or become a barrier to it. Weber described an organization's authority as charismatic, traditional, or legal and the designations still hold true 63 years later (Weber, cited in Cheney, et al., 2004).

The structure of an organization such as communications often includes many separate and specialized groups of individuals interacting to create the whole organization, or sum of its many parts (Giddens, 1984). In defining organization as the coordinated activities of at least two people, Chester Barnard reportedly took into account and highly regarded the interdependence and interactions of parts and the sum of an organization (Mahoney, 2002; Cheney et al., 2004).

For employees of a company about to be bought by another, mystery surrounds the organization of the future. Most employees have much of their identity tied to their workplace by virtue of the time spent on the job.

The social ties to the workplace have increased because employees spend more time with colleagues, forcing workers to discard the container model that supports a strict demarcation between professional and personal lives (Cheney et al., 2004). The workplace today is accepted to be more socially oriented because of longer work hours that bring on increased stress for the employee, and technology that blurs the work hours and makes it more difficult to delineate work and leisure time. The social ties to the workplace increased because employees spend more time with colleagues, forcing workers to discard the container model that supports a strict demarcation between professional and personal lives (Cheney et al., 2004).

There is more work conducted in teams within the internal markets, making room for trust and loyalty to develop where mutual goals are reached (Varey, 1997). Varey called corporate communications the conscience of community, the key to the "infrastructure of organized cooperating complex of social institutions" (p.119), that is concerned with forming identities and relationships (Varey, 1997). Trust is an issue that is always of concern during management or organizational transition.

When a merger is pending, there is often little information that can be even be shared with all employees or potential future employees. While there is overall evidence that information-sharing with employees potentially builds trust in the organization (Becerra & Gupta, 2003; deRidder, 2004; Ellis & Shockley-Zalabak, 2001; Hargie, Tourish, & Wilson, 2002) because it is viewed as openness (Hosmer, 1994, 2005), there is a distinction between the quantity and quality of the information. Thomas, Zolin, and Hartman (2009) found the quality of information best predicts trust in the relationships between employee and supervisor while quantity is a most significant predictor of trust with top management. But employees often complain the information shared with them does not link back to their specific business or responsibilities (Fawell, 2009). This can mean that little time is actually spent learning more about one's future organizational responsibilities.

Corporate transitions are often in the news but there are often quiet times during the internal merger processes. Upon completion of a merger or business transition, instructions for practical matters such as payroll, HR, and benefits are just some of the issues covered and communicated to employees rapid fire. One of the unique but very important challenges is to be aware of, and guard against, communicative "overload" (Bartoo & Sias, 2004) of employees (Holz, 1999). The 24-hour reach of media and communications can become as much a danger as an enhancement to the modern workplace. Personal digital assistants (PDAs), remote access, intranets, and other environments that feature technology for employees translate into communication at any time, from almost anywhere (Voeller, Groehler, 2004).

Considering the economically troubled times and increased unemployment that has resulted, those who are employed can feel pressure, real or presumed, to constantly stay connected. Respect for co-worker's time, and the geographic differences among work locations, is not always considered when distributing employee communications (Cheney et al., 2004). However, more and more communicators are beginning to consider the overload factor and raise it as an issue as new programs are being developed. In 2009, Home Depot abolished what was considered as communication overload, cutting back Monday morning's corporate e-mail distribution from 200 messages and reports to one, and trimming overall e-mail clutter during the rest of the week (McGregor, 2009).

The reorganizations of companies or distinct internal organizations inoccur for many reasons including changes in ownership, laws and regulation, employee benefits, or realignment to correct previously ineffective practices (Deetz, Tracy & Simpson, 2000). The absence of an internal communication network to introduce changes and allow for feedback can independently create serious problems within an organization or business (Turnball & Wass, 1998). Hargie & Tourish (2000) believe communication is fundamental and its tools are an organization's most important resource for survival. Keeping employees engaged in times of change can translate to an "average 26% higher productivity rate" with lower absenteeism (2008-2009 WorkUSA survey cited in TowersWatson, 2009-2010). A survey of 328 companies indicated the United States was among the lower tier of six countries in using communication to increase productivity and telling employees how their actions affect the consumer. The survey also revealed that few companies do an adequate job of explicitly stating what the employee can expect from the company and what the company expects from the employee, or employee value proposition (EVP) (TowersWatson, 2009-2010).

This study explored the internal structure of the communications and public affairs responsibilities and organizations within the former BellSouth Corporation and AT&T and to further examine two specific research questions.

RQ1: How the corporate communication and media relations functions from the former BellSouth Corporation will be expected to integrate into the methodology and structure of AT&T? The second research question will examine the question of standardization to determine if it exists within the corporate communication departments.

RQ2: How do some other organizations organize their corporate communications department(s)?

Background

On March 5, 2007 (AT&T, 2007) AT&T Inc. announced it would acquire BellSouth Corporation for a record $67 billion dollars. The BellSouth media relations department at the state and corporate level was actively involved in communicating this announcement. Over the next ten months, BellSouth's state media spokespersons, who reported within the regulatory and external affairs department, handled only limited media issues beyond notification of service disruptions.

During this 10-month window, there were rumors and much discussion about job security, anticipated compensation and benefit changes and, in particular, how or if BellSouth's communications professionals would integrate into the communications structure within AT&T and Fleishman Hillard, AT&T's outsourced public relations partner. Publicly, the acquisition was often labeled a merger, but it was a buyout in every sense.

The merger was finalized in late December 2007. By March 2008, all but three of BellSouth's corporate communications directors remained and seven of the eight state media spokespersons accepted new roles within the AT&T public affairs organization. Under the new organization, public affairs media relations duties were limited to legislative, regulatory and government policies along with "outside game" activities; previously, the group handled both regulatory and corporate communications such as product announcements and localized service outages.

The new duties were related to local and state regulatory initiatives and included strategic planning, messaging, third party interaction and advertising. When the company favored legislation in a particular state, the public affairs representative coordinated activities such as employee communication, research, media messaging, advertising, and third party activities

(consumer groups, economic development leaders, industry associations, etc.) with the state president, lobbyist, corporate communications and regional public affairs vice president. Previously within BellSouth, the resources available for these types of initiatives were more limited and were directed by the state president. Additional media relations duties once handled in the states included service, product, and legal matters were to be addressed by employees of Fleishman Hillard, a communications agency that maintained multi-state responsibilities. In other regions within AT&T, employees of VOX Global Mandate, a Fleishman subsidiary, fulfilled public affairs responsibilities.

By 2008, legislation to streamline the approval process for competitors to enter local cable television markets had been successful under this new public affairs model in three legacy BellSouth states: Georgia, Florida and South Carolina, and unsuccessful in one state, Tennessee. Similar legislation had not yet been introduced in the remaining four legacy BellSouth states: Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Kentucky. The legislation passed in North Carolina prior to the AT&T acquisition.

The researcher's new responsibilities included public affairs for Alabama and the oversight of media relations in all nine legacy BellSouth states (Exhibit 1). The researcher managed direct media response in four states and coordinated responses with colleagues from the five other southeastern states. It was the researcher's goal, through this exercise, to examine the immediate (current) disruptions that impacted the migration to the new organizational structure, examine the public affairs structure within several other corporations, evaluate current research on the subject and develop strategic recommendations to assist transitions similar to the southeast public affairs department alignment to serve AT&T. Note that many of the public affairs activities described and included herein (press releases, public opinion poll brochures, third party advertising…) were distributed publically in AT&T campaigns (Exhibit 2, 3 &4).

Immediate (Current) Disruptions: Changing Culture, Control Issues
BellSouth, headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, extended broad autonomy at the state level within the organizational structure of regulatory and external affairs. The structure was in place for many years and, since 1998, the company's nine state presidents reported to the same individual – a former state president – who served as group president and reported directly to the CEO. Following the AT&T acquisition, more than 20 BellSouth executives left the company including six state presidents.

The newest partner in the neighborhood was public affairs. The organizational teaming of public affairs with external affairs in an effort to meet regulatory objectives represented a successful structure first introduced within the legacy AT&T and integrated following the merger of SBC and AT&T, with the same integration undertaken within legacy BellSouth.

Corporate Communications Partners: Fleishman-Hillard/Public Affairs and VOX/Global
For over a decade, Southwestern Bell, later AT&T, employed the public relations agency Fleishman Hillard to manage public relations and media communications. Many Fleishman employees worked in AT&T offices and until 2004, some identified themselves as employees of the company, according to a San Francisco Chronicle article about union negotiations, where one of the issues was the use of outsourcing. In May 2004 reporter David Lazarus wrote:

> What makes the case unusual, though, is that Bien [author's note: Marc Bien is a Fleishman employee domiciled at AT&T], who has appeared in this column many times representing SBC's position on a variety of   matters, bears the title of SBC vice president

of corporate communications. His business cards say as much, and he works in the firm's San Francisco office. Internal documents show that about a half-dozen SBC vice presidents are in reality Fleishman employees. Yet they present themselves as SBC executives (Roderick, 2004).

While the outsourcing to and embedding of Fleishman employees was a longstanding practice that dated to the former Southwestern Bell, it represented a new approach for state operations in legacy BellSouth. A former BellSouth executive said, "I still don't know what to make of that whole arrangement" (Personal communication, Jeff Battcher, December 20, 2007, & December 16, 2010). The former executive explained that the reporting structure was such that many AT&T employees reported to employees of Fleishman or its VOX Global Mandate subsidiary. VOX, a political consulting company launched in May 2005 by Fleishman, managed the public affairs discipline for AT&T. Further amplifying the culture clash, the Fleishman/AT&T approach to media gauged success largely in terms of volume of press releases published while BellSouth historically focused on fewer releases.

BellSouth historically hired consultants, but not to the degree as AT&T and the organizational reporting structure was not the same. The employ of consultants was always under the direction of BellSouth, whether for an event, a legislative initiative, or other project work. For example, an outside firm often prepared news releases for sports sponsorships, but those releases included a direct BellSouth employee as the corporate media relations contact.

Sharp Increase in Processes And Messaging Technology

AT&T was more than five times larger than BellSouth in terms of number of employees worldwide. The count of press releases generated reflected that difference. For example, BellSouth generated 281 news releases in 2005 (BellSouth, 2006), which would have been considered a high-count year, due to Hurricane Katrina's impact on three states served by BellSouth including Louisiana.

Prior to the merger being finalized, AT&T generated at least 929 news releases in 2006. In 2008, with the BellSouth addition, AT&T posted more than 1,000 releases to its website. These counts occurred despite a longer approval process, though the counts on their own were not necessarily indicative of a successful corporate communications department. The approval process was a complicated one. Two practitioners (Personal communication, Rhonda Crawford, December 15, 2007, & December 17, 2010; Conroy Boxhill, December 18, 2007). said a typical agency revenue stream is predicated on hourly billing, and some agency processes appear inherently designed to thrive in a complex environment.

The use of communications technology within the communications and public affairs departments was also heightened. It was common to receive more than 350 e-mails in one day and to send more than 200 responses or original messages. Because mailbox size limits were reduced following the acquisition, daily attention was required to clear available space or risk exceeding limits that blocked future messages. The nature of communications positions includes being "on call" 24 hours a day, but the increased messaging was a further impact on work-life stress.

Job insecurity did not begin with the announcement of AT&T's acquisition of BellSouth. BellSouth had experienced periodic and large job reductions since the early 1990s. A change in benefits came with the, along with new processes for nearly every employee administrative function, from insurance to 401(k) management to educational assistance.

Strengths and Recent Successes

While the preceding section detailed the primary areas of change for the department, the various legacy organizations that comprised the new AT&T each brought numerous strengths to be leveraged within the department going forward.

- BellSouth brought personnel with experience, credibility in local communities, and broad media contacts (Malik, 2007).
- The sheer size of the combined company gave it a budget for public affairs activities matched by few other organizations.
- Both BellSouth and AT&T showed a track record of successful legislative accomplishments, buoyed by longstanding relationships with key legislators, public service commissioners, and other centers of influence (Haugsted, 2007).
- The public affairs function was valued by the AT&T organization and directly reports to a member of the company's senior executive management team.
- Public affairs served as the primary communications arm for one of the largest corporate philanthropies in the nation.
  Several corporate successes in which the public affairs department played an integral role immediately followed the AT&T acquisition:

Consumers win in Connecticut. The attorney general in Connecticut went to court to try to force AT&T obtain a cable television license even after the legislature passed a law allowing new entrants to compete in the market. A high profile consumer education campaign and another judge's ruling helped turn that effort around within two months. AT&T's cable service is up and running today thanks, in part, to support from its union representatives and other groups targeted by the public affairs campaign (Carlow, 2007; Haugsted, 2007).

More states followed. Public affairs led efforts to pass legislation allowing new entrants into the video and entertainment market by streamlining the licensing process in former BellSouth states Georgia, South Carolina and Florida.

Tennessee. Similar legislation was passed upon reconsideration in the 2008 legislative session. An initial effort had failed after some newspapers presented cable television's position only (Humphrey, 2007; Knoxville News Sentinel, 2007).

Case Studies: Comparison of Alternate Solutions

Corporate public affairs activities are structured differently depending on the industry and the influences of the community and political environments. The boundary spanning functions were more widespread within BellSouth than AT&T but both communications and public affairs departments kept a constant monitor on those "mutually beneficial relationships" (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994).

While the internal structures for the function vary across corporations, there is wide agreement responsibilities should span communications, collaborations and community relations and should include media relations, public relations, advertising, community and employee relations (Grunig & Grunig, 2001; Pinkham, n.d).

The 2005 State of Public Affairs report, published by the Washington, DC based Foundation for Public Affairs showed that public affairs work has turned from reactive to proactive to reactive at both the national and state levels. In other findings, as compared to the 2002 report, there was a 4% drop in the number of public affairs executives who report to the CEO, but a 3%

increase – to 53% – in the number of public affairs executives who are part of their company's senior management committees. And, though there was an increase in representation on strategic planning committees, only 40% of the companies surveyed included public affairs in these decision-making plans (PR Newswire, 2005).

Given the widespread agreement among researchers and practitioners that public affairs is not self-sufficient and must have the support of senior management to succeed (Griffin & Dunn, 2004; Boddewyn, 2007), the fact that a majority of corporations do not include public affairs in strategic planning is not a positive reflection for the profession overall. Since resource allocation and structural variations directly influence the performance and effectiveness of a public affairs department, its placement, involvement, and influence should be a primary organizational concern (Kraus, 2005).

This research included interviews with current and former communication practitioners from Delta Airlines, Southern Progress/Time, Inc., USAA and Edelman Public Relations, and interviews with representatives from AT&T and former BellSouth communicators. Figure 1 summarizes the corporate approaches discussed.

Figure 1.
AT&T: Largest communications company in the U.S. and worldwide, by revenue;

		DELTA	SOUTHERN PROGRESS	USAA	at&t
Size:	Employees	47,000	1,000	22,000	304,000
	Annual revenue*	16B	5B	96B	117B
Department that houses Public Affairs also manages:	Advertising		✓		
	Communications - Internal		✓	✓	
	Communications - External		✓	✓	
	Community relations	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Contributions	✓	✓		✓
	Regulatory / Gov't relations		✓		✓
Outsourced partners		No	In-house agency at corporate parent	Partial; two agency staff on site	Predominant; agency staff on site

* Southern Progress revenue is for parent company Time Inc.; USAA statistic is assets, a more common measurement for financial firms than revenue.

Headquartered in Dallas, TX; Employees: 303,670; Revenue: $117 billion (2008).

The internal organizational goals of AT&T's public affairs organization at the time of its BellSouth acquisition remained consistent with professional standards. Public affairs worked closely with government affairs, state regulatory and external affairs, and corporate communications functions, and with the AT&T Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the company.

"The collaboration is essential to advance public policy. Public affairs professionals have a particular expertise in media and government which gives them an ability to articulate the right messages. It is a different language, the ability to articulate a complex issue into a message that motivates the public and public officials," said Billy Linville, vice president of public affairs for AT&T in the southern region (Personal communication, Billy Linville, January 3, 2008).

Linville said the resources of public opinion polling, activation of ally organizations and tactical messaging can make the difference in legislative or regulatory campaigns. It is a component that was rarely utilized within BellSouth's governmental relations organization. "The

competitive advantage is that we are able to call on different disciplines and target individual expertise. The research tells us the best way to explain a complicated issue, characterize facts and drive legislation. But, you need political experience and I don't think that can be taught. You see it from being involved in government, you know the decision process how politicians think and act and we use different vehicles to communicate," said Linville.

Linville said the biggest challenge to public affairs within AT&T is management of the processes involved with the messaging for campaigns because the process can reduce the agility of strategic responses. This included the coordination of the company's contributions in order to maximize their impact and create awareness with the appropriate audiences.

Delta Airlines, Passenger airline founded in 1928; Headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia; Employees: 47,000; Revenue: $16 billion (2008).

Delta Airlines, emerged from bankruptcy in 2008, merged with Northwest and employed a structure that isolated many of the public relations disciplines including communications, regulatory, advertising and public affairs, which handled community relations and contributions. "The lack of structure doesn't tie the departments together so you do lack one theme of message and a team strategy," said Jeff Battcher, Delta's former executive vice president of communications (Personal communication, Jeff Battcher, December 20, 2007, & December 16, 2010).

Prior to joining Delta, Battcher was the communications director at BellSouth. "The more I do this the more I do think there needs to be a position of chief communications officer – one person with supervisory responsibility over regulatory, advertising and external and internal public relations," he said. Battcher gave two examples where communications oversight would have been of benefit. Delta spent millions of dollars in advertising a new international route, but the advertising buy was not coordinated with communications. The launch earned media opportunities (i.e. beneficial unpaid news coverage) with some of the same media outlets.

During the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Battcher pointed to a number of duplicative efforts between human resources and communications at BellSouth. Battcher said it is sometimes the common sense experience communications professionals bring to a discussion that is the most valuable. He mentioned a strategic planning session where executives discussed directing bills to customers in New Orleans in which he was the only person who mentioned that many of those customers no longer had homes where bills could be delivered.

From an internal perspective, Battcher pointed to a hesitancy to understand that employees are the most important asset in a true customer driven industry, especially when there is a tendency to overload audiences with information instead of prioritizing issues of importance.

Southern Progress, subsidiary of Time Inc., a Time Warner Company. Founded in 1886, lifestyle publisher of seven magazines and book division; Based in Birmingham, AL; Corporate headquarters: New York; Employees: 1,000; Revenue: $5.2 billion (parent Time Inc, 2008).

Helen Todd is the former public relations manager for Southern Living magazine from 2007-2010. The magazine, which operates along with six other lifestyle magazines under the Time Warner subsidiary, Time, Inc., Southern Progress is not noted for devoting much in the way of time or resources to local community relations and has not historically been greatly impacted by local or state government. While it employs a corporate spokesperson, the operation devotes most of its public relations efforts to enhancing its reputation in the southern region through 'idea homes' and food-related events.

Todd worked closely with in-house agency representatives based within Time's New York operations. There were weekly calls and monthly meetings to review plans to solicit media coverage. She said it was a challenge to pitch stories for media to cover media, but it is even more challenging to convince colleagues in New York that regional audiences merit a different approach from what might gain coverage in New York. "It would be helpful if New York would get out of our business and recognize a regional approach," said Todd. "To be frank, there is no acknowledgement of talent and resources outside the parent company." Todd acknowledged the negative influences present in the headquarters-administered environment: "There is a corporate uneasiness and threat of cutbacks you feel at every turn. It is a very large company that, unfortunately, feels the necessity to change successful programs for the sake of change" (Personal communication, Helen Todd, December 18, 2007).

Todd previously worked for Birmingham-based Regions Bank, which most recently bought Birmingham-based AmSouth Bank, to form one ten largest financial institutions in the country. Even though Regions was the buyer, former AmSouth officials were in charge of the new company. What went by the wayside was a communications structure she calls, "one of the best strategic structures I've ever seen." Each communications manager had responsibility for three or four internal partners, parts of the business that shared dependent interests, such as advertising, marketing and sales; or regulatory and investor relations. "We learned these bundles of responsibilities intimately and it led to very successful and cohesive messaging," said Todd.

USAA, a private diversified financial services firm for military and family members only, Headquartered in San Antonio, TX; Employees: 22,000; Assets: 96.1 Billion (2008).

USAA was named by *Business Week* as the top corporation in customer service, and a Forrester Research survey ranked it highest among financial services companies for customer advocacy. Even though its products are only offered to current and retired U.S. military personnel and their families, reputation, communications and public policy are important to USAA. The company's public affairs communication role currently resides under the interim direction of Rhonda Crawford, the former vice president of member communications who is now the vice president over digital operations. Two interviews were conducted, the first just one week after she assumed the interim oversight responsibility for public affairs and in December, 2010 during her first year heading the corporate digital initiatives (Personal communication, Rhonda Crawford, December 15, 2007, & December 17, 2010).

One staff member was assigned to public affairs communications and the company contracted with an outside agency that kept two employees in residence at USAA. In 2008, USAA awarded the agency contract to Edelman, replacing Fleishman Hillard. The core government relations function was under the direction of the corporate counsel. It is rare for USAA to take a stance on a regulatory issue that opposes the positions of other financial services firms, but Crawford said USAA would not hesitate to mount an individual public affairs campaign in opposition to the industry's position, if necessary. Crawford also cited the communications role in becoming more active in public affairs issues and seeking external affairs "tie-ins", especially on issues such as insurance regulation, which is currently under the control of individual state governments though USAA favors a single point of regulation.

Advertising was once targeted to military and trade publications under the direction of marketing at USAA, and Crawford said three divisions (marketing, digital and communications) work closely together to insure that public relations efforts complement paid media. However, she says, "We are not always as strategic as we could be in making community contributions, but

we generally make those contributions silently as compared to, say an AT&T, which holds press conferences for arguably much smaller donations." Since 2010, USAA lifted some membership requirements in an effort to nearly double its membership with help from its first national television advertising and image campaign.

Crawford said that USAA first outsourced some of the public relations work to an agency whose employees worked inside the company in 2006. She said it was a difficult transition, but took place in the midst of downsizing at the company. Having previously enjoyed a no-layoff policy, there was broad change within the company. "In context, it was just one of many significant changes and if the outsource move was going to be made, it was best to have all the changes at one time," said Crawford.

She added it made all the difference to have the agency staff in house. Crawford said two other practices were key to the relationship. "We are the drivers and very hands on day to day and they are never quoted on the company's behalf," said Crawford. She said the second agency transition was not necessarily as smooth as the first installation. "They just don't seem to have cracked the code yet. Admittedly, Fleishman had experience in this type of arrangement and Fleishman had a stable of experience and could pull from staff with AT&T experience," AT&T and USAA were both headquartered in San Antonio for a time (AT&T later moved its corporate headquarters to Dallas), where Fleishman based many employees. USAA operated on a traditional monthly retainer basis with the outside agency and had the ability to negotiate additional projects beyond that arrangement.

Edelman: Founded in 1952, the world's largest independent global public relations firm, third largest overall; Headquartered in New York; Employees: >2,100; Revenue: $299 million (2008).

Edelman has served as the public relations agency for many companies of varying sizes, as well as non-profit agencies and government entities. This interview with Conroy Boxhill, an account supervisor in the corporate and public affairs division, focused on corporate clients (Personal communication, Conroy Boxhill, December 18, 2007).

Boxhill said Edelman employed in-residence teams at corporate locations for large clients such as Wal-Mart and Pfizer. "It gives us the benefit of having people at the table during strategic planning meetings. We are able to react much more quickly than if we had to rely on second-hand information and the two-way communications model allows us to participate and liaison with the client," said Boxhill. However, another Arkansas-based Edelman employee pointed out that she often wrote speeches for executives she had never met.

Edelman staffed a rapid response line within Wal-Mart dedicated to media inquiries. It was not always the case, but Edelman did prefer to have a Wal-Mart employee ultimately respond to individual reporters. Edelman's senior management handled media training and participated in specific interview preparation and associated research. Edelman, in a role much like Fleishman at then-SBC, created a professional ethics issue in its representation of Wal-Mart that Boxhill said led to new policies within the agency.

A blog launched in 2007, "Wal-Marting Across America," ostensibly portrayed a couple traveling across the country in an RV and spending overnights in Wal-Mart parking lots. It didn't take long for the watchdog organization Wal-Mart Watch to reveal Edelman as the fake blog's creator. It was revealed the agency also made up the organization that went by *"Working Families for Wal-Mart"* and used the contributions from an unidentified *Washington Post* photographer (Siebert, 2006).

"This is so foolish on so many levels," a corporate blogging consultant was quoted as saying on Mediapost.com. "Everyone involved violated the basic rule: be transparent. If you're found out, it comes back as a slap in the face." Boxhill cited transparency as a primary focus, a big issue. "If I call a journalist, I am very clear that I am from Edelman and I am calling on behalf of a particular client. Previously, I never said I worked for the client, but now there is a clear identification of my employer," Boxhill said.

The agency did engage key opinion leaders for support on certain issues; for example, a current practice of insurance companies paying doctors to switch patients from a name brand drug to generic brands. But Edelman will ask a client's lobbyist to work directly with any consumer organizations the company supports financially.

Boxhill said Edelman typically submits a proposed press release through internal approvals by a number of employees, concluding with a senior manager in charge of a particular account, but that process is seamless to the client. On billing, Boxhill said the agency favors flat project fees or hourly retainers over monthly retainers because the latter are more difficult to manage and yield less for the agency since the agency almost always devotes more time than accounted for in the monthly retainer.

Aligning to Serve: Strategic Recommendations

In a perfect world the transition to, and operations of, the public affairs department for the south region of AT&T would be left solely to the discretion of its team members. But, the corporate world is rarely perfect and internal teams do not control their own destiny (Bordia, Jones, et al., 2006; Spedle, Frans, & Volberda, 2007).

A closer look at the standards of this profession showed clearly that the core structure, goals and resources AT&T began with were surprisingly sound. The challenges that followed were precisely what researchers Griffin and Dunn laid out in 2004:

- To minimize internal constraints
- Enhance communications flows, and
- Develop effective decision making patterns

This study identified three disruptive factors, each of which could be mitigated by incorporating tactics displayed by the case study organizations or recommended in the industry literature, as summarized in Figure 2 (Farjoun & Starbuck, 2007; Nadler, 1993; Pinkham, n/d; Public Relations Quarterly, 2000; Wilts, 2006).

Figure 2.

Disruption	Response	Case Studies
Culture change and control	Road show of campaign partners showing capabilities: ads, third party activities…	AT&T; USAA; Edelman
	Accept change of control as given	
	Promote first win using new public affairs campaign tools.	
Outsourcing partners	Require transparency.	USAA; Delta
	Develop long-term relationships with outsourced partners.	
	Employee driven oversight vs. agency control.	
	Continuous development of issues management.	
Technology overload	Add 'groupware' tools to allow collaborative editing and approval of press releases.	Delta; Edelman; Sothern Progress
	Filter low priority emails through administrative staff.	
	Single point of contact from agency and corporate headquarters.	

The most significant recommendations are explained and prioritized in greater detail below. Not all are immediately attainable or even immediately essential, but each would help optimize the department for long term success.

Culture Change: We are not the enemy, don't fight an internal city hall. Attainability – High, Priority – Short term

More than three quarters of companies surveyed for the Foundation for Public Affairs State of the Industry Reports in 2005 outsourced a portion of their public affairs work. When asked which activities benefited the most from outsourcing, one study ranked communications, internal and external, second on the list. Whether it is because an outside eye brings fresh perspective or for the cost benefit, most corporate managers expect to expand outsourcing (Muehlberger, 2007; Spedale, Frans, & Volberda 2007).

The southern regional public affairs staff is the only AT&T communications group initially not outsourced. Therefore, it was incumbent for the group to add value beyond the traditional tasks in order to maintain relevance in the corporation. This was a new line of work for most members of the team though it combined competencies practiced previously. A consistent focus on issues management would improve the inherent ability to spot relevant issues, motives, vulnerabilities or questionable circumstances and is of immeasurable value in a public policy environment.

Acceptance from the state organization's top executives was not a given and would have to be earned, but demonstrating new tools and resources within public affairs offered the best place to start. Public affairs' knowledge positioned it as a source for background for the state legislative and external affairs teams. In addition, the corporate partners that produced advertising and third party coordination for public affairs campaigns also brought significant knowledge and tools. There was a benefit for managers in seeing these resources as they would be applied during a campaign, and a 'road show' to each state would be illustrative. In one workshop simulation, the team shadowed a legislator and participants to hear the type of phone call a constituent might make, a radio commercial that would be heard while the lawmaker is traveling, an ad from the local newspaper and a television commercial to round out the day. It was believed that such demonstrations would alleviate hesitancy to employ public affairs when important issues arose (Boddewyn, 2007; Kraus, 2005; Shropshire & Hillman, 2007).

In contributions, public affairs was striving for relevance in its releases over sheer quantity. The goal was not to produce 100 press releases about charitable contributions, but to tell the story about local students gaining access to technology in the classroom because of an AT&T contribution that officials went into the community's classrooms to experience.

Sixty percent of the 223 responding companies in the Foundation survey in 2002 felt an impact on the public affairs organization due to mergers and acquisitions within the previous year. These corporate changes were highest in North America and grew, along with CEO transitions, over the past decade (Griffin & Dunn, 2004; Public Relations Quarterly, 2000). This confirmed that AT&T's circumstances were not unique or even rare. AT&T may have been larger in scale, but was not alone, which put the organizational changes into context and diminished the 'woe is me' attitude that can lead to wholesale layoffs. "We sat down and negotiated a fair price for the bank and paid them with our stock. But then, instead of feeling that they had joined our team and had the goal of helping all of us prosper, its officers and staff looked upon us as the enemy. They tried to do as little as possible," said a banker in the *American Banker* trade magazine, commenting on a difficult merger (Nadler, 1993).

Culture Change: All for one and one for all. Attainability – Moderate, Priority – Long term

Moving beyond the post-acquisition culture clash is imperative to a successful relationship between external public relations and public affairs. The prior inclination to handle issues quietly within the local environment will prove unworkable in the new structure and lead to a breakdown in the processes that otherwise fostered the partnership approach.

One variable was timing and Linville suggested that one or two successful collaborations would overcome any initial hesitancy and trust issues that might arise from state executives reticent to share control over decisions once made exclusively. Linville said when public affairs achieved a first major success, results would be communicated across the state organizations and help establish public affairs as the definitive resource for background and future mobilization.

Three state offices launched successful legislative campaigns out of the gate, but for states that had not yet launched an effort from the front lines, preparation was a luxury. The introduction of the new resources could be developed more strategically, through incremental steps, but Linville said acceptance would take time. A baseline public opinion poll, or the mobilization of a corporate political strategy team and consumer advisory panels would have the opportunity to demonstrate benefit from early collaborations to jump start strategic plans needed at the onset of a crisis.

The utilization of these resources, internal or outsourced, in public affairs campaigns goes a long way to break down the internal barriers and prove that state organizations need not be self-sufficient. Access to opinion polling, primary and secondary research, third party allies, advertising and direct mail provides a significant advantage in public policy debates.

Outsourcing Partners: On a Clear Day Attainability – High, Priority – Immediate

Outsourcing in the public affairs profession should become an accepted fact by the organization and appreciated for the resources it provides the group. USAA used this model effectively because it maintained direct oversight and brought a corporate maturity and transparency requirement to the relationship. However, previous bad judgment calls by both Edelman and Fleishman showed no such maturity or transparency and revealed there are limits to efforts aimed at providing a client with a competitive edge. Media consultant Brenda McClain said, "If skilled counsel is not part of the equation, the credibility of both companies, the agency and the corporation, will have a very limited shelf life" (personal communication, Brenda McClain, January, 2008).

This is the same common sense strategy practiced by Jeff Battcher in his roles at BellSouth and Delta Airlines. The public affairs or communications employee needs a comfort zone from which to question policy, which is not typically a comfortable fit from the agent-client position. Another perspective might argue the agency level can pose questions about strategy more easily, since the outside contractor need not fear firing; but this is not typical when the contractor remains less invested in the company's outcomes. Long-term relationship building with partners is imperative so that expectations are established long before a high profile crisis emerges. Such relationships minimize surprises because expectations are well defined, preferences well known and two-way communications lines well established.

Technology Overload: Untangling the Cords. Attainability – Moderate, Priority – Immediate

Information overload is the good and the bad news all rolled up in the Internet. As mentioned, the ability to prioritize valid information, recognize future threats and see potential partners with common interests will allow public affairs to become the resource that makes sense

of it all. But, the information needed to distill useful data creates overload when you add approval tracks for press releases and messaging to the daily corporate messaging and exercises.

This added up to hundreds of e-mails in and out that cannot be filed or erased before the build up returns. The continuous cycle brought frustration and stress and impedes productivity. For the most part, communications and media response positions within the company were 24-7 and the work-life balance suffered from the lack of boundaries. A study by Boswell and Olson-Buchanan found this issue raised during interviews with the significant other of employees (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007). The authors theorize that the imbalance would manifest itself through attitudes toward the job and organization, motivation, and retention, though the sample was too small to carry to that level.

This heightened conflict would have to be addressed fully at the source, but there were steps that could be taken at the individual level to alleviate some of the less pertinent noise, similar to the proposal to prioritize valid threats from less time-sensitive data. Lower priority mail, such as daily clips, could be routed directly to administrative support for filtering. Large files, such as photos, could follow the same routing.

Groupware, or collaborative productivity software, would facilitate the approval process for press releases. Initially, the process for approval of a release required distribution of 10-12 e-mails to reach a final version. Groupware would allow everyone to work from a single document and reduce both e-mail volume and the potential for errors. At the least, there should be a single contact for the region at corporate public affairs and, as at Edelman, a draft sent should be processed and a final version returned from one agency representative. Representatives in the new department advocated for both processes and technology that supported the streamlining.

Discussion, Limitations and Future Research

AT&T enjoyed a strong public affairs department with a deep foundation for its future endeavors. However, as an organization built through numerous mergers, the AT&T public affairs structure faced challenges in integrating disparate corporate cultures rendered all the more complex by the immense involvement of an external firm. By striving for a mutually beneficial relationship with the state organizations, maintaining transparency in its activities, streamlining its processes, and demonstrating how communications can advance the organization's agenda, the AT&T South public affairs department was well aligned to meet the needs of its internal and external constituents. The incorporation of BellSouth communication practitioners into AT&T was not seamless and experienced standardization issues between the companies. The migration into the new communication methods and practices, while aimed at simplifying the lives of its key constituents, was a quick one for many of the communication employees. An historical perspective and sampling of other company organizations would have aided the migration on behalf of the former BellSouth staff.

A thorough examination of the structure of the communication departments within different corporations clearly revealed that one size definitely does not fit all. This early perspective, provided to employees in the midst of transitions or reorganizations, could have aided a truly transparent and comfortable transition with key relationships for successful issues management. The details of the inner workings of a communication or public affairs organization may not always be outlined for the public. However, much information is available through resources within membership organizations such as the *Institute for Public Relations*, the *Public Relations Society of America (PRSA),* and other trade groups. The prior and shared experiences from successful and unsuccessful transitions can be a most valuable resource for employees in a state

of structural change. A primary focus is given to communicating to the publics, internal and external, during corporate changes in mergers or acquisitions. The employees responsible to be the communicator in these circumstances have a great deal to learn long before assuming the position of communicator within the new organization.

Toward that end, an interesting topic for future research would be to be empirically review post-merger corporate communications functions, with a goal of deducing the factors that discriminate between successful and unsuccessful mergers, at least from a communications standpoint. We may never forget how to ride a bicycle; regardless of style or model, the mechanics of the process remain similar. But the reality is that when migrating to a new model after many years on a familiar one, it is always wise to first take a long look at the new model to understand how to fit on it and perform optimally. Communications departments are similar; though all may seem on the surface to reflect the same instruction manual, some can differ drastically in their operation and performance. The historical perspectives and practices provided by those who have successfully navigated mergers can provide a valuable set of operating instructions for those facing their own imperatives to maximize the performance of a post-merger communications department.

Exhibit 1: Organizational Chart
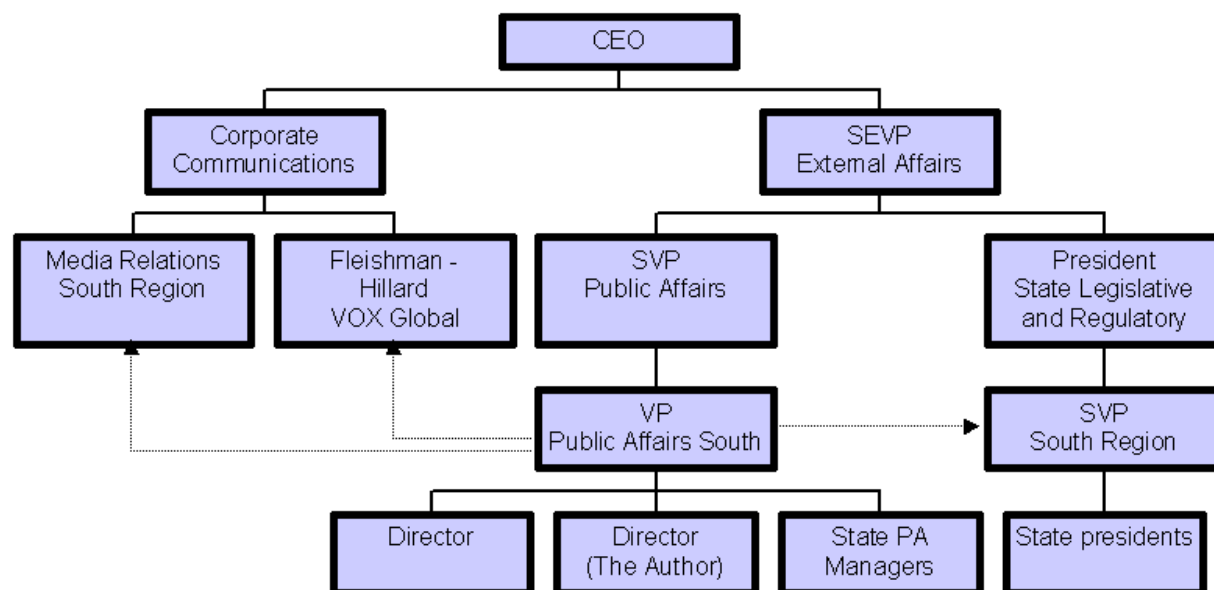
Exhibit 2: Public Opinion Polling, October 2007

Why not Huntsville?

Significant innovation is occurring in the video and entertainment realm, creating opportunities for **real competition** for cable entertainment services. New regulation on this industry will **discourage investment** and **limit access** to new choices and technology in Huntsville.

Don't Turn "Rocket City" into "Regulation City!"

Alabamans WANT the Benefits of a Competitive Market:

Competition

69%

69% of Alabama consumers support bringing competition to the cable TV market in Alabama.

Not enough competition — 67%

67% of Alabama consumers believe there is NOT enough competition to keep cable prices down and provide good service.

Choice

67%   64%   62%

Alabama   Your Own County   Your Own Neighborhood
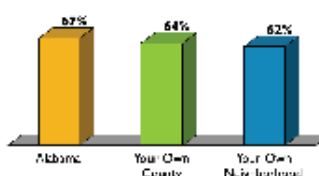
• Substantial majorities of consumers say that the state of Alabama (67%), their own county (64%), and their own neighborhood (62%) would benefit if new companies were allowed to enter the video services market.

Consumer Savings

93%

• According to the FCC, **cable rates rose 93%** nationwide from 1995 to 2005.

• **72**% of Alabama consumers say that **prices for cable are too high**, including **44**% of consumers who say they are "much too high."

• **60% of Alabamans agree** that if there were competition for cable service, everyone would benefit financially, because the current company would have to compete with lower prices across the state.

More and more states are streamlining regulations to encourage new providers in the video services market. **Huntsville residents deserve the same opportunities,** not new regulations that will **discourage investment** and **limit access** to new technology.

Why Not Huntsville?

Poll Source: Peter D. Hart Research Associates, October 24-27 2007.

Exhibit 3: Tennessee Legislative News Article

knoxnews
Knoxville News Sentinel

Lobbying costs hit $11M in AT&T, cable TV industry battle

By Tom Humphrey
Tuesday, November 20, 2007

NASHVILLE - Lobbying expenses in Tennessee's legislative war between AT&T and the cable television industry reached the $11 million plateau this year, according to reports filed with the Tennessee Ethics Commission by major participants. The reports, required under an ethics law passed by the Legislature last year, mark the first time that lobbyist employers have had to publicly disclose their expenditures for a full year. Two reports were required for 2007, the last due on Nov. 15.

AT&T, which pushed legislation that would have allowed the company to obtain a statewide franchise to operate cable television, reported spending between $3.45 million and $3.55 million in its effort during the two reporting periods combined. Between $600,000 and $700,000 of that total came in direct payments to the 26 lobbyists registered for AT&T. The rest went for advertising and mailings that urged Tennesseans to contact their legislators and urge them to vote for the bill.

TV4US, which bills itself as a consumer advocacy group seeking more competition in the cable television industry and a supporter of the AT&T bill, reported spending between $1.6 million and $1.7 million - almost all for advertising. AT&T is listed among several organizations sponsoring TV4US on the group's Web site, www.wewanttvchoicetn.com/tn. Thus, total spending by the major supporters of the bill in the 2007 legislative session was between $5.05 million and $5.25 million. The measure failed, but AT&T Tennessee President Gregg Morton says the telecommunications giant will renew its push in the 2008 session.

Spending on the opposing side was somewhat higher. The Tennessee Cable Telecommunications Association reported spending between $5.5 million and $5.6 million in the two reports combined. That included $400,000-$500,000 in compensation to lobbyists, with most of the rest going to cable television advertising. The association also operates a Web site devoted to the issue at www.keepitlocaltennessee.com. Comcast Cable Inc. filed separate reports showing between $175,000 and $350,000 in expenditures - most in direct payments to lobbyists. Spending of the major opponents of the legislation thus totaled between $5.675 million and $5.95 million. Combined spending for both sides totaled between $10.725 million and $11.2 million.

The lobbyist disclosure law does not require reporting of exact figures on lobbying costs, and those who spend less than $10,000 in a six-month period do not have to report any expenditure figure. City and county governments, which generally were opposed to the AT&T bill, also are exempt from reporting requirements, though some local governments file reports voluntarily. The Tennessee Municipal League, representing cities statewide, reported between $100,000 and $200,000 in payments to lobbyists. The Tennessee County Services Association, representing county governments statewide, disclosed paying between $50,000 and $100,000 in lobbyist compensation.

Both groups, however, are involved in lobbying multiple other issues. Stacey Burks Riggs, executive director of the cable association, said local governments were supportive of the cable cause but very little spending was involved in city and county efforts. "Their members (city and county elected officials) are their lobbyists," she said. She said cable efforts were necessary to counter AT&T "hiring every lobbyist in the state, practically."

Under the current cable system, local governments issue cable franchises and receive fees in return. Several officials contend passage of statewide franchising could lead to loss of local control and local revenue.

AT&T spokeswoman Terri Denard said the company's expenditures were necessary to "communicate to the people of Tennessee, as well as their elected officials, the benefits of more competition."

She and Riggs both said their organizations are prepared to renew the lobbying battle next year. Riggs said the cable association recently began running ads again.

Denard said that elected officials are beginning to get the AT&T message "as they hear from their constituents" while cable interests "simply don't want to compete against a viable competitor, and that's what we intend to be.

"The message we get from our customers is that they overwhelmingly want to see competition for their entertainment services," Denard said. "As that message continues to get to local officials and they begin to understand the why and how of that message, I think we will continue to gain support."

Exhibit 4: Sample News Release (first page only)

News Release

For more information, contact:
Terri Denard
Office: 205-714-0777
E-mail: td9168@att.com

AT&T Supports Nonprofit Organizations in the Birmingham Area; Builds Stronger Communities Through $9 Million in National Grant Program

AT&T Excelerator Grants Assist Organizations Serving Diverse Ethnic Groups, Low-Income Families, People With Disabilities, Youth and Seniors

BIRMINGHAM, Ala., Nov. 30, 2007 — The AT&T Foundation — the corporate philanthropy organization of AT&T Inc. (NYSE:T) — has announced that it has awarded more than $150,000 to support nine Birmingham-area organizations through the AT&T Excelerator competitive technology grant program.

Since 2002, the AT&T Excelerator program has provided more than 2,500 technology grants — totaling more than $47.8 million — to organizations across the country. In 2007, more than 680 regional and local nonprofit organizations nationwide have benefited from nearly $9 million through the competitive program. This year, the AT&T Foundation expanded the Excelerator grant program for the first time to include AT&T Southeast's nine-state service area.

The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute will use its grant to install a fiber-optic network in the facility. "The rich video histories that include firsthand accounts from those who were integral to the civil rights movement need to be available to teachers and students at speeds as fast as possible," said Dr. Lawrence Pijeaux Jr., president and CEO, BCRI. "This valuable combination of next-generation technology and educational content is a goal we have wanted to attain for many years. AT&T helped us launch our new Web site several years ago, and this continues our long-standing partnership."

"In today's fast-paced world, technology is a vital component to the success of nonprofit organizations that do not always have the funds to properly use cost-saving technologies," said state Sen. Jabo Waggoner. "The ability to improve efficiency and increase their reach will mean the world for organizations such as Kid One Transport, which will be able to better coordinate travel between medical facilities throughout the metropolitan area."

-- more --

at&t

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**Image Restoration Strategies Employed by Press Secretary Robert Gibbs
as President Barack Obama's Job Approval Ratings Decline**

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Abstract

Image restoration theory is founded upon two primary assumptions: communication is a goal-directed activity, and maintaining a positive reputation is a key goal of communication (Benoit, 1995). This study extends image restoration theory by examining news in the making through analyzing Press Secretary Robert Gibbs' responses to questions on events such as the closing of Guantanamo prison, the 100th day anniversary in office, the Air Force One Manhattan flyover, Afghanistan, "The Beer Summit," and midterm elections. These events also correspond with President Barack Obama's declining job approval ratings as reported from Gallup opinion polls. The analysis reveals increase in the press secretary's willingness to answer questions over time. From the beginning of his presidency through the aftermath of the November 2, 2010 elections, this study analyzed the content of 463 press briefings.

Introduction

The president's press secretary or spokesman serves many masters – the press, the public, and ultimately the president. In a 24/7 news cycle, the press secretary shapes much of the dialogue between the president and the people and assists a president in achieving his political agenda (Klein, 2008). Although the role of press secretary is historically tied to conventional journalism practices, this study posits that today a press secretary operates in a continuous cycle of image maintenance or repair within responses to questions ranging from the president's schedule to health care reform.

Image restoration seeks to preserve reputation; however, first a crisis must occur. Once a crisis is underway, individuals and corporations alike begin subconsciously and then intentionally strategizing image restoration strategies in order to preserve reputation and image (Benoit, 1997b). Typically this is because the gravity of the crisis or the responsibility of the crisis is attributed to the individual or the corporation. As the liaison between the president and the media, the press secretary follows the president as the most televised government official (O'Keefe, 2011).

Influencing press coverage is how the press secretary moves the president's political agenda forward (Rozell, 1995). President Barack Obama's job approval rating began at a high of 67% in January 2009, and dropped to a low of 44% by November 2010. Given the role of the press secretary, such a descent in the President's job approval rating signals a threat to reputation and image.

Literature review

Reputation and Image

Image repair seeks to preserve reputation – the overall quality or character as seen or judged by people in general (Merriam-Webster Online, 2007). Reputation is damaged when accusations of objectionable behavior prompt explanations, defenses, justifications, rationalizations, apologia, or excuses for the behavior in question (Benoit & Brunson, 1994). Therefore, character attack demands a direct response (Ware & Linkugel, 1973).

Image is defined as a mental conception symbolic of a basic attitude or a popular conception projected especially through the mass media (Merriam-Webster Online, 2010). Burns and Bruner (2000) note that image is not static or fixed, and therefore "unlikely to be restored to its prior state" (p. 30). Individuals and organizations continuously develop, maintain, protect, and restore image (Brinson & Benoit, 1996).
Benoit (1995) posits that we communicate purposefully in order to reduce, redress, or avoid damage to reputation from perceived wrongdoing. Image restoration strategies originate from apologia, which are found in the writings of Plato, Isocrates, and Aristotle (Ryan, 1982).

Apologia

Apologia, the speech of self-defense, is one of the oldest message outcomes in relation to image restoration theory (Ware & Linkugel, 1973; Hearit, 2001). Despite contemporary society's trend to mitigate damages through the legal system, the concept of correcting image through apologia remains as important in contemporary times as in centuries past (Ware & Linkugel, 1973).

Two types of apologetic discourse are defense of policy and defense of character.

Kruse established three factors warranting apologetic speech: ethical charge of wrongdoing, purification of reputation, and a personal address delivered in defense of the self (Hearit, 2001). Schlenker and Darby (1981) posit that social interaction returns to normal so long as the apology is accepted. This requires repentance, sincerity on the part of the actor and forgiveness on the part of the audience who deems punishment unnecessary. Consequences increase as the magnitude of harm increases and therefore the actor's responsibility. When consequences and responsibility are both high, the actor is more likely to engage in "self-castigation and to request forgiveness" (Ware & Linkugel, p. 276, 1973). Kategoria is the accusation or charge that speaks against or accuses (Ware & Linkugel, 1973).

Image restoration theory

Elements of image restoration theory can be found in Aristotle's (2004) *Rhetoric*, and feed from Rosenfield, Burke, Ware & Linkugel, Ryan, Scott & Lyman, Schonbach, Schlenker & Darby, and Goffman (Benoit, 1995; Burns & Bruner, 2000). Benoit leads scholarly research in image restoration theory in large part due to his 1995 text *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies: A Theory of Image Restoration Strategies*. The text is perhaps the most comprehensive on the subject as it brings together several rhetorical approaches from Aristotle to Burke, and explicates the theory of image restoration, message outcomes, and provides contemporary analyses employing Benoit's typology of image restoration strategies.

Image restoration theory is founded upon two primary assumptions. First, communication is a goal-directed activity in that we seek the most important goals or the best mix possible, and second, maintaining a positive reputation is a primary goal of communication (Benoit, 1995).

Benoit's (1995) image restoration theory has five typologies of image restoration strategies: denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification. These strategies reflect the goal of the discourse. Benoit applies the theory of image repair discourse to corporate, and individual messages. Benoit's (1995) typology of image restoration strategies is most often relied upon for analyzing message outcomes. The origins of his typology stem from Ware & Linkugel's (1973) four postures in apology for character: denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence, which built upon Abelson's (1959) four modes of resolution.

Accounts, excuses, and justifications

The issue of causation links directly to attribution and accounts (Bruner & Bruner, 2000). Accounts are tactics that restore equilibrium by providing a credible speaker to explain an incident or mishap (Scott & Lyman, 1968; Schlenker & Darby, 1981). Accounts bridge the gap between actions and expectations, and may cover more than one event. However, when the magnitude of the event exceeds the account, the account may be viewed as illegitimate or unreasonable. In addition, audiences may be reluctant to demand an account if it is perceived to be disruptive.

Mystification, referral, and identity switching are strategies for avoiding accounts. The mystification takes the long story approach, but assumes responsibility. The referral approach subordinates cause to superiors or attributes it to an illness. Identity switching seeks to find someone else to provide an accounting for the accusations.

Excuses admit that the act is wrong, but do not accept responsibility (Scott & Lyman, 1968). Schlenker, Pontari & Christopher (2001) observed that the goal of the excuse is to distance the self from the incident thereby reducing personal responsibility. Excuses may appeal

to the infrequency of accidents, the lack of knowledge or willful intent, or biological drives, such as uncontrollable urges (Scott & Lyman, 1968). Excuses are universally condemned while being universally used (Schlenker, Pontari & Christopher, 2001).

If the gravity of the event exceeds the account, or the justification, it will not be honored by the public and considered illegitimate and unreasonable (Scott & Lyman, 1968). Justifications must fit within the acceptable boundaries of society. Schonback expanded Scott & Lyman's (1968) excuses and justifications to include labeled concessions, the full or partial admission of guilt, the expression of regret, or compensation, and refusals or denials (Benoit, 1995).

Denial, differentiation, bolstering, and transcendence

Ware & Linkugel (1973) propose that denial and differentiation split apart cognitive elements while bolstering and transcendence join cognitive elements to create new awareness among an audience. Denial and bolstering are vital and reformative (Ware & Linkugel, 1973). Denial is reformative in that no attempt is made to change the audience's held meaning. The goal with denial is to separate the actor from the issue. Typically this involves the denial of intent to harm. Denial is useful so long as reality isn't distorted, doesn't conflict with audience held beliefs, and can be sustained (Benoit & Anderson, 1996). Denial is chosen because the corporation or person believes it has limited culpability or its actions were unintentional. With the counter-attack, the corporation attacks the entity bringing the charges claiming unfair editing, or sensationalizing for ratings (Hearit, 2001).

Bolstering lies at the other end of the spectrum reinforcing favorable perceptions and positive qualities (Zhang & Benoit, 2004). Bolstering is evident in corporate slogans such as "You can trust your car to the man who wears the star," or "Count on Sears" (Benoit, p. 89, 1995; Brinson & Benoit, p. 483, 1999).

Differentiation and transcendence are both transformative in that the goal is to change the audience's meaning by creating a new construct of reality that is not part of the old construct. The accuser may seek a suspension of judgment based upon his value as a human being or a separation from the normal self. Differentiation is cognitively divisive and concomitantly transformative, and the most rhetorically powerful (Ware & Linkugel, 1973; Hearit, 2001).

The opposite of differentiation is transcendence. The audience is moved from the specifics of the case to a more abstract, general view of character. Transcendence encourages the audience to identify the real issue, or rather extend the issue to a larger context (Ware & Linkugel, 1973; Benoit, 1995).

Benoit's typology of image restoration strategies defined

Benoit (1995) typology of image restoration strategies incorporates subcategories within the major categories. Denial may include simple denial in that the said event did not occur, or shifting the blame, asserting that no one was harmed. Evading of responsibility may include provocation or responding to another's offensive act, defeasibility, lack of information about or control over the situation, or good intentions.

Reducing the offensiveness of the event involves bolstering or emphasizing the corporation's good record, minimization or downplaying of the damage, differentiation or rather the positioning of other acts has more offensive, transcendence or the emphasizing of benefits, attacking the accuser by accusing them of wrongdoing, and compensation, which the victim must find as acceptable. Lastly, the typology includes corrective action to prevent future problems, and mortification, the sincere confession and seeking of forgiveness (Benoit, 1995).

Benoit Case Examples and Approaches to Analyses

Although Benoit addresses the audience in his theory through audience perception, the case studies stem from corporate messages. Burns and Bruner (2000) take exception to this idea that image restoration must always be studied from the vantage point of the corporation or the person or organization under attack.

Benoit's case studies on image repair strategies are numerous and include analysis on Hugh Grant, Sear auto service, Dan Quayle and the sitcom Murphy Brown, Queen Elizabeth, AT&T, NBC's Dateline, President Reagan on the Iran-Contra Affair, Tonya Harding, the tobacco industry, Kenneth Starr, Judge Clarence Thomas, Oliver Stone on the movie *JFK*, Texaco, Exxon, Dow Corning, and Firestone. To varying degrees, each of Benoit's image restoration strategies is found within the many cases analyzed. His analyses have found that denial can be successful when it can be sustained, such as in Johnson & Johnson's Tylenol poisoning crisis (Benoit & Anderson, 1996). Otherwise it is best to admit to wrongdoing and seek corrective action.

Textual analysis and rhetorical criticism are Benoit's main approaches to analyzing image restoration techniques. For his analysis, Benoit's sources have included news releases (Brinson & Benoit, 1999), television sitcoms (Benoit & Anderson, 1996), television and radio advertising spots (Zhang & Benoit, 2004), online newspapers (Zhang & Benoit, 2004), corporate letters to the public (Benoit & Brinson, 1994), editorials (Benoit & McHale, 1999), congressional testimony (Brinson & Benoit, 1996), public addresses by governing officials (Benoit & Brinson, 1999), and advertising campaigns (Benoit & Harthcock, 1999). Later studies have incorporated the use of public opinion polls (Benoit & Anderson, 2004).

Image restoration studies have typically focused on one crisis scenario. This study analyzes a pendulum of events over the first two years of President Obama's presidency with Robert Gibbs as press secretary. President Obama's declining job approval ratings serve as the critical backdrop or crisis for this study. Specifically this study seeks to answer:

RQ1:   Which image repair strategies are prevalent in Press Secretary Robert Gibbs' responses to reporters' questions regarding President Barack Obama's declining approval ratings in polling?

RQ2:   Which image repair strategies are prevalent in Press Secretary Robert Gibbs' responses to reporters' questions regarding President Barack Obama's interaction or lack of interaction with the media?

RQ3:   Which image repair strategies are prevalent in Press Secretary Robert Gibbs' responses following key events including the closing of the Guantanamo prison, the Air force One Manhattan flyover, the 100th day presidential assessment, the "Beer Summit," President Obama's increase in troops in Afghanistan, and midterm elections?

RQ4:   Which image repair strategies increase or decrease over the two-year period?

Methodology

Most image restoration studies begin with a background of the controversy followed by a critical analysis of persuasive attacks and defenses or image restoration discourse, the strengths of the campaign, and conclude with public reaction, evaluation and implications. The content and context of the text analyzed originates from newspaper articles, advertisements, and televised interviews.

Using the *New York Times* (*Milestones*, 2011) timeline of the president's accomplishments over the first half of his term as well as critical issues identified through review of 463 press briefings, events correlating with declining Gallup job approval ratings for President Obama were identified as the President's declining job approval rating, the president's interaction with media, the closing of Guantanamo prison, the Air Force One Manhattan flyover, the 100th Day anniversary of the president in office, increasing troops in Afghanistan, "The Beer Summit," and midterm elections. This study extends image restoration theory by examining news in the making through analyzing the press secretary's responses to questions on these topics.

While healthcare reform appears most frequently throughout the press secretary's briefings, this study excluded the topic for several reasons. First, the time required to analyze questions and responses on the topic did not fit into an undergraduate research semester. Second, the questions and responses appeared to be quite repetitious; therefore by analyzing a variety of topics this study hopes to gain a better understanding of how Press Secretary Gibbs utilized image restoration strategies. Lastly, the President's signing of healthcare legislation is celebratory in nature and therefore less likely to enhance the understanding of image maintenance or repair.

Sampling

For 2009, 33.3% of the passages identified for analysis (N=156) focused on public opinion, and 66.7% of the passages identified for analysis focused on President Obama's interaction with the media. For 2010 (N=140), the passages were evenly split. For key events, the following number of passages (N=251) were identified for analysis: Afghanistan, N=55; "The Beer Summit," N=89; the closing of Guantanamo prison, N=17; the Manhattan flyover, N=40; the first 100 days in office, N=32, and midterm elections, N=18. The total number of passages analyzed for this study was N=547.

To identify press briefings containing questions regarding the president's interaction with the media a computer aided text analysis of each press briefing (N=463) was conducted searching for the following key terms: "media," "press conference," and "reporters." To identify press briefings with questions regarding public opinion a computer aided text analysis of each press briefing was conducted searching for the following key terms: "public opinion," "polls," "perception," "impression," and "transparency". Once identified, the press briefing was reviewed to evaluate if the context in which the key terms were used fell under either President Obama's interaction with the media or with public opinion polling. Press briefings conducted by the Deputy Press Secretary Bill Burton or other government officials were excluded from this study.

To identify press briefings containing questions regarding the key events identified computer aided text analysis of each press briefing following the date of the incident was conducted searching for the key terms related to the event. Identified press briefings were divided into passages based upon a reporter's questions. Press briefings are conducted by recognizing an individual reporter to ask a question; follow up questions from other reporters regarding the same topic may occur throughout the press briefing. Subsequently, several passages on a topic may be analyzed from one press briefing.

Coding

Three undergraduate students at a liberal arts university coded 477 passages from 463 press briefings using Benoit's (1995) image restoration typology. Benoit's typology was divided

into macro level repair and maintenance strategies and micro level repair and maintenance strategies (see Appendix A). The macro and micro levels included: Denial – simple denial and shift the blame, evasion of responsibility – provocation, defeasibility, accident, good intentions, get back to you, reducing offensiveness – bolstering, minimization, differentiation, transcendence, attack accuser, and compensation; corrective action; and mortification. This study expanded Benoit's typology to include one additional macro level typology and three micro level sub-typologies. Get back to you, humor, and irrelevant comment were added at the micro level to evasion of responsibility; answers the question was added at the macro level.

Intercoder reliability

Two coders each analyzed all passages (N= 296) for public opinion and President Obama and the media for 2009 and 2010 with a Scott's Pi intercoder reliability of 93% for 2009 and 92.4% for 2010. Three coders each analyzed all passages within topic packets (N= 251). Using Scott's Pi, intercoder reliability was assessed between pairs of coders at the macro and micro level for each coding packet; the composite reliability coefficient for each coding packet is reported at both the macro and micro level: 100 Days – .91/. 87; Air Force One Manhattan flyover – .93/. 90; Guantanamo Prison – 1/. 98, "The Beer Summit" – .83/. 81; Afghanistan – .86/. 81, midterm elections – .89/. 84.

Results

Research Question 1

When comparing Gibbs responses to questions regarding public opinion polling and the president for 2009 (N=52) and 2010 (N=70), Cramer's V and chi square test for independence revealed significance for denial, evasion of responsibility and reducing the offensiveness in 2009, answer the question in 2010 (r (122) = .43, $p < .001$; x^2 (2) = 23, $p < .001$). In 2010, Gibbs was almost twice as likely to answer the question.

Comparing Gibbs' responses to questions regarding public opinion polls and the president's interaction with the media, Cramer's V and chi square test for independence revealed significance for the use of denial, reducing the offensiveness, evasion of responsibility (r (296) = .28, $p < .001$; x^2 (2) = 23, $p < .001$). Gibbs was almost twice as likely to use denial in responses to public opinion polls, more than likely to evade responsibility in responses to questions on interaction with the media, more likely to reduce the offensiveness of the act with public opinion polls, and more likely to answer answers regarding public opinion polling than the President's interaction with the media.

**Table 1: Chi Square Results for Significant Image Restoration Strategies
and Public Opinion Polls**

Image Restoration Strategy

Year		Denial	Evasion	Reducing	Answers
2009	Count	4.0	17.0	31.0	0
	Expected Count	1.7	12.8	29.0	8.5
2010	Count	0	13.0	37.0	20.0
	Expected Count	2.3	17.2	39.9	11.5
TOTAL	Count	4.0	30.0	68.0	20.0

Research Question 2

      While comparing Gibbs responses to questions regarding the president's interaction or rather lack of interaction with the media for 2009 (N=104) and 2010 (N=70), Cramer's V and chi square test for independence revealed significance for denial, evasion of responsibility, and corrective action in 2009, and reducing the offensiveness and answering the question in 2010 (r(174) = .43, $p < .001$; x^2 (2) = 32, $p < .001$).

**Table 2: Chi Square Results for Significant Image Restoration Strategies
on the President's Interaction with the Media**

Image Restoration Strategy

Year		Denial	Evasion	Reducing	Corrective	Answers
2009	Count	6.0	78.0	69.0	2.0	0
	Expected Count	3.2	60.6	71.1	1.1	19.0
2010	Count	0	37.0	66.0	2.0	36
	Expected Count	2.8	54.4	63.9	29.6	17
TOTAL	Count	6.0	115.0	135.0	2.0	36

Research Question 3

      In regards to Gibbs responses to events such as the 100th day in office, the Air Force One Manhattan Flyover, the closing of Guantanamo prison, "The Beer Summit," Afghanistan, and midterm elections (N=272), Cramer's V and chi square test for independence revealed significance at the macro level for evasion of responsibility, reducing the offensiveness, corrective action, and answering the question (r(272) = .48, $p < .001$; x^2 (2) = 62, $p < .001$).

      Gibbs was more likely to answer questions regarding the president's 100 days in office and increasing troops in Afghanistan; he was least likely to answer questions regarding the midterm elections. He was more likely to utilize evasion of responsibility for questions regarding

the Air Force One Manhattan Flyover and for "The Beer Summit;" more likely to reduce offensiveness in responding to questions regarding the closing of Guantanamo prison and the midterm elections. Corrective action occurred almost twice as often than expected when responding to the Air Force One Manhattan Flyover and the closing of Guantanamo prison; it was three times more likely than expected for responses on increasing troops in Afghanistan.

When comparing Gibbs responses to events such as 100 days in office, the Air Force One Manhattan Flyover, the closing of Guantanamo prison, "The Beer Summit," Afghanistan, and midterm elections (N=272), Cramer's V and chi square test for independence revealed significance at the micro level for simple denial, defeasibility, good intentions, humor, irrelevant comment, bolstering, minimization, transcendence, attack the accuser, and corrective action $(r(272) = .72 , p < .001; x^2 (2) = 140, p < .001)$.

For the 100th day anniversary of the President in office, Gibbs was more than twice as likely to use simple denial, good intentions, humor, irrelevant comment, and bolstering strategies. For the Air Force One Manhattan Flyover, he was twice as likely to use defeasibility or "get back to you" strategies, and more likely than expected to utilize corrective action. For Guantanamo prison, he utilized bolstering more often than expected, but was twice as likely to utilize minimization or attack the accuser. In response to questions regarding "The Beer Summit," he more likely than expected to utilize simple denial, defeasibility or transcendence, but almost twice as likely to utilize humor. His responses regarding the increase of troops in Afghanistan favored minimization, but were almost three times more likely to favor corrective action. Lastly, for the midterm elections Gibbs was more likely than expected to utilize bolstering or attack the accuser, and six times more likely to utilize transcendence.

Research Question 4

When comparing 2009 to 2010, Gibbs was more likely to use denial, evasion of responsibility and corrective action in 2009, but more than twice as likely to answer the question in 2010. He was also more likely to answer questions regarding public opinion polling than the president's interaction with the media.

Discussion

Critics of Benoit's image restoration typology assert that attributing causation to rhetorical discourse is difficult because the analyses are based upon what gets reported, and therefore invites examination of the role of the media (Burns and Bruner, 2000). This study expands Benoit's image restoration theory by analyzing direct responses to the media over time on different key issues as well as longitudinal issues such as the President's interaction with the media and declining job approval ratings. Furthermore, Burns & Bruner (2000) assert that public opinion polls are needed to affirm claims that image restoration strategies correlate with particular outcomes. This study attempts to correlate image restoration strategies with the President's job approval ratings.

While Gibbs employed some corrective action in responses to media on public opinion polls about the President, denial was more likely to be used. Gibbs was more likely to directly answer questions regarding this issue in 2010. Comparing image restoration strategies between 2009 and 2010 for the President's interaction with the media, it appears Gibbs began taking media questions more seriously in 2010 by answering more questions, the lack of denial in his responses, and increased use of reducing the offensiveness of the act.

At the onset of the President's term, reducing the offensiveness of the act when announcing the closing of Guantanamo prison is prevalent. For the Air Force One Manhattan

flyover, corrective action and evasion of responsibility are significant. The 100th day anniversary of the President in office, the failure of the Guantanamo prison closure budget, and "The Beer Summit" all lead with evasion of responsibility. The 100th day anniversary and "The Beer Summit" also include reducing the offensiveness and denial. For the 100th day anniversary the denial regarding the significance of the time is uncanny given the President's affinity for President Ronald Regan. President Reagan utilized his 100th day in office as a major media milestone. From the 100th day in office to "The Beer Summit," the President's job approval ratings slip from a high of 67 to 54.

The President's increase in troops in Afghanistan is positioned as corrective action and reducing the offensiveness of the act is also employed. For failing to meet the President's self imposed deadline for closing the Guantanamo prison and for the midterm election results, reducing the offensiveness of the act leads the charge as the President's job approval ratings drop to 44%.

This study provides good examples of when to employ corrective action: the Air Force One Manhattan flyover and the increase of troops in Afghanistan. However, corrective action isn't prevalent in others areas such as the closing of Guantanamo prison or the midterm elections. It would appear that reducing the offensiveness of the act, which includes bolstering, minimization, differentiation, transcendence, attacking the accuser, and compensation, should have been more prevalent.

Lack of an apology brings more scrutiny than the transgression; in our culture apology is the cornerstone for mitigating damages even if the apology doesn't resolve the issue. Given the current economic circumstances – unemployment, health care, and foreclosures – we find ourselves in an apology culture (Bai, 2011). However, this study did not find significance for apologia or mortification in Benoit's typology.

Finally, this study bears ecological validity. Through analysis of press briefings and examination of media reports, it was discovered that bloggers had dubbed Gibbs as "Mrs. Doubtfire" (*Robert Gibbs*, 2009; Bell, 2011). Certainly evading the issues, usually with either an "I'll get back to you," or through sarcasm, does not correlate with improving the President's job approval ratings.

Public opinion polls reveal the demise of hope among Americans regarding the direction of the country. At the onset of Obama's presidency 50 percent had high hopes for the country's direction; one year later and this hope slipped to just 37 percent (Balz, 2010). Obama's presidential approval rating fell 10.5 percent from his first year in office to his second year if office, which is the largest drop in approval ratings since President Ronald Reagan. His average job approval rating for his second year of term was 46.7 percent (Jones, 2011). It is noteworthy to point out that presidential approval ratings following a State of the Union address have only increased in four instances since 1978: three times for President Bill Clinton and once for President George W. Bush (Jones, 2011b).

Limitations

The more inferences required of a coder, the more difficult the content analysis (Lavrakas, 2008). It is possible that another set of coders would identify different frequencies in which the micro levels of the image restoration typology were used. However, given the strength of the intercoder reliability, it is difficult to imagine that differences would occur at the macro level.

Conclusions from Benoit's case studies may not be generalizeable to other studies by his own admission. The implementation of one image restoration strategy over another is dependent upon the particular situation (Benoit & Brinson, 1994).

Future research

This study is only the beginning of understanding the use of image restoration strategies among press secretaries. In order to extract more meaning on the implementation of image restoration strategies, future studies must be conducted. In particular, an analysis of the press briefings conducted by Press Secretary Jay Carney in correlation with the President's job approval ratings should be analyzed over the next two years to provide a comparison with Press Secretary Robert Gibbs.

In addition, image restoration strategies are intertwined and the order of importance appears to be contingent upon the speaker and the incident. Future research is required in order to prescribe a sequence for implementing image restoration strategies at the micro level for particular scenarios.

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Appendix

Image Restoration Typology

Macro Strategy	Micro Strategy	Key Characteristics	Example
Denial	**Simple Denial**	The president did not perform the act; is not responsible.	"No, the president did not say…"
	Shift the Blame	Another performed the act; another is responsible.	"This is not the president's fault."
Evasion of Responsibility	**Provocation**	Direct response to the act of another	"The president did this in response to…"
	Defeasibility	Lack of information or the ability to do anything about it.	"This is under review." "You need to contact this government agency." "I don't have the exact amount." "I wasn't at the meeting." I am not…"
	Accident	Mishap; unintentional consequence.	"I have more information now than then." "I did not mean to imply or to suggest…"
	Good intentions	Meant to do well.	"If we had known then…"
	Get back to you	Promises more information is to come.	"Let me find out about that." "Information will be available later."
	Humor	Deflects the question through wit, sarcasm or humor.	Changes the subject inappropriately; places himself (Gibbs) as the joke or punchline.
	Irrelevant comment	A response unrelated to the topic or question.	"This is a beautiful area!"
Reducing Offensiveness			
	Bolstering	Stress caring, concern, good traits	"Look over here at all of the good the

			president accomplished."
	Minimization	Act isn't serious; others making it more serious than it is.	"This is over. We're not going to revisit this again."
	Differentiation	This act is different from other acts. This act is not as offensive as other acts.	"What's happening now isn't the same as _____."
	Transcendence	More important values are at play.	"While _____ is important, we must first address this issue.
	Attack the Accuser	Reduces the accuser's credibility	Identifies an individual or a group. "This person or group always disagrees with the president."
	Compensation	"Reimburse" the victim; restitution	"The government will pay or fix this; the people will pay."
Corrective Action		Provide a plan to solve/prevent a recurrence of the problem. Acknowledge some ownership of the problem. Sets right, alters, adjusts, counteracts something.	"A new director or advisor has been appointed." "We have new procedures."
Mortification		Expresses remorse or apologizes.	"The president wishes he had (or had not) done…"
Answers/Reinforces		Answers the question or reinforces a reporter's point.	Q: We hear the president is furious. A: I have firsthand knowledge that the president is furious.

Emotional Intelligence for Excellence in Public Relations: A Pilot Examination

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Abstract

This pilot study was conducted as an initial examination of the relationship between emotional intelligence and public relations roles (manager and technician). Literature outside public relations has studied emotional intelligence in relation to performance outcomes, e.g. promotion, and, thus, this research used public relations roles as a performance outcome, indicative of promotion or two-way communication. Results from this study indicate that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and public relations roles. Further, hypotheses in this research are supported, finding that higher overall emotional intelligence is found in practitioners primarily performing the manager role, and lower emotional intelligence if found in practitioners primarily performing the technician role.

In the winter of 1969, *The Public Relations Quarterly* published an article entitled "A Management Psychologist Looks At the Public Relations Man" (DuBrin, 1969). This article employed a very unsystematic and subjective participant observation of "the public relations man" and those individual attributes that have a bearing on the effectiveness of practitioners. Dubrin (1969) concluded of the "ideal" public relations man:

> He is intellectually quick and creative in a practical sense. He communicates his thoughts to an optimum amount. He is emotionally responsive and sensitive but not lacking emotional control. He finds ego gratification in helping other achieve their goals. He is statesmanlike, enthusiastic and responsive to other people. He has penetrating insights into other people and situations. He is a careful planner who is sufficiently flexible to shift back and forth from one project to another without losing effectiveness (p. 12).

Clearly, much has changed for Dubrin's (1969) "public relations man" in the past 40 years; however, a few of Dubrin's observations are still worthy of note. Dubrin stressed emotions throughout his profile of the practitioner, noting that effective practitioners should be "emotionally responsive and sensitive but not lacking emotional control" and have "penetrating insights into other people and situations." Although Dubrin was likely unaware of it, he was undoubtedly implying what has come to be known as emotional intelligence.

In the organizational behavior literature, emotional intelligence has been operationalized as the abilities of "knowing one's emotions, managing emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing the emotions of others, and handling relationships" (Goleman 1996, p. 43-44). In fact, extensive research has been conducted regarding emotion (or affect) across several streams of academic research, including organizational behavior, management, and psychology, among others. Most often, research regarding emotional intelligence studies the idea that success is not solely dictated by cognitive task abilities, rather emotional abilities are examined as contributing to performance outcomes, e.g. academic performance, negative and positive behaviors, and job outcomes. It is surprising, then, with the historically dense and large amounts of literature exploring emotional intelligence that little to no attention has been given to research regarding emotions (or individual/interpersonal variables, for that matter) within the public relations discipline, despite the fact that much of the emotional intelligence research has been linked to job performance in other areas for scholarly research, i.e. the management discipline in particular.

Further, the lack of emotional intelligence research within public relations is particularly surprising when considering the vast amounts of public relations literature exploring excellence/effectiveness (See Grunig, 1992, for example). In fact, public relations is generally defined as "the management of relationships between an organization and its publics" (Grunig & Hunt, 1984): A definition that seems inherently related to the previously noted definition of emotional intelligence, "knowing one's emotions, managing emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing the emotions of others, and handling relationships" (Goleman 1996, p. 43-44). More specific to this research's rationale, Broom & Dozier (2006) suggested that future public relations research contributing to excellence should examine the manager (versus technician) role regarding where public relations managers' expertise comes from.

As such, this research seeks to fill the knowledge gap in the public relations literature through research regarding emotional intelligence. More specifically, this research examines the relationship between emotional intelligence and public relations roles (manager/technician) in

order that public relations roles serve as the outcome of interest in this research. In other words, the emotional intelligence of public relations practitioners was assessed in comparison to public relations roles through a pilot examination in order that an initial understanding of the concept within a public relations-specific context was obtained, leading to future research and subsequent practical implications.

Literature Review

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EQ or EI) has gained real momentum in both the academic and business worlds throughout the past two decades; however, historically, EQ is directly derived from psychological theories of emotion that have been debated for more than a century, i.e. basic emotions theory, differential emotions theory, and universalist emotions theory. Caruso (2008) suggests that modern interest in EQ can be traced to Charles Darwin's (1872) *The Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals* but that it is not necessary for EQ to adopt a single theory of emotion. However, Caruso (1998) posits that EQ is likely most closely aligned with a basic or differential emotions theory, which suggests that there is a finite set of fairly universal emotions.

It was not until 1990 when John Mayer and Peter Salovey first published a formulation of EQ and Daniel Goleman subsequently popularized the concept that emotions as ability really garnered mainstream attention. Today, Goleman (2006) notes that EQ has "legions of researchers" where once there was little, if any, scientific literature in the area. Further, the popularity of EQ extends beyond academia with the publication of multiple "self-help" books (e.g. Bradberry & Greaves, *The Emotional Intelligence Quick Book*) as well as organizations and consultants eager to assist corporations and individuals enhance their EQ.

As with any theory that becomes mainstream, interpretation becomes distorted. For example, it is often stated that "EQ accounts for 80 percent of career success," wherein actual empirical research suggests that intelligence quotient (IQ) generally accounts for 20 percent of the variance in career success. For the ordinary reader, this translates to the aforementioned fallacy that EQ accounts for the other 80 percent, when, in fact, researchers are unclear as to what comprises the remaining 80 percent of variance in career success. For example, (in addition to cognitive ability or IQ) much of the research on EQ has shown a significant relationship between the construct and the Big Five personality variables (See Joseph & Newman, 2010 for a review as it relates to job performance outcomes). Clearly, with a misinterpretation such as that, the business world is ecstatic to embrace EQ, which further increases its popularity among academics. Thus, it is important to first understand that EQ is often poorly researched and the reality of interpretations reported in both academic publications and mainstream media are often incorrectly understood.

Importantly, some preeminent scholars have sought to validly conceptualize and measure EQ (See Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1996; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004) despite the apparent exploitation and distortion of the concept. As previously mentioned, Goleman (1996) operationalized EQ as the abilities of "knowing one's emotions, managing emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing the emotions of others, and handling relationships" (pp. 43-44). In other words, research surrounding EQ studies the idea that success is not solely dictated by cognitive task abilities, rather emotional abilities are examined as contributing to discipline-specific outcomes. Research measuring emotional intelligence has stemmed from a variety of academic disciplines with several measurement techniques and a variety of outcomes of interest.

Measurement Techniques

The Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations (CREIO) was founded in 1996 with the mission of "advancing research and practice of EQ and social intelligence in organizations through the generation and exchange of knowledge" (EIConsortium.org). Several noted EQ scholars serve on the core membership board of CREIO, and a list of EQ measures for which there is a substantial body of research (a minimum of five published journal articles or book chapters that provide empirical support for the assessment) was compiled. The measures include: BarOn Emotional Intelligence Quotient (EQ-i); The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue); Emotional Competence Inventory 2.0 Emotional & Social Competency Inventory (ESCI); Emotional & Social Competence Inventory - University Edition (ESCI-U); Genos Emotional Intelligence Inventory (Genos EI); Group Emotional Competence (GEC); Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT); The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT); Work Group Emotional Intelligence Profile (WEIP); and Wong's Emotional Intelligence Scale (WEIS).

A full review of the generally accepted measures for EQ is beyond the scope of this research; however, it is important to note that self-report measures of EQ have been argued to be invalid (Brackett et al., 2006), as in the case of the SSEIT used in this research. Rather, it has been posited that because the most valid conceptualization of EQ is ability-based, measures based in ability are most appropriate. More specifically, the MSCEIT is generally recognized as the EQ measurement standard. The MSCEIT uses eight tasks, e.g. emotion recognition in photographs of people's faces, identification of how emotions feel, the identification of emotions in their helpfulness for solving specific problems, etc. However, this researcher contends that while the MSCEIT uses an experimental method, the measurement of EQ is still largely based on self-report measures, just in a less direct measure. For example, for the sensations task, the MSCEIT asks participants to identify how various emotions feel, i.e. physical sensations associated with those emotions, such that "happiness may feel warm, cold, sharp, or soft" (Caruso, 2008). This non-self-report measure is in opposition to the SSEIT self-report measure of EQ, which was designed to map onto the Salovey & Mayer (1990) four-dimensional model (perception of emotion, the integration and assimilation of emotion, knowledge about emotions, and management of emotions) of EQ. The SSEIT directly asks participants to rate, for example, the degree to which they are aware of emotions as they experience them. Further, Van Rooy & Viswesvaran (2004) suggest that there is, in fact, no generally accepted, robust measure of EQ, and often researchers construct their own measures because of the lack of research examining the validity of existing measures (pp. 74-75).

Again, a methodological discussion and subsequent comparison of EQ measures is beyond the scope of this research. Thus, despite any potential shortcomings, the SSEIT was the measure used in this research and, importantly, the measure has shown an internal consistency Cronbach's alpha of .90. The SSEIT is further detailed in the methodology section and a full list of the measure's items is detailed in Appendix 3.

Outcome Variables

Research measuring emotional intelligence has stemmed from a variety of academic disciplines with a variety of outcomes of interest, which can generally be categorized within the following: academic performance, negative and positive behaviors, and job outcomes. Research regarding academic performance has indicated that EQ has predicted the performance by undergraduate students when IQ was also considered (Lam & Kirby, 2002), the performance of

student teams at the initial stages of a project (Jordan et al., 2002), and the classroom performance of managers and professionals (Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004). However, Caruso (2008) notes that while several studies have found a significant relationship between EQ and academic performance outcomes, these relationships have been primarily modest in nature. Importantly, however, Caruso (2008) recognizes that a study of middle-school students receiving emotional literacy training significantly enhanced academic performance (Brackett, in preparation, as cited in Caruso, 2008, p. 12).

Next, research assessing negative and positive behaviors consists of the measurement of EQ in relation to negative behaviors, such as bullying, aggression, drug use, and vandalism, and positive behaviors, such as pro-social behaviors and quality of relationships with peers (See Caruso, 2008 for a review). Generally speaking, negative behaviors have been found to be negatively related, and positive behaviors have been found to be positively related to EQ when other personality variables were accounted for, specifically the Big Five.

Most prevalent among the outcomes of interest and most closely linked to the study at hand, EQ has been examined in relation to job performance outcomes. For example, research has found that EQ is positively related to "the collection performance of account officers (Bachman et al., 2000), sales performance (Wong, Law, and Wong, 2004), and supervisory ratings of job performance (Slaski & Cartwright, 2002; Law, Wong, & Song, 2004)" (as cited in Cote & Miners 2006, pp. 1-2). Conversely, other research has indicated that there may be an inconsistent or no relationship between EQ and job performance (Austin, 2004; Day & Carroll, 2004; Petrides, Frederickson, and Furnham, 2004; Sosik and Megerian, 1999; and Janovics & Christiansen, 2001) (See Cote & Miners, 2006 for a review). More specifically, Rosete & Ciarrochi (2005) found that EI was associated with higher leadership effectiveness based on performance ratings of managers when controlling for personality and IQ variables; however, only for specific job performance outcomes, which are listed as follows: those that examined how a manager achieved results (communication, sharing of vision, and satisfaction), but not what was achieved (sales quota and profit guidelines). Thus, Caruso (2008) stated, "The key is that EQ should only predict those work outcomes that focus on the long-term quality of interpersonal communications, conflicts, and relationships. EQ may not be a robust predictor of work outcomes such as sales performance, rank, and years of experience" (p. 13).

Public Relations, Roles and Emotional Intelligence

As may be evident within the prior review of this literature, the link between EQ and public relations seems obvious in terms of the relationship and communication components inherent to discussions of EQ. In 2001, Coombs called for a research agenda examining the individual, interpersonal variables leading to effective relationship building on behalf of practitioners. Further, a review of the public relations literature surrounding this topic found only a single, qualitative piece originating in the United Kingdom and citing the neglect of this important area for inquiry (See Yeomans, 2007). Further, public relations defines itself as "the management of relationships between an organization and its publics" (Grunig & Hunt, 1984), which it would appear are facilitated at least in-part by EQ. Indeed, public relations is a strategic management function, not left to emotional ability, alone; however, it follows that in the management of the often subjective, relationship-centered situations (e.g. with the media, with both internal and external publics, etc.) practitioners encounter, practitioners' EQ abilities would seem to supersede cognitive task abilities. Therefore, it would follow that public relations practitioners high in EQ would have the highest job performance.

Based on the research surrounding public relations' roles (manager-technician), support has been shown for public relations professionals functioning in the manager (as opposed to technician) role as more likely to practice two-way, open-systems models of communication, which are considered the most effective method of public relations practice, as opposed to one-way models of communication that involve more technical tasks (Grunig & Grunig, 1992 and Dozier, 1992). Dozier (1992) explains, "Conceptually, the role (manager) and the functions (two-way asymmetric and symmetric models) go hand in hand" (p. 347). In other words, job performance (or at least promotion) in public relations seems to be indicated by the management role or those practicing two-way communication. Likewise, public relations technicians are those who practice more technical tasks, such as writing, photography, graphics, etc. At this level, it can be inferred that less emotional intelligence, and more cognitive task ability is required to navigate technical duties. It is important to further mention that EQ research in other contexts has indicated that rank (promotion) may not be an outcome for which EQ serves as a predictor. However, previous public relations-related research has shown that managers are more likely to practice two-way communication, so perhaps, then, EQ contributes to two-way communication and the subsequent rank/promotion to the management position.

Further rationale for the study at hand is the research agenda proposed by Broom & Dozier (2006) for future roles research in public relations: "Measure manager role expertise as a separate concept and find out where that expertise comes from" (p. 164). As such, perhaps this research could also further serve to refine/extend the theoretical, path model of role enactment and professional advancement created as a result of public relations roles research by Dozier & Broom (1995). Thus, the following research question and hypotheses are proposed:

RQ1: What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and public relations roles (a job performance outcome linked to two-way communication)?
H1: High EI scores will correlate with the manager role. In other words, practitioners high in EI will be performing the manager role, thus indicating a higher level of job performance in terms of promotion and two-way communication.
H2: Practitioners low in EI will be performing the technician role. In other words, practitioners low in EI will be performing the technician role, thus indicating a lower level of job performance in terms of promotion and a lack of two-way communication.

Methodology

Overview

In this pilot study, the relationship between public relations roles and emotional intelligence was investigated quantitatively as it pertains to job performance (in terms of promotion indicative of two-way communication) using a cross-sectional design. A self-report, survey instrument composed of the manager-technician measure (Broom & Dozier, 1986) and emotional intelligence measure (Schutte et al., 1997) was given to a sample of public relations practitioners from the Miami Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America.

Participants and Recruitment

A convenience sampling method was used to recruit public relations practitioners from the Miami PRSA membership, which has approximately 200 members. The Miami PRSA Chapter President distributed a link to the online survey via email to the chapter's membership roster, as well as posted the survey link in the chapter's monthly newsletter (March 2011).

Twenty-two responses were received; however, only 11 responses were usable due to missing data. Of those 11 respondents, the following organizational affiliations were indicated: agency (n=4), corporate (n=3), educational institution (n=1), nonprofit (n=2), and independent consultant (n=1). Eight participants indicated that they were female, and three participants indicated that they were male. In addition, participants indicated the following racial/ethnic identifications: Black (n=1), Hispanic (n=5), and White (n=6). One respondent indicated more than one race/ethnicity (Hispanic and White). The following years of experience in the public relations industry were indicated by participants: 5 or fewer (n=3), 6-10 (n=2), 11-15 (n=3), and 16 or more (n= 3). And, the following individual annual incomes were indicated by participants: $25,001-50,000 (n=2), $50,001-75,000 (n=1), $75,001 or more (n=6), and two respondents "preferred not to answer." Thus, despite the small sample size in this pilot study, a generally diverse group of public relations practitioners are represented in regards to organizational affiliation, race/ethnicity, years of experience, and income. Perhaps, most applicable to the study at hand, when asked to self-identify into the manager/technician roles (as opposed to the scale items), all participants (n=11) self-identified as "managers" at their current organization.

Design and Procedure

The manager-technician measure (Appendix 2) is comprised of 21 items (15 manager items and 6 technician items) and has shown a stable Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient supporting the manager-technician dichotomy across the following years: 1979 and 1991 (Dozier and Broom, 2006) and 2001 and 2009 (Kelleher, 2001 and Diga and Kelleher, 2009, respectively). Likewise, the emotional intelligence measure (Appendix 3) is comprised of 33 items and has shown an internal consistency Cronbach's alpha of .90. This one-factor measure of emotional intelligence represents the following categories related to emotional intelligence: "appraisal and expression of emotion in the self and others, regulation of emotion in the self and others and utilization of emotions in solving problems" (Schutte et al. 1997, p. 175). Both measures employed a 5-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

Statistical analyses first correlated the manager-technician items with the emotional intelligence items. As such, the researcher sought to gain a general understanding of the relatedness between public relations roles and emotional intelligence research and measure within a public relations context. Next, based on the results of the manager-technician measure, participants were classified as performing primarily a manager or technician role. Thus, a backward elimination regression method was performed to determine the predictability of emotional intelligence (the independent variable) on the categorization of manager and technician roles (the dependent variable), such that public relations roles are a function of emotional intelligence. Demographic variables, i.e. gender, industry, agency/corporate, age, and years of experience, are included as independent variables in order that they were considered via the backward elimination method.

Results

This pilot study sought to examine the relationship between public relations roles (manager and technician) and emotional intelligence. Appendix 1 reports the means and standard deviations for all of the items on both the emotional intelligence (Table 1) and public relations roles (Table 2) measures. Standard deviations are reported in parentheses. For the emotional intelligence measure, the Cronbach's alpha reliability was .79, which is considered good. The reliability of the measure would not have been improved by more than .04 with the deletion of an

item. Likewise, for the public relations roles measure, the Cronbach's alpha reliability was .97, which is considered good, and the scale would not have been improved by more than .005 with the deletion of an item. In addition, an unrotated principal component analysis of the public relations roles measure indicated three factors; however, for no items was the loading highest (or even above .30) for the third item. A brief analysis of the factor loadings indicated that the manager/technician role items were generally loading as expected.

Appendix 2 displays the significant correlations ($p<.05$) found among items in the public relations roles and emotional intelligence measures. Only a few items between the measures revealed significant correlations. All of the public relations roles items with significant correlations were manager-role items, which is not particularly surprising considering the small sample size of this pilot study and the public relations roles measures contains more management- than technician-related items.

Next, for the public relations roles measure, technician items were reverse coded to create an overall mean score for each participant on a manager-technician continuum. As previously mentioned, when participants were asked to self-identify into the manager/technician roles (as opposed to the scale items), all participants (n=11) self-identified as "managers" at their current organization. Likewise, mean scores on the public relations roles measure indicated that the mean score for all participants was 3.78 (SD=1), indicating that overall, participants generally could be categorized within the manager role. However, when examined participant-by-participant, only one participant would clearly be classified within the technician role with a mean score of 1. Many participants (n=4) had mean public relations roles scores that fell between 3 and 4 on the 5-point scale, with all but one being closer to 4. The majority of participants (n=5) had mean public relations roles scores higher than 4, indicating categorization within the management role. As a result, the 11 participants were categorized (and dummy coded into a new variable) into the manager or technician role based on mean responses to the public relations roles measure. Importantly, nine participants were classified into the manager role, and two participants were categorized into the technician role. Additionally, an overall mean score on the emotional intelligence measure was calculated for participants. Mean scores on this measure indicated that the mean score for all participants was 3.67 (SD=.307).

Thus, keeping this managerial tendency for this pilot study in mind, a simple linear regression method was performed to determine the predictability of emotional intelligence on manager and technician roles, such that public relations roles are a function of emotional intelligence. Appendix 3 displays the regression equation as well as relevant regression tables. When the mean emotional intelligence measures were regressed on the manager/technician role categorizations, the linear combination of manager/technician roles and emotional intelligence was significant $F(1, 9)=7.54$, $p<.05$. The sample multiple correlation coefficient (R) was .68, which indicates that approximately 46 percent of the variance in manager/technician roles in the sample can be accounted for by a participant's level of emotional intelligence. Thus, this study's research question can now be answered: A significant predictive relationship seems to exist between EQ and public relations roles based on the results of the sample in this pilot examination.

Further, an additional backward elimination method regression was performed in order to examine demographic variables, i.e. gender, race/ethnicity, organization type (agency, corporate, etc.), and years of experience. Appendix 4 displays the regression equation as well as relevant regression tables. Only the addition of race/ethnicity presented an overall significant model $F(2, 8) = 4.53$, $p<.05$; however, the variables within the model were not significant. Thus, when

considering demographic variables via the backward elimination method of regression, the linear combination of manager/technician roles and emotional intelligence was the only significant model with significant variables.

Finally, based on the significant relationship between EQ and public relations roles, it was important for this research to further confirm the relationship for manager as opposed to technician roles and emotional intelligence (due to the small sample size in this pilot study). Thus, cases were dummy coded to create separate manager and technician variables (0, not a manager or technician; 1, a manager or technician). Correlations revealed that mean score on emotional intelligence was significantly correlated .68, $p<.05$ with the manager role and significantly negatively correlated -.68, $p<.05$ with the technician role. This simply served to confirm the previous regressions.

Thus, based on previous regressions and the aforementioned correlations, the research hypotheses can be answered affirmatively: High EI scores correlated with the manager role, and low EI scores correlated with the technician role. In other words, practitioners high in EI are more likely to be performing the manager role, thus indicating a higher level of job performance in terms of promotion and/or two-way communication. Likewise, practitioners low in EI are performing the technician role, thus indicating a lower level of job performance in terms of promotion and/or two-way communication.

Discussion and Implications

This pilot study was conducted as an initial examination of the relationship between EQ and public relations roles (manager and technician). Literature outside public relations has studied EQ in relation to performance outcomes, e.g. promotion, and, thus, this research used public relations roles as a performance outcome, indicative of promotion or two-way communication. The implications, then, of this research are primarily in using this initial (and admittedly flawed) examination as a stepping stone to further academic examination of the EQ concept within a public relations context.

Implications of future research (with a large sample size and significant results) would, perhaps, include the addition of EQ to training and hiring procedures in public relations. Also, implications for future research would include structural equation modeling to examine the relationship between EQ, two-way communication, public relations roles, and where the manager (versus technician) role regarding where public relations managers' expertise comes from (Broom & Dozier, 2006).

Limitations

The first, obvious, limitation to this study is that it was a pilot examination, and the sample size was extremely small, even for a pilot. Further, differences in practitioners' cognitive abilities and individual personality dimensions were not controlled for due to the length of the survey, i.e. adding more items could result in survey fatigue, and that the validity of self-report measures of cognitive ability are as debated as the EQ measures. Again, while self-report measures of EQ have been validated, they are not the preferred method of study due to the fact that participants may "fake good." Moreover, significant relationships were not found in correlations or regressions when manager-technician categorical level variables were absent. However, with the small sample size in this research, it was necessary to examine data from all possible approaches in order that this research could contribute to future academic examinations

of EQ within a public relations context (with an adequate sample size and the use of continuous variables).

Future research, then, should attempt to account for cognitive abilities and personality dimensions (as both have shown a relationship with emotional intelligence in other research). Perhaps, although not common to the public relations field, laboratory research is necessary to further explore these concepts, and a lack of knowledge and access to such laboratory methods is responsible for the lack of emotions-related research in the public relations literature. In addition, attempts should be made to examine the connection between EQ and two-way communication, specifically.

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Appendix 1
Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations for Emotional Intelligence Measure

Item	Mean (SD)
I know when to speak about my personal problems with others.	3.73 (.79)
When I am faced with obstacles, I remember times I faced similar obstacles and overcame them.	4.27 (.47)
I expect that I will do well on most things I try.	4.09 (1.1)
Other people find it easy to confide in me.	3.91 (.83)
I find it hard to understand the non-verbal messages of other people.*	2.36 (1.4)
Some of the major events in my life have led me to re-evaluate what is important not important.	4.18 (.60)
When my mood changes, I see new possibilities.	3.64 (.92)
Emotions are one of the things that make my life worth living.	3.91 (.70)
I am aware of my emotions as I experience them.	4.18 (.41)
I expect good things to happen.	3.91 (.83)
I like to share my emotions with others.	3.36 (1.1)
When I experience a positive emotion, I know how to make it last.	3.45 (.93)
I arrange events others enjoy.	4.18 (1.17)
I seek out activities that make me happy.	4.36 (.51)
I am aware of the verbal messages I send to others.	3.80 (1.03)
I present myself in a way that makes a good impression on others.	4.10 (.74)
When I am in a positive mood, solving problems is easy for me.	4.30 (.68)
By looking at their facial expressions, I recognize the emotions people are experiencing.	3.70 (.95)
I know why my emotions change.	3.90 (.74)
When I am in a positive mood, I am able to come up with new ideas.	4.10 (.57)
I have control over my emotions.	3.60 (.84)
I easily recognize my emotions as I experience them.	4.00 (.63)
I motivate myself by imagining a good outcome to tasks I take on.	3.64 (1.02)
I compliment others when they have done something well.	4.45 (.52)
I am aware of the nonverbal messages other people send.	3.91 (1.04)
When another person tells me about an important event in his or her life, I almost feel as though I have experienced this event myself.	2.64 (.92)
When I feel a change in emotions, I tend to come up with new ideas.	3.27 (.65)
When I am faced with a challenge, I give up because I believe I will fail.*	1.64 (.67)
I know what other people are feeling just by looking at them.	3.18 (.87)
I help other people feel better when they are down.	3.82 (.87)
I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles.	3.45 (1.29)
I can tell how people are feeling by listening to the tone of their voice.	3.73 (.79)
It is difficult for me to understand why people feel the way they do.*	2.36 (1.12)

*Item was reverse-coded

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations for Public Relations Roles Measure

Item	Mean (SD)
I plan and recommend courses of action for solving public relations problems. (M)	4.18 (1.17)
I diagnose public relations problems and explain them to others in the organization. (M)	4.09 (1.14)
Because of my experience and training, others consider me the organization's expert in solving public relations problems. (M)	3.82 (1.33)
I operate as a catalyst in management's decision making. (M)	3.91 (1.12)
In meeting with management, I point out the need to follow a systematic public relations planning process. (M)	4.18 (1.17)
I take responsibility for the success or failure of my organization's public relations program. (M)	4.09 (1.14)
I keep management informed of public relations reactions to organizations policies, procedures, and/or actions. (M)	3.91 (1.14)
I observe that others in the organization hold me accountable for the success or failure of public relations programs. (M)	4.18 (1.17)
I encourage management participation when making the important public relations decisions. (M)	4.00 (1.18)
I work with managers to increase their skills in solving and/or avoiding public relations problems. (M)	4.18 (1.25)
When working with managers on public relations, I outline alternative approaches for solving problems. (M)	4.09 (1.14)
I make the communication policy decisions. (M)	3.73 (1.19)
I report public opinion survey results to keep management informed of the opinions of various publics. (M)	3.64 (1.12)
I create opportunities for management to hear the views of various internal and external publics. (M)	3.55 (1.13)
I conduct communication audits to identify communication problems between the organization and various publics. (M)	3.00 (1.18)
I handle the technical aspects of producing public relations materials. (T)	3.45 (1.44)
I produce brochures, pamphlets, and other publications. (T)	4.00 (1.18)
I maintain media contacts and place press releases. (T)	3.64 (1.57)
I am the person who writes public relations materials presenting information on issues important to the organization. (T)	3.36 (1.43)
I do photography and graphics for public relations materials. (T)	2.27 (1.35)
I edit and/or rewrite for grammar and spelling the materials written by others in the organization. (T)	4.09 (1.14)

*(M)=Manager items, (T)=Technician items

Appendix 2: Correlations among Measures' Items

Emotional intelligence items are listed first, and public relations roles items with significant correlations are presented below each emotional intelligence item. Correlations are presented in parentheses, *p*<.05

1. Some of the major events of my life have led me to re-evaluate what is important and not important.
    a. I observe that others in the organization hold me accountable for the success or failure of public relations programs. (.658*)
    b. I encourage management participation when making the important public relations decisions. (.701*)
    c. I work with managers to increase their skills in solving and/or avoiding public relations problems. (.615*)
2. When another person tells me about an important event in his or her life, I almost feel as though I have experienced this event myself.
    a. I conduct communication audits to identify communication problems between the organization and various publics. (.640*)

Appendix 3: Emotional Intelligence and Manager/Technician Roles Regression

Manager/Technician Role = Level of Emotional Intelligence + Error

Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
.675	.456	.395	.31457

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	.746	1	.746	7.537	.023*
Residual	.891	9	.099		
Total	1.636	10			

*p<.05

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	b	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-1.438	1.190		-1.209	.258
Mean EI	.887	.323	.675	2.745	.023

**Appendix 4: Emotional Intelligence, Demographic Variables and
Manager/Technician Roles Backward Elimination Regression**

Manager/Technician Role = Level of Emotional Intelligence + Gender + Race/Ethnicity +
Organization + Years Industry Experience + Error

Model Key
Model 1 Predictors: Mean EI, Industry Experience, Race/Ethnicity, Organization, Gender
Model 2 Predictors: Mean EI, Industry Experience, Race/Ethnicity, Organization, Gender
Model 3 Predictors: Mean EI, Race/Ethnicity, Organization
Model 4 Predictors: Mean EI, Race/Ethnicity
Model 5 Predictors: Mean EI

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.765	.585	.171	.36840
2	.764	.584	.306	.33700
3	.761	.579	.399	.31370
4	.729	.531	.414	.30974
5	.675	.456	.395	.31457

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.958	5	.192	1.411	.357
	Residual	.679	5	.136		
	Total	1.636	10			
2	Regression	.955	4	.239	2.102	.199
	Residual	.681	6	.114		
	Total	1.636	10			
3	Regression	.948	3	.316	3.209	.092
	Residual	.689	7	.098		
	Total	1.636	10			
4	Regression	.869	2	.434	4.528	.048*
	Residual	.768	8	.096		
	Total	1.636	10			
5	Regression	.746	1	.746	7.537	.023*
	Residual	.891	9	.099		
	Total	1.636	10			

*p<.05

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		b	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.512	2.168		.236	.823
	Race/Ethnicity	-.186	.190	-.378	-.979	.373
	Gender	-.055	.385	-.064	-.144	.891
	Organization	-.081	.103	-.287	-.786	.467
	Industry Experience	.040	.150	.121	.269	.799
	Mean EI	.529	.481	.402	1.100	.321
2	(Constant)	.407	1.868		.218	.835
	Race/Ethnicity	-.173	.151	-.351	-1.141	.297
	Organization	-.076	.088	-.269	-.858	.424
	Industry Experience	.025	.099	.076	.256	.807
	Mean EI	.536	.437	.408	1.225	.267
3	(Constant)	.334	1.719		.194	.851
	Race/Ethnicity	-.170	.141	-.344	-1.208	.266
	Organization	-.066	.073	-.232	-.894	.401
	Mean EI	.564	.394	.429	1.433	.195
4	(Constant)	-.276	1.558		-.177	.864
	Race/Ethnicity	-.156	.138	-.317	-1.133	.290
	Mean EI	.679	.368	.516	1.846	.102
5	(Constant)	4.438	1.190		3.730	.005
	Mean EI	.887	.323	-.675	2.745	.023*

*p<.05

An Examination of a Health Care Industry's Use of Social Media: A Transtheoretical Approach

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Abstract

This study examines one of New York State's least healthy counties. When examined across counties in New York State, Oswego County ranks 60 out of 62 in regards to health factors (countyhealthranking.org).These include health behaviors (such as adult smoking and obesity) and clinical care (hospice use and preventable hospital stays). Specifically, in-depth interviews were conducted with administrators within the Oswego Health System to determine the current stage and processes of change that the health system resides in with respect to social media. Results will provide insight into how we can utilize the Transtheoretical Model to determine organizational change with specific regards to incorporating social media within the health care industry.

Social media has revolutionized how public relations professionals approach business, the marketplace and customers (Paine, 2011). Nielsen Online found that 67 % of the world belongs to some kind of online community. Social media in the health care industry has raised interesting questions. A recent survey done by iHealth indicated 60-80% of Americans use the Internet daily to research health concerns compared to the 55% that consult their personal physician as their main source of information. Researchers suggest health consumers are searching for 1) affordable health care, 2) disease prevention and 3) chronic health problems (Stevenson & Woodruff, 2009). Similar to consumers, organizations are searching for ways to use social media and online resources to reinforce their organizational mission. As of October 19th 2010, there were a total of 871 U.S. hospitals that used social networking tools, according to Ed Bennett who provides social media resources for health care professionals (see: http://ebennett.org/hsnl/). As these numbers increase, it is important to understand best practices surrounding social media and online tools. Understanding how practitioners perceive these tools will provide insight into the types of difficulties that surround these tactics.

The current study will examine one of New York State's least healthy counties. When examined across counties in New York State, Oswego County ranks 60 out of 62 in regards to health factors (countyhealthranking.org). These include health behaviors (such as adult smoking and obesity) and clinical care (hospice use and preventable hospital stays). This study will examine in-depth interviews with administrators within the Oswego Health System to determine the current stage and processes of change that the health system resides in with respect to social media. Results will provide insight into how we can utilize the Transtheoretical Model to determine organizational change with specific regards to incorporating social media within the health care industry.

Existing Social Media Practices Within Health Care

Sarasohn-Kahn (2008) explains that social media has empowered, engaged, and educated consumers, as well as providers in the health care industry. Sarasohn-Kahn (2008) refers to this movement as Health 2.0, which she defines as "the use of social software and its ability to promote collaboration between patients, their caregivers, medical professionals, and other stakeholders in health" (p. 2). This section will provide an overview of how health consumer and individuals working within the health care industry have engaged in social media.

Health Consumers. Social media in the health care industry gives consumers the opportunity to share their stories and relate their conditions, issues, or cases with other people, similar to themselves. Through testimonials the consumers create an emotional support system as well as a trusted source of first-hand knowledge. A survey, by iCrossing (2008), found that 34 percent of participants use social media to find information on health topics, while only ten percent use hospital or clinic sites to find information.

Sarasohn-Kahn (2008) argues that one of the most important additions to the social media wave is the availability of wikis, or sites that allow users to search for information and read articles that, on the surface resemble a factually-correct, published work, but upon closer review, are written by people who feel they have valuable information to share. Although these sites have been criticized for being inaccurate and giving potentially harmful information, internet users continue to access wikis, as well as post information on wiki sites. The survey by iCrossing (2008) found that 21 percent of respondents use wikis for information about health and six percent use social networking sites.

Popular sites such as Facebook and Twitter have allowed consumer to interact with health care providers.   The American Health Association, for example, created a page to allow Facebook users to access health information. The American Health Association's Facebook page currently has 6,234 followers. Additionally, health care providers, such as The American Public Health Association, created a Twitter account that gives daily updates about general health awareness as well as specialized information based on the day.

Health Care Social Media, tagged #hcsm on Twitter, is a weekly chat that focuses on health care communications and social media. This weekly chat, on Sunday nights, allows Twitter users to participate in a conversation similar to a focus group. A moderator leads the group by asking questions and listening to feedback. Women's Health offered a similar feature on their Twitter account, a one-hour discussion about breast cancer prevention. However, they took it to the next step by offering participants the chance to win a Ralph Lauren Pink Pony shirt as well as a one-year subscription to Women's Health. Features such as these on Twitter and other social media sites encourage readers to engage in the conversation, discussing the topic with the moderator as well as other users.

As the trend of Web 2.0 continues, sites bringing together individuals with common traits are sprouting up all over the web. Websites such as, PatientsLikeMe, an online community site which allows patients to share health information and personal health experiences have opened up new possibilities. The goal of PatientsLikeMe is to connect patients with similar health issues in an attempt to facilitate a support structure for patients.

WebMD, a website designed to provide credible and practical information for users, includes services such as live web events, user experiences, health news service, and medical graphics and animation. The founder of WebMD, Jeff Arnold, recently released a new website named, Sharecare. This new website will allow people to interact with medical experts, store personal medical records and eventually provide online consultations. It is designed as a question and answer forum, allowing input from users, medical professionals and member organizations, such as the American Cancer Society.

Additionally, Kamel Boulos and Wheeler (2007) discuss the different types of social media and the benefits they provide to the health care industry. Wikis, social networking, blogs, social bookmarking, and podcasts are discussed as possible functions of communication between patients and doctors. Each of these social media options allow users to tell stories, get answers in real-time, and conduct health research through non-traditional methods.

Health Practitioners. Sarasohn-Kahn (2008) explains that the presence of social media is also beneficial for physician-to-physician information sharing. From job postings to case studies, social media lets doctors work together nationally or even globally in a way that has not been available previously. Although patients want to access these social media sites to gain insight through testimonials and other patients with similar issues, physicians are posting blogs and information on wikis just as frequently. Sermo is a social networking site, specifically targeted at doctors. Sermo allows doctors to collaborate and exchange information and observations regarding the medical field. With over 110,000 physicians participating, it is the largest medical sharing site of its kind. Sermo describes itself as a medium between physicians.

Another website, The Center for Connected Health Community, is designed for health care providers and policymakers to discuss controversial topics, share best practices, new ideas, upcoming events and research.

Social Media and Hospital Trends

Dr. Thomas Dolan, President and CEO of the American College of Health care Executives, cites several social media trends that were identified in *Futurescan 2011-2016,* an annual guide to health care trends developed by a panel of experts. First, they recommend that it is essential for hospitals to use social media to promote their services and maintain a presence online.   Next, hospitals will need to utilize social media to increase health literacy in the community and for recruitment purposes. Furthermore, they ascertain that consumers will expect their health care providers to communicate electronically with them. Additionally, they predict health care practitioners will use social media and online networks to decrease the amount of time they spend searching for information. Finally, they acknowledge critical health consumers will expect efficient and effective communication from health care providers.

Social media has transformed the marketplace in the past decade and continues to grow more popular. The health care industry is only one of the many industries that may benefit from integrating social media into their strategic marketing plan and day to day operations. However, with limited resources and fast changing technology it is difficult for organizations to adapt to these new practices. This study will investigate interviews with the Oswego Health System administrators through a theoretical framework to determine its current stage and process of change to implement social media into their organization.

Transtheoretical Model

Updating the direction and priorities for health care industry communication by utilizing social media requires organizational adjustments. Whether an organization uses social media to disseminate information, contact patients, respond to media reports, facilitate two-way communication, or recruit physicians and other staff members; the strategic planning committee will need guidance. Organizational change is often accomplished by a process of trial and error or by using a successful model of change. Using a trial and error approach involving social media can not only be time consuming and financially costly; it can also create a potentially vulnerable position with regards to the reputation of the organization. Using a theoretical model to guide an organization through the change process may help to alleviate these challenges.   A model that is widely recognized in the public health and psychology field for effectively guiding intentional change is the Transtheoretical Model. The model was developed through a comparative analysis of more than 300 theories of psychotherapy. Although the model has traditionally been used to guide individual behavior change and maintenance, it has been increasingly recognized as a tool for organizational change as well (Madsen, 2003; Prochaska, 2000).

The Transtheoretical Model (TTM), originally developed by Prochaska and DiClemente (1984) and modified through the years, proposes that intentional modifications to behavior are assessed through two dimensions; stages of change and processes of change. The stages represent the distinctive steps an individual or organization goes through in order to intentionally create change. It is important to note that the following descriptions regarding each dimension and construct of the model have been modified to be consistent in the context of organizational change (rather than individual change). The order of stages are identified as: precontemplation (the organization is not considering change), contemplation (the organization is considering change), preparation (the organization intends to change and develops a plan), action (the organization is actively engaging in the new structure), maintenance (the organization is able to sustain the change successfully), and finally two additional stages included later were the

possibility of a relapse stage (recognizing the organization may need to revisit earlier decisions and refine their current stage), and termination (the organization is successful with the change and no longer is tempted to reverse it).

The second dimension, processes of change, identifies two types of intervention strategies to guide the organization through each stage. The first type, experiential or cognitive processes of change, includes: conscientiousness raising (becoming more aware of a problem), dramatic relief (emotional reaction to problem and need for change), environmental reevaluation (recognizing how the environment is effected by the problem), social liberation (recognizing how the environment can help the organization change), and self reevaluation (recognizing that the organization may be effected by change). The second type, behavioral processes of change, includes: stimulus control (restructuring the organizational goals), helping relationships (indentifying and requesting support), counter conditioning (replacing previous actions with new procedures), reinforcement management (recognizing rewards from the change and implementing additional rewards to reinforce the change), and self liberation (making a permanent commitment to continue in the new direction). Each process is intended to help the organization move to the next stage (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Stages of Individual Change in Which Change Processes are Most Emphasized*

Stages of Change	*Processes of Individual Change*
1. Precontemplation	Consciousness Raising Dramatic Relief Environmental Reevaluation
2. Contemplation	Self-Reevaluation
3. Preparation	Self-Liberation
4. Action	Reinforcement Management Helping Relationships Counter Conditioning Stimulus Control
5. Maintenance	
6. Termination	Self-Liberation

Note: Modified from Prochaska, Redding, and Evers (1997).

Also described in the TTM are four additional constructs; self-efficacy, temptation, decisional balance, and critical assumptions. Self-efficacy, from research by Bandura (1977) represents the degree to which individuals within the organization believe they have the ability to make the necessary changes successfully. Temptation, identified as an important construct by Prochaska and Velicer (1997), relates to the urge to avoid change. Decisional balance, from research by Janis and Mann's (1977) represents the degree to which the perceived strengths (pros) of the changes outweigh the concerns (cons). Lastly, critical assumptions delineated by Prochaska and Velicer (1997) represent a list of seven assumptions that must be made in order to use the model for its intended purpose. The following assumptions have been modified to reflect organizational change: 1) No one single theory can account for all every complexity of organizational change. 2) Organizational change is a process that passes through a sequence of stages. 3) Stages are open and stable to change. 4) Without planned interventions of change, organizations will remain in the early stages. 5) The majority of organizations that are not prepared for immediate change, will benefit from a stage approach. 6) To implement progress,

organizations need to apply specific processes and constructs during specific stages. 7) Change can be influenced by biological, social, and self-control. The stage approach is principally designed to increase self-control (organizational-control).

Research Questions

As mentioned previously, the TTM has been traditionally applied to individual behavior change; however the findings of J.M. Prochaska (2000) "provide strong support for the application of the TTM to assessing readiness for organizational change (p.80-81). Therefore this study posed three research questions in order to gain a better understanding of how the TTM would be applied to the Oswego Health System and issues surrounding social media. Specifically, we were interested in:

RQ1: In what TTM *stage of change* does Oswego Health System currently reside in with regards to implementing social media?

RQ2: In what TTM *processes of change* does Oswego Health System currently reside in with regards to implementing social media?

RQ3: What do administrators identify as the pros and cons of effectively implementing social media within the Oswego Health System?

Methodology

Participants

In-depth interviews were conducted with three Oswego Health System administrators, including the President and CEO, Director of Business Development and Marketing, and the Vice President for Strategic Services. These administrators were chosen because they provide management functions in order to authorize and implement social media into the strategic plan in order to fulfill their organizations' mission. Each interview included questions about the perceptions, uses, and challenges of social media.

Procedures

Interviews were transcribed and coded for constructs from the TTM. The following constructs and operational definitions were utilized in the coding of the data: *Conscientiousness raising*: becoming more aware of a problem; *Dramatic relief*: emotional reaction to problem and need for change; *Environmental reevaluation*: recognizing how the environment is effected by the problem; *Social liberation*: recognizing how the environment can help the organization change; *Self reevaluation:* recognizing that the organization may be effected by change; *Stimulus control:* restructuring the organizational goals; *Helping relationships:* identifying and requesting support; *Counter conditioning*: replacing previous actions with new procedures; *Reinforcement management:* recognizing rewards from the change and implementing additional rewards to reinforce the change; *Self liberation*: making a permanent commitment to continue in the new direction; *Decisional Balance:* weighing the pros and cons; *Self-Efficacy*: degree to which individuals within the organization believe they have the ability to make the necessary changes successfully; *Temptation:* the urge to avoid change.

The unit of analysis was identified as each individual statement. The sample included 60 units. Each unit was coded by two independent coders to determine the best fit construct. The two coders had 83% agreement. After debriefing on the disagreed units (n = 5) the coders reached 100% agreement.

Results

Evidence of Experiential Process of Change

After coding comments from the three administrators, researchers identified evidence of TTM experiential processes of change including: *consciousness raising, dramatic relief, environmental reevaluation* and *self-reevaluation*. No quotes supported the *social liberation* construct.

Conscious raising was defined as becoming more aware of a problem. Two example quotes that support this construct include: "One of the things we have to do in order for us to survive, is to reach out to the younger population within the community of Oswego County. And the only way we are going to do that is to make ourselves more accessible. And one of the ways to do that is though Social Media" (President and CEO) and "When I think about Social Media, I think about some of the challenges and some of the things that we need to do, and we need to get out there and utilize web page and utilize any type of communication. We need to do more as far as getting out there and letting people know how wonderful we are" (President and CEO)

Dramatic Relief which was defined as the emotional reaction to problem and need for change were also evident. Two sample quotes that support this construct were, "There was very little accurate information that I could find as I went through 53 postings. People are threatened by that. We're threatened by that" (Vice President for Strategic Services) and "The whole going viral thing scares the heck out of people in business" (Vice President for Strategic Services).

Additionally, *Environmental reevaluation* was evident throughout the transcripts. This was defined as recognizing how the environment is effected by the problem. Sample quotes from this construct were, "We are not getting enough out there about what our services are and initiating dialog so that members of the community really understand what Oswego Health is" (Director of Business Development) and "I think we need to get people to understand [through social media] what specialist we have here so people can stay here rather than drive past us" (Director of Business Development).

Finally, *Self reevaluation* which was defined as recognizing that the organization may be effected by change was also evident. Sample quotes included, "Some physicians, the younger physicians like email communication, some physicians, as I said, like text communication, some still want to read a hard copy. So it's trying to determine, how do we get the communication out to them?" (President and CEO) and "That method of communication inherently is something we need to pay attention to …to manage our reputation" (Vice President for Strategic Services)

Evidence of Behavioral Processes of Change

The results of the interviews also demonstrated evidence of behavioral processes of change when the administrators were speaking about Facebook and Twitter, including *helping relationships, counter conditioning,* and *stimulus control*. No evidence of reinforcement management and self-liberation were evident in the transcripts.

Helping Relationship defined as identifying and requesting support were identified. Two sample quotes included, "We do have an individual who kind of monitors our Facebook page on a daily basis and does most of the postings of photos, press releases, events, so it is updated a few times a week" (Director of Business Development) and "I have a corporate team and we look at the needs that are different" (President and CEO).

Counter Conditioning defined as replacing previous actions with new procedures also existed. Two sample quotes included, "Now I get text messages from Physicians and Board

Members" (President and CEO), and "We do have a Facebook page and we have a twitter account" (Director of Business Development).

   Stimulus Control was defined as restructuring the organizational goals. A sample quote that supports this construct was, "Social Media is in the strategic plan in terms of how we manage our communications. We put together a matrix with our marketing mix on it. We are looking at billboard paid ads, PR, Television, Radio" (Vice President for Strategic Services).

Evidence of Decisional Balance

   To capture the *decisional balance*, researchers coded the transcripts for perceived strengths (pros) and concerns for the change (cons). The following pros were identified, 1.) Capture the younger population, 2) Recruit Physicians, 3)Market new facilities, 4) Market available services, 5) Respond to misinformation from the media, 6) Become familiar (recognize) and comfortable with the staff, 7) Follow construction progress, 8) Better understanding of distribution of funds (grants), 9) Two-way communication, 10) Meet the needs of different populations, 11) Create quicker response time, 12) Better communication, 13) Respond to questions immediately, 14) Recognize community needs faster, 15) Possible replacement to traditional patient surveys, 16) Redirect resources by utilizing social media in place of financially costly alternatives.

   Additionally, the following cons were identified, 1) Reaching the intended audience, 2) Meeting everyone's needs, 3) Lack of participation on the current Facebook page and blogs from other well respected Health care facilities, 4) Legal limitation, 5) Managing a positive reputation when health care is highly susceptible to service, concerns and high anxiety situations; multiple opportunities for crisis and distress, 6) Difficult to control for the speed of word of mouth and misinformation, 7) Recognized the lack of participation from certain populations. Finally, the transcripts revealed a high level of self-efficacy. All comments reflected the intentions of making changes and the belief that it was possible to change. No *Temptation* or urges to avoid the change were identified.

Discussion

   Implementing social media practices into the Oswego Health System has many advantages; however it requires organizational change within the association. Action approaches to change involving social media has the potential to leave the organization in a vulnerable state. The reputation of the health care facility demands a structured stage approach to this type of organizational change. A successful stage model traditionally applied to individual behavior change in the public health and psychology field is the TTM. After years of successful research applying the TTM to individual behavior change, it was studied as an organizational change model. J.M Prochaska demonstrated reliable and valid measures of the use of the TTM as a tool for intentional organizational change. With the intent to apply the TTM as a stage model to guide the Oswego Health System through intentional organizational change regarding the effective use of social media; researchers in this study interviewed three health system administrators to determine which TTM stage of change the Oswego Health System currently resides in with regards to moving from little use of social media strategies to effectively implementing multiple types. Researchers also identified the pros and cons of implementing social media; and the types of TTM processes of change that were determined by responses from interviews.

Oswego Health System's Stage of Change

According to the three interviews, it appears that the Oswego Health System is in a *preparation* stage of change with regards to implementing multiple forms of social media. The TTM processes of change that have guided the health system beyond the *precontemplation* and *contemplation* stages were evident from their responses. After coding comments from the three administrators, researchers identified evidence of TTM experiential processes of change including: consciousness raising, dramatic relief, environmental reevaluation and self-reevaluation. Consistent with Prochaska, Redding, and Evers (1997) with respect to the position of each process of change in relation to the stage of change; the Oswego Health System is beyond the *contemplation* stage. According to the TTM, in order for the Oswego Health System to move beyond the *preparation* stage, they would need to start recognizing how the environment can help the organization change (social-liberation). To move beyond the action stage of effectively implementing multiple social media strategies, the health system would need to restructure the organizational goals (stimulus control), identify and request support (helping relationships), and replace previous actions with new procedures (counter conditioning). They would also need to recognize rewards from the change and implement additional rewards to reinforce the change (Reinforcement management). To move into the maintenance stage they would need to make a permanent commitment to continue in the new direction (self-liberation).

Although the health system is in a preparation stage of change with regards to implementing multiple social media strategies, they are in a maintenance stage of the TTM with respect to specific implementation of Facebook and Twitter. In addition to the experiential processes discussed, the results of the interviews also demonstrated evidence of behavioral processes of change (including: stimulus control, helping relationships, and counter conditioning) only when the administrators were speaking about Facebook and Twitter. Although they are in a maintenance stage of change for implementation of Facebook and Twitter, the health system appears to be disappointed with the participation level of each social media tool. To further improve upon the use of Facebook and Twitter, it may be necessary to relapse back to the preparation stage and reevaluate previous decisions by reconsidering the use to two-way communication and identifying appropriate messages to address specific audiences.

The final constructs of the TTM that were examined in this study include decisional balance, self-efficacy, and temptation. During the interviews there were no comments alluding to any urges of avoiding change. Along with no signs of temptation, the health system responded with a high sense of self-efficacy frequently commenting on the need, willingness, and belief that it is possible to make the necessary changes. Finally, the health system administrators where able to outweigh the cons (7 mentioned) with the pros (16 mentioned), making it clear that the main focus for change is within the preparation stage.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the Oswego Health Systems perceptions of social media and the application of the Transtheoretical Model. While this study was reliant on only three interviews, it does provide some insight into the Oswego Health System's perceptions of social media. Future research should design specific implementation strategies that would move this organization successfully forward. Additionally, it should explore health information privacy and other issues unique to the health care setting that impact the implementation process.

Overall, the results of this study suggest the Oswego Health system would benefit from reexamining their organizational goals to determine how social media can be utilized to meet

their strategic mission. In terms of strategic planning, data gathered from social media may help guide how to best allocate resources. Therefore, measurement is crucial to organizational success. We are reminded by Katie Delahaye Paine (2011) a "good PR person is focused on his or her relationships—be they with local media, national bloggers, employees or community organizations…The difference is that a decade ago we talked primarily about relationships between corporations and their stakeholders. Now, the relationship is just as likely to be between two individuals on your Facebook page. Actually, make that millions of individuals on your Facebook pages." (p. xviii). Therefore, understanding that we can no longer *control* the message within social media, but we can *manage* these messages by *listening* and building trustworthy and credible online relationships is crucial to our online health.

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METRIC Model: Measuring Engagement and TRacking Influencer Communications

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Abstract

This research aimed to develop a model to systematically document and measure the outcome of a PR campaign designed to establish and cultivate relationships resulting in stakeholder engagement and response to a call to action. This paper documents the development of this METRIC model and its application to the work of the Strategies to Overcome and Prevent (STOP) Obesity Alliance.

Introduction

Public relations programs are increasingly focused on building relationships with stakeholders and influencers, particularly in the public affairs and issues management environment. Measuring these fuzzier, more intangible aspects of public relations has been a challenge for PR practitioners. One such scenario is that of the Strategies to Overcome and Prevent (STOP) Obesity Alliance, which seeks to foster change in society's perceptions of, and approaches to, preventing and treating obesity in the context of the real-world environment in which we live. Their goal is to drive innovative and practical strategies that combat obesity in order to prevent obesity-related chronic diseases in America.

The Alliance is a collaboration of consumer, provider, government, labor, business, health insurers and quality-of-care organizations united to drive innovative and practical strategies that combat obesity. The Alliance operates out the Department of Health Policy of The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services and is funded by industry. In 2009, its founding year, the Alliance sought to establish a Steering Committee to support and drive its mission. As the work of the Alliance continued, an Associate Member and Government Liaison category was also created.

The Alliance sought to measure its success in engaging the Steering Committee and Associate Members in its activities and furthering its mission. They wanted to understand the depth of the relationships they had forged, provide a benchmark to measure against in the future and demonstrate progress toward their goals.

The team at Determinus worked with the Alliance to create a customized solution - the METRIC (Measuring Engagement and TRacking Influencer Communications) Model to measure engagement and track the outcomes of influencer communications. Goal of the model was to:

- Go beyond media results to provide full picture of relationships with Alliance members and their activities
- Provide baseline metrics which will be used to set future goals and targets
- Compares engagement level among member organizations
- Provide comparisons for future periods to illustrate continued success
- Flexibility to amend parameters for future Alliance activities

Applying the METRIC Model to Internal Relationships

Core to the METRIC Model is the identification of a customized list of the desired actions of each influencer. Each potential action is assigned a weighted score based on its significance in moving toward the desired outcomes. For the STOP Obesity Alliance we identified a range of activities and assigned point values and classification as follows:

Limited (1 point)

- Touching base periodically with Alliance staff and/or providing feedback on initiatives
- Providing organizational information for Member page on Alliance Web site

Basic (2 points)

- Participating in internal Alliance meetings and calls
- Submitting featured news items to STOP Obesity Alliance E-Newsletter
- Using Alliance listserv to distribute member organization news and announcements

Intermediate (3 points)

- Contributing as guest bloggers on STOP Obesity Alliance "Weighing In" blog
- Attending Alliance public events (in person, via webcast or teleconference)

- Asking Alliance to support and sign position statements or letters

Advanced (4 points)

- Requesting content from STOP Obesity Alliance or featuring Alliance materials on communications channels (e.g., website, Member publications and internal newsletters)
- Recruiting/suggesting potential members and/or funders for the Alliance
- Including Alliance news on social networking sites (e.g., Twitter, Facebook)
- Following the Alliance on social networking sites (e.g., Twitter, Facebook)
- Participating in Alliance projects, discussions or task forces

Full Engagement (5 points)

- Participating in media — quotes in press materials, media interviews, etc.
- Participating in speaking events/conferences on behalf of the STOP Obesity Alliance or where the Alliance has a presence/role
- Leveraging public affairs/policy relationships to further STOP Obesity Alliance policymaker efforts (includes STOP messaging and materials in outreach)
- Referencing the Alliance or its body of work (e.g., Obesity GPS, surveys, recommendations, research)
- Inviting Alliance leadership to attend, speak, co-sponsor or participate in a non-Alliance event
- Collaborating with the Alliance to guide or inform programs executed by Member organizations
- Suggesting or creating synergies between the Alliance and other third-party partners
- Referring media or other organizations to the Alliance for comment/expertise

The requisite points are assigned for each relevant activity throughout the year and the accumulated points for each classification results in the total engagement level for each Member. At the end of 2009, each member's overall level of engagement was illustrated against the criteria in graphic format as below. Steering Committee engagement and commitment was well-established during the founding year. Nearly 80% had interacted at some Full Engagement level and more than 65% had participated in some activity at every level.

2009 Member Engagement Tracker – Steering Committee
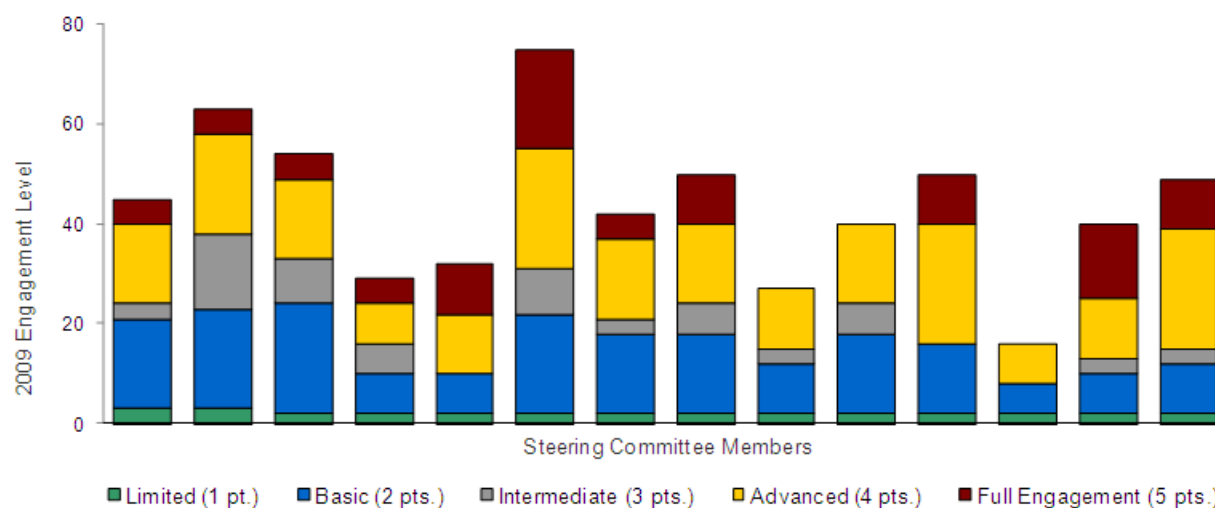
The addition of Associate Members brought Alliance activities, research and outreach to broader audiences in 2009. Nearly 80 percent of Associate Members had engaged at or above Intermediate level. Two Associate Members had engaged at every level.
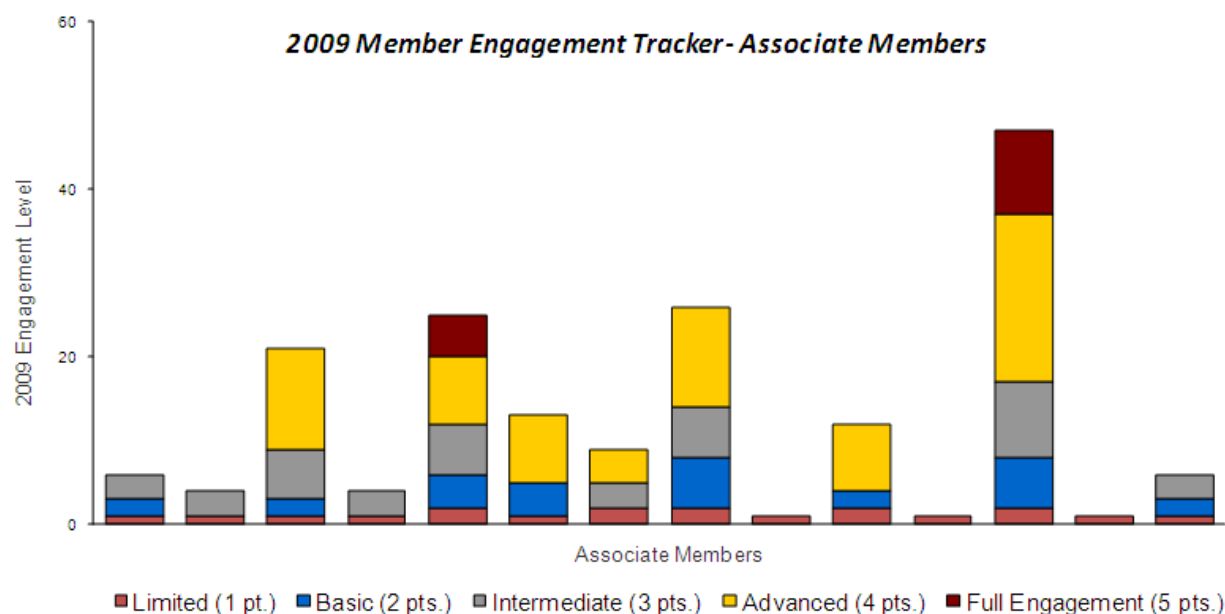
Tracking Internal Relationship Change Year-on-Year

In 2010 the Alliance continued to use the METRIC Model for measuring engagement among members. A few additional activities were added to the engagement criteria to reflect the evolving role of the Alliance. For example, "asking the Alliance to support and sign position statements or letters" was added to the 3 point level activities.

Results for 2010 (below) showed that nearly 90 percent of Steering Committee members have interacted on the Full Engagement level, up from 80 percent in 2009. As in 2009, nearly 65 percent of members participated in all activity levels at some point throughout the year. Steering Committee Membership has increase by 15 percent.

2010 Member Engagement Tracker – Steering Committee
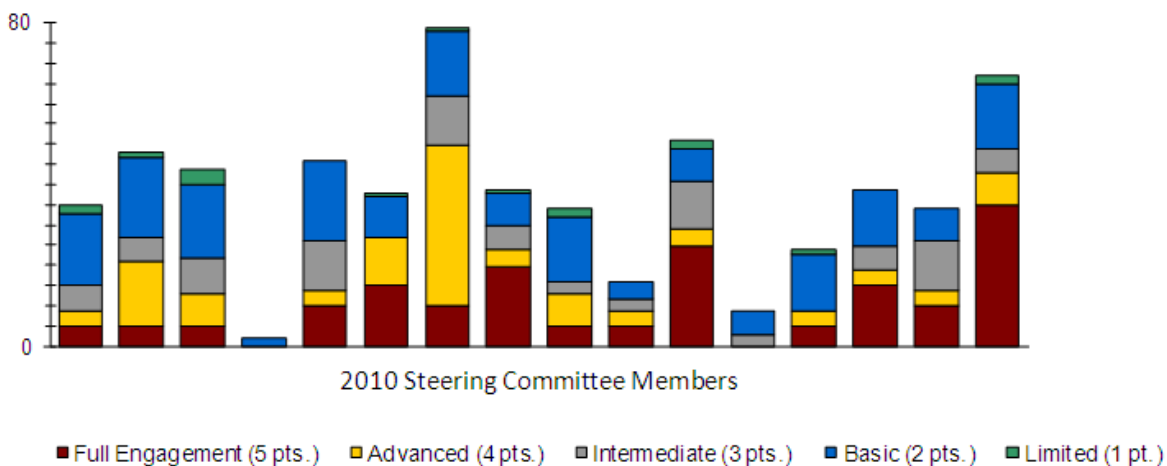
The Associate Member engagement also improved from 2009 (see chart below), most notably membership nearly doubled from 17 to 32. Of note, several Associate Members came to the Alliance through referrals from existing members — a new level of engagement that has benefitted growth and demonstrates member commitment to the coalition.

Highlights of the engagement among Associate Members in 2010 include nearly 40 percent of Members interacting on the Full Engagement level, down from 2009 due to the positive development of a 47% increase in Associate Membership. Seventy-five percent of Members have interacted at or above the Intermediate level, up from 53% in 2009.

2010 Member Engagement Tracker – Associate Members

30

0

■ Full Engagement (5 pts.)   □ Advanced (4 pts.)   ■ Intermediate (3 pts.)   ■ Basic (2 pts.)   ■ Limited (1 pt.)
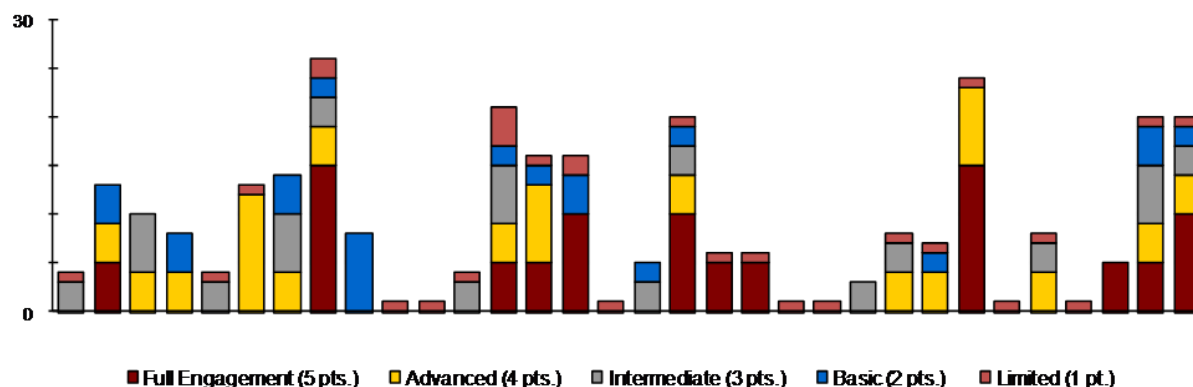
Applying the METRIC Model to External Relationships

The Alliance also applied the METRIC Model to their external relationships which led to some of their most visible accomplishments in 2009, including the *USA Today* article "Doctors Join Fight Against Obesity." External stakeholders were defined in four groups – media, policy makers, business and advocacy groups.

Similar to the internal engagement measurement process, customized criteria was created by Determinus and the STOP team right from the start, based on the desired outcomes of the external relationships. The potential actions were categorized and weighted through the assignment of a point value ranging from one to five, as follows:

Awareness (1 point)
- Requests a meeting with the Alliance
- Ran a story on the Alliance as a result of proactive media outreach by CCA

Collaboration (2 points)
- Asks to partner or volunteer with the Alliance on specific projects
- Extends invitation to attend unrelated obesity event or conference

Partnership (3 points)
- Expresses interest in sponsoring the Alliance
- Invites Alliance to sign onto coalition position statement or letter

Adoption (4 points)
- Invites Alliance leadership to attend, speak or participate in non-STOP event
- References the Alliance or its body of work (e.g., Obesity GPS, surveys, recommendations, research)
- Refers media or other organizations to the Alliance for comment/expertise

Full Engagement (5 points)
- Requests to become an Alliance member
- Asks for input/interview from the Alliance that results in a media article (reactive)
- Adopts Alliance recommendations and/or policies
- Use of Alliance materials for education, awareness, training and reference purposes

The chart below demonstrates levels of external stakeholder engagement with the Alliance in 2009 based on the 5-point ranking system. As with the internal stakeholders, the requisite points are assigned for each relevant activity throughout the year and the accumulated points for each classification results in the total engagement level.

All groups of external stakeholders had interacted with the Alliance on the Full Engagement level. The media demonstrated Full Engagement in Alliance activities nearly 10 times more than any other group.

2009 External Relationship Tracker
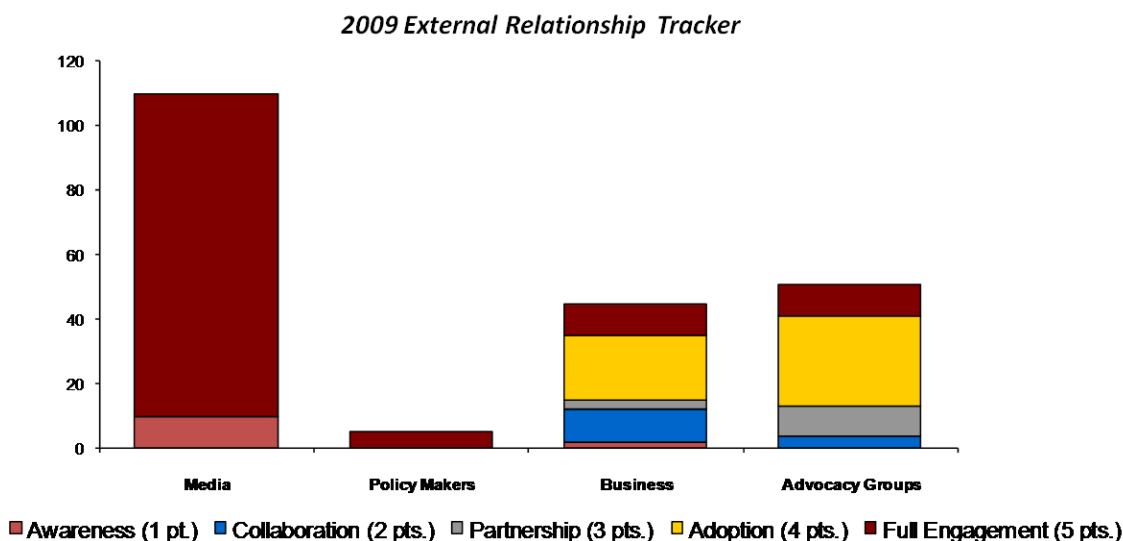
Tracking External Relationship Change Year-on-Year

The rating criteria for external stakeholders were revised slightly in 2010 reflect a shift in the way the Alliance engaged with these stakeholders and the policy environment. Additional criteria included "meeting with the Alliance to discuss potential partnerships and synergies (1 point)" and "journalist reaches out to the Alliance or attends an event that results in coverage (5 points)."

The 2010 external relationship tracker below indicates the Policymaker engagement increased 14-fold since 2009 and includes engagement on all five levels. All external audiences have engaged on the "Awareness," "Adoption" and "Full Engagement" levels. Communications/news media has shown the highest level of engagement, consistent with 2010.

2010 External Relationship Tracker

Legend: Awareness (1 pt.), Collaboration (2 pts.), Partnership (3 pts.), Adoption (4 pts.), Full Engagement (5 pts.)

Categories: Communications, Policy Makers, Business, Advocacy Groups
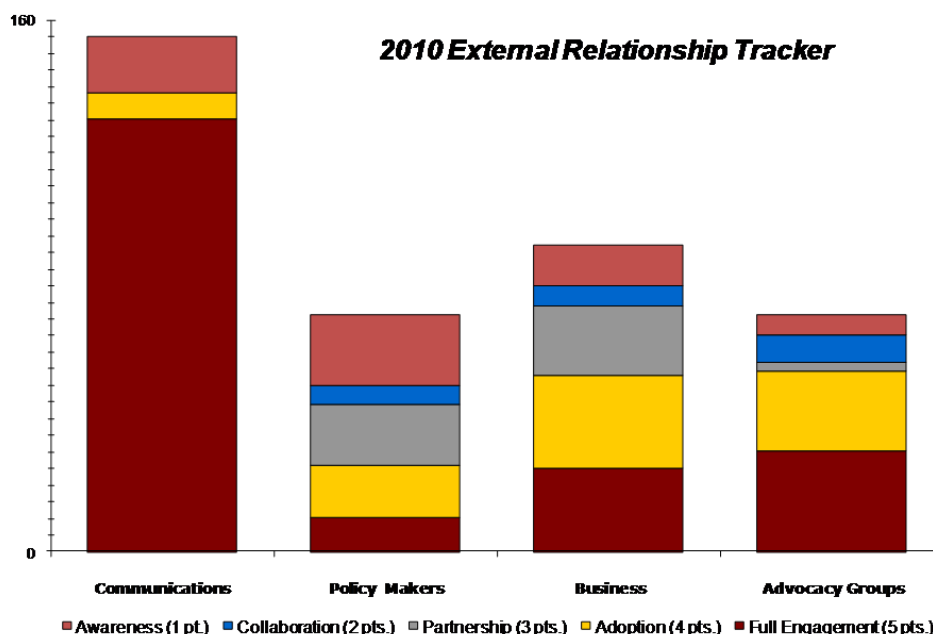
Non-member advocacy organizations referred to Alliance materials and invited Alliance leaders to participate in events throughout the year, signaling the Alliance's standing as a trustworthy resource and presence in the field. Other external opportunities have included meetings with government agencies and potential funders.

Keys to Success

Planning is critical to success in implementing the Model. Get it right from the start so that all relevant interactions can be documented in a timely manner. It is not realistic to ask the team to go back at the end of six or twelve months and try to recall the path of engagement for each member or stakeholder.

A template should be set-up in Microsoft Excel or similar tool, accessible through Sharepoint, to record activities for each Member or stakeholder and appropriate staff members assigned to document interactions on a regular basis.

Data is impressive and clearly demonstrates value. But, it is still important to include some anecdotal feedback and highlights of activities in the reporting to bring the results alive and illustrate what lies behind the numbers, especially when presenting to those outside the inner circle.

The METRIC Model provides the fundamental data for measuring success of the STOP Obesity Alliance year-on-year. However, annual reporting also includes some of the standard PR measurement metrics to give a complete picture. For example, message penetration in media coverage, type of media in which the coverage appeared, open rates for the Alliance e-newsletter, click-throughs from the e-newsletter and e-newsletter subscribers by sector (e.g. .com, .edu, .org, .gov/.us and .com/.net).

Applications for the METRIC Model

Throughout our practice we regularly develop customized measurement metrics and scorecards focused not just on media results, but on measuring outcomes and building

relationships with stakeholders. The METRIC Model served as a core framework which has proven to be very adaptable.

In some applications, especially when the relationships are long-standing, less granularity is needed for the engagement criteria. For others, a simpler "high," "medium" or "low" classification will suffice [or green, yellow and red] instead of a weighted score. This streamlined view is often appropriate for c-suite executives where decisions must be made quickly, so the analysis must be clear, concise and quickly digestible. In this situation, all you want to show is that engagement   increased, not the specific details.

Overall, the consistent feedback is that the METRIC Model is simple and transparent, can be executed fairly easily and understood quickly. There is no secret sauce or black box to negotiate. Also, the Model measures to objectives which has the advantage of requiring the team to align on desired outcomes right from the start.

Next Steps

Several suggestions have been made to take the model further.

In some scenarios it may be possible to develop a return of investment (ROI) number, as the public relations program is solely responsible for the relationships, its impact can be isolated. If actual dollar figures are not available, it could be possible to use hours of professional time as the investment factor.

It is also possible to validate the data using triangulation by asking the Members or stakeholders to do their own assessment of the relationship, perhaps even qualitatively at first, through interviews where they would define their own criteria for success. From this four or five factors would emerge against which all the Members and stakeholders could be surveyed.

In summary, our positive experience with the METRIC Model is based on several features: it is fully transparent, can be customized for specific PR campaigns, it can track progress over time and can be adjusted as programs change and it is easy to interpret.

Communicating "Pink": An Analysis of the Communication Strategies, Transparency, and Credibility of Breast Cancer Social Media Sites

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Abstract

Considering the tremendous impact of social media on public relations, how nonprofit organizations are using various forms of social media is important. Little research has analyzed the overall social media presence of an organization. This study will quantitatively analyze the content of the Twitter account, Facebook page, and organizational blog of the top 20 breast cancer nonprofit groups.

According to Willard (2009), three technologies have most contributed to the "explosion of the social web": mobile communications (handheld computers and mobile phones); social media (enables users to upload their own content and find content generated by others); and online social networking (allows users to maintain and extend their personal and professional networks). In public relations, this "explosion" has significantly impacted how organizations communicate to their various publics through social media, Facebook, and Twitter.

While previous studies have investigated dialogic communication and relationship building strategies in organizations, few have done this in terms of an organization's overall social media presence. Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) analyzed Twitter postings of Fortune 500 companies and found more than half employed Kent and Taylor's (1998) dialogic loop of communication. Similarly, McCorkindale's (2010b) analysis of brands on Twitter found employment of the dialogic loop depended on the purpose of the account. Those heavily focused on customer service were more likely to engage in dialogic communication.

Social media studies in public relations have primarily focused on corporations' use of social media. Few have examined nonprofits use of social media. For example, Zoch, Collins, Sisco, and Supa (2008) found that activist organizations weren't fully utilizing their Web sites while Waters, Burnett, Lamm, and Lucas (2009) analyzed Facebook profiles and found most nonprofits are not taking advantage of social media. Moreover, the organizations that did use social media typically employed one-way communication strategies focusing primarily on information dissemination. In addition, Henderson and Bowley (2010) analyzed a nonprofit's use of social networking to communicate with potential stakeholders during a recruitment campaign. They found that the use of social media enhanced the nonprofit's authenticity and attracted new stakeholders.

Considering the tremendous impact of social media on public relations, how nonprofit organizations are using various forms of social media is important.   Little research has analyzed the overall social media presence of an organization. Using Kang's (2010) credibility scale and Rawlins transparency scale (2009) this study will quantitatively analyze the content of the Twitter account and Facebook page, of the top 15 breast cancer charities. Results and suggestions for future research will be included.

Social media and public relations

Social media provide a variety of ways for users to become involved with organizations. Social media creates the perception of close interaction regardless of time and space, thereby connecting individuals and groups with organizations (Fuchs, 2004). Furthermore, social media allow "interpersonal dialogue between and among users, has offered new opportunities for both institutions and individuals to connect with stakeholders and each other" (Gilpin, Palazzolo & Brody, 2010, p. 259).

Tredinnick (2006) defined social networking sites as those sites driven by user-participation and user-generated content. Social networking sites provide organizations with a space to interact with key publics and to allow users to engage with one another on topics of mutual interest. Social media allows users to participate but also to give feedback and foster a sense of community with an organization. The outcome of this connection is a "collaborative, participatory culture where users feel comfortable expressing themselves, creating and sharing their creations and communicating with a variety of people across the world" (Henderson & Bowley, 2010 p. 239).

For public relations practitioners, one of the advantages of social media is the ability to speak directly to publics without the influence of gatekeepers; this in turn opens the space to more dialogue with many different publics (Henderson & Bowley, 2010). Although as recently as 2008, research (Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser) has found that practitioners were still more likely to use traditional tools because of their ease of use. Several studies have documented the hesitancy of public relations practitioners to fully adopt social media to interact with publics (Briones, Kuch, Liu, & Jin, 2010; Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008; Porter, Sweetser, & Chung, 2009; Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). This finding may be surprising, as social media has been found to be a great tool in fostering relationships with publics. McCorkindale (2010a) studied corporate Facebook pages and found most engaged in one-way communication by merely posting information, as opposed to engaging in dialogic communication with its fans. As Wright andHinson (2008) found that blogs and social media have enhanced what happens in public relations and that social media and traditional mainstream media do complement each other.

Nonprofits usage of social media
Social media can be especially beneficial for nonprofit organizations. In addition to strengthening relationships with publics, Waters (2009) found nonprofit organizations use social media to streamline management functions, educate the public about programs and services, and communicate with constituents. Furthermore, O'Neil (2008) found communications that help donors understand how their donations will be used are the most significant predictor of commitment, satisfaction, and trust. The author concluded communications make a significant difference in predicting donor's long-term attitudes toward the organizations, and influence donor support.

According to Waters (2009), typically, nonprofit organizations lag behind others in social media adoption, waiting to see how other organizations adopt and use this new technology. Waters, Burnett, Lamm, and Lucas (2009) found that despite its prevalence nonprofit organizations are not fully utilizing the interactive functions of Facebook to build relationships with publics. Bortree and Seltzer (2010) found similar findings in their study of advocacy organizations. Most organizations "seem to adopt the position that the mere creation of an interactive space via a social networking profile is sufficient for facilitating dialogue" (p. 318). Bortree and Seltzer further suggest that in order to encourage dialogue and interaction with publics organizations should "post frequently to their own profile via applications that provide photos of events, videos, RSS feeds, calendars of events, etc., and that will serve to stimulate discussion" (p. 319). On the other hand, a 2009 study found 93 percent of the U.S. charities studied had a Facebook profile while 87 percent had a Twitter page. The authors, Barnes and Mattson, concluded U.S. charities outpaced both academia and the business world in terms of adoption.

One of the biggest obstacles for nonprofit organizations is a lack of resources, specifically available time and a trained staff.   Most nonprofits know that having a Facebook page or Twitter account is beneficial but may not maintain their own social media sites. Bortree and Seltzer (2010) recommend that:

> nonprofit organizations designate someone to be responsible for following through on dialogic opportunities by responding to user posts, as well as by providing timely, relevant information about issues of mutual concern to the organization and stakeholders and by providing useful information about the organization itself. (p. 319).

Measuring online relationships

Yang and Lim (2009) found that individuals tend to trust organizations when they perceive greater level of interactivity in social media. The ability to interact continuously and keep publics informed also increases an organization's credibility. Johnson and Kaye (1998) found when individuals consider a medium credible; they are also more likely to rely on that medium for information. Furthermore, Kang (2009) suggested credibility is "one of the key factors driving the traffic of individuals to organizations' social media" (p. 20). Organizations should prioritize the credibility of their social media in order to enhance their relationships with current publics as well as attract new publics.

In addition to being perceived as credible, an organization should strive to maintain transparency with key publics. Transparency is often viewed as openness with the community (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). Rawlins (2008) states, "transparent organizations must share information that allows stakeholders to make informed decisions regarding their relationship with the organization" (p.6).

Transparency has become a familiar term in the public relations literature despite lacking a universal definition. In an attempt to measure this construct, Rawlins (2009) developed a scale that divides the transparency of the organization's communication efforts into four dimensions: participation, substantial information, accountability, and secrecy. In the analysis of these four factors, Rawlins (2008) found that there is a strong correlation between organizational transparency and public trust. Therefore, as an organization becomes more open with their publics through social media they have the ability to increase relational trust. The second part of his scale measures three dimensions of the organization's transparency: respect for others, clarity, and integrity.

Breast cancer organizations have developed extremely sophisticated techniques for communicating with publics. Samantha King (2006) identifies breast cancer nonprofits as optimal charitable organizations. King describes how in a very short time span (1993-1997) the public went from thinking about breast cancer as grassroots activism to an undertaking involving "wealthy individuals, CEOs and politicians who had succeeded in making breast cancer chic" (p. ix). These organizations have done an excellent job of incorporating social media in order to maintain their online presence and improve relationships with their publics.

The current study will use Kang's (2010) credibility scale and Rawlins' transparency scale (2009) to quantitatively analyze the content of the Twitter account and Facebook page of the top 15 breast cancer charities in an effort to measure their social media effectiveness. The list of the top 15 Charities Working to Prevent and Cure Breast Cancer was obtained from CharityNavigator.org. Charity Navigator is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization that provides an open evaluation of charities in terms of their financial health for prospective donors. Based on the above literature review, the following research questions and hypotheses will be addressed:

RQ1: How active are breast cancer nonprofits on Facebook and Twitter?
RQ2: What is the relationship between Twitter/Facebook activity and an organization's transparency?
RQ3: What is the relationship between Twitter/Facebook activity and the organization's credibility?
H1: Breast cancer nonprofits that are ranked higher will have higher levels of transparency than its counterparts
H2: Breast cancer nonprofits that are ranked higher will have higher levels of credibility than its counterparts

Methodology

The study consisted of a quantitative survey of the content of Facebook pages and Twitter accounts of the top 15 breast cancer charities during the month of January 2011. The basic sampling unit was the content of one Facebook page and one Twitter account for each organization. The 15 organizations included the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, Breast Cancer Research Foundation, National Breast Cancer Coalition Fund, The Rose, SHARE, National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc., Living Beyond Breast Cancer, Breastcancer.org, Young Survival Coalition, Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute, Breast Cancer Network of Strength, Breast Cancer Fund, United Breast Cancer Foundation, and the American Breast Cancer Foundation. Five other charities from the same list were excluded because of their lack of social media: Breast Cancer Connections, John Wayne Cancer Institute, American-Italian Cancer Foundation, Walker Cancer Research Institute, and Coalition Against Breast Cancer.

Survey Instrument

The measurement instrument asked participants to describe in detail the organization's Facebook page including, the number of likes and fans. It also asked participants to analyze the organization's Twitter account including followers, those following, tweets and the number of dialogic tweets during the month of January.

To measure the organization's transparency, the authors implemented Rawlins' (2009) measurement instrument. The transparency semantic differential scale was composed of organizational traits such as being reliable, ethical, honest, open, sincere, consistent, and willing to listen. The second part of the index measured the communication efforts of the organization according to the four components of transparency: accountability, voluntary disclosure, and sharing of information that is complete, relevant, verifiable, accurate, balanced, comparable, clear, timely, reliable, and accessible. This scale used a 7-point Likert-type scale. (i.e., 1 = strongly disagree; 4 = neither agree or disagree; 7 = strongly agree).

The instrument also included Kang's (2010) blog credibility scale, which the authors adapted for social media measurement. This scale asked respondents to recognize the importance of 14 attributes in evaluating credibility of the organization's social media, in terms of two theoretical dimensions (i.e., credibility and content credibility), using a 7-point Likert-type scale. (i.e., 1 = strongly disagree; 4 = neither agree or disagree; 7 = strongly agree). The source credibility scale items measured if the organization's social media was: knowledgeable; influential; passionate; transparent; and reliable. The message/content credibility items measured if the organization's social media was: authentic; insightful; informative; consistent; fair; focused; accurate; timely; and popular.

Before the survey was implemented, a pretest was conducted to ensure that the survey and directions were clear and effective. After the pretest, minor revisions were made to both the survey and the directions; both were deemed suitable for implementation. For each organization, respondents were instructed to visit the entire Facebook page (including photos, wall posts, events, and info) and Twitter account. The respondents were asked to restrict their viewing of both the Facebook pages and Twitter accounts to the month of January 2011.

Regarding the reliability check for dependent measures, dimensions within Rawlins organizational transparency scale showed appropriate Cronbach's alphas: integrity (.77), respects others (.83), and clear (.76). Dimensions relating to the transparency efforts in terms of the organization's communication efforts also were appropriate: participative (.76), provides

substantial information (.78), provides accountability (.71), secretive (.73). Regarding Kang's blog credibility scale, the Cronbach's alphas of the two dimensions were .80 for the organization's credibility and .89 for the credibility of the content, both meeting the minimum standards for reliability (Nunnally, 1978).

Results

RQ1 asked about the level of activity of the breast cancer nonprofits on Facebook and Twitter. The Susan G. Komen for the Cure was the most active breast cancer nonprofit on Facebook and Twitter. Susan G. Komen had the most Facebook likes (M = 447,264), Twitter followers (M = 18,569), number of accounts they followed on Twitter (M = 4,677), total tweets (2,104), and tweets for the month examined in January (M = 70). The organization also scored in the top three for Facebook posts in January (M = 28) and the number of dialogue tweets in January (M = 7). Some organizations were more likely to be active on Twitter than Facebook compared to their counterparts, and vice versa. For example, the National Breast Cancer Foundation had the third most followers (M = 2,941) and the most dialogue tweets in January (M = 12). Activity, though, is not an indicator of participation. The United Breast Cancer Foundation was the second most active breast cancer charity on Facebook with an average of 46 posts in January, but had the second to lowest number of Facebook likes (M = 426). In addition, the organization had the second highest number of tweets in January (M = 55) and the second highest number of dialogue tweets (M = 11). However, the United Breast Cancer Foundation had 530 followers and 222 tweets in total indicating this account may have recently become more active (Table 1).

Hypothesis 1 suggested the breast cancer nonprofits that were higher in ranking would be more transparent than those that were ranked lower. This hypothesis was partially supported. ANOVAs were used to compare differences of the dimensions within Rawlins's organizational transparency scale among the breast cancer nonprofits. Using Scheffe's post hoc analysis, Susan G. Komen for the Cure (ranked 2) and the National Breast Cancer Foundation (ranked 3) scored significantly higher in terms of integrity, $F(14, 36) = 6.3$, $p = .00$, than its counterparts. Several charities, including Susan G. Komen for the Cure, reported stronger levels of clarity, $F(14, 36) = 7.4$, $p = .00$) than the Breast Cancer Network of Strength (ranked 12) and the American Breast Cancer Foundation (ranked 15). In terms of overall organizational transparency, the National Breast Cancer Foundation (ranked 7), the National Cancer Coalition Fund (ranked 4), the Susan G. Komen for the Cure, the Dana Farber Cancer Institute (ranked 1) and the Young Survival Coalition (ranked 10) had significantly higher levels of overall transparency ($F(14, 33) = 6.3$, $p = .00$) than the American Breast Cancer Foundation (ranked 15). Significant differences were not found among the breast cancer charities regarding whether the organization respects others (see Table 2).

ANOVAs and Scheffe's post hoc tests were also used to compare differences of the transparency of the communication efforts among the breast cancer nonprofits. Differences were not found among the breast cancer charities regarding whether the communication efforts were participative, whether they provided accountability, or whether they were secretive. Regarding the communication efforts, the Susan G. Komen for the Cure and the National Cancer Coalition Fund were found to be significantly more substantial ($F(14, 36) = 6.6$, $p = .00$)than the American Breast Cancer Foundation. Overall, there was not a significant difference of the overall transparency of the organization's communication efforts (see Table 3).

H2 posited organizations ranked higher would have higher levels of credibility than those ranked lower, which was partially supported using ANOVAs and Scheffe's post hoc analysis. Using Kang's credibility scale, The Susan G. Komen for the Cure was found to have significantly higher levels of organizational credibility ($F(14, 33) = 7.1$, $p = .00$) than the American Breast Cancer Foundation and the Breast Cancer Network of Strength. As far as the content, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, National Cancer Coalition Fund, National Breast Cancer Foundation, Breastcancer.org (ranked 9), Young Survival Coalition, Living Beyond Breast Cancer (ranked 8), The Rose (ranked 5), and the Dana Farber Cancer Institute had significantly higher levels of content credibility ($F(14, 36) = 11.4$, $p = .00$) than the American Breast Cancer Foundation and Breast Cancer Network of Strength (see Table 4).

RQ2 asked about the strength of the relationship between Twitter and Facebook activity, and an organization's transparency. Pearson correlations revealed a moderate relationship between an organization's transparency and the total number of tweets ($r = .36$, $p < .05$). There was also a moderate relationship between the transparency of the organization's communication efforts and the number of Facebook likes ($r = .33$, $p < .05$), Twitter followers ($r = .33$, $p < .05$), total tweets ($r = .40$, $p < .01$), and tweets for the month of January ($r = .33$, p $< .05$).

RQ3 examined the strength of the relationship between Twitter and Facebook activity, and an organization's credibility. Pearson correlations found a moderate relationship between the organization's credibility and the number of Facebook likes ($r = .34$, $p < .05$), the number of Twitter followers ($r = .34$, $p < .05$), total tweets ($r = .46$, $p < .01$), and tweets in January ($r = .35$, $p < .05$). Similarly, moderate relationships were also found in regards to the credibility of the content and the number of Facebook likes ($r = .34$, $p < .05$), the number of Twitter followers ($r = .35$, $p < .05$), total tweets ($r = .45$, $p < .01$), and tweets in January ($r = .35$, $p < .05$).

Finally, there was also a strong correlation between the organizational credibility dimension, and both the overall organizational transparency ($r = .76$, $p < .01$), and overall transparency of the organization's communication efforts ($r = .73$, $p < .01$). Similarly, a strong correlation existed between the credibility of the organization's content, and both the overall transparency of the organization ($r = .76$, $p < .01$), and its communication efforts($r = .79$, $p < .01$).

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine how breast cancer nonprofits are participating on social media sites, specifically Facebook and Twitter, and how these sites affect perceptions of credibility and transparency. This research indicates Twitter and Facebook both affect the perception of organizational credibility and transparency. Overall, most top breast cancer nonprofits are active on both Twitter and Facebook, but differ in terms of activity. Some nonprofits were more active on Facebook than Twitter, while others were more active on Twitter than Facebook. Organizations, though, need to take advantage of the benefits of both sites, which do appeal to different audiences. Therefore, the usage and content on both sites needs to be consistent, as well as frequently updated. Also, organizations need to use both sites to not only communicate with their audiences, but also to engage in dialogue. Similar to Waters et al. (2009) and McCorkindale (2010a), organizations are not taking advantage of the dialogic nature of Facebook or Twitter, and use the sites to merely communicate one-way and post information.

The top charities, Susan G. Komen for the Cure and the Dana Farber Cancer Institute, were most active on both Twitter and Facebook. Even though followers or likes should not be used as metrics of success, some followers or fans do become exposed to the organization's

message, which in turn can affect donations and volunteer efforts. In fact, the United Breast Cancer Foundation (ranked 14) was the second most active breast cancer nonprofit in terms of postings, but had one of the lowest numbers of "likes," which emphasizes the importance of brand awareness. However, it should be noted the organization was still most likely to score higher in terms of credibility and transparency than its counterparts that were ranked higher.

Those breast cancer nonprofits that were ranked higher in the top list of nonprofit charities were more likely to be seen as more transparent and credible than those that were ranked lower. For example one respondent said of the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute (ranked 1) "they're very active on Facebook with weekly posts, with testimonials, press releases, (and) polls concerning their new application for the iPad." Another respondent described the social media of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure (ranked 2), "the visuals are amazing. They are informative, educational and give inspiration to viewers. They comment back to many people and provide information everyday." On the other hand, the American Breast Cancer Foundation (ranked 15) was described as "not very active, they don't have many posts and they don't respond to posts by fans."

A moderate relationship was also found between activity on the Facebook and Twitter page, and the organization's credibility and transparency. Organizations that tweeted more, had more likes, more followers, and more overall tweets were seen to be more transparent and credible by virtue of activity alone. Therefore, organizations need to spend time crafting thoughtful, and open communication, but also do so frequently. The organizations who updated less frequently also appeared to be less transparent. Public relations practitioners must keep their Twitter and Facebook pages active in order to be perceived as transparent and credibility. However, it should be noted that even though followers, fans, and the number of tweets should not be used as a metric for success, the findings do indicate users assess this information to determine how credible or transparent the organization is. In essence, this is the bandwagon effect.

Interestingly, the number of dialogic tweets did not impact perceptions of credibility or transparency. However, it should be noted the participants viewed the pages as a whole and were not active followers or fans of the Facebook or Twitter profile. Therefore, they have not engaged or attempted to engage with the organizations studied. The finding may have been different if the user followed all the sites or had attempted to engage with the organization on social media sites.

Many social media tools are freely available to nonprofit organizations, but the time and technology necessary to configure, update, and monitor them is certainly not without cost. Having a social media presence isn't enough; the organization must ensure high quality interactions to keep individuals engaged. In essence, merely putting together a Facebook page is ineffective if the page is not going to be kept up-to-date and serve as an engaging forum for stakeholders.

This study found a strong link between the transparency and credibility of the organization. This is a significant finding. For public relations practitioners, those organizations that appear to be transparent were also seen to be more credible, indicating openness, honesty, and respect do influence the credibility. Jo (2005) found that online credibility has a direct influence on relational trust. As research has shown, trust is an essential element for nonprofit organizations especially those that rely on donor support (O'Neil, 2008).

There were some limitations to the study, including only breast cancer charities were studied. Even though the study was based on assessing the nonprofit's Facebook and Twitter

page, prior brand awareness in terms of the more popular charities such as Susan G. Komen for the Cure, was not assessed so the participants' prior attitudes or knowledge could have impacted their responses. Another weakness was the participants assessed one snapshot of the organization's Twitter or Facebook page, which may not represent their typical page. In order to truly gauge the utility of social media there has to be some way to measure key indicators. This study incorporated just two measures that may not encompass all the advantages of social media use. More research is required before any overall conclusion can be drawn about social media and its ability to engage stakeholders.

Although this study was limited to breast cancer nonprofits, the findings have implications for not just nonprofits, but organizations as a whole as well as the body of public relations knowledge in how they interact and participate on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. There are obvious benefits for organizations that are using social media. It can strengthen an organization's existing communication attempts, open an avenue to new publics and potentially gain fresh support for the organization. For nonprofit organizations, the key to doing this successfully is keeping publics engaged and differentiating the organization from others.

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Virtual Games as a Tool for Building Image Brand: The Case of Super Volleyball Brazil

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Abstract
This study offers a contribution to the understanding of the impacts generated to Olympikus brand belonging to the Vulcabras/Azaleia group, with the development of a new media: the game Super Volleyball Brazil. This way, through an online game, it is possible to observe the influence of technology in the activities of the Public Relations using new tools of communication to build the image of the brand. Data analysis was performed using a survey, from a sample of 453 cases, all of them users of Super Volleyball Brazil. It was possible to know the grade of influence of the game, and the users perceptions related to the Olympikus brand.

Introduction

Following the technological advancement and the phenomenon of globalization , ever since the 90's, and mainly with the arising of internet, the access to new communication tools has broaden in such a manner that many of these tools have been incorporated in the communication process of the society. Amongst this new scenario the need to address a new vision of marketing can be found, "one that mingles interactivity with a global vision in order to allow a sense of proximity with the public." (CASTRO, 2000, p.7). Therefore it has become necessary to reflect on the communication, especially on the role of Public Relations in this context.

Technology has been opening new contact channels with the public of institutions what has called for an investigation on its impacts as a communication means, as well as the process of branding management that is under the responsibility of Public Relations, once the coordination of a "wide variety of activities supporting the goals, both corporative and regarding the brand" (SCHULTZ e BARNES, 2001, p. 241) lie beneath the competence of such professionals. To this sense, new opportunities of relationship with the public are arising in order to empower the communication with groups of interest to the organizations and maintain their competitive potential.

A virtual and interactive game developed by Olympikus, a Brazilian sports brand which is owed by a foot wear enterprise named Vulcabras/Azaleia has been chosen in order to study such phenomenon. From the case we have tried to comprehend the impacts generated to the Olympikus brand once it applied the game as a communication tool, and such will be the main objective of the present study. Through the game it has become feasible the understanding of the manners in which the development of a new communication channel, virtual and interactive, may influence the work of brand image building before the publics of the organization, in the present case the image of Olympikus brand before the game users.

The theoretical base of the present study is founded on a brief overview of mass communication, addressed communication and virtual communication as well as it investigates the usage of technology by Public Relations highlighting the role of internet in this context. Such concepts present themselves as pillars to the objective of studying the influence of technology in the activities of Public Relations through the case Super Volley Brazil. In subsequence we have used the study pillar of the brand: image and brand identity and the relationship between them and their virtual positioning, all of it contributing to the objective of analyzing the role of the game as a Public Relations tool to the work of brand image building. Beyond that one observes the game instrument as a communication tool and therefore it has become necessary to comprehend the universe of games in communication by the means of introducing the concepts of immersion, product placement and virtual games. As a third and last specific goal the present work seeks to: identifying how was the brand Olympikus perceived by the users of the game Super Volley Brazil, using as support a quantitative research in the form of a structured questionnaire.

As to methodological procedures the present study has used the descriptive conclusive research method with quantitative analysis, according to Malhotra (2006), by the means of the application of interviews through the Internet in a sample of 453 users of the game. The results indicate a positive influence of the game as a communicational tool of Olympikus.

Public Relations and Technology

Public Relations "comprises a broad variety of supporting activities to both corporative and branding goals" (SCHULTZ; BARNES, 2001, p. 241) and has as one of its main functions the creation of structures of communication channels which favor the dialogue and the free circulation of information among organizations and their publics. To this sense it is under the competence of these professionals an important space in the communication of organizations in regards to the comprehension of the message that it is willed to transmit and to whom it is wished to transmit, as well as in the establishment of the used language to such means and in the choice of the means by which it is intended to do so.

The role of Public Relations is related to the construction of communication policies with social responsibility and to the promotion of initiatives that open effective communication channels of dialogue, indispensible conditions to enable the interactive process and the mediations between organizations and their publics, as well as the public opinion and the society in general (KUNSCH, 1997). Public Relations are considered "the most encompassing subject of marketing communication comprising a wide range of activities and specializations used to transmit corporative and branding messages" (SCHULTZ; BARNES, 2001, p. 229). Within such context the function of execution of the Public Relations activity may acquire different combinations using the apparatus of mass, directed and virtual communication.

Mass communication is the one which allows Public Relations to lead the information to a wide range, in a fast manner, globalized to variable and non-nominated publics. It is worth to highlight that mass communication is an important tool of information and debate at the service of the professional but that it does not build relationships.

From the understanding of mass communication as an important tool for transmitting information in a wide, fast and broad achievement it is necessary to observe what are the manners in which other elements may be applied, elements which "may assist the reorganization of diffuse ideas and may maintain the balance of the individual, and, extensively of the society, propitiating elements for the formation of public opinion" (OLIVEIRA, 1981, *apud* FORTES, 2003, pg. 238). The activity of Public Relations must apply of resources that free both communication and relationships with the publics and therefore the vehicles of directed communication have great application in this field. According to Pinho (1990) the directed communication may have its effects known in a briefer period of time once there is a feedback communication promoting an interaction between the communicator and its audience. Its major advantage, when referring to known groups is the possibility of better adjusting the communication to the repertoire and the interests of the public. The directed communication may be therefore determined, selected and controlled by the emitter of the information, factors which generate confidence to the professional in charge of the promotion of the relationship between institutions and their groups.

Departing from the study of mass communication as a Public Relations tool capable of achieving the public in a broad, immediate and highly impacting manner and considering directed communication focused on the transmission of more objective messages through which a channel of dialogue and relationship is established it is necessary to understand the role of virtual communication in this context, once, in the present days the existence of a movement towards virtualization may be perceived. To Levy (2003) such movement, beyond affecting information and communication, ends up also influencing individuals, as well as the economical

functioning, the collective sensibility or the exercise of intelligence. Levy (2003) highlights the fact that today virtualization affects virtual communities, virtual enterprises and virtual democracy. Yet, Fortes (2003) who has the core of his work on online communication explains that the propagation of computerized dada and information force a new perspective of organization amongst people, groups and enterprises arise: the virtual communication.

In this sense the professionals of the area must be attentive to the inclusion of a virtual policy in the processes which integrate the communication of organizations with its publics, who, on their turn, already hold an expectation of being capable of communicating with companies through virtual means, more intensely by the Internet. Such assumption is supported through Weinberg, Locke and Levine (2000) all of whom very affirmatively relate the positioning that online means have acquired in the communicational process. They all indicate that a powerful global conversation has begun. By Internet people have been finding out and inventing new manners of sharing relevant knowledge in a frightening speed. As a direct result markets are becoming smarter and faster than most of the enterprises.

In the ambit of this relationship with the publics it is necessary to observe the concept of interactivity compounded by the characteristics of virtual communication, therefore followed by, of interface and usability. The fact that the information is objective is not sufficient for the communication to occur in a consistent manner. In order to conquer a good relationship "the explorer must gather around him or herself several alternative proposals, such as games and entertainment, or simply serve as a "passage" to well set and complete websites" (FORTES, 2003, p. 250). There are situations which allow us to know the user who is on the other end of the screen and it is under the responsibility of Public Relations to empower and "use" such "weapon" offered by the Internet in a strategic manner creating online channels of communication with all their publics once Public Relations arise from dialogue, from the possibility of establishing a flux of information in every sense" (ANDRADE, 2001, p.31).

Therefore the essence of virtual communication is exactly the establishment of such dialogue at which the performance and the response of the user must be taken into consideration "With interactivity the users themselves coordinate their researches so as to fulfill their informational needs" (FORTES, 2003, p. 252). This way, what matters is the utility, the handling and the benefits of the information offered to the public.

Therefore these studies support the discussions regarding the contribution of technology to the breaching of communicational frontiers as well as to its empowerment mainly through Internet. Such changes end up interfering in the social, economical and cultural lives of the communities, what causes significant transformations in the possibilities for the exercising of Public Relations.

Internet as a communication tool

From the comprehension of Internet as a communicational tool which combines the amplitude of information, reaching a wide number of users with interactivity and allowing a closer treatment with the user "a new vision of marketing, which mingles interactivity with a global vision so as to allow proximity with each one of the millions of users that may access our website" becomes necessary. (CASTRO, 2000, p.7). It may be perceived, therefore, that "through Internet the consumer has further access to information and that is why he or she is capable of knowing, questioning, comparing, and divulging his or her opinion about products,

services, brands and enterprises" (CAVALLINI, 2008, p. 24). Similarly, Karsaklian (2001) defines the public as a cyber client who knows what, how and when he or she wants, and that is why he or she is extremely demanding, acquiring more power and demanding a higher effort of communication from the institution.

In this sense the interactive media enables the client to know about the existing product or brand, as well as becoming aware of the benefits and advantages that a certain product or brand offer and from such awareness decide on consuming or establishing a relationship with the brand and maintain an image of the brand in the mind of the consumer for the production of fidelity and a future purchase.

The relevance of the brand

According to AMA[1] "the brand is a name, a signal, a symbol or a drawing, or a combination of the above mentioned which intends to identify the goods and services of a sales person or a group of sales people and differentiate them from their adversaries". For Aaker (2001) the brand is considered such a fundamental strategic component that for her in order to achieve success a consistent and differentiated balance is necessary. It defines as balance of the brand the set of inherent resources to a symbol to which value is aggregated proportioned by the benefits perceived of the company. According to Martins and Blecher (1997) a brand represents an organization, its products or services to which an identity, a name and an additional value of brand image were given.

It is therefore possible to perceive the representativeness and the relevance of the function of the brand in the organizational environment. The brand may be seen as a centralizing element of the values idealized by the organization which promote purpose, significance and meaning to such brand. In this sense one observes that the identity of the brand must be related to the strategy of the organization and represents its basic characteristics which will persist throughout the time representing the core structure of strategic objectives, values and aspirations of the institution which were idealized through a strategy of Public Relations for the construction of the brand's identity.

The effort to consolidate a strong brand identity could be pointless to the organization if its final goal were not intended to firm such identity before its publics, therefore generating a human process of image building. This way the image of the brand is more related to what the publics understand of the organization than of what the organization wishes its public to relate to it. What occurs is that "clients or consumers create the brand for themselves, their understanding of the brand and the experience they may have with it are single and individual" (SCHULTZ; BARNES, 2001, p. 49). Each client who becomes in contact with the brand holds his or her own vision of it and of what it means to him or herself. The publics may associate to the brand positive or negative concepts according with his or her relationship with the organization. Investments in building a strong image become then necessary in order to differentiate and approximate the brand from its publics. Such image building may be referenced in terms of investment and by monitoring the reverberation of the brand in the virtual sphere.

One of the first thoughts regarding this thematic is brought by Spyer (2007) who considered that a blend of virtual communities and online games are creating unusual and original

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[1] Source: AMA Website (*American Marketing Association*). Acessed on April 10, 2009.

opportunities to support the work of brand image building. The virtual positioning assists the establishment of the identification of the consumer with the brand and, beyond that; the feedback of that format of relationship may be measured quite fast and in a quite non-invasive manner to whom provides the information, therefore, faster adjustments for the maintenance of the image of the brand may be promoted in a faster manner a well.

So as to contribute to this vision it is needed to recall the essence of the activities of Public Relations whilst offering information to assist the decision making process of its several publics and comprehend this process of decision making in the virtual environment. According to Pinho (2003) 81% of the users use the web to search for new products, 84% of the web users feel that the Internet helps them to make better decisions and 63% navigate with a specific purpose. Such figures reinforce the need for a strategy of virtual positioning of the brand which must be inserted in the planning of Public Relations to organizations and publics which communicate and interact with such enterprises.

Moreover than understanding the online environment as a market opportunity for the placing of brands and services with the objective of generating business and raise sales it is necessary to comprehend it as a path of interaction and relationship where the organizations should place themselves institutionally through the work of building the image brand which will in its turn assist the maintenance of such image in the "real world". Therefore virtual communication becomes fundamental to Public Relations planning, which, through online means, carry out a truthful strategy of contacts management and of relationship with its different publics.

Games

Whenever analyzing the potentiality of games as a communicational tool one must firstly understand some research figures brought by Cavallini (2008). In 2006 the games industry had more than 32 billion dollars of revenue all over the world, in 2007, in the United States only, the segment grew 43% when compared to the former year rounding up a total income of 17.94 billion dollars, a historical record of this market in the country. Up to March 2008 the games industry presented positive results with a growth of 27% in the period. [2]

The age average of game players in the United States was 29 years old; in 2007 it had already reached 33 years old. North Americans above 50 years old represent 24.2% of players. [3] In the USA women above 18 years old outnumber the percentage of boys under 17 years old, the comparison is of 31% to 20% [4], therefore proving that the range of age, gender and number of users has been broadened and has already achieved a significant mass of game players. In order to reinforce this idea one may notice through Maciel and Venturelli (2004) that electronic games have been provoking violent impacts in the contemporary culture, consolidating themselves as a popular emerging form of art, including. "At schools, students discuss games with the same

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[2] Source: NPD Group (http://www.npd.com). Acessed on March, 2008.

[3] Source: http://www.theasea.com. Essential Facts 2007.

[4] Source: Peter D. Hart Research Associates (USA).

passion former generations used to discuss Hollywood cinema" (MACIEL; VENTURELLI, 2004, p.170)

Hand in hand with Internet, the possibilities broaden thmeselves to the phenomenon of virtual gaming. This communication tool, furthermore disseminated by the day, enables that thousands of users experiment, have fun and interact with virtual and real characters even being physically located in different parts of the world. "Thousands of people transform themselves into characters and interpret online roles, interacting among themselves" (CIPRIANI, 2006, p.26), therefore enabling an interaction with the brands that take over these opportunities.

To complement such vision the contribution of Maciel and Venturelli (2004) was analyzed in order to comprehend virtual gaming not merely as an important communication tool and of contemporary culture formation but as a tool of stimulus to learning which enables the proximity of a generic public with technologies. Once that, according to Santos e Alves (2006) Internet allows the interaction of several sorts of knowledge as well as the intertwining between formal and informal learning, virtual games have become a new form of sociability so that individuals may learn through the path of desire and pleasure.

Cavallini (2008) highlights the importance of investments in games as a tool to be considered in the market and institutional environments, coordinated by Public Relations before the organizations. Major companies such as *BMW*, *Coke, Pepsi and Sony Ericsson,* which are considered references on what regards the work of relationship with consumers and of brand image building have carried out important investments on virtual gaming. Understanding and dominating these recent movements would allow one to comprehend technology as an allied in the search of new opportunities. Regarding games technology the concepts of immersion, product placement and embedding on the idea of online games become therefore essential to this study.

The concept of immersion

The idea of immersion is related to two basic concepts: the raising of the feedback from the public and the interaction of the consumer with the brand. Becoming aware, thought Cavallini (2008) of the fact that the Brazilian young population consumes several medias at the same time one notices that such multitasking behavior may be clearly perceived in this group age, once 73% of adolescents between 7 to 15 years of age hold the habit of carrying out 3 to 8 tasks simultaneously.[5] The possibility that Internet brought along for simultaneous browsing in several different network environments intensifies such possibility even further, what, in its turn, enhances the grade of dispersion in the system of information established amongst brand and consumer, organizations and their publics. Games present themselves as an alternative within such context. The high level of graphics quality and interactivity achieved by games intensify the involvement of the consumer with the tool and consequently his or her involvement with the brand. For Maciel and Venturelli (2004) high technology of computer graphics invested in virtual games allows players to enter in a sort of a trance provided by the realism of the drawings which simulate real movements in a complex and truthful manner.

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[5] Source: Kids experts, Cartoon Network, Turner International of Brazil - Institute Alana.

Moreover, the intensity of the interactivity provided by the games and the high quality of the graphics allow the user to feel within the virtual reality. Instead of pressing a button to move left or right, he or she ratiocinates actions such as jumping, deflecting, or running, for instance "Virtual reality is not feasible but the immersion felt in the games comes very close to it" (CAVALLINI, 2008, p. 72). Games have become more and more complex and interactive present more esthetical interfaces which had been projected to activate the spatial memory of the user. The textured environments have been progressively substituted for sophisticated and complex architectonic maps which try to simulate reality (MACIEL; VENTURELLI, 2004, p.176).

To this sense, good playability, good plots and images produced are essential elements to guarantee a deep grade of immersion of the player in the game.

Product Placement: a strategy of visibility in games

Cavallini (2008) orients towards a strategy that has already been consistently observed by some enterprises concerning the placing and the visibility of products in virtual games. Virtual games enable the conception of more interesting participations of the consumer for the interaction and the experiencing of products. Therefore the adoption of product placement strategies becomes adequate. These experiments, as illustrated by the author, range from the placing of Diesel pants in characters of the game *Devil May Cry*, to the usage of *Axe* products and external media in *Tom Clancy´s Splinter Cell*; to the consumption of *Red Bull* to provide more energy to the character from *SEGA* so that he may jump higher and to the usage of *Nokia* mobiles by the characters of *CSI-3: Dimensions of Murder.* In this sense one may observe well succeeded strategies which have led game producers to adapt their plots so as to meet the needs of their sponsors.

Online Games

Electronic games played by the Internet are classified as online games or virtual games. In them a player with a computer or videogame connected to the web may interact with a platform of artificial intelligence or with other players, in real time, without the need of being in the same environment once they all withhold the Internet as a mediator of this interaction. In order to characterize these games, independently from their formats, it can be considered valid the assumption that a game "may be played for over 100 hours (figure that to some games is extremely conservative and pessimist), what would be a much broader audience, measured in hours, than most of the North American major successful TV series" (CAVALLINI, 2008, p.76). That is, the time of contact permanence of the consumer with the brand acquires a profile of higher intensity and for a longer period of time when compared to other sorts of media.

Whenever comparing such formats, though, a difference related to the costs for obtaining brand feedback may be perceived. There are variables which make the choice of a game for the insertion of a brand or a product more complicated mainly on what concerns the offline environment once the price for developing compatible games with platforms of high technology are considerably costly and the access to such tools more restrict once it is necessary to rely on their commercial success for dissemination. However, while speaking of online games this process is triggered by the availability of the game on the web "enabling the introduction of campaigns for a specific period of time and through specific actions, not having to fingerprint

your brand in a closed package as a shelf game" (CAVALLINI, 2008, p.77). One of the advantages presented by online games is their capability to be built and updated dynamically. Using Internet as a basis for the game proportionate to organizations an inserted communication in the games, using them as a media of relationship and therefore consolidating itself as a Public Relations tool.

Whereas, Internet presents some limitations to obtaining richer tools for the development of games. The processing power and the patterning of videogames are important differentials whenever they are compared to online games. Anyway, advantages such as dynamic updates and wide distribution to different publics and places, enable virtual games to being the best alternative for broad range campaigns.

Cavallini (2008) proposes the study of *advergaming* whose finality is to produce the entire game as a means of promoting a product or a brand. If actions of *In-Game Advertising* are much more common today Cavallini (2008) indicates that *advergaming* (games as a communication tool and content) will acquire an even larger profile. An example of well succeeded work is the case of *America's Army* which in 2002 produced a combat simulator to reflect the values of the American Army. This was a branding initiative that reached five million registered players in 2004, who played more than 600 million missions of 10 minutes each. 30% of the ones who visited the website of the game have also accessed the enlisting website.

According to Cavallini (2008) the understanding of this interaction and entertainment tool and its constant evolution through technology allows a progressively more realistic vision of online games. Realism and interactivity which enable a proximity of a public who is not restrained to enjoyers of games but promotes the interests of diversified groups which may range from sports fans and cheerers to consumers of the brand.

Description of the Cases

Based on the relevance of games as above outlined by the theoretical embedding one observes such scenario before the footwear company Vulcabras/Azaleia, to whom the sports brand Olympikus belongs. Vulcabras/Azaleia is the largest foot wear company in Latin America and counts with more than 34 thousand collaborators in Brazil and abroad, therefore placing itself as one of the largest employers of the country and consolidating its productive capability.[6] It has become the largest company in its field ever since the acquisition of Azaleia Footwear and other companies in Argentina in July 2007.

With a growth in its no EBITDA of 58% referent to BRL 267 million and with 34.8 thousand employees, the figures of Vulcabras/Azaléia outnumber its opponents all over Latin America. The company of open capital has its headquarters in the Municipality of Jundiaí (State of São Paulo) and develops, produces and distributes sports footwear, women's footwear and sleepers as well as sports clothing. On a daily basis 190 thousand pairs of shoes are produced in 26 own industrial units located in Ceará, Sergipe, Bahia and Rio Grande do Sul, in Brasil, and in Coronel Suárez, in Argentina. It has in its portfolio the following brands: Azaleia, AZ, Dijean, Funny, Opanka, OLK, Olympikus, Reebok and Vulcabras Boots. Guided by the mission of carrying out businesses in the footwear and sports items markets and of meeting the desires of

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[6] Source: www.vulcabras.com.br. Acessed on May, 2009.

the consumers Vulcabras/Azaleia has a its entrepreneur **vision** the will to enhance quality and technology as well as to offer differentiated products, effectively meeting the market demands, valorizing and establishing as its priorities the client and the employee, who is, in the end, is the main responsible for the results of the company.

Olympikus Brand

Created in 1975 by Azaleia Footwear S.A. the brand Olympikus arises in Brazil into a scenario at which the international major sports brands, such as Nike and Adidas, for instance, are yet unknown. It began performing in the national market through the launching of the school sneakers Olympikus, a model made of leather, what was quite a novelty at the time. From the 80's on the international concurrence reaches the country bringing along products with new technologies, innovative marketing strategies and great sports celebrities, casting advertisement campaigns. Therefore in 1989 the brand Olympikus increased its investments in design/technology and initiates relationships of involvement with sports in Brazil in order to re-place the brand, until it became consolidated, in 1994, as a sports brand. In the following year the best athletes of Brazilian volleyball formed the Olympikus volleyball team. In 1996 the brand extended its production into developing textile products and sports accessories so that in the following year the brand began sponsoring the National Confederation of Volleyball (CBV), one of the strongest partnerships in the Brazilian sports scenario which lasts until the present days. Olympikus became the official brand of CBV and, in this very same period, Brazil ends up forming and promoting the best national Volleyball team in the world.

After its participation in two Pan American games (1999 and 2003) and two Olympic games (2000 and 2004) the brand Olympikus broadened its national and worldwide visibility sponsoring in 2007 the first edition of Pan American games in Brazil, the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008 and the volleyball Brazilian athletes Giba, Bernardinho, Bruninho, Fabi and Paula Pequeno and Zé Roberto. The association between sponsorships, marketing and investments in technology enabled Olympikus to remain in the position of national leadership in sales, both in volume and in value, according to the report *Latin Panel.* With a growth of 30.3% on the average pricing of its products from 2007 to 2008, corresponding to BRL 110.39 (One hundred and ten and thirty nine cents of BRL) Olympikus disputes with players such as Nike, Adidas, Reebok, Puma Timberland, Asics, Fila, Diadora, Mizuno, Topper and Rainha.

Its investment efforts in media, point of sales and sports marketing solidified its involvement with the consumer market forming the basis of its communications strategy. Through sports events, confederations and athletes the brand has been disseminated at the international level. The brand uses integrated marketing and strategies of competitive intelligence in order to raise its visibility. Its objective is to aggregate value through innovation, with technology and design and that is why it has been investing in researches and in sports.

The Game Super Volleyball Brazil

Ever since 1997 until the present day the sponsorship of the National Confederation of Volleyball (CBV) by Olympikus, official supplier of sports material of the national teams, has been bringing good results to the Brazilian volleyball favoring the visibility and the recognition of these organizations. It was from this partnership on that Olympikus has developed, in

partnership with *Aquiris Game Experience*[7] the game 3D Super Volleyball Brazil with the objective of paying homage to the athletes of the male national team and therefore generating a proximity with the publics interested in games, as well as in the Brazilian volleyball, in the athletes and in the Olympikus brand through this interactive channel of virtual communication. The game may be accessed by the website www.supervoleibrasil.com.br, through one's own *url* [8]but it may also be accessed by Olympikus website (www.olympikus.com) that has a link on its homepage to the *url* of the game

Figure 1 – Super Volley Brasil
Source: www.supervoleibrasil.com.br. Acessed on: March 23, 2009.

From the technological perspective the game presents the quality of an advanced videogame. It may be executed directly at the Internet browser with the installment of a *plug-in* which has been made available to all sorts of computers in order to provide full compatibility.

The concept of the game is based on the idea of street volleyball, played in couples, only a net, a ball and some players are needed, players who, in the case of the game, are great stars of the Brazilian Volleyball, players like Giba, Gustavo, André Heller, Murilo, Serginho and Bruninho. The court is assembled in an urban scene (Annex A) where the audience is comprised of social stakeholders who vibrate with the athletes of the National Team from the windows of surrounding buildings. The urban environment contrasts with the presence of super athletes who are in the game materialized as caricatured characters, promoted to the status of superheroes, with deformed features that accentuate their two major driving powers: their hands (strength) and their feet (propulsion).

The objective of the game is to win the matches, summing them all up and gathering the largest number of victories possible. The player chooses a character and sets his or her play mate, as well as the uniforms and picks out of 4 different types of balls, herein guarantying the presence of sports products of the brand. Who draws the opponents is the machine itself. Apart from the user all the other players are chosen by the computer. As the user progressively wins the

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[7] *Game House* located in the South of Brazil. The company has three years of activities and develops games, Virtual Reality, 3D Navigational Interfaces and Digital Samples.

[8] Having as its translation into Portuguese *Localizador de Recursos Universal*, the url (Uniform Resource Locator), is the address of an available resource in a network, being it the Internet or a corporative network.

matches the level of difficulty also rises. The players possess differentiated characteristics according to their real skills in court, divided as follows: strength, technique and speed. That influences the individual performance of each player. As the player wins he or she is able to unlock items of the game, such as wallpapers and even a secret character.

The curve of evolution is related to variables which progressively cadencies the difficulty level of the game. It begins slowly and gradually up to a point of stabilization. That is, once the player masters the way to play, that is definitive. The variables of difficulty become then the setting of playmates what is randomly done by the machine. For instance: the setting of two characters with great attacking skills does not form a couple of playmates as good as one that mingles a good attacking player and a good defensive one. Playability, in its turn, is aided by resources that enable the player to find the best touching spots at the ball so that it hits wherever it should, what is indicated by assisting settings in the court.

The game Super Volleyball Brazil is part of the launching strategy of the new uniforms of CBV (National Confederation of Volleyball) which had been produced by Olympikus for the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008. This was the form that the brand considered proper in order to transmit, with adequacy, the attribute of technology that can be found in the clothing parts; therefore, it was a strategy of product placement.

The metrical analysis of accesses only already demonstrated good results for the brand through the game. With more than 700 thousand games played, some longer than 6 hours, Super Volleyball Brazil was an unconventional path found by the brand concerning communication. Olympikus has bet on the game as a new tool of communication in a period of time at which other brands, mainly at the national sphere, still did not. Through a measurement done by the calculus of centimeter range the game generated a feedback of approximately BRL 1 million in visibility of spontaneous media, figures which have been provided by the press office of the company. As a media strategy Olympikus, instead of interrupting the programming, offered entertainment to the consumer what is in consonance with the idea presented by Cavallini (2008) as a trend in the usage of entertainment for communication, mainly through virtual means due to their interactive capabilities.

From the launching of the game on 21 July 2008 up to 25 May 2009 Super Volleyball Brazil presented significant results to the brand. The website of the game, only, received 219.306 thousand accesses during the period. More than 113 thousand unique visitors (selected visitors) navigated on the website maintaining an average of permanence of 4 minutes and 43 seconds. Beyond that, during the same period, the figures obtained through the direct interaction with the game are even more significant, 273.419 thousand people played Super Volleyball Brazil totalizing more than 1.300.700 thousand matches with an average of permanence of 7 minutes and 36 seconds. Such figures characterize an intense and broad involvement of the users with the brand, through the game.

The present work aimed at studying the concepts which guide Public Relations and its relationship with technology as enabling new channels of communication, comprehending the processes of brand image building as well as the role of virtual games in this context. In order to do so, the research team proposed the methodology of quantitative researching by the means of an applied questionnaire through which the necessary figures were obtained in order to, by the means of the following analysis, answer the matters and objectives herein outlined.

Procedures and Methods

This work employs the method of Quantitative Descriptive Research (Malhotra, 2008) with transverse section and simple random sampling as a survey technique to study the Olympikus *Super Volleyball Brazil case* history.

A specific questionnaire for completion by the person replying was developed and made available on the INTERNET. The questions were programmed together with the information data bank of *Zoomerang*[9] utilized by the digital agency, AG2[10]. A specific questionnaire for completion by the person replying was developed and made available on the INTERNET. The invitations to participate in the study were sent to a population of 9.998 users of the e-mail list captured by a data bank generated from the Super Vôlei Brasil user-lists. In 120 hour during the period from 27th. Of May to 1st. of June, 2009, 453 users responded to the research questionnaire. A wave for filling out the questionnaires, which had been previously measured and validated by application of a pre-test of twenty users, was realized

The questionnaire is composed of twenty-six items divided into five sequential parts designed to clarify and understand different aspects of the user´s perception of the research objectives. Firstly, we sought to understand the user´s impression about virtual games in general, and in the second segment, the research was directed to a comparison with the results from other communication means. In the third part, the research endeavored to understand the user´s opinions on the Super Vôlei Brasil game specifically, associated to the identification of a brand name at the end of this phase. In this way an evaluation of the Olympikus brand is possible, although this was disclosed only in the fourth part. The fifth and final part was dedicated to collecting demographic data for the identification of the profile of the person responding.

The self-completed questionnaire developed for this work used more than one type of question classified as (i) closed questions where the person being investigated is asked to chose between available alternatives; (ii) dichotomy questions, which present as alternatives positive or negative replies. Considering the population of 9998 users of the Super Volleyball Brazil, the sampling plans utilized in the research present as a minimum standard sample 193 responders for a margin of error of 7% - to reduce this margin to 5%, 370 responded questionnaires would be necessary. The index exceeds the expectations, and ends with a total sampling of 453 responders, without restrictions of economic class, gender or age.

Data Analyses

As mentioned previously, the data base for this research is created from a sampling of 453 respondents and 26 variables from a population of 9.998 users of the Super Volleyball Brazil game. The objective of the research was to identify the profile of the game users, determine their perceptions of virtual games in general, of RH communication instruments and their opinion of the Olympikus brand derived from their contact with the Super Volleyball Brazil.

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[9] Zoomerang is a tool for on-line research that permits the creation and emission of the questionnaire as well as the analysis of the results. The tool also makes samples of the research, online focal groups and other types of market studies via the INTERNET available. Used to determine consumer behavior, to analyze the competition and customer satisfaction levels, Zoomerang has more that 800000 registered sers.

[10] The AG2 is a company providing communication solutions based in intelligence and digital management destined for the corporative market that was created in 1999 and operates in the Brazilian marketplace.

Before initiating the analyses of the results, and following the orientation given by Hair (2005), we reviewed the data and found that the user´s replies were coherent, that the questions were understood and that all the respondents replied fully to the obligatory questions. Question 26 – about the family income - although optional was replied to by the entire sample. The open questions, number seven (*How would you characterize a company that uses virtual games for communication with its public?*), and number 18 *(How would you characterize the Olympikus brand in the use of virtual games for communication with customers?)* although optional, received replies from 259 and 223 users respectively. This suggests good performance in the application of the questionnaire. As a measure of the central tendency, and to synthesize and condense the information, we selected the average as the parameter of measurement. To measure the dispersion, the variance, or the standard deviation, were selected to determine the distance a particular respondent was from the average.

As regards the structure of the questionnaire, questions 1 to 4 in the first part of the research characterize the user´s opinion about virtual games and determines his/her habits of use. The questions 5 to 7 investigate the importance of virtual games as an instrument of communication with the public. The questions in the third part, endeavor to understand the user´s perception of the Super Volleyball Brazil game to identify the degree of satisfaction existent. The fourth part, made up of Questions 14 to 18, seek to find out how the brand Olympikus was seen as a part of the game. Finally, questions 19 to 26 trace the profile of the person being interviewed.

Like the statistical techniques directed via Hair (2005) we used nominal and ordinary mensuration scales, both with the application of chi-square as the statistical parameter, as well as scales of interval or result using the average of the central tendency and ANOVA as statistical measurement. The data of this stage were understood by univariate and bivariate analyses. The first to measure the attitudes and opinions by utilizing tables to evaluate the degree of importance to and satisfaction of the users while the second was used for cross references between the data so as to describe the relationships between the studied variants.

Profile of Sample

From the first results, we endeavored to identify the profile of the user of the Super Vôlei Brasil game. At once, we observed the predominance of males - 86.75% of the total – which agrees with data provided by Cavallini (2008) indicating that males make up the majority of the universe of users of virtual games.

It is important to remember that this information indicates a lack of communication with the feminine public which, as studied in the chapter on the case description above , is also a part of the brand target and accounts for 48% of those there represented. This predominance is also seen when the data on the civil situation of the users is examined – the Single (male) profile accounts for 78.8% of the entire group investigated. The fact may be related to life-style questions because a single person normally has more spare time available. He/she has, for example, no undertaking to support a family and so has more time for leisure and entertainments such as games.

As regards age, the distribution between the ages shows a concentration in the range of 14 to 30 years - principally between 19 and 25 years – or 38.9% of the total of the respondents. It is important to consider this data in two ways. The first relationship reinforces Cavallini (2008) on the tendency of distribution of the age profile in the age-bands, reducing the concentration of the

young public as can be seen in the following graph. It will be noted, however, that different age groups participate in the *Super Volleyball Brazil* results, although with some centralization.

   The second fact to be considered points to an agreement between the brand target-public – the young adult in the 16-30 years age range – and the concentration of the sample which came out in the 14-30 year age range,

   In the question on family income, the data is more relevant in the income range above R$ 2,601.00 with 47.4% of those interviewed concentrated there - so that a group having considerable purchasing power is present. The results for *Super Volleyball Brazil* therefore indicate that users of the game are in the higher income classes.

   Summarizing, by analysis of the sample profiles, it is possible to note a concentration of the single male publics, with a homogeneous distribution in the age groups and income levels. These references indicate a group with average to high consumption standards so that it can be said that the users of the Super Vôlei Brasil are economically active, and therefore, have sufficient purchasing power to acquire Olympikus brand products.

The Influence of Virtual Gaming in Public Relations Activities

   While verifying the habit of using virtual games and their qualification by the users in order to enable the comprehension of their perceptions concerning games, it has been noticed that 95.4% of the answerers like or like very much virtual games what indicates a large acceptance of the tool by the public. In this context it may be noticed that virtual games present an elevated level of maturation and that technology may be verified as an enabling element of new tools which provide satisfaction to the consumer.

   While questioning users regarding the frequency of usage of virtual games it may be perceived that more than half of them maintain a constant regularity in accessing games, once 52.1 % use the tool from 1 to 6 times a week. The fact that 21.6% of the interviewed people present characteristics of high frequency of usage must be highlighted, accessing more than 10 times per week, signalizing to a strong usage of virtual games as an entertainment and communication tool.

   Taking into consideration that the game is a means that permits returning and using the tool more than once a day, one may identify, through the gathered figures, its frequency potential as high, if compared with a vehicle such as a newspaper which will be read once a day, in average. This assumption meets the concept brought by Castro (2000) where the author defends that mass and directed communication presents low interactive capability, while virtual communication allows a high capacity of interaction, consequently stimulating the usage of the tool as a habit.

   Departing from the significant share of 21.6% of users who interact with virtual games more than 10 times a week, what means daily contact with repetition, adding the information that the average time of permanence on Super Volleyball Brazil is of almost 12 minutes and 53 seconds[11] one understands virtual games as an effective tool of profound contact of the brand with its public.

   To this aspect it is necessary to retake the concept of immersion as presented by Cavallini (2008) on what concerns the study of games. The author believes that, in the present days, the public consumes several sorts of media, simultaneously, generating a high level of attention dispersion from the part of the individual towards what is trying to be communicated. He

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[11] Figures provided by Aquiris Game Experience in June 2009.

suggests that graphics quality and the power of interactivity, which can be considered an immersion in virtual reality, intensify the involvement of the public with the tool and consequently of his or hers involvement with the brand.

When overlapping frequency and gender a significant difference between men and women was not detected. The habit of usage between genders is quite similar, statistically non-significant (qui-square index is larger than 0.5). This is a curious figure once it had been previously observed a lower incidence of female publics in samples.

The environment of higher usage and access to virtual games is mainly concentrated "at home" according to users, with 89% of all the presented options. Whenever inquired about the moments of the day at which they play virtual games (question 4) the answer of higher percentage is related to leisure moments of the users. That is, it could be implied that the majority of the users of online games plays during their moments of leisure, an idea comparable to the concept of *advergaming,* in favor of marketing.

Regarding question 4 one must highlight the low percentage of answers in the alternative "when I want to know more about a brand", the index of 1.1% signalizes to the fact that curiosity and interest for a brand is not a motivating factor for the usage of the game.

Virtual Games as a Tool for Brand Image Building

In the virtual context virtual games are perceived as a communications alternative, capable of generating profound involvement (both in terms of time and interaction) with the user. Taking such aspect into consideration and aiming at verifying the involvement of the group with several vehicles of communication and with virtual games, in the second phase of the interview the perceptions of the users of Super Volleyball Brazil were researched, on what concerns online games as a communication tool and its comparison with the other vehicles of communication which were also under the scope of interest of the present study.

Out of the interviewed people, 83% consider television as an important or very important means what reinforces the relevance of this mass vehicle for a wide range contact with the public.

The vehicle site assumes the main spot to be highlighted in the opinion of the users with 92% of evaluation ranging between important and very important. The option very important accumulated 61.1% of the total of answers what demonstrate a growing usage of virtual communication. It must be also highlighted that, once the research was applied to users on the online environment this index tends to present a characteristic of research bias. Anyway, it is still a high percentage that demonstrates the satisfaction of the public with the virtual environment.

Regarding the online game vehicle, main object of this study, the evaluations of importance are favorable. It is considered more important than the means of mass communication such as magazines and radio. It presents a result of 54.3% between important and very important, the forth best evaluated among all the investigated vehicles. Out of the vehicles in the virtual environment it is the second best evaluated. It presents low margins of rejection with only 4% of reply applicants considering virtual games as non-important.

In order to facilitate the comprehension of the evaluations which had been given to the inquired vehicles (television, radio, newspapers, magazines, websites, blogs, games social networks and external media) a comparative table of averages was elaborated (Table 1) at which it is possible to perceive the classification of the vehicles from the evaluation of the interviewed

users. To comprehend it one must take as edge basis the grade 1, as being "non-important" and 5 as "very important". The indication of standard deviation shows the dispersion of answers around the average. The higher represent the obtained results through the most heterogenic replies, as it is the case presented in the evaluation of social networks, for instance.

Table 1: Communication Vehicles *Ranking*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standart Deviation
Website	452	1	5	4,5111	0,7125
Television	453	1	5	4,1170	1,0119
Newspapers	450	1	5	3,7467	1,2024
Virtual Games	450	1	5	3,5756	1,1365
Events	447	1	5	3,5011	1,1362
Social Networks (Orkut, Facebook, My Space, others)	449	1	5	3,4588	1,2761
Radio	450	1	5	3,2956	1,2358
Magazines	447	1	5	3,2573	1,1496
External Media (Billboards, Busdoor, Frontlight, others)	443	1	5	3,1941	1,1913
Blogs	444	1	5	3,1869	1,2602

The figures, suggest, therefore, that the vehicles of higher importance to the profile of this specific research public are website and television, with averages of 4.51 and 4.11, respectively, indicating a classification ranging from important and very important to all the users. The indication of a low standard deviation, as in these two cases, demonstrates that there was a concentration of voting on the two prevailing options, not occurring many divergences of opinion around the average amongst the group of participants. Virtual games present a good placing if compared to other vehicles: forth place in the general ranking, with and average of 3.57, being classified as a high intermediate level. The more elevated standard deviation indicates the presence of more heterogenic replies; a little more disperse around the average, what may have been caused by the considerable volume of 25.4% of participants who evaluated games as being very important.

Therefore, by the evaluation of the virtual means it may be noticed that the same occupied an important space in the day-to-day communication of the organization with its publics. Even though, it must be mentioned that mass communication means, such as the television, still occupy a great relevance in this communicational process.

After testing the co-relation between the communication vehicles this study sought understanding the level of importance given to the usage of virtual games in the communication strategy of organizations before their publics. Regarding this aspect 82,5% of the users considered important or very important the usage of such tool. Crossing these figures with age groups, economical profile, and gender has not generated significant differences what indicates that, in general, independently from the characteristics of the demographic profile, people consider games as an important communication tool. The only relevant result regarding the

mentioned figure crossing, from the statistical perspective, was related to the fact that younger people have attributed higher grades in comparison with the adult group, who has graded it with lower grades in their evaluations. This situation may be explained due to the playing aspect of games which is more associated with younger age groups.

Having comprehended the opinion of the public regarding the importance of virtual games as a communication it became necessary to evaluate the attributes which had been qualified to a company that uses this channel so that one might comprehend the impacts of the usage of online games in brand image building. Through an open and non mandatory question 259 users provided their answers. The most cited characteristics that were highlighted are of a company that is considered: "modern", "innovative", "updated", "creative" and "visionary". The comments that were mentioned at this question lead one to believe that the interviewed people associate these brands to the above mentioned characteristics for considering the game as an innovative tool that is allied to technology, as it may be perceived in the following quotations: *"I characterize it as a company that is making efforts to update itself technologically"* or *"I believe that the company is modern and innovative, always attentive to technological novelties"* and, at last, *"A company that is updated in technology and that demonstrates having an updated mind with the present times where Internet has become the best means to connect with its potential clients"*.

Beyond that it was also perceived through other comments that the public does not merely identify such attributes of technology and modernity, but they also value the interaction, the proximity and the entertainment provided by the brand through the tool. A company that uses this tool for the communication with its users is considered *"a company that is not only concerned with its clients' pockets but is also thinking about their joy"* and that knows *"his or her client, their habits of consumption and allows that each one may be capable of interacting with the brand for as long as he or she desires"*. The comments shed light over two aspects introduced during the bibliographical construction of this study, which are: the entertainment and the interactivity that virtual games proportionate, therefore confirming how the public valorizes such characteristics.

At last, it is important to raise one more characteristic that has been identified by the people who replied the questionnaire and that is related to the defenses of the concepts of virtual communication means, especially virtual games, presented so far. According to Castro (2000) due to its possibilities of interactivity and free choice of the public this sort of alternative in communication is seen as a positive initiative to attract the attention of the user by the relevance of the offered content and not by the imposition and interruption of his or her entertainment. It is through the comparison of the user himself (or herself) that one may reinforce the idea that a brand that uses virtual communication, through an interactive and virtual game may be characterized as an *"intelligent company, once it develops a different manner of approaching consumers, a much more intriguing manner, which catches your eye much more than a commercial"* or as a traditional means as has been commented by other users. To this sense, virtual games present themselves as an alternative within the universe occupied by the points of contact in between communication and consumers.

Therefore the results indicate that the users of Super Volleyball Brazil consider the game as a channel of communication that aggregates modernity, proximity and innovation to the organization. The game has then contributed to the work of Public Relations both in its market

profile as in its institutional responsibilities as it had been reminded by a SVB player while characterizing a company that uses such tool "It does not only sell the product but makes one remember the brand much more". Such fact is directly related to the perception of value of the brand as it has been highlighted by Cesca (2006) once the creation of adequate conditions for the promotion of dialogue and interaction with the public, as it happens in the case of games, allows a higher perception of the value of the brand for the construction of an organizational image.

Super Volleyball Brasil as a Communication Tool

In the third phase of the research one tried to comprehend the concept attributed t SVB by the way the game was characterized. Whenever questioned about the game, 97.7% of the users replied "I like SVB" or "I like SVB very much". In this information one may highlight the index of 66.4% of the users who affirmed liking it very much, what signalizes a high level of satisfaction.

In order to understand the origin of the user's knowledge regarding the game, question 9 was outlined to identify the precedence of Super Volleyball Brazil divulging. In this case blogs of games held a significant role at which the initial point of contact from users with the game, with 27.6 % of all over alternatives, as it may be perceived at the table below. As it had been seen in the case, this fact had probably occurred due to an effort of divulgation in these channels that was carried out by the company. The actual feedback of communication may be verified through this result. Anyway, it is important to highlight that, while evaluating the blog as a means of communication on question 5 the users have attributed the lowest grades in relation to its importance if compared with other means, fact that may catch one's attention to the difference of evaluation in between usability and importance. Cavallini (2008) while commenting about games as a tool of communication and other virtual media in general calls one's attention to the particularities of communication means. In this case it may be noticed that on what concerns games there is still a need to support the launching with other media tools, being them online or offline. The capacity of expansion and divulgation of this tool is only feasible with an initial effort using informational media such as blogs, newspapers and television, as it can be perceived in the following table:

Table 2: Procedence of Contact with Super Volleyball Brazil
Question 9: How did you come to know the game Super Volleyball Brazil?

	Frequency	Percentage	Accummulated Percentage
Indication of Friends	93	20,5	20,5
Comunities at Orkut	20	4,4	24,9
Newspaper Artices	58	12,8	37,7
Blogs of Games	125	27,6	65,3
Others	157	34,7	100,0
Total	453	100,0	

Due to the high percentage of "others" replies the research team investigated the incidence of different channels of communication, most of them present on the virtual environment, such as blogs of games, sites for downloads were also frequently mentioned, as

well as blogs of diversified themes, research on Google, the Olympikus website and television callings. It may be therefore verified that the dissemination on the virtual environment was the main agent of divulgation of the game complementing the efforts on spontaneous media on TV and newspapers.

In the aspect of motivation for the participation in the game the tenth question aimed at identifying the stimulus which led the users to access the game for the first time. The figures demonstrate that 55% of the users were provoked by their interest in volleyball. What may be related to the fact that volleyball is the second most popular Sport in Brazil, with 151 worldwide champions, according to Ary Graça, presidente da CBV[12]. Only soccer is ahead for being the most highlighted Sport in Brazil.

Despite the fact that the higher indexes represent important indicatives, in this case, what catches one's eye is the percentage of 30.7% of faithful and exclusive users of Super Volleyball Brazil, what demonstrates satisfaction of this group with the game and its characteristics.

However, while analyzing the relation between the usage of other games with the habit of frequency of the user, a statistically relevant difference may be noticed (index chi-square lower than 0.05) where one perceives a relation of proportion between the variables. In order RO exemplify the matter the research team took as a basis the values of frequency of once a week, where 46.2% of the users use other virtual games and the frequency of 4 to 6 times a week where the number grows to 78.4 %. This result indicates a possible growing movement in the habit of using games on the Internet as well as a division of the attention space of the Super Volleyball user with other games.

Exploring new possible crossings in regard of question 11, we may notice another relevant result, statistically speaking, while we co-relate the use of other games with the factor of game motivation, as it had been pointed out on question 10. It may be noticed that 80% of the users who had contact with Super Volleyball Brazil, motivated by their interest in games, also play other virtual games. This percentage diminishes as the interest of the player transforms into, for instance, interest in the brand, where the percentage reaches 58.3%. These indexes suggest a relation of effect between the motivations for the usage of the game due to the fidelity of the user with the brand.

The Image of Olympikus Brand Through Super Volleyball Brazil

The present phase of this analysis proposes the observation of the Olympikus brand image with the development and application of Super Volleyball Brazil as well as the impacts of the tool in the opening of paths of communication from the brand to its publics.

In a first moment, in order to perceive the grade of association of Olympikus to the virtual game, the interviewed inquired about the connection of a brand to the tool, out of which 89.2% of the interviewed people identified Olympikus as the brand related to the game, what demonstrates a strong attachment of Olympikus to the brand. With a representation of 6.4% summing up the indicatives for Nike and Adidas, the brands were mistakenly recognized y the

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[12] Source: Interviewed granted by Ary Graça, President of the National Confederation of Volleyball to Gazeta Esportiva as consulted by the link:
<http://esporte.ig.com.br/volei/2009/05/14/ary+graca+nunca+o+volei+brasileiro+esteve+tao+bem+6130910.html>. Acessed on: June 08, 2009.

consumers. It is in fact possible that these two names have been mentioned due to their strong presence in virtual environments and also due to their sponsorship to sports events.

Table 3: Brand Association
Question 13: To which brand do you associate the game Super Volleyball Brazil?

	Frequency	Percentage	Accumulated Percentage
Topper	3	0,7	0,7
Adidas	11	2,4	3,1
Nike	18	4,0	7,1
Olympikus	404	89,2	96,5
Mizzuno	1	0,2	96,7
Puma	3	0,7	97,3
Reebok	6	1,3	98,7
Others	6	1,3	100,0
Total	452	99,8	
Lost by the system	1	0,2	
Total	453	100,0	

To further and deeper explore the perceptions of the users who identified Olympikus as Super Volleyball Brazil's sports brand, a few other data crossings were necessary. The first of them relates to the association of the brand with the gender of the user, having the male profile as its major. The brand, however, related in a restrict way with the female public. As in regards to age, the predominant layer of association is from 14 to 30 years old, with 84% of the people who answered the interviews. This age group is compatible with the target group of the brand, what indicates the correct placing in order to achieve a favorable result to the outlined strategies.

In relation to schooling and family income the percentage of the public that identifies Olympikus concentrates above the category Non Graduate University students, with 62.6% out of the total of users. While, regarding family income, the portion centralizes with 37.4 % of the total income ranging from BRL 2,602.00 to BRL 6,500.00. These two factors, when aligned, indicate that the brand Olympikus was identified by a public with a larger power of consumption and purchase potential adequate to the pricing and placing of the brand, as it may be perceived by a statement of an user impacted by Super Volleyball Brazil "It is something extraordinary. The game Super Volleyball Brazil, for example, was an incentive for me to buy to pairs of Olympikus sneakers, beyond providing incentives for the practice of sports displaying idols in whom we may mirror ourselves". In this case it is possible to identify a commercial and an institutional result in the same user.

In the forth and final phase of the research, after revealing the association of the brand with the game, one may investigate the perceptions of the public regarding Olympikus through Super Volleyball Brazil. The first studied fact identifies the origin of contact between the organization (Olympikus) and the public. The results present television with 28.3%, sports marketing with 26%, 12.8% to sports events summed up to the 13.2% from athletes sponsoring, and to footwear stores, also identified as points of sale, with 35.3% of the first contact from the

interviewed person with the brand, characterizing the above as the three main points of contact between the public and the institution. This fact meets the communication strategy of Olympikus, once, as it has already been seen, it is supported in media, sports marketing and points of sale. Therefore one may demonstrate coherence between strategies and results obtained. This process must be credited to Public Relations, once, according to Kunsch (1997), it is co-related with the promotion of effective open paths of communication. Furthermore, the figures suggest that, with 2% of participation in the identification of the brand by the user, Super Volleyball Brazil contributed by playing a support role in the assimilation of Olympikus but with god results of satisfaction as an intercative and technological tool built to fulfill a need of proximity with the public.

Once the work of Public Relations is not associated only with institutional communication but that it is meant to support market strategies this study investigated the purchase relation connected to the game. Through the following table one may perceive that the percentage of purchases from users is of 87.1 %, what demonstrates proximity with the brand, not only related to concepts, but also to actual consumption. While analyzing SVB as a core aspect for the realization of the purchase, the percentage of consumers related only to the game is low, 2.6%, though. But a comment must be made, once the game was presented as a supporting media for the institutional communication of the users with the brand, the same happens from the market point of view, where the game does not seem to be the core factor for the purchase, but assumes a complementary aspect for its incentive. That is, the figures allow us to understand the game as a stimulus to support the promotion of the product, however; one may not guarantee that the game Super Volleyball Brazil occupies a central position in the cause/effect relation for the actual purchase. In this context the concept of product placement may be integrated, as it had been presented by Cavallini (2008), which suggests that virtual games enable the conception of much more interesting participations from the consumers' sides for the interaction and experimentation of the products. The figures point out that, actually, such experimentation results in the conceptualization of the product and not necessarily in its actual sales.

Table 4 :Consumption of Olympikus products
Question 15: Have you ever bought Olympikus products?

	Frequency	Percentagel	Accumulated Percentage
No	58	12,8	12,8
Yes, before I came to know Super Volleyball Brazil	218	48,1	60,9
Yes, after I came to know Super Volleyball Brazil	12	2,6	63,6
Yes, before and after I came to know Super Volleyball Brazil	165	36,4	100,0
Total	453	100,0	

The research team has then initiated the verification of the perception of the user in regards to the role performed by the brand at SVB with the objective of measuring the user's opinion on the grade of involvement and participation of Olympikus in the game. The results of this question demonstrate that 57.4% of the interviewed people characterize the brand as the sponsor

of the game, while actually, the brand has idealized the game, and therefore was its rightful owner. It is important to highlight that this denomination obtained only 17.4% out of the total of answers. This effect is aligned with the intentions of the organization, as presented by Márcio Callage, instead of intending to place itself as the owner of the tool – what could have generated a rejection from the public due to the commercial interests of the company – Olympikus adopted a position as a generator of contents, strengthening its existing role in support of volleyball and of the online game itself without making explicit its commercial and institutional strategies, reason why Olympikus does not sign the name of the game, Super Volleyball Brazil. In this case, according to Schultz and Barnes (2001) it is possible to identify coherence between the adopted tactics for the brand image building with the strategy aimed at its identity, once the characteristics intended by the organization were very close to the characteristics that were identified by the public.

Table 5: Role of the Brand Olympikus at the Super Volleyball Brazil
Question 16: For you, what is the role of the brand Olympikus at the Super Volleyball Brazil?

	Frequency	Percentage	Accumulated Percentage
None	2	0,4	0,4
Advertiser	28	6,2	6,6
Owner	79	17,4	24,1
Sponsor	260	57,4	81,5
Supporter	79	17,4	98,9
Other	5	1,1	100,0
Total	453	100,0	

In order to deepen the analysis of perception regarding the brand Olympikus through SVB the interviewed people were stimulated to evaluate the visibility of the brand in the game. From the figures that were obtained in this question one may perceive that 92.1% considered its visibility as good or very good, what characterizes a positive exposition of the brand through this tool.

Table 6: Visibility of Olympikus Brand at Super Volleyball Brazil

	Frequency	Percentage	Accumulated Percentage
Very bad	1	0,2	0,2
Bad	4	0,9	1,1
Regular	24	5,3	6,4
Good	154	34,0	40,4
Very good	263	58,1	98,5
No opinion	7	1,5	100,0
Total	453	100,0	

Having measured the user's perception of the brand as a function of the game, an open question was elaborated to qualify the individual´s impression about Olympikus from the

viewpoint of the use of the game as communication with the public. Amongst the 223 replies received, the attributes most used to characterize Olympikus were ´´actual´´,´´modern´´,´´criative´´, ´´ innovative´´, íntelligent´´ and ´´pioneering´´ - these adjectives indicate that, in general, the users have a positive   vision of the brand. According to Martins (1999) this group of emotional characteristics associated with the brand is what defines its personality and guarantees the identification of the brand by the public.

From the explanations of those interviewed, it was possible to detect confirmation of the satisfaction and admiration of the public with Olympikus. Many users said they liked the brand better after the game was launched , as can be seen in the statements ´´The brand gained my sympathy even more, for having produced this great and creative idea´´ Another point given prominence was the ratification of the Olympikus as a support for Brazilian sport in general ´´Olympikus is a brand associated with volley and its participation in virtual games confirms its support of the game´´ This characteristic is important from the point of view of separating the brand from its competitors, which according to Cesca(2006) only comes about when a strategy of communication of the brand capable of guaranteeing its definition and distinguishing icons is employed .

As well as being considered a pioneer because it was the first sportive brand to invest in virtual games, it was observed that, until then, the interviewed persons had not considered the brand particularly strong in this field and some did not even know of the brand. Taking as an example the two opinions following: ´´ In my opinion it (Olympikus) is a weak brand – with an Adidas or Nike the game would be much more visible´´ and ´´Great! – something I did not believe could come from a Brazilian brand`` it can be seen that some users show preference for the international brands, but on the other hand, others had a positive surprise to see such excellence from a Brazilian alternative.

The establishment of a new instrument for relations between organization and public was identified as a favorable point in the process of communication of the brand. The users considered that the brand ´´opened new spaces for relations with the public´´ with the utilization of the game, confirming recognition of its work in the virtual universe. We noted that the user considers it an advantage that Olympikus utilizes virtual means for contact with the public ´´ very well imagined – nowadays everything is virtual´´. With regard to the relationship with the public, the replies point to an approximation with a young public – the brand was said to be ´´young´´ and ´´antened´. This means that the consumer is acknowledging that the tool is adequate for communication with the public and characterizes Olympikus as ´´a brand that uses new and alternative means to reach its public, especially since its products are for younger persons (not, of course, excluding those of other ages)´´

In this sense, the results lead us to identify a brand that is more focused on an institutional than a market-oriented vision. The association of the product does not occur in isolation – although on a smaller scale, it appear harnessed to brand qualification values that can be assimilated, such as: ´´A brand that wants to satisfy its consumers with games and with its products``. Thus, as can be seen when we stress the perception of technology associated with the brand via the game, the user adds the attribute to the brand and the product simultaneously ´´Working and evolving together with the technology´´

All the facts seen up to this point confirm the proximity of image and brand identity, because the attributes identified by the users are in agreement with the communication strategies

laid down by Olympikus with the development of Super Vôlei Brasil. In this way guaranteeing favorable positioning in the virtual universe *and* strengthens the brand values with its public in the real environment.

Final Considerations

The present study proposes to understand the impacts generated for the Olympikus brand name by the use of the Super Vôlei Brasil game as an instrument of communication in support of the Public Relations activities. By means of a review of the literature and quantitative research using a structured questionnaire amongst the users of the game, the knowledge gained and data obtained were of fundamental importance in attaining the targeted objectives. From the point of view of the impact of technology, via the virtual games, in the Public Relations activities, it could be observed that, with the increase in the diversity and reach of the mass vehicles, directed and virtual, society is subjected to communication stimulation in an intensified form.

The fragmentation and dispersion of public attention have gradually reduced the results obtained by relationships and weakened the brand image. From the data obtained in this research, one also observes that individuals feel themselves invaded by aggressive communications strategies, which they see as an intromission into their daily lives and programs. In this sense, the game appears as an alternative capable of capturing the attention of the public in a pleasant rather than in an aggressive manner. The graphic quality and the interactivity, guaranteed by the new technologies, allow the new technologies to provide an immersion in the virtual reality, intensifying the public involvement with the instrument, and consequently, with the brand having the most seductive format. In the Olympikus case, the Super Vôlei Brasil is an ally in the search for attention and proximity of the brand with its public.

When the game is understood as a communications vehicle and an ally in Public Relations activities, it is possible to see its long-range potential, as well as the intense relationship, characteristics that converge with the idea of the union of massive and directed attributes present in virtual communication. The use of virtual means, in especial that of virtual games, for consolidation and assimilation of the new technologies is being adapted by a growing number of users and this confirms the necessity that the tool should be considered in Public Relations as an important asset in attaining their institutional and market objectives. This fact is confirmed by the numbers of the audiences achieved by the *Super Vôlei Brasil* – over 1.300.700 thousand games executed in a period of less than one year, and 97.7% of the players ´liked` or ´liked a lot´ the game.

Such results confirm games as important instruments of communication, observed both from the viewpoint of theoretical sustentation and of the good evaluation attributed by the users according to the research data. However, when their importance is compared to that of other communication vehicles, the game should be seen as a complement to the website and television, which, according to the research results, are the priority communication means. For this reason, the game should be considered as allied to the communication of the organization and its publics to complement the relationship and information whenever a more interactive and entertaining instrument becomes necessary.

With respect to the Olympikus brand, this is a concrete fact, because the Super Vôlei Brasil does not appear only as the vehicle from which the respondents got to know the brand for the first time, but also one by which they collaborated in the perception of its evolution, because

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the users expressed their admiration and satisfaction with Olympikus. The game is thus seen as a support and sustentation communication tool, because with it Olympikus improved its image with its public. In this sense, it can be said that virtual games play an important part as an instrument or tool of Public Relations in what concerns the process of construction of the brand image.

From the results of the research and the theoretical sustentation, it is clear that this tool has become consolidated as a part of the arsenal of Public Relations organizations. This fact is borne out by the growing number of brands owners that are investing in virtual games as instruments of relationship and positioning of the brand. Such is the case of Pepsi and Grendene, who, while this work was being developed, launched the virtual games PepsiFootvolley (http://www.pepsifootvolley2009.com) and the tennis game PapeTenis do Guga (http://www.papetenisdoguga.com.br) respectively - both with positioning strategies of the brand and the product. This proves the these important organizations are fully aware of the importance of establishing this type of relationship channel.

Turning to the impacts generated for the Olympikus brand name, the Super Vôlei Brasil produced favorable results in the strategies of Public Relations because the use of the game as a communication tool identified the class, the age and the education of the public in accordance with the focus of communication of the brand. On the gender aspect, the feminine public was less well represented, and this must be taken into future consideration in view of the fact that they represent more than 40% of the communication focus of the brand. From this study, however, we can see that the participation of females is increasing so that this situation may alter in the near future.

It could also be seen that the numbers attributed to the identification of Olympikus and its visibility in the game were positive. This data permits the conclusion that Olympikus conquered spaces and established favorable relationship with the game users. The brand was classified by the respondents as modern, innovative, creative and visionary – exactly the attributes that Olympikus emphasizes in its communication strategies. These facts lead us to affirm that proximity exists between the identity of the brand and the image, guaranteeing positive positioning in line with the strategies of the organization. It can be seen, therefore, that the choice of the instrument of Public Relations to be utilized for communication of the organization with its publics can influence the image of the institution in such a way as to strengthen its brand strategy.

Therefore, it can be seen that virtual and interactive tools, made possible by technological advances, should be considered as new opportunities of communication and relationship between the organization and its publics, helping to obtain improvements in the quality of the work of Public Relations for the construction of the brand. In today´s world, where society is constantly impacted by a plethora of information that results in dispersion of the individual´s attention, it becomes ever more necessary to reflect on the strategies of Public Relations and to ensure the constant actualization of the communication instruments and tools. In this way, the identification of communication channels capable of attaining the institutional and market participation objectives should always be tied to and based on the identification and understanding of the target-public, of the characteristics and objectives of the organization. The launching of the Super Vôlei Brasil under the Olympikus brand is a case of adjustment to organizational

necessities , and which guaranteed favorable results for the image of the brand in accordance with its target-public, identification and communication objectives.

Thus considered the research problem, new approaches to the theme for future studies materialize – such as ´´ The use of *advertainment* in virtual games´´ and ´´ Entertainment as a instrument of Public Relations`` - when it is observed that communication, via the entertainment provided by virtual games, is well accepted by the general public. They associate this initiative closely with pleasure, incorporating the tool in their daily routines and considering it neither opportunist nor invasive and hence it may be used for strategic purposes.

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Transparency and City Government Communications

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Abstract
This study advances the development of a transparency model for government communicators. Previous research conducted by Fairbanks et al. (2007) used in-depth interviews of federal public information officers to develop a three-dimensional model composed of "valuing transparency," "organizational support," "communication practices" and "provision of resources." This study develops a quantitative instrument to confirm the dimensions of the model and to predict which of the dimensions best predicts perceived governmental transparency at the city level.

A popular government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.

—James Madison

This famous quote from James Madison articulates the popular belief that a democracy can't survive without its citizens having access to information. In democracies, citizen trust in government is necessary for political leaders to make binding decisions and to commit resources to attain societal goals (Gamson, 1968). However, Americans are losing trust in the government. In the late 1950's and early 1960's, 75% of the American public believed that you could always or almost always trust the lawmakers and agencies in Washington to do what is right. According to the 10th edition of the Edelman Trust Barometer, this past year has been unlike any other. Only 30% of Americans trust the American Government to do what is right according to the 2009 Edleman Trust Barometer, down from 39% in 2008. The 2009 Edelman study also reports that in no country is government less trusted than in the United States.

Increasing transparency has been heralded by several authors as one way to increase trust (see Edelman Trust Barometer, 2007; Golin, 2004; Public Relations Coalition, 2003; Savage, 2005). In a study of employees, Rawlins (2008) found that as the perception of organizational transparency increased, so did trust in the organization. If transparency plays a major role in an organization's ability to obtain and maintain public trust, a profession that wants to be trusted by its publics needs to be transparent (Bunting, 2004).

Transparency in government operations is also getting increased scrutiny. Although a relatively new subfield of study in public affairs, academic books and articles are helping to build a body of knowledge that defines, prescribes, and measures governmental transparency (see Fairbanks, Plowman & Rawlins, 2007; Florini, 2007; Hood & Heald 2006; Piotrowski, 2007; Roberts, 2006). This article seeks to add to that body of knowledge by quantitatively testing a model of governmental transparency developed by Fairbanks et al. (2007). To test the concurrent and predictive validity of the instrument, the results will be analyzed against another quantitative transparency measure developed by Rawlins (2009). Finally, this paper will apply these transparency measures at the city government level, which has been researched less frequently than the state and national levels.

Literature Review

Purposeful and concise communication between government and its citizens is a moral obligation as well as a pragmatic practice that originates from the very principles of democracy (Viteritti, 1997).

Governmental transparency has been defined by Finel and Lord (1999) as the following:

Transparency comprises the legal, political, and institutional structures that make

information about the internal characteristics of a government and society available to actors both inside and outside the domestic political system. Transparency is increased by any mechanism that leads to the public disclosure of information, whether a free press, open government, hearings, or the existence of nongovernmental organizations with an incentive to release objective information about the government. (p. 316)

According to Piotrowski (2007), "Governmental transparency allows the public to develop a more accurate picture of what is happening inside a government" (p. 6). This allows publics to evaluate the performance of governmental agencies, hold them accountable, and answer concerns pertaining to management of public resources. Since people are affected by decisions made by governmental bodies, they have a right to know how the decisions were made. Balkin (1999) identified three primary purposes for transparency: providing essential information to publics, increasing public participation, and holding organizations accountable. These three purposes are reflected in Cotterrell's (1999) definition of transparency: "transparency is the availability of information on matters of public concern, the ability of citizens to participate in political decision, and the accountability of government to public opinion or legal processes" (p. 414).

Rawlins (2009) developed a measurement tool that allows stakeholders to evaluate the transparency of an organization. A factor analysis of the questions used in the instruments resulted in a four-dimensional model of transparency that is remarkably similar to previous definitions. The four dimensions were *participation*, *substantial information*, *accountability*, and *secrecy* (a reverse item construct that represents the opposite of openness).

The responsibility for sharing information that allows for more transparent governance falls squarely on the shoulders of public affairs, public information, and communications officials in governmental agencies. These communicators can be found in all governmental organizations at the national, state, and local levels. They have the obligation to keep publics informed, increase awareness of public policies and how they were created, facilitate feedback and two-way communication with publics, and use that information to improve agency performance and accountability (Avery et al. 1995; Garnett, 1997).

J. Arthur Heise (1985) proposed a model for public communication to help government communicate more effectively with the many publics it serves. The model consists of five tenets. First, government officials needed to make publicly available all releasable information, whether it sheds a positive or negative light on the organization. This dissemination needs to be timely and completely accurate. Second, government officials need to communicate with their publics through the mass media and other channels to reach publics. Third, rather than continue to rely on a small group of politically active organizations and individuals for partial and biased feedback, government communicators need to develop better channels to gather perspectives and feedback from all of its constituent groups. Fourth, senior public officials should legitimately employ public resources and communication channels for the purpose of policy making, without bias toward electoral politics. Fifth, the implementation of the public communication approach needs to be the responsibility of top administrators who hold ommunicators responsible for the implementation of the agency's communications policy.

While developing a transparency model for government communications, Fairbanks et al.

(2007) interviewed several federal government communicators and found that the majority recognized the need for and benefits of transparency and believed that it is essential to a functioning democracy. Although many government communicators valued transparency, the model posits that there were other factors that influence the practice, namely the *communication practices* of the agency, the *organizational support* for transparency, and whether there are *adequate resources*. Many communicators expressed concern about how to determine how much information to release. There was a fear of releasing too much information and that it was often safer to be more conservative with messages, unless there was strong organizational support for transparency. At the same time, transparency requires significant resources. Upkeep of Web pages, responding to requests, and working with media requires additional time, personnel and money.

There is very little research on transparency at the city or municipal level. One exception, a study by Piotrowski and Van Ryzin (2007), found that citizens expect local governments to be transparent about their finances (budgets, bids, contracts, campaigns), public safety (crimes, health inspections, sex offenders), principles (knowing what the government is doing, public records and documents) and governance (open and not secretive, fighting corruption).

Research Questions

The existing literature on government transparency provides a robust definition that includes sharing substantial and useful information, citizen involvement, being accountable, and open to public scrutiny. Citizens expect their governments to be transparent about fiscal, safety, and policy issues that affect them. Government communicators value transparency, but their practice is affected by perceived organizational support, availability of communication tools, and provisions of resources.

The Fairbanks et al. (2007) model provides a good framework to evaluate government transparency efforts. However, it was developed after exploratory research using qualitative interviews. The model hasn't been tested with a quantitative method to confirm the impact of these dimensions on a larger, more representative, sample. This study created such an instrument and tested its concurrent validity with the dimensions of the Rawlins (2009) stakeholder measurement tool. To that end, the following four research questions and one hypothesis hope to be answered:

RQ1: *Can the three-dimensional model be tested quantitatively?*

RQ2: *How do city communicators evaluate themselves on each of the four parts of the three- dimensional model for transparency in Government communication? Part 1: Valuing Transparency Part 2: Organizational Support Part 3: Communication Practices Part 4: Provision of Resources*

RQ3: *How do city communicators evaluate their cities' transparency efforts according to Rawlins test for transparency?*

RQ4: *Which of the four parts of the three-dimensional model best predicts the overall score for transparency?*

H1: *The higher cities scores on the overall three-dimensional model for transparency section of the survey, the higher they will score on Rawlins' test for transparency.*

Methodology

An invitation to complete an online survey was emailed to the public information officers of the largest cities in the United States. Surveys have become a very widely used and acknowledged tool in the research world, and are considered to be one of the best and most accurate methods of research for determining information about populations (Rea & Parker, 1997). According to the 2000 US Census, there are 601 American cities with a population of 50,000 or more. The addresses were compiled from city websites and phone calls to city offices. Online research of city Websites and telephone calls to city offices was used to get accurate email addresses for communications officers in each city, and the email invitation was sent to all 601 cities. Each city had a different name for its Public Information Officer, so the survey was sent to the individual in each city office who oversees communications, public relations, public affairs, and/or media relations for the city and/ or the Mayor's office. For the remainder of the study, this individual will be referred to as the Public Information Officer.

Figure 1

Population Size	Count
50,000-90,000	114
90,000-130,000	66
130,000-170,000	23
170,000-250,000	17
250,000+	27
Total	247

The online survey was designed using Qualtrics, a Web-based survey software. The survey was composed of demographic and descriptive questions pertaining to the communicator and the city. To test the four parts of the Fairbanks et al. (2007) model, 21 statements were created (6 for value transparency, 4 for communication practices, 6 for organizational support and 3 for provision of resources) with 7-point Likert-type responses from Very Strongly Disagree to Very Strongly Agree (see Figure 2 for list of statements). The Rawlins (2009) transparency efforts survey was reduced to from 36 questions to 10 questions using statements that scored the strongest in each of the four dimensions (see Figure 3). Additionally, the Rawlins test was modified to fit the participants of this study. Since the Rawlins test was developed to measure transparency of organizations by employees, the questions were modified to allow the public affairs officers to evaluate their cities' efforts from an administrator's point of view.

After several follow-up emails and phone calls, 295 participants completed the survey. Fifty-three individuals specifically opted out of taking the survey (8.8%). The survey did not require every question to be answered, and therefore, the total number of answers for each question varied. Of the 295 respondents, 247 completed the survey. The 247 completed surveys represent a 41% response rate, which is very respectable considering the population (government communication professionals).

As previously stated, all participants came from cities with a population of 50,000 or more. The graph below shows the populations of those that completed the survey.

A large majority of the public information officers (73 percent) reported directly to the mayor or city manager. Of the cities that had a public television station (n=198, 75 percent),

nearly all of them broadcast city meetings (n=178, 90 percent). Nearly 97 percent of the cities had a city Website that allowed citizens to reach city officials electronically to ask questions and provide feedback.

Results

RQ1: *Can the three-dimensional model be tested quantitatively?*

One of the main purposes of the study was to determine if the three-dimensional model can be quantitatively tested by operationalizing the constructs. To answer this question, the statements created to measure the four parts of the Fairbanks three-dimensional model were tested for internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha. The closer Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.0 the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale. Churchill (1979) recommended that minimum reliabilities should be .6, which all but one exceed, and the other construct comes as close as possible. The reliability of the constructs were not improved by removing items, therefore the full set of items were used for subsequent analysis. Alphas for each of the constructs were the following: the six statements pertaining to how much the communicator values transparency had an alpha of .76; the four statements on communication practices had an alpha of .59; the six statements pertaining to organizational support had an alpha of .67; and the three statements on provision of resources had an alpha of .76. The alpha for the section that measures transparency from Rawlins' test was .85. This stronger alpha is expected since that test was previously tested for validity and reliability.

It is recognized that two of the four scores for the parts of the three-dimensional model are below a .70. The Cronbach's alpha scores are sufficient for an exploratory study but it is recognized that certain items within the survey could be improved for future studies. Overall, this result provides evidence that the three-dimensional model for transparency can be tested quantitatively.

RQ2: *How do city communicators evaluate themselves on each of the four parts of the three-dimensional model for transparency in Government communication? Part 1: Valuing Transparency Part 2: Organizational Support Part 3: Communication Practices Part 4: Provision of Resources*

As Figure 2 indicates, the city public information officers strongly agreed with the statements that assessed their value of transparency.   They also evaluated themselves highly on their communication practices that would lead to transparency. The weakest agreement in this construct pertained to effective policy or protocols for disseminating information. This might suggest that there is still some uncertainty about what information should be released. For the most part, the communicators felt the organization acted in ways that support the principle of transparency. However, there seems to be a lesser sense of support from particular individuals and the dominant coalition. Respondents were less sure about city employees' commitment to transparency, and some still were struggling to gain influence at the top management level.

Not surprisingly, the statements with the lowest agreement related to the provision of resources. About half of the respondents did not feel there was sufficient budget and personnel to practice optimal transparency.

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Figure 2: Responses to statements representing the four parts of the Fairbanks Three-Dimensional Model

Value Construct Alpha=.76

Statement	No. of Respondents	Percentage Agree	Mean
Transparency (openness) in government is a vital part of a successful democracy	246	98.4	6.63
Transparency (openness) in government is a vital part of a successful democracy	246	99.2	6.65
I regularly try and help others within the organization understand the importance of transparency	245	94.7	6.34
Transparency and openness is always the best policy with the citizens of my city	245	97.6	6.37
The city government is transparent and open with its citizens	245	96.4	6.13
The City management/leadership values transparency	244	95.5	6.18

Communication Construct Alpha=.59

I do my best to regularly inform the public of important city matters	245	99.6	6.62
I regularly consent to requests for interviews and questions from the news media	245	91.9	6.44
There is an effective policy/protocol to follow within the city structure to disseminate information to the public	245	87.8	5.78
I regularly send news and city information (i.e. press releases) to local media outlets	245	96.0	6.52

Support Construct Alpha=.67

The mayor/or city executive regularly consents to requests for interviews and questions from the news media	244	95.3	6.38
The city provides information to its citizens in a way that is readily and easily available	245	97.6	6.27
The city regularly holds meetings where the public is invited to participate and give feedback and suggestions	245	95.5	6.39
The general feeling and attitude among the city employees is one of openness and trust	244	76.2	5.25
I have a respected place at the management table or a place in decision making	244	85.6	5.74

Generally speaking this city wants to know how its decisions are affecting its citizens	242	94.7	6.13
Resources Construct Alpha=.76			
The city website is user friendly and easy to navigate	245	82.5	5.47
There is adequate staff allocated to communication practices to ensure transparency	243	53.0	4.19
There is sufficient funding allocated to communications and transparency in the city budget	244	47.5	4.04

RQ3: How do city communicators evaluate their cities' transparency efforts according to Rawlins test for transparency?

Ten questions were used from the Rawlins (2009) test for transparency efforts. The first two questions measured citizen participation, questions 4, 5 and 8 measured sharing useful information, questions 3, 7 and 9 measured accountability, and questions 6 and 10 measured the reversed factor of secrecy. Since the secrecy questions were reversed items (meaning a negative response to these statements was a positive evaluation of transparency), the scores were inverted to work with the means of the other statements. Overall, the public information officers scored their cities with a mean of 5.64 on the 7-point transparency test. The most positive evaluation they gave was of the cities' efforts to communicate useful information. They were less likely to evaluate the citizen participation factor as high, and two statements regarding accountability (3 and 9) were among the lowest means on the scale.

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Figure 3: Rawlins Transparency Test

Statement	No. of Respondents	Percentage Agree	Mean
The city government takes the time with its citizens to understand who they are and what they need	242	80.6	5.31
The city government involves its citizens to help them identify the information they need	242	79.8	5.36
The city government presents more than one side of controversial issues	242	69.4	5.13
The city government provides information that is relevant to its citizens	241	94.6	6.05
The city government provides information that is easy for the citizens to understand	242	94.7	5.85
The city provides only part of the story to its citizens	242	10	2.55
The city is open to criticism by its citizens	242	93.1	5.75
The city provides accurate information to its citizens	241	98.4	6.43
The city freely admits when it has made mistakes	243	81.9	5.55
The city only discloses information when it is required	242	11.2	2.45

RQ4: *Which of the four parts of the three dimensional model best predicts the overall score for transparency?*

A step-wise multiple regression was conducted to answer this research question. The dependent variable was the overall score of the 10 questions used for the Rawlins test for transparency efforts. The scores of the four constructs that measured the Fairbanks three-dimensional model were entered as the independent variables. The step-wise regression analysis built three models. The third model was the strongest, and it consisted of three of the four parts of the three-dimensional model. The final model excluded the construct that measured valuing transparency, because it did not make a significant contribution to predicting the change in variance of the dependent variable. The adjusted R^2 was .565, which means that 56.5 percent of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the model. The ANOVA found the results statistically significant, $F(3, 219)=97.2, p<.001$.

Figure 4 shows that the strongest predictor of the overall transparency score is organizational support ($B=.58$), followed by provision of resources ($B=.20$), and communication practices ($B=.10$). Valuing transparency has no significant effect on the overall score for transparency.

Figure 4: Regression Analysis of Fairbanks Model Predicting Overall Transparency

Variable	B	SEB	B
Organizational Support	1.152	0.112 *	0.576
Provision of Resources	0.386	0.097 *	0.204
Communication Practices	0.349	0.16 *	0.102

F(3, 219)=97.2, p<.000
*Significant at *p*<.001

H1*: The higher the city scores on the overall three-dimensional model for transparency score, the higher they will score on Rawlins' test for transparency*.

To test this hypothesis, a simple bivariate regression test was run. The test found that there is a positive relationship between the overall score on the three-dimensional model and the overall score for transparency. The regression test was conducted to investigate how well the overall score of three-dimensional model would predict overall transparency. The results were statistically significant   *F*(1, 221)=219.3, *p*<.001. The adjusted R² value was .496, indicating that nearly 50% of the variance in overall transparency scores can be explained by the overall score on the three-dimensional model section of the survey. This hypothesis was supported.

Discussion

Much of what Fairbanks et al. (2007) found through qualitative in-depth interviews was supported by the quantitative survey method used in this study. The results of this study provide confirmatory evidence that the factors identified in the three dimensional model also affect government communicators' perceptions of municipal-level transparency.   The study also moves a step closer to developing a quantitative instrument that can measure the four parts of the three dimensional model. Such an instrument will allow for comparative studies of different groups, levels, or agencies for future research.

The study also provides evidence that public information officers experience many of the same situations as their federal counterparts. Much like the findings in Fairbanks et al. (2007), this study found that city government communicators strongly value transparency and recognize its benefits.

However, this study goes one step further by identifying that valuing transparency has very little effect on predicting whether an organization is going to be perceived as being transparent. This may be explained by the possibility that valuing transparency is a constant rather than a variable. Everyone ranks the need for transparency highly, therefore this dimension doesn't discriminate different levels of support.

The regression analysis found organizational support as the strongest coefficient for predicting perceived transparency by city government communicators. Fairbanks et al. (2007) described organizational support as administration understanding the importance of transparency and making sure that is communicated to all staff. Organizational support also means that the communicator has a place at the management and decision-making table. It also means that the communicator has the ability to communicate within the office, and with the rest of the staff so

that their objectives can be realized. This means that if the communicator has strong convictions concerning transparency, but doesn't have the organizational support, he or she will not likely consider the organization to be transparent.

Although having sufficient resources to practice transparency wasn't as strong a predictor of perceptions of organizational transparency, it appeared to be the biggest obstacle. This was the area where participants were least satisfied. This was true with responses to the Likert scale question, but also became very apparent in the responses to the survey's only open-ended question. The final question in the survey allowed respondents to comment on their situation. Sixty-five participants opted to leave a comment, and the majority addressed the need for more resources. Here is a sample of their remarks:

- "Unfortunately, during these difficult budget times, governments are no different than their counterparts in the private sector cutting into communications and outreach budgets when those services are most needed and our customers need to be informed more than ever."
- "I think we do an excellent job of keeping our city transparent with the staff and funding we have but I would still say we are underfunded and staffed. The reason these questions are hard is because communications are a bit of a black hole in that you could always use more funding and staff; there is always something more that could be done, or what you do could be done better."
- "Our website is our weakness in regards to external communications. The problem is due to lack of staffing, not lack of ability."

Conclusion and Further Research

Ultimately, this study sought to determine if a city government adhered to the guidelines established in the three-dimensional model of government communication that their level or degree of transparency would increase. The study found that there is a strong positive association between perceived transparency and adhering to the three-dimensional model, with particular emphasis on organizational support and sufficient resources.   The study therefore provides evidence that adhering to the tenets of the three-dimensional model will help increase perceptions of a more transparent city government.

This study confirmed what previous research has determined: government communicators value transparency, and they recognize its importance in government communications and in society today. However, they face many challenges. It is these challenges that create an even greater need for more focus on research pertaining to government communications. This area of research has been greatly neglected in the past and more research is needed. The three-dimensional model for government communications (Fairbanks et al., 2007) presents a start, but there must be more. Government communicators need models and theories with which to work. This study took a previously created model that was designed through qualitative research by studying federal government communicators, and it applied the model to city government communicators to ascertain if the model could be applied at different levels of government than the original study.

The possibilities for future research are many; there is still relatively little research done on government communications, specifically state and local government communications. Those surveyed in this study were quick to share challenges and frustrations, while recognizing the

importance of transparency. Future studies could continue to address the challenges that limit effective government communications. The Fairbanks et al. (2007) study looked at federal agencies and this study explored the issue of transparency with city communicators. The state-level government entities should also be studied.   The quantitative instrument developed in this study would also allow for comparative studies between these levels, different agencies, and different communicator roles.

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Ethics and the Government Response to the Deepwater Horizon Disaster

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Abstract

This paper examines the ethical implications of government communication during the response to the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster. The authors employed an ethical framework specific to disaster response to examine 178 news releases that were issued by the joint information center (JIC) from April 21, 2010, the day after the explosion, to July 16, 2010, the day after the oil well was officially "killed."

On April 20, 2010, a man-made disaster struck in the Gulf of Mexico that would leave its mark on both human and marine life for years to come. The Deepwater Horizon, an offshore oil rig owned by British Petroleum (BP) and under contract by Halliburton and Transocean, exploded, killing 11 crew members and releasing millions of barrels of oil into the Gulf. Ultimately, an investigation found that BP and its contractors were responsible for sacrificing safety for profits in their operation of the drilling platform. In addition, the federal agency that regulated offshore drilling, the Minerals Management Service, also was blamed for not enforcing safety and operational standards (Broder, 2010).

This study explores the U.S. government's communication during the response to this fatal disaster from an ethics perspective. The government's response to the Deepwater Horizon explosion required the implementation of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), which was mandated by the federal government in 2003 as a management structure for federal agencies during all phases of disaster: preparation, mitigation, response, and recovery. NIMS follows an all-hazards approach, meaning this structure must be activated for all possible domestic events with a potentially negative impact including natural and man-made disasters (*National Incident Management System,* 2008).

Of particular relevance to this paper is NIMS protocol for public information. All governmental, nongovernmental, and private organizations involved in a disaster response must coordinate all activity through the incident command system with the goal of having a single, accurate, and consistent voice. Therefore, all news releases, spokespersons, press conferences, and media interviews would be managed through one entity, the joint information center (JIC), which answers directly to the incident commander (*National Incident Management System,* 2008). The Deepwater Horizon Incident Joint Information Center managed collection and dissemination of all official information related to this incident and reported to the unified area command that was implemented specifically for this response (*About Restore the Gulf,* 2010).

Because the NIMS and JIC procedures are now established practices in U.S. emergency management, it is essential to evaluate the communication that results from this organizational structure. This paper explores the use of the joint information center that was implemented in response to Deepwater Horizon and examines ethical implications that emerged from the JIC's public information efforts. Specifically, the authors conducted a qualitative content analysis of 178 news releases that were issued by the JIC between April 21, 2010, the day after the explosion, and July 16, 2010, the day after the well was sealed.

The Role of Government in Crisis Communication

The primary objective of government communication is to inform citizens, especially in times of crisis or life and death situations (Garnett, 1992). Crisis communication can be defined from two perspectives depending on the nature of the organization's involvement in the event. When an organization is central to the crisis, communication may be focused on reputational issues as well as informing stakeholders about the event. However, when an organization is not involved in the crisis, but is working to resolve the crisis, and is not as concerned with public image, the organization focuses on delivering accurate information to all stakeholders (Reynolds, 2002). We define a disaster according to current U.S. policy for emergency management: A disaster can be real or a threat; it can be caused deliberately, by accident, or by nature; it is bound

by time and place; it harms a larger society or a smaller community; it disrupts daily life on a grand scale and damages essential public infrastructure; and it requires a response by a federal, state, or local governmental entity, among other actors (Fischer, 2008).

Disaster communication, therefore, falls into the second category of crisis communication types in which the emergency response organizations are tasked with delivering information that can help the public make informed decisions regarding safety and welfare. Reputation management would take second place to the government's public information efforts. This focus on the public good distinguishes government's goals from those of corporate communication, where the goals are principally reputational and financial (Horsley & Barker, 2002; Liu, Horsley, & Levenshus, 2010). However, effective communication that serves the public good can provide a secondary benefit for an organization's reputation. For example, constant contact with the media during a disaster can generate more control over the accuracy of the information while presenting a positive image of the organization (Hughes & White, 2006).

Greater cooperation between media and disaster response organizations can result in a more effective and ethical disaster response. It also can prevent the spread of rumors and incorrect information that may hamper a community's ability to respond to and recover from a disaster. This cooperation must begin internally, however, as the communicators must have access to accurate, timely information and the authority to release it to the media and the broader public (Fischer III, 2008). Leaders and spokespeople from response agencies need to have an understanding of how the media operate well before a disaster strikes. Developing a relationship with reporters, editors and news managers during routine times can pay dividends in a crisis situation (McEntire, 2007; Scanlon, 2007).

Communicators must balance public information with statements that may appear to be self-serving because government communication that is intended to build image rather than provide factual and accurate information may be considered unethical under certain conditions (Graber, 2003). While the prevailing literature suggests that government communication has the ultimate goal of serving the public good, a study of Israeli emergency communication suggested that influences from a western philosophy of public relations caused spokespersons to focus more on promoting their organizations than on communicating vital public information. The study interviewed public information personnel from seven emergency management organizations, reporters who cover these organizations, and former emergency management personnel. Not only did the author find that ethics were lacking in terms of serving the public interest, but he also found discrepancies among the various government organizations in their priorities for communication (Reich, 2009).

Public Affairs Protocol in U.S. Disaster Management

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) is administered by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to provide a single, consistent management structure for an emergency response. The events of September 11, 2001, sparked the presidential declaration to establish an improved emergency response system in 2003, and NIMS was revised following the 2005 response to Hurricane Katrina. Because a universal strategy is necessary for all levels of government to work effectively together during a disaster response, NIMS compliance is mandated at the federal level and is a prerequisite for federal preparedness funding at the state, tribal, and local levels of government. Nongovernmental organizations and private industry are

encouraged to learn the NIMS protocol in the event that they become involved in a disaster response. The basic premise of NIMS is that it can be adapted to any type of human-caused or natural disaster of any size. NIMS provides guidelines for all organizational areas involved in a disaster response, including public information (*National Incident Management System,* 2008).

The public information component "consists of the processes, procedures, and systems to communicate timely, accurate, and accessible information on the incident's cause, size, and current situation to the public, responders, and additional stakeholders (both directly affected and indirectly affected)" (*National Incident Management System,* 2008, p. 70). The PIO and public affairs support guidelines, however, do not mention ethics specifically or offer guidance on ethical decision making while performing the public information role. The guidance does, however, recommend that communications be accurate and timely while providing vital information about health and safety concerns to various stakeholders, including special needs populations (*Basic guidance,* 2007; *Public affairs support,* 2008).

All government agencies that respond to a disaster must join the joint information center (JIC) to coordinate the gathering, production, and dissemination of all public communication. The public information officer (PIO) is a member of the incident command management team and follows the protocol outlined in the joint information system (JIS) to organize all public information activities (*National Incident Management System,* 2008). This system was used in the response to the Deepwater Horizon disaster, and the JIC was staffed with communicators from dozens of federal, state, local, voluntary, and private agencies (*News,* 2010).

The advantages of having an adaptable, organized, interagency system of communication have been widely acknowledged, primarily for enabling fast, accurate, and consistent information to both internal and external audiences (Haddow & Haddow, 2009; McEntire, 2007; Politano, 2009). In fact, one of the findings from an investigation of the response to the Pentagon attack on Sept. 11, 2001, was that the *absence* of a JIC hindered the ability of authorities to communicate critical information in a timely manner. However, critics have argued that the culture of the Department of Homeland Security resists open communication with the public and must be changed before the joint information system protocol can be effective. There also are inconsistencies in withholding of information because of criminal or terrorism investigations, and agencies are slow to develop communication strategies for new threats to national security (Haddow & Haddow, 2009). McEntire (2007) observed that NIMS is designed more for responses to terrorism than accidents or disasters, that it does not address the importance of the prevention phase of emergency management, and that the protocol is too rigid.

To address the ethical implications of JIC communications during the Deepwater Horizon disaster, we ask:

RQ1: What are the ethical responsibilities of government communicators in a disaster?
RQ2: Did the government meet these ethical communication responsibilities in the Deepwater Horizon disaster?
RQ3: Was the implied primary goal of the government's communication efforts to protect its reputation or to serve the public good?
RQ4: Did the JIC protocols enable ethical communication in the Deepwater Horizon disaster?

Method

The authors examined 178 news releases issued from April 21, 2010, the day after the explosion, to July 16, 2010, the day after the oil well was officially "killed." News releases that consisted of only a photo and caption or were later updated or corrected were omitted from the final sample. The news releases were obtained from RestoreTheGulf.gov, a web portal developed specifically for this disaster response operation and maintained by members of the JIC (About Restore the Gulf, 2010). Both authors coded the sample, repeating analysis of the texts until the emerging themes achieved data saturation (Creswell, 2007).

To answer RQ1, the authors created an ethical framework appropriate for analysis of government disaster communication by reviewing relevant ethical theories, literature and codes of ethics. To answer RQ2, the authors used qualitative thematic analysis of the 178 news releases to find manifest and latent evidence of ethical communication and applied the ethical framework from RQ1. To answer RQ3 and RQ4, the authors used the thematic analysis to determine if the news releases, as a whole, supported objectives related to image and reputation or the public good, and if the efforts of the JIC enabled ethical communication practices.

Findings

Our first research question concerned the ethical responsibilities of government communicators in a disaster situation. Many theories and codes of ethics offer relevant concepts and tenets that could provide guidance to communicators in a disaster as well as in evaluation of communication efforts, but a formalized code of ethics specific to crisis or disaster communication does not exist. Through qualitative analysis of related literature, the researchers identified three concepts that could provide ethical guidance for government communication in a disaster: *accountability, reciprocity* and *social responsibility*. These concepts were synthesized into an ethical framework that could be applied not only to the situation for analysis, but future government disaster communication activities as well.

Social Responsibility. A duty to social responsibility, or serving the public good, is represented in professional codes of ethics, ethical theory and models, and as prescribed by experts as best ethical practices in public relations. The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Code of Ethics addresses the importance of social responsibility in an ethical practice: "The level of public trust PRSA members seek, as we serve the public good, means we have taken on a special obligation to operate ethically" (*Code of Ethics*, 2000, para. 2). The code also refers to the societal role of PR in providing facts and "a voice in the marketplace of ideas," and contributing to "informed public debate" (*Code of Ethics*, 2000, para. 7).

While the PRSA code emphasizes the importance of social responsibility for all PR practitioners, the National Association of Government Communicators (NAGC) focuses on the ethical obligations of government communicators who can expect to be held to a higher standard of social responsibility because "providing public information is an essential civil service" and that "the public-at-large and each citizen therein has a right to equal, full, understandable, and timely facts about their government" (*Code of Ethics*, 2011, para.2).

The NAGC code advises government communicators to "conduct their professional lives in accord with the public interest" and protect the public's right to know "how interested citizens can participate" (*Code of Ethics*, 2011, para. 8). The code supports the participation of an informed citizenry, which is essential to core principles of a democracy. A code of ethics for

disaster management, although not specific to communication, was offered by Zack (2009) that echoes the priority of social responsibility addressed in public relations codes. Zack stressed the moral obligation of government to prepare for and respond when disasters strike. Disaster response should be fair, the safety of the public should come first, disaster victims' needs must be met, and human dignity should not be ignored. Other theoretical models encourage social responsibility as an ethical duty rather than a path to effective results. Baker and Martinson's (2001) TARES test includes "(S) Social responsibility for the public good" as a principle of ethical persuasion. "The welfare of all citizens, rather than that of factions or special interests, should be served impartially" (Baker and Martinson, 2001, p.169). As serving the public good is the primary directive of all government activities, social responsibility should be the highest priority of government communicators, above self-interest or image objectives. In a crisis or disaster situation, social responsibility in communication can have a significant impact on public safety and security issues (Zack, 2009).

Accountability. To be accountable, an organization must take responsibility for its actions, be forthcoming and transparent about its purpose and objectives, and report openly and accurately to stakeholders. Both the NAGC and PRSA codes of ethics place emphasis on communicating with truthfulness, accuracy, and transparency. The NAGC code of ethics stresses "accountability to the public" (*Code of Ethics*, 2011, para. 3) for government communicators and that "the public-at-large and each citizen therein has a right to equal, full, understandable, and timely facts about their government." The PRSA code advises practitioners that the "free flow of accurate and truthful information is essential to serving the public interest and contributing to informed decision making in a democratic society" (*Code of Ethics*, 2000, para. 13) and that independent practitioners "are accountable for [their] actions" (para. 10).

In a crisis situation, the need for accountability is important to an organization's credibility, as well as public safety and security. To repair credibility and regain public trust in a crisis, Fitzpatrick and Rubin (1995) advised organizations to "be candid" and "voluntarily admit that a problem exists, [and] if true then announce and implement corrective measures as quickly as possible" (p.21). For public organizations to manage public safety and security issues, Graber (2003) advised the goals of public relations should be dissemination of timely and complete information that preempts the spread of misinformation in an otherwise void.

Reciprocity. Reciprocity, or a mutual exchange, can encourage a mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and its publics. Public relations theories of two-way symmetric communication (Grunig and Hunt, 1984) and dialogic theory (Kent and Taylor, 2008) stress the importance of equitable communication in effective and ethical public relations. A dialogue, according to Kent and Taylor can "change the nature of an organization-public relationship by placing emphasis on the relationship," which in turn creates opportunities for ethical and respectful behavior (Kent and Taylor, 2008, p. 24).

The NAGC encourages reciprocity by advising practitioners to enhance and facilitate the relationship between the public and government, and expects government communicators to serve as "steward[s] of the public's trust" (*Code of Ethics*, 2011, para. 4). According to Kelly (1998, 2001), reciprocity is a component of stewardship that is applied through acknowledgement, appreciation, and respect for publics and stakeholders. Reciprocity can help organization-publics achieve balance in their relationships.

Reciprocity is not optional for government communicators who are obligated to provide opportunities for the participation of an active and informed public in a democracy. In a crisis, government communicators need to acknowledge and respond to public input and requests for information while facilitating public involvement in dealing with the crisis. Zack (2009) included ethical responsibilities of the public, stating individuals must also be accountable for disaster preparedness and response and have a duty to help others, and pointed out that disaster responses require the cooperation of responding organizations as well as the public they serve.

Our second research question asked whether the government met ethical communication responsibilities in the Deepwater Horizon disaster as outlined in our framework of social responsibility, accountability, and reciprocity. *Social responsibility* appeared in efforts to protect the public from the effects of this disaster. In addition to the local community and stakeholders who were directly affected, such as the Gulf fishing industry, communication efforts indicated the far reach of the spill. The government positioned itself as a protector of the environment and the nation as a whole. Releases that discussed the possible landing of oil on Florida shores, the effect on migrating birds from South America, and the impact on the seafood industry nationwide charged government agencies with the responsibility of protecting the public at large. The agencies emphasized "the importance of continued vigilance and interagency coordination" (*UPDATE 11- controlled burn scheduled to begin,* 2010). Environmental concerns of air quality and wildlife health and safety, including one release that reported the rescue of the first oiled bird and thoroughly detailed the medical treatment plan for oil-soaked fowl, also provided an opportunity to show how the government agencies were working to protect shared resources. Individual social responsibility was also a recurring theme. Opportunities for volunteering, applications for contracting a vessel of opportunity, and guidelines for avoiding additional harm to injured wildlife by the public were common topics of news releases. Repeatedly, instructions for obtaining more information or involvement were provided and encouraged.

Although some statements showed the government's perception of *accountability* as the direct efforts of the Coast Guard, the Environmental Protection Agency, and other agencies, many suggested that the government's primary responsibility was holding BP accountable for the recovery efforts. However, the first release after the spill appears to have originated from BP public relations, as it contains BP contact information and limits BP's role in the spill: "BP today offered its full support to drilling contractor Transocean Ltd. and its employees after fire caused Transocean's semisubmersible drilling rig Deepwater Horizon to be evacuated overnight, saying it stood ready to assist in any way in responding to the incident" (*BP offers full support to Transocean after drilling rig fire,* 2010). This news release is different in tone and structure from all others. After the initial news release, BP is consistently referred to as "the responsible party." One news release includes two uses of this phrase: "in collaboration with BP, the responsible party, [we] are working round the clock to determine options to contain and secure the spill," and "BP, the responsible party, is required to fund the cost of the response and cleanup operations" (*UPDATE 7: Unified command continues to respond to Deepwater Horizon,* 2010).

Officials and communicators were successful at conveying *reciprocity* through acknowledgement of public engagement and non-government community efforts, as well as statements that directly invited public questions and concerns. Community members were portrayed as a valuable resource and as experts. A report of a visit to the site by officials from the EPA and Homeland Security emphasized that the officials were "here to address community

members --the people who know these waters and wetlands best" (*EPA establishes web site on deepwater horizon oil spill,* 2010). Reports of cooperation between government and community also demonstrated the acknowledgement of the importance of public participation in the restoration efforts: "The Secretary of Defense is authorizing under title 32 the mobilization of the Louisiana National Guard to help in the ongoing efforts to assist local communities in the cleanup and removal of oil and to protect critical habitats from contamination" (*Statement on national guard mobilization,* 2010). In this and other references to cooperative efforts, the government efforts and personnel were positioned as support for local efforts, rather than an authoritative role. Quotes from administrators praised "the hard work and outpouring of support from the local community and around the country. The people of the Gulf Coast -- even at a time of considerable anxiety and anger -- have stepped up to assist the response and lift each other up" (*Administrator Jackson wraps up tour of areas potentially impacted by BP spill,* 2010).

The statements offered numerous ways for the public to get more information. However, many of the communication channels that were offered were primarily one-way: hotlines with recorded messages, text or Twitter alerts, websites, and NOAA weather radio announcements. One-way communication limited the public's ability to reciprocate in the disaster response.

Our third research question concerned the goal of the government's communication efforts: maintaining or repairing reputation versus serving the public good. While there were some statements that promoted the image of the responding federal agencies, the majority of the statements demonstrated the government's accountability in the recovery efforts and its responsibility to protect the environment, coastal species, and humans who may be harmed physically or materially by the spill.

The news releases put the government in a good light by repeatedly stating that incident command was supervising BP's efforts and was holding the company responsible. BP's culpability is juxtaposed with the government's role of champion of the Gulf Coast. Some of the releases expand upon this relationship with BP using metaphors of war, such as this one quoting Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar:

'…we have mobilized an army of national park rangers, wildlife managers, scientists, and natural resource professionals that is working non-stop to keep oil off the shores and to fix the damage that BP's spill is causing.…We will continue to defend America's national parks and wildlife refuges….We are waging an all-out campaign to save the Gulf Coast….' (*Salazar visits Gulf Islands National Seashore as Interior continues fight to protect Gulf Coast national parks, wildlife refuges,* 2010)

The war metaphors were also combined with National Incident Commander Admiral Thad Allen's heroic language depicting the government's role in the cleanup efforts: "'We will continue to fight oil…. We will not rest until BP's well has stopped leaking, the oil is cleaned up, and our communities are made whole'" (*Admiral Allen highlights fivefold increase in skimmers since early June,* 2010). The news releases made it clear that the government was in charge of the response efforts, and that BP was answering to the incident command.

Aside from the few remarks that built up the federal government's image in this disaster, the majority of the news releases provided factual information about the cleanup efforts and assurances that the incident command was working in the best interests of the public, the environment, and the fish and wildlife. A recurring theme was that BP was going to pay for the damages. The toll-free BP number was mentioned several times for individuals who needed to

file a claim for personal or business losses. Each news release announcing billing to and payments received from BP also made it clear that the government was being reimbursed for its role in the cleanup and recovery. The government had complete oversight of the financial costs of this disaster: "The United States Coast Guard is responsible for administering the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund to ensure that individuals and communities harmed by oil spills are made whole and that the costs of response and cleanup are borne by the responsible parties" (*Administration sends third bill to BP,* 2010).

Closings of fishing areas and increased seafood inspections were framed in the context of making seafood safe for human consumption, therefore balancing food safety with loss of production – and income. Water and air quality tests were conducted to "ensure the health and safety of Gulf Coast residents and oil spill responders" (*National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration deploys additional high powered research aircraft to Gulf to help monitor air quality,* 2010). Partnerships with other government agencies and research scientists were hailed as "ways to bring the absolute best science to inform the response and recovery efforts" (*Initial observations from the NOAA ship Thomas Jefferson,* 2010). The safety and welfare of the public and coastal species appeared to take priority in all of the actions depicted in the news releases.

Public information was also a recurring theme related to serving the public good. A majority, but not all, of the news releases provided phone numbers, websites, or information about town hall meetings for the public to get more information. A centralized phone and website were not provided until later in the recovery phase. RestoreTheGulf.gov, a web portal administered by the Joint Information Center, was launched on July 7, more than three months after the Deepwater Horizon explosion. Most of the releases provided contact information for individual agencies. For example, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) suggested a list of resources, including email alerts, a toll-free hotline with recorded information, NOAA weather radios, text alerts, a Twitter account, and a Facebook fan page. Other agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and the Environmental Protection Agency listed websites that were specific to the oil response. The Unified Area Command, which comprised satellite incident command units in several gulf coast states, only mentioned social media once when it announced it would be live tweeting and posting information on its Facebook page during a virtual town hall meeting on July 16. The desire to provide one-way public information was evident from the news releases, but there were few opportunities for two-way communication other than at town hall meetings.

Our fourth research question asked if the joint information center enabled ethical communication practices. While the guidelines for operating a JIC and performing public affairs duties did not mention ethics specifically, qualitative analysis of the news releases revealed ethical considerations in the JIC's communication about the response and recovery efforts.

The premise of a JIC is to enable accurate and timely public information, and in a disaster situation, this can protect lives, livelihoods, and property. The JIC issued 178 news releases from the day after the Deepwater Horizon explosion until the day after the well was killed, averaging just over two per day. Although sheer quantity is not an effective way to evaluate timeliness, the statements included key words such as "this morning," "today," "this afternoon," and "tomorrow" that suggest the information was released with minimal delay, a hallmark of good disaster communication (Haddow & Haddow, 2009; Politano, 2009). Accuracy is also difficult to

determine in our sample. However, releases marked "UPDATED" or "CORRECTION" suggest that the JIC staff was diligent in getting accurate information to the media.

A disaster is often characterized by uncertainty, and the Deepwater Horizon incident was no exception. The news releases often acknowledged that there was limited information and that they did not have all the answers for a concerned public. The language was often cautious rather than overconfident in its description of the situation: "It is important to realize that numbers can change" (*U.S. scientific team draws on new data, multiple scientific methodologies to reach updated estimate of oil flows from BP's well,* 2010); "The threat outlined in the model does not necessarily indicate that oil will come ashore" (*NOAA models long-term oil threat to Gulf and East Coast shoreline,* 2010); "'This modeling provides a glimpse for planning purposes but does not represent what we're actually seeing on the ground'" (*CLARIFICATION on the current threat to Florida peninsula and Florida Keys from Deepwater Horizon/BP oil spill,* 2010). Ulmer, Sellnow, and Seeger (2007) established that a basic tenet of ethical crisis and disaster communication is to admit when all the facts are not known and to make the public aware that there may be other potential outcomes. The public needs information to make decisions, but if the communicator is overly confident, the public may make decisions based on inaccurate facts.

While acknowledging uncertainty is a component of ethical communication, so is correcting misinformation and quashing rumors. On June 27, the JIC issued a news release in an attempt to stop inaccurate reports of widespread beach contamination caused by the spill. Tourism was threatened by reports of dirty beaches that resulted in cancellation of hotel rooms and beach rentals. The release also addressed rumors that oil-soaked birds were being removed from the beaches after dark to cover up the extent of the harm. Officials in Florida responded to the rumors and misinformation by putting volunteers on the beaches to answer questions about the effects of the spill and to send in first-hand reports of beach conditions to a hotline. By addressing the rumors and explaining what was being done to maintain an accurate flow of information, the JIC was communicating in an open and ethical manner.

One element of JIC operations that was not maintained, and therefore may have ethical implications, is the need to communicate with one voice. Crisis communication literature supports the concept of using a single voice to communicate with the public in a consistent manner (Coombs, 2007). However, analysis of the 178 news releases reveals that, while the news releases may have been issued (and presumably were approved) by a single organization (the JIC), it is apparent that the releases were written by different agencies with differing news release styles. For example, releases reporting NOAA activity include a boilerplate that explains the mission of this federal agency; however, most had no boilerplate, and none of the news releases had a consistent boilerplate relating to the mission of incident command. The releases were written in varying styles, referred the public and media to a variety of phone numbers and websites, and most focused on the activities of a single agency. As mentioned previously, the JIC did not have a centralized online resource until July 7 when it launched RestoreTheGulf.com. The duration of this incident justifies the use of consistent messaging to ensure that all communication is accurate and supports the mission of the disaster response organization.

Discussion

Evidence from the 178 news releases issued by the JIC suggests that communication was conducted in an open, ethical manner, with few exceptions. Although there were no specific

ethical guidelines provided by NIMS, the communications demonstrate an ethical framework that addressed tenets of ethics including social responsibility, accountability, and reciprocity, as well as ethical actions such as quashing rumor and misinformation, acknowledging uncertainty, and providing information in a timely and accurate manner. It is easy to be transparent, open, and honest, however, when one is not at fault and has an easy target to blame for the crisis.

There were conflicts, however, that emerged that may have compromised ethical standards, either in reality or perception. One conflict concerned the incident command's relationship with BP. Although most of the statements adamantly declared that BP was responsible for the disaster, some news releases appeared to advocate for BP. In many instances, BP is seen as a partner rather than a transgressor. For example, news releases reveal that BP was asked to participate in the unified incident command. This partnership made BP an ally with government agencies and diluted the harsh language about BP's culpability, which began to appear to be self-serving. Furthermore, a statement in a June 8 news release, after 48 days of blaming BP, praised BP for its creation of a wildlife fund as "the latest example of BP's commitment to help the Gulf Coast states and their residents (*BP to donate net revenue from MC252 well leak to protect and rehabilitate wildlife in Gulf states,* 2010). This statement appears to be incongruous as there were no other news releases in the sample that praised BP's actions.

The conflict in the representation of BP may relate to the issue of multiple voices in the statements disseminated by the JIC. While the news releases all appear on a website maintained by JIC staff, the documents have different formats, writing styles, tone, content, and contact information. Most news releases appear to be on behalf of a specific agency rather than on behalf of the unified area command center. In addition to timeliness and accuracy, consistency is a hallmark of ethical communication that was not accomplished with the Deepwater Horizon JIC.

Reciprocity was not fully realized in the JIC communication efforts. While statements acknowledged an appreciation for the expertise and passion of the public who made their livelihoods in the Gulf region, there were few two-way communication channels available for individuals to fully participate in the response efforts. Activities such as volunteering and attending town hall meetings were available, but for those who were not able to participate in person, there were few ways to communicate directly with members of the government's response structure via phone, internet, social media, or in writing. The first mention of the unified area command using live chat, Twitter, or Facebook to broadcast a town hall meeting was published on July 15, the day the oil well was "killed."

While the JIC protocols and practices did not fully enable ethical communications, we offer recommendations to improve procedures and training that would put ethical considerations at the core of disaster response operations.

Implications and Conclusions

The Deepwater Horizon disaster was perhaps the greatest test in scope and duration of the NIMS disaster management guidelines since they were revised in 2008. There are lessons to be learned from this disaster response that should be incorporated in NIMS guidelines for JIC operations. As noted, the current JIC protocols do not have explicitly stated codes of ethics for communicators to follow. The addition of ethical standards would put these considerations at the forefront of all decision making and provide a consistent framework for communication strategy.

In a natural disaster, there is not an entity outside of Mother Nature who can be blamed for the ensuing destruction. However, in the case of Deepwater Horizon, there were specific corporate entities that were clearly responsible for initiating the crisis. JIC guidelines for issuing statements about responsible parties should be made clear to avoid potential conflicts of interest as well as confusion by the public about the relationship between the government entities and the responsible parties.

The purpose of a JIC is to provide a centralized function for consistent, accurate, and timely public information. The Deepwater Horizon JIC failed to generate a single voice in its communications that reported the activities of the incident command team. Future guidelines for JICs should require consistent use of news release formats and boilerplates; communication channels such as hotline numbers, social media accounts, and websites; and public affairs contact information such as email addresses and phone numbers. These measures would help the JIC communicate with one voice, reduce uncertainty among target audiences, improve opportunities for two-way communication, and elevate the ethical standards of the JIC organization. Revised written procedures and training for JIC communicators would reinforce the ethical practices that were already in place and provide guidance for overcoming dilemmas that may potentially compromise the goals of ethical communication.

Study Limitations and Future Research

This study is limited by the sole use of news releases to draw a determination of ethical implications. This precludes an understanding of the ethical decision-making that took place during development and dissemination of the news releases. This study would be bolstered by interviews with members of the joint information center who were directly involved in the day-to-day communication efforts. Analysis of the news conferences led by the incident commander and members of the JIC would provide additional data regarding ethical implications of the public communication efforts. Also, continued analysis of the response efforts after the federal Minerals Management Service was found to be partially responsible for BP's lack of safety measures would create an opportunity to explore the government's communication practices once it is implicated in a complex disaster situation.

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What is the Financial Impact of Negative News about Collegiate Sports Teams? Using Fan Identification to Understand College Student Responses

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Abstract
When negative news has been produced following a crisis, social identity theory provides a way to understand existing differences and differential responses among members of a target audience. This survey research examined how students, a key target audience for most university athletic departments, respond to an actual crisis involving members of the football team at an NCAA Division I university.

Negative news about collegiate sports teams is nearly unavoidable for most universities. The sheer number of athletes involved in multiple programs at major universities increases the likelihood of problems. Football programs alone include rosters of 100 or more players (Sokolove, 2002), and the total number of athletes at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) member institutions in the United States is over 360,000. Not surprisingly, a recent study of NCAA Division I athletic programs found that 70% had experienced some type of crisis during the previous year (Hessert, 1998). Under the circumstances, many universities are faced with trying to determine appropriate strategic public relations responses in a reactive manner while attempting to minimize the impact of a crisis situation on revenue generation.

Not every crisis will result in negative news. Some incidents, for example, may simply involve medical treatment for an athlete or a fan. However, many other crises have serious implications that can affect the reputation of a team, athletic department, and university. Coaches or athletes may be involved in criminal misconduct, NCAA rule violations, inappropriate on-field and off-field behavior, performance-enhancing drug use, or gambling.

In other instances inappropriate fan behaviors, after both wins and losses, have resulted in injuries and property damage while contributing to negative media coverage that reflects poorly on university athletics. After a 14-9 football victory over Michigan in 2002, Ohio State fans rioted and burned cars, looted businesses, and caused tens of thousands of dollars in damage (Sokolove, 2002). Since 1999, Michigan State University has repeatedly made the news for student riots that have occurred following men's basketball team losses at different stages of the NCAA Basketball Tournament. Media coverage extended beyond local media and attracted the attention of national news organizations (e.g., *New York Times*, NBC, CNN). In addition to the examples described here, other recent sports crises have gone beyond the sports section and have earned front-page news status (*PR Week*, 2007).

The media coverage devoted to covering crises in sports is hardly surprising. Sports at both college and professional levels receive constant media and fan attention. This results in extensive media coverage in all formats, including entire sections of newspapers; 24-hour television coverage on ESPN and its competitors; sport-specific radio talk shows, some up to 3 hours long 5 days a week; and Web content from traditional media and online-only sources (Burton & Howard, 1999; *PR Week*, 2007). The conflict often associated with crises is a newsworthy element that is capitalized on by journalists competing for consumers' attention. A recent review of the daily news on ESPN.com revealed stories in the top headlines section dealing with a September brawl between Kansas University football and men's basketball players, a Texas Longhorns football player who was recently arrested for drunk driving, and a coach's decision to suspend three Tennessee football players who were charged with armed robbery. A similar search of daily sports news on the *New York Times* Web site, a more traditional media outlet, revealed stories about obscene gestures made by an NFL owner to the opposing teams' fans and the suspension of an international soccer coach for expletive-filled rants after his team qualified for the 2010 World Cup.

Understanding how crises influence the target audiences of athletic departments and the universities they represent is important. The consequences of a crisis have the potential to impact both sports and non-sports fans with university ties. Dean Smith, former University of North Carolina men's basketball coach, explained the sport-university relationship by stating "…while

sports are far from a university's most important facet, they are the most visible. Athletics are a university's front porch…" (Sorenson, 2003, p. 2). The visibility described by Smith is evidenced in a study by Goff (2000) that showed 70% of all newspaper articles written about a research-focused Midwestern university were about athletics. Conversely, 5% of the articles were research related.

Successful athletic programs help to generate revenue through merchandise and ticket sales and media packages (Fulks, 2002). Programs have also been shown to increase student applications and alumni contributions (Grimes & Chressanthis, 1994; Toma & Cross, 1998). In a specific instance during the 1980s, "Boston College quarterback Doug Flutie and the success of the team were credited with increasing applications by 25 percent and transforming B.C. from a regional to national university" (Sokolove, 2002, p. E36). Although other factors likely contributed to the increase, something argued by representatives of Boston College, the university confirms that applications rose 30 percent during Flutie's junior and senior seasons (McDonald, 2003). The influence of sports on universities is enough that a number of schools have recently tried to develop athletic programs as a way to improve the university's brand identity (Judson & Carpenter, 2005).

When a crisis happens in a university athletic department the media interactions are typically coordinated by the sports public relations practitioners, also called sports information directors (SIDs). These individuals work with the media on an ongoing basis to manage team and game coverage. As a result of their media relationships, the SIDs are used by athletic directors to facilitate communication with the media and are often the first people contacted by a media member developing a story.

This places SIDs in a unique position. They have opportunities to advise athletic directors on strategic responses to crises and to influence media coverage through their media interactions. However, due to a lack of research on sports-related crises at universities, their decisions and recommendations are typically based on past experience or intuition. Their ability to choose appropriate response strategies that will minimize the financial impact of a crisis and the subsequent negative media coverage needs to be improved.

This paper will review sports public relations and sports marketing research that can help provide a better understanding of target audiences and their possible responses to a crisis. It will explore how media coverage impacts fans with high and low identification to a university sports team and the decisions they make after a crisis has happened (i.e., will fans be less supportive of a team?). A survey methodology is proposed that can evaluate audience responses to negative news.

Literature Review

Sports Public Relations (Sports Information)
Sports public relations is the application of public relations strategies and tactics designed to influence the attitudes and behavior of target audiences in a sport environment. It has been defined as "a managerial communication-based function designed to identify a sport organization's key publics, evaluate its relationships with those publics, and foster desirable relationships between the sport organization and those publics" (Stoldt, Dittmore, & Branvold, 2006, p. 2). The definition's important elements – a managerial communication-based function

and a focus on relationships with key publics – are consistent with emphasis areas in contemporary definitions of public relations (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009).

The practitioners working in sports public relations may operate under a variety of titles in professional sports (e.g., communication, public relations, marketing), but at a collegiate level the most commonly used term to describe their work is sports information. At small universities a single practitioner usually serves as the sports information director. At large universities a sports information department is often created within the athletic department. Regardless of a university's size, sports information practitioners typically report to the athletic director, the individual responsible for managing the entire athletic department within a university.

Overall, the research devoted to sports public relations/sports information is limited but appears to be increasing. The upcoming *Sage Handbook of Public Relations* includes a chapter on sports public relations (Isaacson, in press) after the 2001 edition included a chapter focused specifically on collegiate sports information (Neupauer, 2001). Scholars in public relations and related disciplines have completed a number of studies using a diverse set of research methods that contribute to the overall understanding of this specialized part of public relations practice (e.g., Desmarais & Bruce, 2008; Fortunato, 2000; Funk & Pritchard, 2006; Hardin & McClung, 2002; L'Etang, 2006; McCleneghan, 1995; Neupauer, 1999; Stoldt, Miller, & Comfort, 2001; Woo, An, & Cho, 2008).

Desmarais and Bruce (2008) explored how sports announcers use stereotypes when describing international rugby matches. Hardin and McClung (2002) surveyed sports information directors to gather demographic information about practitioners working in the field. Neupauer (1999) used purposive sampling to explore the possibility of trait differences between sports information practitioners employed at small and large academic institutions. However, while the aforementioned studies contribute to the knowledge base in sports public relations, key issues that may improve target audience relationships and impact athletic department revenue generation or prevent revenue loss remain uninvestigated.

Stoldt et al. (2001) surveyed athletic directors at NCAA Division I, II, and III institutions to gain an understanding of their perceptions of the work done by sport information directors (SIDs). Results showed that a majority of the SIDs (92.3%) are perceived to primarily fill technical roles. The athletic directors' highest level of confidence in sports information staff's ability to perform public relations tasks were on producing sports information materials (e.g., media game notes, game programs, media guides), working with coaches and athletes, maintaining media contacts, and coordinating special events. Conversely, the lowest levels of confidence were for conducting public relations research, mediating conflicts, setting public relations goals, and identifying emerging issues.

When athletic directors were asked to identify the benefits they received from public relations programs, those cited least frequently included a variety of ways to increase revenue generation (e.g., ticket and merchandise sales). In response to items asking about strong and weak departmental relationships, the weakest perceived relationships were with students, alumni, and boosters. Stoldt et al. (2001) summarized their results by stating, "If SIDs are indeed their athletic departments' top public relations officers, and yet serve in limited public relations capacities, then it seems likely that college athletic departments are failing to maximize their public relations effectiveness" (p. 170).

Few of the published research articles on sports information and sports public relations provide research results or evidence-based advice that can help practitioners improve their public relations effectiveness. Many of the articles include descriptive results about the nature of daily responsibilities and provide a demographic profile of sports public relations practitioners (e.g., Harden & McClung, 2002), or are developed based on case studies of single sport organizations (e.g., Jensen & Butler, 2007). Certainly this approach helps to inform practitioners and educators in the field, but it rarely provides results that can be applied by practitioners or taught by educators to address the issues raised by Stoldt et al. (2001) (i.e., impact on revenue generation and improved organizational relationships).

One exception is Funk and Pritchard's (2006) article exploring the effects of positive and negative newspaper coverage on attitudes towards professional sport teams. Using a repeated measures pre-post design, they found that commitment influences a reader's processing of messages and, as a result, can moderate reader responses. Committed readers had better recall of supportive articles and less committed readers recalled more facts from negative articles. The results are useful for sports public relations practitioners who may be asked to advise on media relations tactics and develop organizational responses to negative publicity. According to the authors, the study "emphasizes how important media relations are for altering consumer beliefs and feelings about organizations" (p. 618). In addition, practitioners should consider what type of responses can be expected depending on the commitment level of the target public and the valence of recently published news stories about the organization.

Similar to Funk and Pritchard's (2006) research, this paper seeks to evaluate audience responses to negative news coverage. Based on the findings of Stoldt et al. (2001), the proposed survey explores how sports information practitioners may be able to influence relationships with students, one of the weak perceived relationships identified by athletic directors, and minimize lost revenue in a crisis situation by attempting to understand how this audience responds. The intent of the research is to provide practitioners with an understanding of how a target audience can be segmented using demographic and psychographic characteristics, and the impact of negative media coverage on the different segments.

Media Relations in Sports Information

Media relations in public relations practice has been defined as "working with mass media in seeking publicity or responding to their interests in the organization" (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009, p. 10). The value of engaging in media relations is to capitalize on the third-party credibility associated with a message published or broadcast by a member of an independent media organization (Sweetser, Porter, Chung, & Kim, 2008). Its use as a tactic by public relations practitioners is widespread and prevalent; however, in sports public relations it may be even more popular.

Stoldt et al. (2006) describe media relations as the most commonly used tactic by sports public relations practitioners. Their application of the tactic often involves tasks intended to facilitate media coverage of sporting events. These tasks include managing press credentials, organizing and managing a press area (e.g., press box, post-game interview room), designing and writing extensive media guides, writing news releases, and researching and writing game notes. The most common results of this attention to the media include consistent coverage of sporting

events, the development of game stories summarizing the outcome, and news stories focused on events within the game or about its participants.

The widespread efforts to use the media for promotion however can be a double-edged sword. The second half of the Wilcox and Cameron (2009) definition of media relations, responding to media interests in the organization, applies in a crisis situation when sports information practitioners will need to address media requests for information and interviews. In fact, the media are often the most important external public for an athletic department to communicate with in a crisis because of their access to other external critical publics and to immediately publish or broadcast information (Stoldt et al., 2006).

Sports public relations practitioners often recognize the newsworthiness of a crisis and are willing to work with the media to facilitate coverage. In a 2008 interview, Mike Herman, the director of the Minnesota Twins public relations department, commented on the interaction with media members covering a negative news story by saying, "We understand that they are just doing their job. We had one player suspended (for steroid use) and some negative stories were written. We held a mini-press conference with him in which he explained his side, served the suspension and it was over with." (personal communication, April 20, 2008). Similarly, Stoldt et al. (2001) advocate that sports public relations practitioners work with the media in a responsive and accommodating way and even suggest positioning the organization as the best source of information for the media in a crisis situation.

However, once the crisis has happened and the resulting media reports have been published or broadcast, little is known about the impact the news will have on target audiences and more research is required before evidence-based recommendations can be provided to practitioners (Isaacson, 2010). Of particular importance to a university's athletic department are the future behavioral intentions of its fans. Will the crisis and resulting media coverage affect their support of the university's athletic programs? Decreased support could take the form of attending, watching, or listening to fewer games; purchasing less merchandise; or donating less money to the university.

The next section reviews sports marketing and fan identification research that help provide ways to segment an audience. Appropriate audience segmentation will enable evaluation of differential behavioral intentions that result from negative news about a university sports team. This can help sports public relations practitioners determine appropriate organizational responses and minimize the financial losses that could result from the crisis.

Sports Marketing/Fan Identification

Fan behavior has been explored from a variety of perspectives that have implications for sports public relations practitioners. With a consistent focus on understanding methods of improving attendance and developing a fan base, multiple studies have focused on on-field success (Wann, Dolan, McGeorge, & Allison, 1994; Wann, Tucker, Schrader, 1996; Whitney, 1988; Zhang et al., 1997). Researchers have also evaluated the impact of a variety of other pertinent factors, including family members (James, 1997; Kolbe & James, 2000), new stadium development (Coffin, 1995; Rivers & DeSchriver, 2002), median household income (Noll, 1974), roster turnover (Kahane & Scmanske, 1997), and star players (Rivers & DeSchriver, 2002).

Recent sports fan research has focused on fan identification levels as a way to understand how teams can develop an extensive and loyal fan base (Judson & Carpenter, 2005; Kwon & Trail, 2001; Wann, Brewer, & Royalty, 1999; Wann & Dolan, 1994). Identification has been defined as the spectators' perceived connectedness to a team and the experience of the team's failings and achievements as one's own (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Logically then, as perceived connectedness increases, the support an individual has for the group will increase as well (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995; Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1999; Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Madrigal, 2001).

Madrigal (2001) found that sport fans who identified strongly with sport teams showed greater purchase intentions for the sponsored company's product than did those who had weak team identification. Similarly, Dietz-Uhler and Murrell (1999) found that those with strong university identity evaluated their university football team more favorably over the course of the season, whereas those with weak university identity evaluated the team about the same regardless of game outcomes (wins or losses).

It is worth noting that in a university sports setting, even the fans with low identification are important. Despite their low identification, it is still possible that students in this group engage in behaviors that benefit a university sports team. Although it happens with less frequency, these students are still likely to occasionally watch games and purchase merchandise. Previous research has shown that much higher percentages of college students indicate having at least some interest in major sports at their university than the numbers in the general public (Taylor Research, 1998). Sports fan identification research calls these individuals "social fans" who enjoy the entertainment level of a sport without caring about the outcome of games; instead, it is the social interactions they may have at a game that are valued (Sutton, McDonald, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997). Social identity theory provides an appropriate and effective way of explaining fan identification (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003).

Social Identity Theory. Social identity theory attempts to capture how an individual's identity group memberships form his or her perspectives and experiences in different settings. According to the theory, identity consists of both personal and social components. The personal identity stems from idiosyncratic characteristics, such as personality and physical and intellectual traits. Social identity, in contrast, derives from salient group memberships such as sex, race, class, and nationality (Ashforth & Mael, 1989); and involves the processes of self-categorization and attachment to salient group classifications and particular social categories (Pettigrew, 1986). From this perspective, social identity is defined as "an individual's knowledge of his or her memberships in social groups together with the emotional significance of that knowledge" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63).

An important part of social identity in the context of sports fandom is that the identification people have with a team allows them to partake vicariously in accomplishments beyond their own powers (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Cialdini et al. (1976) called this basking in reflective glory (BIRG) and found support for the phenomenon in experimental tests that "showed a significant tendency for students to strive to associate themselves publicly with their university's football team more after the team had been successful" (p. 374). Stated another way, the successes or failures of a sports team in athletic contests will impact the personal images of fans through their social identification connections with the team.

Social identity only acquires meanings by social comparison with other groups due to its evaluative feature. It assumes that individuals tend to maintain positive social identities by engaging in social comparisons that distinguish between in-groups and out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This means that a successful sports team provides positive social identities for fans when they compare themselves to the fans of other teams. By being connected to a successful group, the fans' social identities are positive (Fischer & Wakefield, 1998).

When negative news about a university sports team has been produced as the result of a crisis, social identity theory provides a way to understand existing differences and differential responses among members of a target audience. Measuring group identification related to sports fandom and behavioral intentions that result from the negative news, can help sports public relations practitioners develop more effective strategies for organizational reactions.

Summary and Research Questions/Hypothesis

The type of crises university athletic departments encounter varies widely. During the past year, examples in the news included fights between the athletes of two teams at the same university (Kansas University, Michigan State University), an athlete arrested for drunk driving (University of Texas-Austin), criminal charges against athletes for armed robbery (University of Tennessee), a sexual assault committed by an athlete (University of Cincinnati), and significant suspensions of athletes for physical altercations that happened during or shortly after games (Michigan State University, University of Oregon). All of these examples resulted in both local and national media coverage, and the physical altercations that took place during and after a game can still be viewed on YouTube.

The impact of these crises and others like them on key target audiences have not been evaluated in sports public relations and sports marketing research. In particular, the economic consequences (i.e., lost revenue) are unknown. As a result, it is not known if a crisis and the resulting news coverage will influence attitudes and produce behavior change among target audiences.

In a university setting, the students are one of the key target audiences and their behaviors that support athletic teams are important to sports public relations practitioners, athletic directors, and athletic departments. The students have been identified as an audience with whom the athletic department desires a strong relationship (Stoldt et al., 2001), and evaluating their responses to a crisis and subsequent negative news can assist with the development of organizational responses. However, because crises have drastically different levels of severity (e.g., the difference between two players versus 10 players being suspended from a team for off-field behavior) and the perceived severity of a crisis by students will vary, it is unknown how this will impact the responses of a student audience (i.e., attitudes and behavioral intentions). This leads to the following research questions:

RQ1: How will the perceived severity of the crisis differentiate audience responses?
RQ2: Will negative media coverage of a university sports crisis influence the attitudes towards the team and team-supportive behavioral intentions of students?

Differences that exist within the student audience can be understood through social identity theory. Students who have high identification with the team benefit from the BIRG effect, something that has a positive effect on their esteem (Cialdini et al., 1976). Because they value being a part of the group and the team's success gives them a positive social identity when

compared to other fans (Fischer & Wakefield, 1998; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), it is logical to expect that the crisis will not have as strong of an impact on their attitudes and behavioral intentions as it would for students with low identification. This is consistent with Funk and Pritchard's (2006) research that found more committed sports fans had a tendency to overlook negative information about their sports team. This leads to the following hypothesis:

> *H1: The attitudes and behavioral intentions of students with high team identification will be less affected than students with low team identification.*

Method

To test the proposed research questions and hypothesis, surveys were administered to students at a large Midwestern university following a sports-related crisis involving student-athletes on their university's NCAA Division I football team.

Participants

Survey participants were undergraduate students (N=64) that were recruited through advertising and public relations classes and offered a chance to win an iPad Shuffle for completing the survey. The ages of participants ranged from 18 to 26 years old ($M = 20.86$, $SD = 1.33$). Women (82.8%, 53) outnumbered men (17.2%, 11) and most of the participants were White/Caucasian (93.8%, 60), followed by Black/African American (3.1%, 2), Hispanic (1.6%, 1), and Asian/Pacific Islander (1.6%, 1).

Procedures

The survey was administered after a crisis happened within the athletic department at the university that involved members of the football team. Multiple players were suspended for the team's 2010 bowl game after they were involved in an on-campus fight that involved other university students. The event and the subsequent university responses generated national, local, and campus media coverage, and the coverage continued for an extended period of time as some of the players were criminally prosecuted for their involvement.

The decision to focus on football was made due to the prominence and revenue-generating ability of the sport at the university where the research was conducted. The prominence, combined with the high student attendance at games, increases the likelihood that many of the students will have attended games in the past.

Measures

For subsequent analyses, the scores of the multiple items were aggregated and averaged to obtain an index score for each variable.

Perceived Crisis Severity. Two perceived crisis severity items developed by Wrigley, Salmon, and Park (2003) were adapted to fit this research study. Seven-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree) were used ($\alpha = .68$). Actual items are included in Appendix A. Survey respondents were categorized into high crisis severity and low crisis severity using a median split.

Group Identification. Group identification was measured using five seven-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (Fischer & Wakefield, 1998). The items evaluate the degree to which people define themselves in relation to a sports team ($\alpha =$

.90). Items are included in Appendix A. Survey respondents were categorized into high versus low group identification using a median split.

Attitude Toward University Football Team. Attitudes towards the university's football team were measured using four seven-point semantic differential items ($\alpha = .95$). The four items were "dislike/like," "negative/positive," "unfavorable/favorable," and "bad/good."

Behavioral Intentions. Three seven-point semantic differential items were used to measure game attendance, game viewing, and purchase of team merchandise behavioral intentions. The three items are "unlikely/likely," "impossible/possible," and "improbable/probable." The alpha coefficients for the three behavioral intention measures were .95, .94, and .98. These topics were chosen because of the impact that an increase or decrease in these behaviors by students could have on the financial success of a university athletic department.

Results

The first hypothesis predicted differences in attitudes and behavioral intentions between students with high and low team identification. An independent-samples *t*-test comparing the university football team attitudes of high identification students to those of low identification students found a significant difference between the two groups ($t(62) = -2.591, p < .05$). The mean of the high identification group ($M = 6.29, SD = .63$) was significantly higher than the mean of the low identification group ($M = 5.63, SD = 1.39$).

Differences in behavioral intentions were evaluated by considering the likely impact of the crisis on students' game attendance, TV viewing of games, and purchases of team merchandise. Independent-samples *t*-tests were performed comparing group means. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 – *Impact of crisis on behavioral intentions*						
	High identification with team		**Low identification with team**			
Behavioral intention	M	SD	M	SD	p	t
Game attendance during upcoming season	1.94	1.35	1.85	1.08	.79	-.271
TV viewing during upcoming season	1.54	0.95	1.40	0.74	.54	-.618
Purchase of team merchandise	1.66	1.29	1.41	0.82	.40	-.847

Note: 1 = unlikely/improbable/impossible, 7 = likely/probable/possible.

In sum, as expected, university football team attitudes were stronger for students with high team identification compared to those with low team identification. However, results were not significantly different between the two groups on behavioral intentions. Thus, the first hypothesis was partially supported.

The first research question explored how perceived severity of the crisis could influence students' attitudes and behavioral intentions. Students were divided into two groups, those who perceived the crisis to be a severe/serious problem for the university athletic department and those that did not. Independent-samples *t*-tests were performed comparing group means related

to university football team attitudes, students' game attendance, TV viewing of games, and purchases of team merchandise. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 – *Impact of students' perceptions of crisis severity on football team attitudes and behavioral intentions*						
	High crisis severity		**Low crisis severity**			
Attitude/behavioral intention	M	SD	M	SD	p	t
University football team attitude	5.91	0.87	6.12	1.23	.46	-.752
Game attendance during upcoming season	2.19	1.43	1.65	0.93	.11	1.614
TV viewing during upcoming season	1.63	1.04	1.36	0.68	.28	1.100
Purchase of team merchandise	1.95	1.39	1.23	0.64	.02	2.400*

Note: 1 = more negative attitude and 7 = more positive attitude for first item; 1 = unlikely/improbable/impossible and 7 = likely/probable/possible for items 2-4. *p < .05.

The second research question explored how negative media coverage of the crisis could influence students' attitudes and behavioral intentions. The crisis that occurred garnered a significant amount of national media coverage (e.g., ESPN, USA Today, New York Times, Sporting News), and students were asked about their exposure to it. Those that had been exposed to the media coverage were compared to those that had not and the results of the independent-samples *t*-tests are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 – *Impact of media coverage on football team attitudes and behavioral intentions*						
	Media coverage exposure (N = 23)		**No media coverage exposure (N = 34)**			
Attitude/behavioral intention	M	SD	M	SD	p	t
University football team attitude	6.09	1.28	5.95	0.85	.62	-.502
Game attendance during upcoming season	1.78	1.29	2.07	1.24	.40	.840
TV viewing during upcoming season	1.33	0.86	1.63	0.92	.23	1.210
Purchase of team merchandise	1.59	1.20	1.66	1.17	.85	.196

Discussion

The results of this study are consistent with previous research that has found attitudinal differences between people with high and low identification with a group, in this case, students' attitudes towards their university football team. However, even though a significant difference exists in attitudes, this did not translate into any differences among student in behavioral intentions to attend games, watch games on TV, or purchase team-related merchandise. This is important for sport promoters because, at least among students, it does not appear that a crisis of this magnitude – multiple players suspended for off-field behavior and, eventually, a number of

players transferring or being kicked off the team – is enough to alter students' team-supportive behaviors.

The study also showed that, regardless of perceptions of how severe this crisis was for the university's athletic department, it did not appear that this would change students' team-supportive behaviors. Although a significant *t*-test showed that students who perceived the crisis to be severe were less likely to purchase team merchandise, the result must be considered in terms of its practical significance. Students in the "high crisis severity" group only had a mean of 1.95 on a 1-to-7 scale (students in the "low crisis severity" group had a mean of 1.23), placing them near the end of the scale that indicated less of an impact of the crisis on purchase intentions.

At the same time, it is worth noting, that examination of the means shows that consideration of students' perceptions of crisis severity may deserve a closer look. All of the means for students in the "high crisis severity" group are closer to the center of the scale than students in the "low crisis severity" group, and the *t*-test for game attendance behavioral intentions is approaching significance (p = .11). Future research should explore other crisis types and increase sample sizes to further evaluate the possible effects.

Finally, the study showed that exposure to media coverage of a sport-related crisis of this type, players' off-the-field behavior, has no impact on students' attitudes or team-related behavioral intentions. This is important for university sport promoters who are not only likely to be acutely aware of the coverage their team is receiving, but are also actively participating in the development of university responses to the crisis. This helps to eliminate the need to adapt responses to fit a student audience and instead allows promoters to consider other audiences that may be more significantly impacted by the crisis. Because students only make up a portion of the fans that support a university football team, additional research should explore the impact of crises on other relevant target audiences (e.g., alumni, local community members).

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Lehman Shock Impact on Japanese Companies and Changes of Corporate Communication: How to Measure Qualitative Change in PR System of Companies

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine quantatively and qualitatively the influence of "Lehman Shock" on public relations of Japanese companies. By conceding the collected data through "The Research on Communication of Japanese Companies by Hokkaido University in 2009," this paper regards the impact of "Lehman Shock" in 2008. Measuring the positive feedback from the collected data and modelizing the public relations system of Japanese companies, this thesis tries to let us understand the quantitative change of public relations in Japan. As we collected data from both administrators of public relations section and junior staff, the gap of recognition of both sides is illustrated.Based on the qualitative data about public relations section, the relationship between the external environment change and the strategy of companies are considered. Thus, a direction of strategic public relations' changing is investigated. Nowadays the external environment changes drastically, many companies re-edit and re-adjust the strategy of public relations "emergently," and shift their ways to open-system public relations model from closed one. The assignment for the strategic public relations of our times which changes rapidly is considered in this paper.

Introduction

In September 2008, the so-called "Lehman Shock" financial turmoil quickly spread to the real economy, revolutionized the business environment of Japanese companies as well as The U. S. ones. Japanese media often described its impact such as "the worst after World War II" or "once every 100 years". In 2009, news started to announce a downward revision of Japan's global companies and its influence is still going on. Public Relations sections in the companies suddenly thrown into turmoil and economic crisis like this, for what did they change and what did they come to change themselves? Speaking more generally, what should they do in the period represented by the rapidly changing external environment or economic crisis?

Method

To get the data to reach the conclusion of this thesis and concede research questions, questionnaires below were sent to companies on September, 2009, after it has been a year from "Lehman Shock" in Japan.

1. "Research on 'communication issue' in listed companies (=RC)", 545 letters were sent to managers or executives of public relations and communication section of the listed companies on the first section of the TSE (Tokyo Stock Exchange). The rate of getting responses was 29.5％.

2. "Research on 'public relations issue' of regular employees (=RPR)", Web research by the internet. The questionnaires were sent to the permanent employees whose companies holding over 2000 permanent employees. 300 responses.

Research Question

The main purpose of this paper is to consider the impact of "Lehman Shock" on public relations of companies by concerning the qualitative and quantative aspects. Concerning collected data, it is determined in the way both quantative and qualitative. Quantative change can be concerned by considering raw data; however, qualitative data is going to be envisaged. Though quantitative data simply can be cogitated, we must modelize public relations system as it is going to be introduced as precedence study. The measurement of the qualitative data collected for this paper refers functions of modelization below.

Theoretical Background – Modelize Public Relations System

Since external environment around companies has changed dramatically in recent, public relations of companies also has been changed. Cutlip et al (2006) distinguished two types of public relations, "Classical" and "Strategic". In these days classical public relations are sifting to strategic public relation by integration of management and public relations. Top management starts to require MBO (Management By Objective) and PDCA to public relations section. (Cutlip et al, 2006, p211-233)

According to this back ground Cutlip et al (2006) mentioned, classical public relations has to be shifted to strategic public relations. Then, what kind of significant features and differences can be seen by this shift? To understand differences, it is important to consider background of status quo deeply, NOT superficially. Deep concerns mean systematic difference which rules

both classical ones and strategic ones. Needless to say, the difference between them is "open-system" and "closed-system". The public relations of strategic one has "open-system" as a function; however, classical public relations is based on "closed-system".

As seen on Figure 1, "Structure and Process" are where public relations is dealt with in the system. Change and maintenance are urged to "Goal States." Besides, adjustment and adaptation of the system work through "feedback" continuously. "Variation in the Environment" is an environmental variable, and "Structure and Process" is revised through "Goal States" and the feedback of public relations when the environmental variable works strongly. Open-system is highly evolutional, and it revises itself by the interaction of the environment and the system. Both Closed and open system do NOT mean a straight choice for each other. It means that there are many intermediates between them continuously. Considering the business and social environment, companies choose the best efficient intermediate.

Figure 1: Open Systems Model, (Cutlip et al, 2006, p.190)
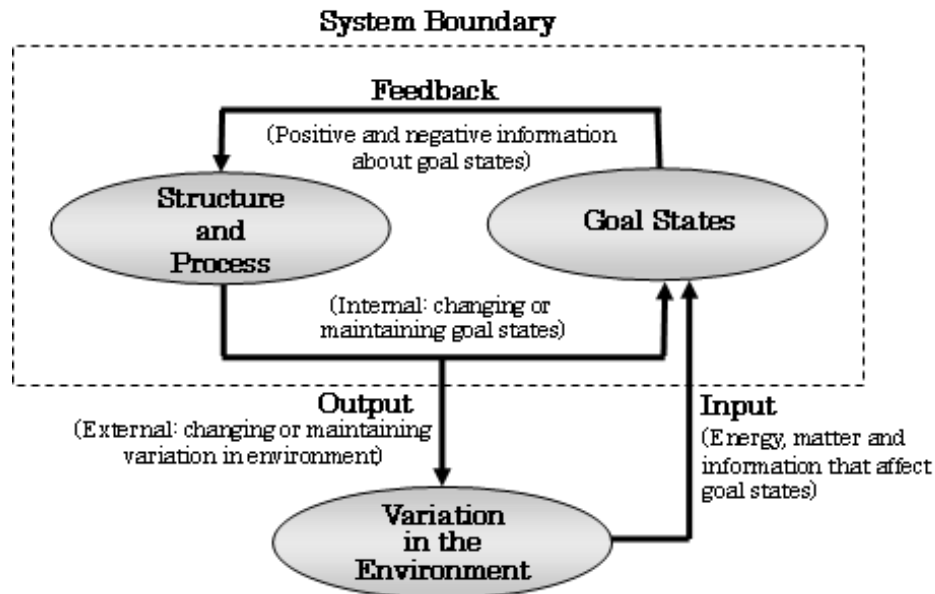
Considering Figure 1: Open System Model of Cutlip et al (2006) as base, Figure 2 can be constructed as proper model to this research.

Figure 2: Open PR Systems Model

1. Mgt System

Dominant System

2. PR System

I Objectives
Homeostasis

Negative Feedback

Positive Feedback

Lower System

II Structure ⟷ III Process

Morphogenesis

External Environment

Output   Input

3. Variation
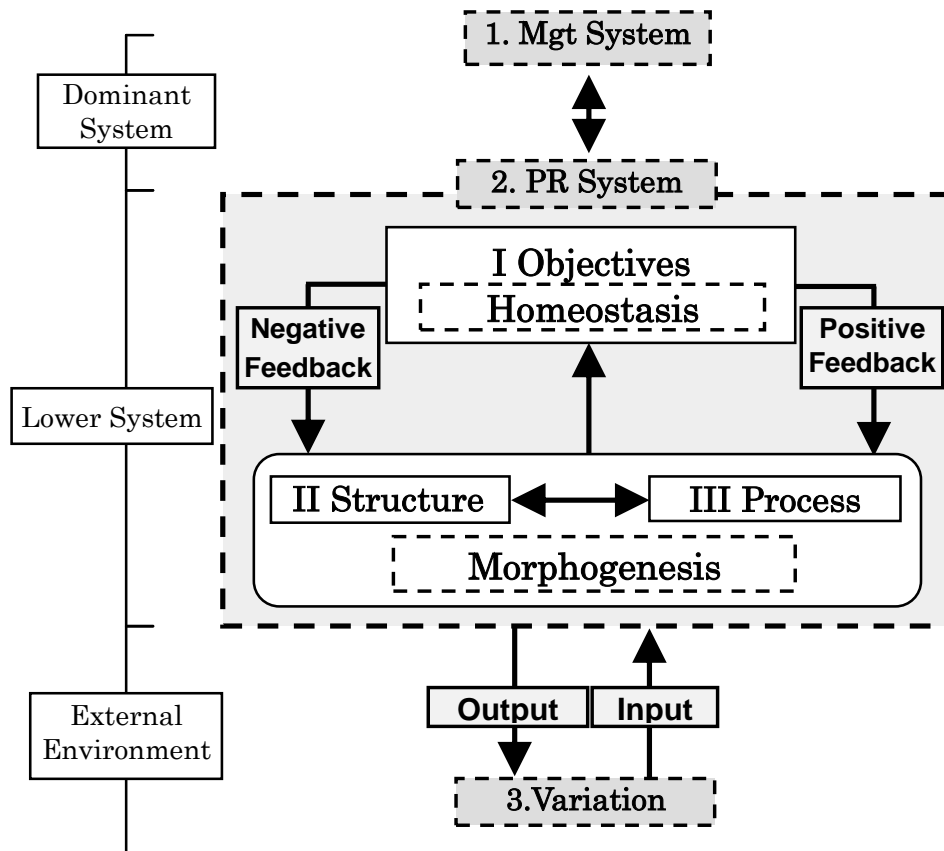
Taking a look at Figure 2, management section and public relations section are NOT stand in rows. There is a hierarchy, and management section is considered as a higher section comparing to public relations section. Examining public relations section, there are 3 functions inside the system, which are "**I: Objectives**", "**II: Structure**", and "**III: Process.**" It can be almost the same structure as Cutlip's model in case "**II: Structure**" and "**III: Process**" can be a pair. Figure 2 illustrates that "**I: Objectives**" is the core function to define the goal to achieve in the system.

One of outstanding points in Figure 2 is modelization of positive and negative feedback. According to Cutlip et al (2006, pp221-2) and Littlejohn(2002:p.45), negative feedback is a feedback which reduces the gaps and corrects deviations of the system so that it can reinforce and maintain a stable state of the system. On the other hand positive feedback is a feedback which increases the gaps and amplifies deviations of the system so that it can promote and growth a change of the system.

Figure 2 is used as a model figure to analyze qualitative data to understand the public relations of companies experienced sudden external environment change, whose contingency

was "Lehman Shock". Its qualitative change is measured as the ratio of **positive feedback**, and confirmation of the status quo can be measured as the ratio of **negative feedback**.

Results; Quantitative Changes

How does public relations section tackle an issue after "Lehman Shock" for a year? Figure 3 and 4 show how they do so.

Figure 3: Change of PR Section (Ito et al, 2010, RC: Q1) n=160
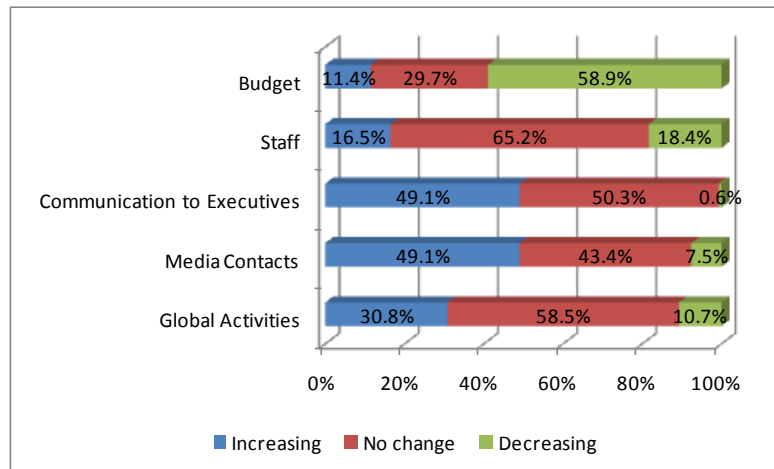
Figure 4: Change of Activities (Ito et al, 2010, RC: Q2) n=160
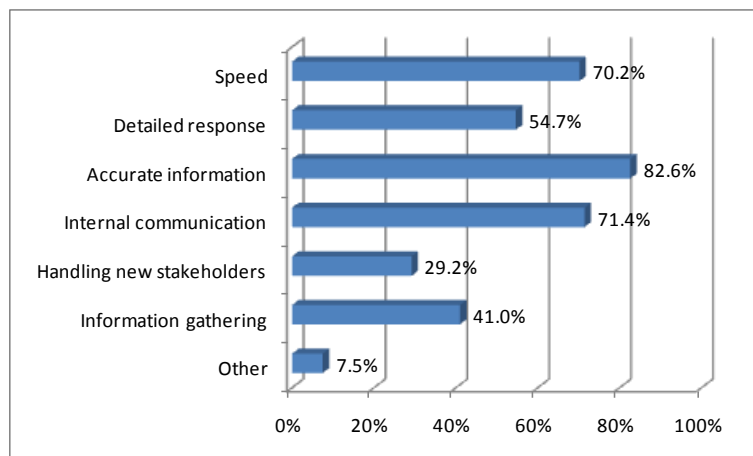
Figures describe that most companies dealt with this research succeed in observance their policy which respects speed and accuracy more than usual though they had to work on tough budget with less staff. In addition, they expanded their work domestically and internationally.

The work they expanded is different from what they used to do. Over 50% (53.4%) of the companies did tackle issues in different ways from how they used to. Figure 5 shows how they did.

Figure 5 :Diffrent response scenes (Ito et al, 2010, RC :Q3-SQ1) n=160
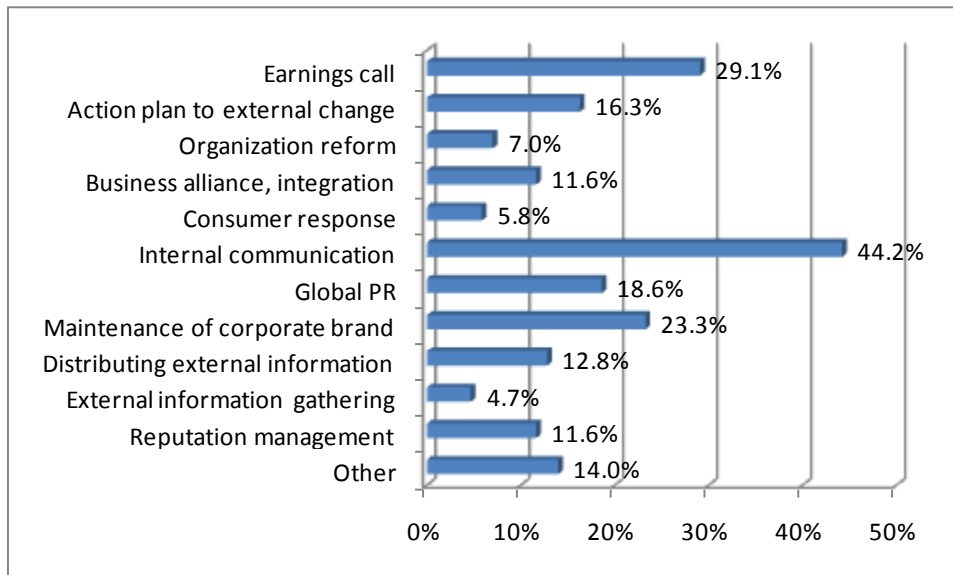
Figure 6 :Change of perception (Ito et al, 2010, RC :Q4) n=160
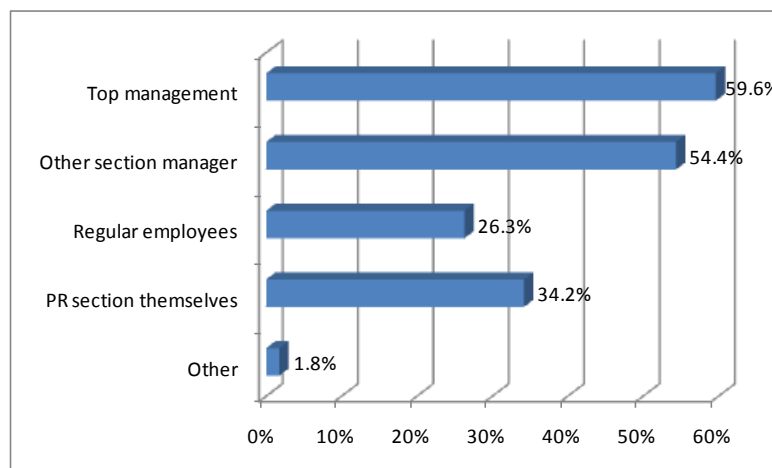
Slashing the forecast, following the image of their companies' brand, companies struggled while the external environment changed drastically; however, they appreciated the inside communication to keep "internal control in emergency" and "stable administration" as well as they could. The result of what they did can be shown on Figure 6. Though administrative

executives and the other managers are changed the way they recognized issues through communication, regular employees are not changed. The question arises: why didn't they change the way of thinking about issues even though public relations section struggled hard? To solve this question, we need to consider the result of the research on "public relations issue of regular employees."

Figure 7: Perception of own company's PR (Ito et al, 2010, RPR: Q11) n=300
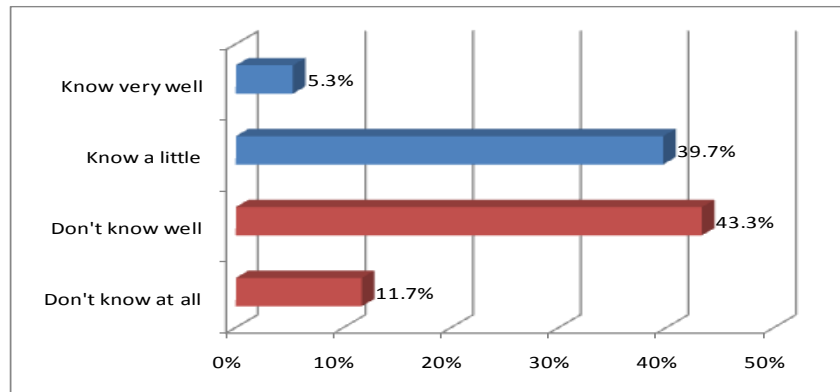
Figure 8: PR Activities of own company (Ito et al, 2010, RPR: Q9) n=300
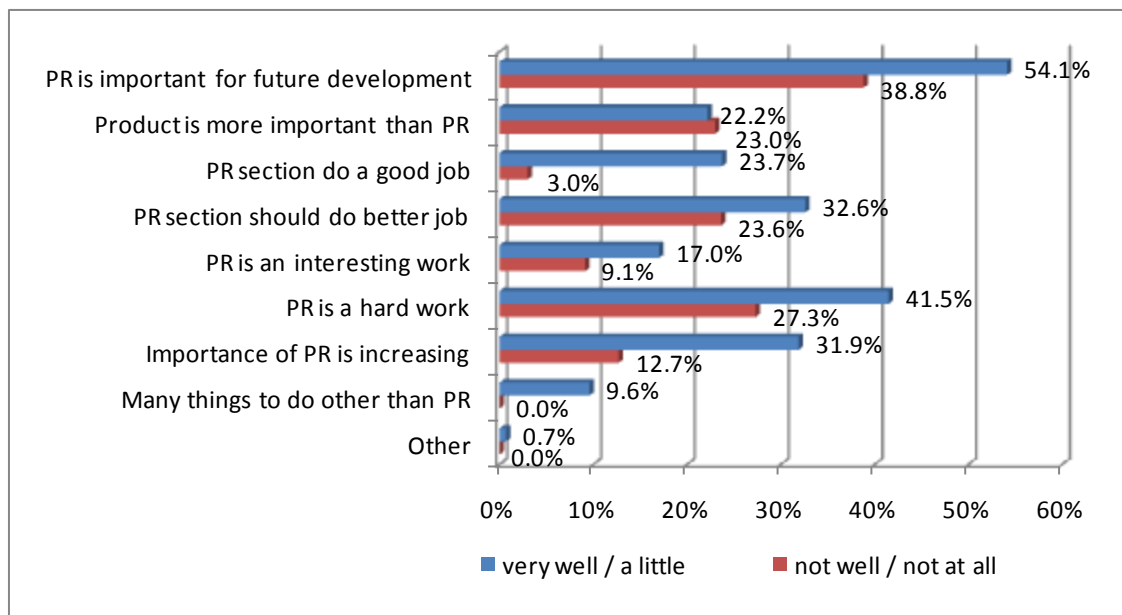
According to Figure 7, regular employees in red do not understand what public relations section does in their companies. Figure 8 is the result of cross tabulation of the Figure 7, the used data is the numbers of "those who know" in blue and "those who does NOT know" in red. The

regular employees who do know what public relations section does in companies evaluate positively their public relations itself and appreciate the its importance. According to this fact, we can assume that companies need the system to spread the idea to let employee know what public relations section does basically in companies. There is no well evaluation on public relations if there is no understanding. Companies need "public relations of public relations."

The second point needs to be argued is the self-image regular employees hold about their companies they work for. The questionnaire has 10 questions to see how regular employees recognize their workplace. The result summed up is shown on Table 1.

Table 1: Consciousness of own company's reputation and image (Ito et al, 2010, RPR: Q9) n=300

Question Items	Agreement Index
Q1.I am interested in my company's news	0.773
Q2.I am proud of my company's good news	0.653
Q3.I want my family to have a good image for my company	0.647
Q4.I like to talk about my company's vision	-0.010
Q5.I have something for my company's reputation	0.480
Q6.I don't know what to do for my company's reputation	-0.033
Q7.Reputation management is for PR section job	-0.130
Q8.I know what to do in reputation crisis	0.437
Q9.I have a manual for reputation crisis	0.267
Q10.My job can do something for my company's reputation	0.483

Agreement Index = (strongly agree + agree) - (disagree + strongly disagree)

Table 2: Factor analysis of own company's reputation and image n=300

Factor	I	II	III	Commonality
Q2I am proud of my company's good news	**0.88**	0.15	-0.02	0.79
Q3.I want my family to have a good image for my company	**0.86**	0.21	-0.04	0.78
Q1.I am interested in my company's news	**0.7**	0.2	-0.01	0.53
Q5.I have something for my company's reputation	**0.65**	0.35	-0.2	0.59
Q4.I like to talk about my company's vision	**0.49**	0.38	0.05	0.39
Q8.I know what to do in reputation crisis	0.24	**0.77**	0	0.65
Q9.I have a manual for reputation crisis	0.26	**0.71**	0.03	0.57
Q7.Reputation management is for PR section job	-0.16	0.19	**0.79**	0.69

Q6.I don't know what to do for my company's reputation	0.05	-0.1	**0.61**	0.39
Factor contribution	2.82	1.5	1.06	
Cumulative contribution	31.32	48.03	59.77	(%)

<div align="right">Principal factor method, varimax, P<.05</div>

An index of agreement of "I am proud of my company's good news when I watch articles and news about my company" is high comparatively. However, it does NOT lead them to act specifically, and an index of this issue is very low.

Table 2 is the factor analysis of 10 questions of the questionnaire. Regarding 3 structures by the factor analysis, the features seen on Table 3 can be analyzed.

<div align="center">

Table 3: Structure of factors

</div>

Type	Features
I Sensitive to information	Sensitive to external information, contributing to own companies' reputation, but not sure whether an appropriate response can be taken in the case.
II Depend on manual	Depending on manual and clearly conscious of own action in the case, but not interested in own company's reputation.
III Depend on others	Worry about the reputation, but no idea of what to do in the case. Never contributing to form own company's reputation and always depending on the experts.

It can be said that regular employees have 3 totally different disposition by reading features introduced previously. They have different sensitivities and reaction toward information. Type I, those who are highly sensitive, have anxiety in the case. On the contrary, Type II, those who are not interested in reputation of their workplace, are confident and know what to do in the case for the sake of manual. Besides, type III, who do NOT know what to do in the case, think that only the public relations section should concern the reputation of their work place. Regarding on regular employees having different sensitivities toward various information to outdo themselves uniformly in communication channel of the company is needed. The efficiency of the action matters here. The PR section should recognize the efficient strategies for each category of regular employees and the information is need to be spread over them as it is spread toward outside stakeholders.

<div align="center">

Results: Qualitative Changes

</div>

The public relations section is the window opened toward the outside world. Besides, at the same time, it is a function as a "sensor" getting the external environment changes. Then, how did the public relations section change qualitivelly when "Lehman Shock" aroused? How did it revise and correct the system of the public relations itself by considering the positive feedback? Regarding on Figure 2 to analyze the data qualitivelly, Figure 9 can be constructed by considering "Research on listed companies."

Figure 9: Qualitative Change[13]
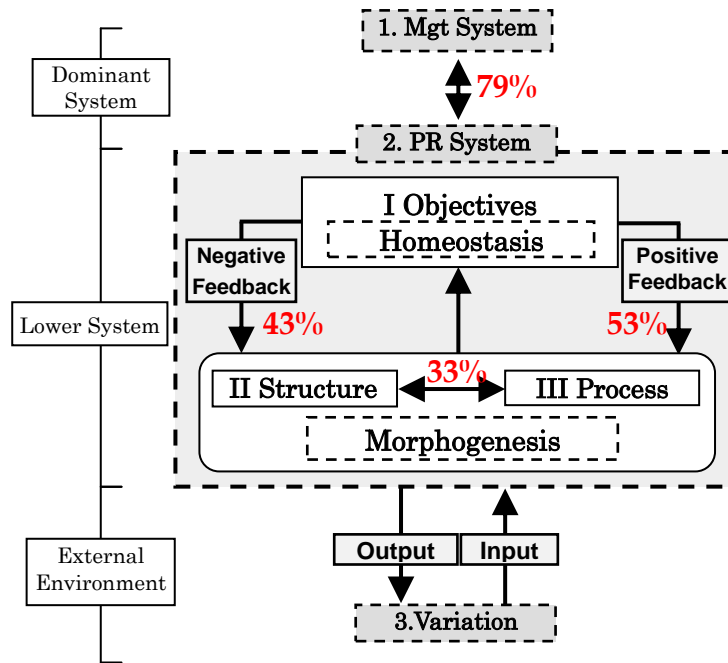
The timing of this research was a year later "Lehman Shock." Out of all companies responded to the questionnaires, **43%** of them corresponded to with negative feedback, on the other hand, **53%** of them did it with positive feedback. Besides, **33%** of answered companies revised, adjusted, and changed their public relations system as the result of positive feedback. In addition, **79%** of answered companies revitalized their communication with those who are in charge of management such as management executives. It made his or her recognition changed influentially, and it lead interaction of management system.

By the external change, which is called "once a hundred year" and "the worst after the World War II" by press, how can we evaluate the result over 50% of companies shift the way to positive feedback? In addition, 1/3 of companies' public relations systems were changed qualitatively, and they changed their own public relation systems. How is this percentage evaluated?

Categories of business, categories of industries, dependency on foreign consumption and IT, development of globalization and so on, each corporate has its different background; however, they did change their own public relation systems actively. The ratio of the data cannot be counted at the time of normal economic situation. We can consider how the influence of "Lehman Shock" was huge from the analysis of the data.

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[13]Results of Figure 9 are measured by Ito et al (2010, RC :Q3, SQ2, Q4) n=160

Discussion

How do we analyze "Lehman Shock?

What is the distinctive feature of "Lehman Shock?" How is it different from the other economic crisis Japan experienced after the World War II? To compare points in common and points of difference, diffusion index of the short-term economic survey of Principal Enterprise in Japan is considered from Figure 10. We focus on Japanese manufacturing industry because this industry easily is reflected in the business climate since it has stock.

Figure 10: Diffusion Index of Japan Bank[14]
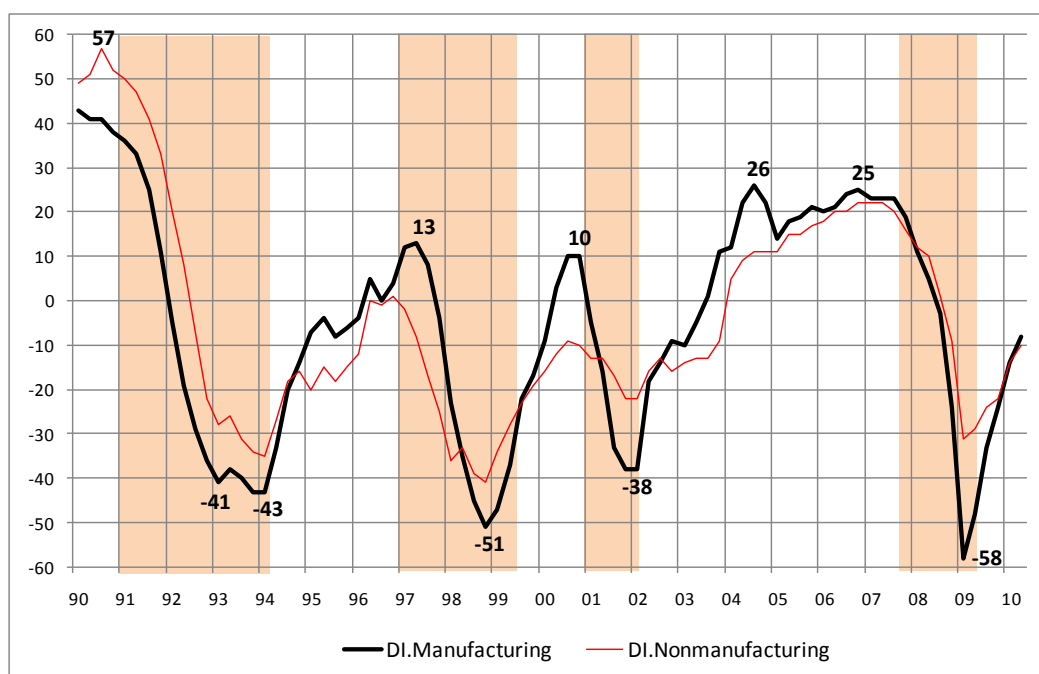
After "Lehman Shock", the D.I. "**- 58**" is recorded in the beginning of year 2009 which is the lowest number Principal Enterprise in Japan has experience. 1997, the year Asian economic crisis started, has the second lowest record "**- 51**" so that we can say that "Lehman Shock" is the most serious issue of Japanese economy by considering this index. However, the record of Asian economic crisis in the Japanese non-manufacturing industry is worse that one of "Lehman Shock." The situations of business climate of both Japanese manufacturing industry and non-manufacturing industry has almost same seriousness during Japan has experienced Asian economic crisis and "Lehman Shock." Then, were phrases such as "once a hundred years" and "the worst after World War II" overstatements?

Asian economic crisis and "Lehman Shock" have definitive different points. The points mean the speed of "Effect" and "Deepening" of influence. Asian economic crisis is directly caused by a crash of Thai-Baht. The influence of this incident took a few months to affect Japanese, American, and European real economies. On the other hand, "Lehman Shock" needed

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[14] Figure 10 is drawn by Japan Bank data. http://www.stat-search.boj.or.jp/mtshtml/q.html (2010 Dec. 01)

only a day to affect Japanese, European, and Asian economies. Besides, it spread over the world quickly, and the credit crunch was reflected on the real economy of the business world. In addition, the deepness of influence was very drastic. Figure 10 shows the quick and worst downturn of the index of the latter half of 2008 and the beginning of 2009.

Ito et al. (2010) analyses these "Lehman Shock" features as three key words, "Evolution of ICT", "Globalization" and "Openness". These three points can be applied to Asian economic crisis; however, these points differ from Asian economic crisis when we focus on the speed of "Effect" and "Deepening" of the influence. The significant feature of "Lehman Shock" does NOT mean a new key word which symbolizes the change of our days quantitatively. Since "Evolution of ICT", "Globalization" and "Openness", these key words' degree of "Deepening" is increased, the external environment around companies was irreversibly fluidized. In addition, its confusion apparently became strong. Therefore, "Lehman Shock" gave strong burdens to Japanese corporate and was imminent with the speed we have never experienced.

Then, questions arise. What is the "economic crisis" such as "Lehman Shock?" How does it change the public relations system and the PR strategy of the companies? In this paper, "economic crisis" is considered as the quick change of the external environment.

Environmental Changes and the Strategy of Companies
The word "strategy" is not old in the research of business management. At first, the strategy was an idea often attached to the word "management" though the word "strategy" has attached to the public relations in the 21st century. Then, how did companies adapt and change the idea of strategy in the business management?

The origin of the word "strategy" is a military word, and this word was sophisticated as the study of business administration was developed. The idea of "strategy" was often used in the study of business administration. Besides, it was changed itself by social and economic change. There is an academic field called "strategy theory". However, a big issue of experts of this field is that there is no definition to answer a question, "what is a "strategy?" Porter (1996) describes in his paper how it is confused. De Kluyver et al (2003) and Whittington (2001) insist in common that strategy consist of two elements, "objective of strategy =What of strategy" and "method of strategy = How of strategy".

Whittington (2001, pp.3-7) tried to draw up typology of strategy by mapping two elements of strategy. 4 quadrants which describe strategy property can be illustrated in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Strategy Map[15]
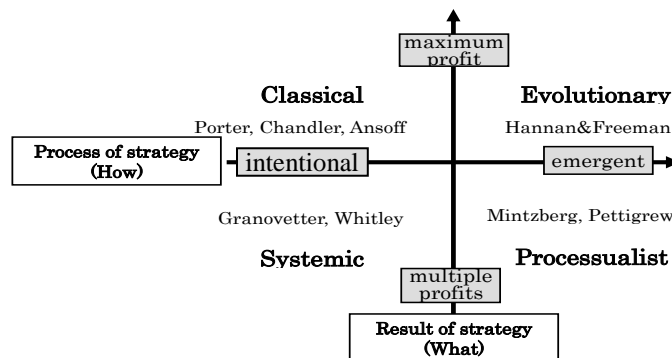
As one of the famous authorities of the 4th quadrant Classical, Porter (1980) laid the foundation of modern strategy theory which is most familiar to Japanese. This era is called "Industrial Economy", Porter (1980, pp.17-54) trying to reduce external environment elements into Five Forces, the business world started to have belief that the values of the market can be monopolized by analyzing SWOT. The structure of industries at that time was relatively stable. Still now, some limited industries can keep this situation; however, the new strategic theories have been suggested since there is the limit when the external environment is put together into Five Forces.

When the external environment and industries are stable, which means the degree of inertia of companies is high, they lay more emphasis on "efficiency" than "change" as Whittington (2001, pp.4-5) pointed out. Japanese companies in the rapid economic growth of the post-WWII period are exactly typical example of the state introduced above. However, they had focused on maximization of their profit, which is illustrated in the 4th quadrant, by efficacy and cutting costs. On the other hand, according to diversification of social environment, companies seeking multi-interests appear. As the result they changes their way from "Classical" to "Systemic." Added to this, in case the degree of efficiency of maintaining strategies decreases, companies change the strategic process from "intentionally" to "emergently." Besides, they shift their way from "Classical" to "Evolutionary" or "Processualist."

Based on the strategic property mentioned above, there are many studies to consider management strategic typology. For example, Mintzberg (1998) adopted classifying in 10 types to analyze, and Numagami (2009) did in 5 types. Picking up exemplary industrial economic model and resource-based model, Figure 12 can be constructed to illustrate the vicissitudes of management resources.

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[15] According to Whittington (2001, pp.3-7, p.60), Figure 11 is arranged by the author.

Figure 12: Sift of Business Resources Model

	Industrial Economy Model	Resource-based Model	Post Resource-based Model
Resources	Products and Market	Corporate resources and capabilities	Human resources and knowledge : Soft resources
Objective	Establishing a position in the market	Ensuring sustainable advantage	Continuous recreation
Content	*Formation of industrial structure *Analysis of the external environment *5 forces analysis	*Business Portfolio *Establishment of core competency	*Prediction of changes by soft resources *Product development by soft resources
Value	Acquisition value	Value Creation	Value Recreation

The left end of Figure 12, in the era of Industrial Economy Model, the external environment was comparatively stable according to Porter (1980). By establishing the fittest position in the market, they could achieve the maximum profit efficiency at that time. In other words, the profits of corporate come from the market automatically. It can be said that gaining profits means "acquisition of the value" in the market by picking up the value in the market. They could accomplish their mission by focusing environmental factors into 5 Forces. However, when the external environment becomes instable, direction of strategy is forced to be toward the relationship between the resources of their own companies and the external environment. And at the same time, the border of fixed "industry" becomes vague.

Rumelt(1991) considers that competitive superiority of companies depends on unique values in the companies, tried to describe up this fact by positive research. And finally Rumelt(1991) declare the birth of "Resource-based Model" by explaining that Industrial Economy companies are limited to 9-16%, on the other hand companies with their own original values are more than 45%. After the study of Rumelt(1991) was introduced, many scholar changed their direction of concerns toward the resources of companies. "Dynamic Capability Theory" by Teece and Shuen(1997) is also on the extended line of this stream. They insisted that companies need ability to develop and improve constantly. That is to say, companies need to construct "core capability" by transcending the boundaries of enterprise units. Thus, accoring to Teece and Shuen, corporate needs to improve their core competency by designing enterprise portfolio based on core projects.

It should be also added "Post-resources Based Model" companies which are focused on human resources and intellectual property. Barlett and Ghoshal(2002) insisted that many companies struggled the lack of human resources and knowledge for overcoming speedily rapid change of external environment, not lack of physical financial resources. "Post-resources Based Model" tries to realize competitive superiority by products development of specific human resources and knowledge.

"Industrial Economy Model" of Porter (1980), "Resources-based Model" of Rumelt(1991), "Dynamic Capability Theory" by Teece and Shuen(1997) and "Post Resource-based Model" of

Barlett and Ghoshal(2002) are illustrated in Figure 13. Its vertical axis means that the original method "discovery", "creation", "recreation" of companies to create values. On the other hand, its horizontal axis represents the relationship with the external environment "controllable", "unpredictable".

Figure 13: Business Resources and External Environment
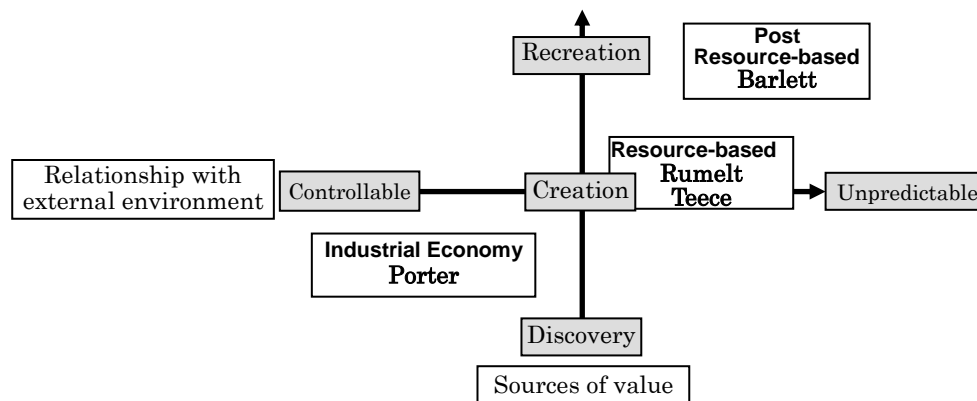
Considering Figure 11, 12 and 13, the relationship between the strategy of companies and the external environment is formularized. When instable factors degree of the external environment increases, strategic process changes, **from "intentional" to "emergent".** Added to this, the origin of companies' values also changes **from "external" to "internal".** In other words, it becomes **more dynamic** and **from "hard" to "soft"** (from tangible assets to intangible assets). Even though the aim of the strategy "WHAT they need to do" is not changed, the option or method "HOW they need to do" is drastically changed with uncertainty of the external changes.

Companies change their management strategy dynamically when their recognition of the external environment changes. When Peters and Waterman (1982) insists that "the most successful organization is one which is good at adapting continuously all the sort of external environment changes, this assertion is exactly same to an observation of this chapter. Based on the vicissitudes of strategy theory by considering the management strategy and changes of public relations strategy happened in PR sections, we take a view of major issues of public relations of our days.

Major Issue of Strategic Public Relations at Present
As the figure 2 illustrated, management system is the upper system, and the public relation is the lower from the point of corporate governance view. Since anticipation looking upon strategic theory and external environment change has increased, management system has credited more powerful strategic system. Thus, the management system has started to require same philosophy to public relations system.

Participating of senior management team to public relations section, participating of the top of public relations section to the board meeting, these tendencies indicate the fact companies

speculate the strategic public relations. Then, how can strategic concept change through the days the external environment changes drastically? It is observed in the preceding chapter that the strategic process is going to be emergent, not intentional. Besides, its self renovation system and monitor cycle works in shorter span of time. The lag is renovated dynamically through interaction of external and internal environment. It leads possibility strategic options change huge. This phenomenon applies to not only management strategy but also to public relations system. What happens to the public relations system of companies after "Lehman Shock" can be said "self renovation" of the PR system.

It is necessary to think a question "how often 'normal situation' of the external environment exists?" in nowadays. Take a look at grayish zone in figure 10. It means the drastic economical change, and
the figure shows that almost a half of zone after 1990's is grey. Corporate strategy of modern times needs to be emergent, and its "open-system" should be opened more and more. Important decision making such as switching negative/positive feedback, open/closed system, strategic public relations issues are dealt by the hands of public relations section of a company. Though these decisions which effect over-all management system, it is notable that 79% of the data tells us public relations section has communicated with management section. Increase of this ratio indicates how vehement the external environment change caused by "Lehman Shock" is. There is a possibility it hits high ratio hereafter consecutively. Importance of decision making by administrators of public relations system section is going to increase routinely.

Nowadays, what is needed as administrators of public relations system is not only the ability they can improve the brand image of their companies, but also ability they make decisions toward positive feedback quickly. Though classical public relations administers task is only needed to be a great communicator, in these days it is getting closer to what management section does. The change of external environment is irreversible so that the words such as "normal situation" and "routine" are not used so often. It should be concluded, from what has been said above, that the change in the public relations section caused by "Lehman Shock" is not temporary incident but it is going to be constitutive.

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Offering an "Authentic" tourism experience: An investigation of nation branding of Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic

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Abstract

This study examines the concept of authenticity in the context of destination branding efforts of two countries: Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic. Specifically, it explores what aspects of authenticity are communicated in the tourism efforts of these countries and compares their approaches to promoting authentic tourism experiences. Using a multidisciplinary case study methodology, including in-depth interviews and textual analysis of campaign material, this research explores how tourism promoters make authenticity claims in their communication efforts, as well as the means through which they reach their intended audiences.

The purpose of this study is to examine how tourism destinations make claims of authentic tourism experience through their public relations and strategic communication efforts. Recently, there has been a growing interest in what constitutes the construct of authenticity within both the academic (Edwards, 2010; Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Molleda & Roberts, 2008; Molleda, 2010a, 2010b; Ragas & Roberts, 2009) and professional community ("Authentic Enterprise", 2007; "Authentic influence", 2009; "PR industry leaders", 2009).

In particular, authenticity has become a buzzword among public relations and strategic communications professionals as evident from the Arthur W. Page Society's Authentic Enterprise report issued in 2007, the International Communications Association (ICA) conference panel held in Chicago in May 2009, and the special edition issued by the Journal of Communication Management in 2010 discussing authenticity as one of the most promising trends in contemporary public relations.

However, despite this growing interest in the construct, there is fluidity of meanings surrounding authenticity and its application to various public relations and strategic communication contexts. It is often associated with terms such as "trustworthy", "legitimate", "honest," "genuine," and "credible" (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Ladkin & Taylor, 2010; Molleda, 2010a, 2010b; Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroech, & Avolio, 2010; Wong & Cummins, 2009). One often cited definition of the construct states that people tend to perceive as authentic that which exists in its natural form; is not artificial or synthetic; is original in design and not an imitation or copy; is executed exceptionally and extraordinarily well; refers or draws from heritage or history; and inspires people to a higher goal (Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Molleda, 2010a).

From public relations perspectives, Molleda (2010b) argues that "authenticity should become central to the study and practice of public relations and communication management and their specialized functions because organizations are progressively being pressured by stakeholders demanding greater transparency, openness, and responsibility" (p.223). The field of destination promotion provides an ideal setting for studying and expanding the concept of authenticity because countries often project themselves as offering authentic tourism experiences in terms of nature, commodities, goods and services, infrastructure, and heritage; elements that are identified as components of authenticity is academic literature (for e.g. Gilmore & Pine, 2007; MacCannell, 1973, 1976; Wang, 1999).

Applying this rationale, Molleda (2010a, 2010b) has proposed a preliminary index of authenticity, which includes a range of questions through which an organization's perceived authenticity could be evaluated. The purpose of the index is to measure the effectiveness of public relations efforts, techniques, and message system by evaluating the perceived authenticity of organizations, including its actions, operations, products, services, and corporate spokespeople in the mind of internal or external stakeholders.

This study builds upon Molleda's (2010b) proposed authenticity index and Gilmore and Pine's (2007) authenticity frames or genres (natural, original, exceptional, referential, and influential) to examine the tourism promotion and nation branding efforts of Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic, including their communication with external and internal stakeholders. In depth interviews with members of public relations and communication management team and a review of campaign material is used to identify and evaluate the campaign and authenticity claims.

As Molleda (2010a, 2010b) suggests, studying authenticity from a public relations perspective, requires assessing how an organization crafts authenticity claims and how the stakeholders perceive these claims. This study addresses this challenge and contributes building public relations understanding of authenticity, by studying it in the context of nation branding efforts. This study aims to provide practical and research insights to how managers and scholars can examine and incorporate authenticity into their communication with key publics, through the experience of these two popular tourism destinations. Likewise, implications for the practice of public relations for tourism promotion, as well as potential areas for future research are discussed.

This study examines the tourism efforts of Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic because they have current national-branding and tourism promotions efforts targeting English-Speaking Publics (Visit Costa Rica, 2011; GoDominicanRepublic, 2011a); and because tourism is a large part of both countries' Gross Domestic Product (WTTC-CR, 2010; WTTC-DR, 2010).

Tourism in Costa Rica

Located in Central America, the Republic of Costa Rica borders both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Nicaragua and Panama (CIA Factbook-CR, 2011). A former colony of Spain, in 1823, Costa Rica became one of the United Provinces of Central America, which jointly declared their independence from Spain. This federation disintegrated in 1838, at which time Costa Rica proclaimed its sovereignty and independence.

Costa Rica is a popular tourism destination in Central America and is ranked as one of the most visited international destinations (Visit Costa Rica, 2011). Tourism is the Costa Rica's largest industry, employing more than 13% of the country's work force. In 2010, tourism accounted for approximately 14% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (WTTC-CR, 2010). It is also the largest earner of foreign exchange for the country. Eco-tourism accounts for nearly 40% of the industry's revenues in a typical year (Euromonitor, 2011). While country is home to about 4.5 million population, it received over 2 million tourists in 2010 (Visit Costa Rica, 2011). The United States is Costa Rica's most important market for tourism accounting for almost half of country's tourist arrivals (U.S. Department of State, 2011).

Costa Rica has been taking a lead in ecotourism and sustainable tourism efforts. It is a member of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism that unites all stakeholders in the industry in influencing policies, developing projects and providing a global communication platform (UNEP, 2011). Although Costa Rica is a small country covering about 0.03% of the earth's surface, it is home to about 6% of the existing biodiversity in the entire world and over 25% of the country is composed of conservation and natural protected territory (Visit Costa Rica, 2011). Under its commitment to sustainable tourism, Costa Rica has designed a Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) program to recognize businesses in the country's tourism industry for demonstrating and practicing sustainable policies and procedures (Visit Costa Rica, 2011).

The leading force behind Costa Rica's tourism branding and communication efforts is the Costa Rican Institute of Tourism (Instituto Costarricense de Turismo, ICT) also known as Costa Rica Tourism Board. The institute, created in 1955, is an autonomous institution of the State (government), responsible for regulating the tourism activity in Costa Rica and promoting Costa Rica's tourism attractions and destinations both at a national and international level (personal communication, Feb. 15, 2011). The institute creates tourism norms, regulations, incentives, and

grants the tourist declaratory for Costa Rica's hotels, travel agencies, rental cars and other tourism organization and service provider. Its vision is "To be the leading and rector institution for the country's tourism activity" (Visit Costa Rica, 2011).

The organization launched its global tourism branding campaign, *No Artificial Ingredient*, in 1996 to promote the country as an exotic destination that is closer and less expensive than similarly marketed destinations such as Thailand and other Asian countries. McCann Erickson, a global marketing communications agency, developed the campaign to position Costa Rica as a popular ecotourism destination using messages such as "Take Central America's largest volcano, add in national parks, mix in miles of pristine beaches". The multibillion dollar campaign included various public relations and communication management strategies and communication platforms including the social media to convey its brand identity and image to its target stakeholders around the globe. While the campaign's messages have changed over years, the country has continued to use its key tagline.

Currently, the country uses its official website (www.visitcostarica.com) available in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish as its primary communication medium with the target audiences. Other communication platforms include a Facebook page, YouTube channel, Twitter, and print material available on the website.

In a 2010 report released by the international consulting firm, FutureBrand, Costa Rica was named the country with the best destination brand positioning. The country's tourism branding slogan, "No Artificial Ingredients," created by the Costa Rica Tourism Board (ICT) was ranked first in Latin America and twenty-seventh among 110 countries evaluated by the firm (Visit Costa Rica, 2011). The country was also included in the 2010-2011 list of "The Developing World's 10 Best Ethical Destinations," an annual ranking produced by Ethical Traveler magazine based on a study of developing nations from around the world to identify the best tourism destinations among them. The benchmarking uses categories such as environmental protection, social welfare, and human rights.

Tourism in the Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic occupies two thirds of the island of Hispaniola in the heart of the Caribbean (CIA Factbook- DR, 2011). Colonized by Columbus in 1542 the island was home to the first city in the Americas: Santo Domingo. In the 1700s, the French colonized the west part of the island and brought an African slave population which led to the formation of Haiti, a formerly slave nation that claimed its independence in 1804 (CIA Factbook- HA, 2011). The Dominican Republic claimed its independence from Haiti in 1844, and to this day both nations share the island in a peaceful, but tense relationship (Sagas, 1994).

The Dominican Republic is the largest tourism destination in the Caribbean (CTO, 2008). In 2010, the tourism sector contributed an estimated 15.9 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (WTTC-DR, 2010). Additionally, the Dominican tourism sector is one of the largest employers in the country (CIA Factbook- DR, 2011). The United States is the most important market for Dominican Republic tourism (CTO, 2009). In 2009 and 2010, American nationals constituted more than 30% of the foreign-national arrivals to the country.

The Dominican Republic Ministry of Tourism (Sectur, 2009a) describes the country's tourism offering as a leisure destination focused on beach-front tourism, even though the sector is undergoing a diversification process and promoting the golfing, congress, ecotourism and cultural tourism segments. The Dominican Republic Tourism Ministry (Sectur, in Spanish) has

international promotion offices in 22 countries (GoDominicanRepublic, 2011a). In the United States, there are four tourism promotion offices one each in Chicago, New York City, Miami and Washington D.C. (GoDominicanRepublic, 2011b).

In January 2009, the Dominican Tourism Ministry launched a new tourism promotion campaign for the country with the Slogan "Dominican Republic Has it All" (Sectur, 2009b). In the words of the minister of tourism, Francisco Javier Garcia, this campaign promotes the country internationally "so that the world knows that the only thing that the Dominican Republic is lacking is snow" (Sectur, 2009b, ¶3). This campaign promotes alternatives to beach-front tourism, such as adventure tourism, ecotourism and cultural and historic tourism. As part of this campaign the Ministry promotes the benefits of the country as a tourism destination through many mediums, including a dedicated website (www.godominicanrepublic.com) available in Spanish, English, Dutch, Italian and Russian. The website offers information about the country's history, culture, events, and popular destinations (The Dominican Republic Has it All, 2011).

Literature Review

Authenticity: Defining the Construct

While authenticity is not a new construct, it has been receiving growing attention in academic research (Edwards, 2010; Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Molleda & Roberts, 2008; Molleda, 2010a, 2010b; Ragas & Roberts, 2009). Authenticity as a construct has its roots in Greek philosophy ("To thine own self be true") and has been extensively examined in the field of psychology (for details read Erickson, 1995; Harter, 2002) and organizational leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Ladkin & Taylor, 2010; Walumbwa et al., 2010; Wong & Cummins, 2009). The construct captured interest of communication scholars as early as 1990s when Hardt (1993) presented the evolution of discussions of authenticity from a critical theory perspective. Since then, the construct has continued to attract attention of scholars and practitioners in public relations and its related communication disciplines (Beverland, Lindgreen, & Vink, 2008; Camilleri, 2008; Fine, 2003; Gilmore & Pine, 2007; McLeod, 1999; Molleda, 2010a, 2010b; Zickmund, 2007).

However, there is still lack of empirical support for its importance and only limited theoretical understanding of what is meant by authenticity and how it can be measured. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines authenticity as "the quality of being authentic, or entitled to acceptance; as being authoritative or duly authorized; as being in accordance with fact, as being true in substance; as being what it professes in origin or authorship, as being genuine; genuineness; as being real, actual; reality" (OED, 2010). Along similar lines, an authentic organization has been described as one that is being true to itself and that is showing qualities such as sincerity, innocence, originality, and genuineness (Fine, 2003; Zickmund, 2007).

Cook (2007) emphasized that authenticity is among the top future trends to better understand the issues facing communication professionals and their clients. While writing in *The Public Relations Strategist*, trade publication of the Public Relations Society of America, the author explained:

We're at the start of an era where people want authentic stories about authentic people. PR [public relations] professionals are the storytellers. It's our job to help find the authenticity at the core of our companies and clients, and to tell those stories to the world in words that will truly be heard. (p. 33)

Public relations and strategic communication professionals working in Destination Promotion Organizations (DMOs) are often entrusted with telling stories about nations to publics all around the world, and as Cook (2007) highlights, authenticity is an integral element of such story telling. According to Gilmore and Pine (2007), authentic communication entails communicating the true values and traditions of an organization/brand. Similarly the Arthur W. Page society (2007), argues that authenticity is a key ingredient that organizations should include in their communication with key stakeholders to gain their trust and credibility.

Molleda (2010a, 2010b) explains authenticity and its dimensions in public relations and communication research from a multidisciplinary perspective, including academic literature from advertising, communication studies, marketing, and public relations. An examination of the construct's definition from various perspectives led the author to conclude that "authenticity is subjective and contextual; that is, authenticity claims reflect the life experiences and aspirations of a segment of the society" (Molleda, 2010b, p. 227). This implies that authenticity is created as a shared experience between the organization that is making authenticity claims as well as its target audience who make subjective judgments about these claims and thereby the organization and its reputation.

Gilmore and Pine (2007) have also discussed brand authenticity as a multidimensional construct. They propose five genres of authenticity corresponding to five economic offerings: commodities (natural authenticity), goods (original authenticity), services (exceptional authenticity), experience (referential authenticity), and transformations (influential authenticity). Gilmore and Pine (2007) defined Natural authenticity as something existing in its natural form and being untouched by humans. Original authenticity refers to that which has an original design or is the first of its kind. Exceptional authenticity refers to what is perceived as "being done exceptionally well, executed individually and extraordinarily by someone demonstrating human care" (p.49, italics in the original). Referential authenticity is related to what refers to a shared context, history or memories. And influential authenticity is related to that which exerts influence on others, or refers to a higher calling.

Additionally, Gilmore and Pine (2007) explain that authenticity is a construct that is subjectively defined. They argue that "what one person experiences as completely authentic, another may view as completely inauthentic, and a third may be somewhere in between" (pp. 92-3).

As identified by scholars, authenticity is a construct that is experienced by organizational stakeholders while they are subjected to various forms of authenticity claims via organizational communication. For example, Molleda and Roberts (2008) applied Gilmore and Pine's (2007) five genres of authenticity to assess a public relations campaign sponsored by the National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia. The authors examined the brand authenticity of the campaign that was built and enhanced using a campaign ambassador, Juan Valdez, who enhanced the perceived genuineness and thereby brand authenticity of the campaign. Similarly, from a brand management perspective, Ragas and Roberts (2009) studied Chipotle Mexican Grill's social responsibility campaign and found that brand authenticity is closely related to sincerity, one of the Aaker's (1997) brand personality dimensions. Along similar lines, Beverland (2005) in his examination of communication and marketing strategies of luxury wine firms concluded that "authenticity is projected via a sincere story that involves the avowal of commitments to traditions, passion for craft and production excellence, and the public disavowal

of the role of modern industrial attributes and commercial motivation" (p. 1025).

From a consumer perspective, Beverland, Lindgreen, and Vink (2008) concluded that advertising (or communication) reinforces images of authenticity that could take three forms: pure (literal) authenticity, approximate authenticity, and moral authenticity. The authors also recommend some cues that advertisers could use to enhance each of these forms of authenticity, for example pure (literal) authenticity cues that "provide consumer with in situ [sic] guarantee of the genuine article"; approximate authenticity can be enhanced by using cues that "provide consumers with a feeling that this brand will help achieve self-authentication though connecting with place and time"; and finally, moral authenticity can be built by using cues that "provide consumer with a feeling that this brand will help achieve self-authentication through connecting with personal moral values" (p.8).

Camilleri (2008) uses the various dimensions of authenticity as collected for various fields and synthesizes them into nine genres, including existential, exceptional, iconic, influential, natural, original, referential (or experiential), staged, and symbolic. Molleda (2010b) adapted Camilleri's typology to propose an authenticity index or scale that could measure the effectiveness of public relations communication efforts including communication messages and tactics to assess their authenticity as perceived by internal and external stakeholders. The scale asks a series of questions regarding whether the (interactive, online, print, audiovisual) text or personal message conveys ant of the following aspects about the sponsored organization. This study combines Molleda's proposed index and Gilmore and Pine's (2007) authenticity genres to study the use of authenticity claims in nation branding and tourism promotion.

Tourism and Nation Branding

Just as corporations and products manage their brand images, nations are often associated with a brand identity or image. For example India is known for its cultural diversity, Thailand is associated with medical tourism, France is popular as a romantic destination, and the United States is associated with opportunity and liberty (Nuttavuthisit, 2006). The nation brand image and reputation is defined by how people from around the world perceive them (Anholt, 1998, 2004, 2006; Caldwell & Freire, 2004; Skinner & Kubacki, 2007). The way people perceive a nation significantly affects the success of its business, foreign investment, and tourism initiatives, as well as its diplomatic, cultural, and economic relations with other nations (Gfk Roper, n.d.). In a globalized world, nations are in constant competition with each other to gain the attention of the international media, investors, tourists, businesses, consumers, and other governments (Anholt, 2006). Therefore, national governments are increasingly cultivating and leveraging their nation's identity, to gain competitive advantage (Aronczyk, 2008).

The concept of nation branding rests on the premise that nations can be branded using the strategies and tactics of branding. In fact, Fan (2006) emphasizes that nation branding involves using branding and marketing communications techniques to shape perceptions of a nation's image. . The American Marketing Association dictionary defines place marketing as "designed to influence target audiences to behave in some positive manner with respect to the products or services associated with a specific place" (AMA, 2011). However, the efforts to brand a nation go beyond strengthening positive association with its products or services to include a nation's diplomatic ties, and its global standing among other nations (Anholt, 2006; Aronczyk, 2008; Skinner & Kubacki, 2007). Leveraging on one or more of their resources including social,

political, economic, cultural, and human resources, nations can enhance their global standing by building a unique and favorable brand image (Anholt, 2004). It is recommended that as with any brand, nations communicate their brand values to their target publics in order to develop brand identities that resonate with the image of the nation (Skinner & Kubacki, 2007).

International tourism is one of the most important service sectors in the world in terms of national income and employment accounting for over 800 billion USD in industry revenue and over four million jobs (IBISWorld, 2010). According to a report, compiled by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), worldwide international tourism has become a major element of the international trade and revenue generation, next only to fuels, chemicals, and automotive products (UNWTO, 2011).

Given the prominence and increasing significance of the tourism sector, it is not surprising that nation governments have launched full-fledged nation branding campaigns to attract international tourists to their countries (e.g. Korea Be !nspired, Incredible !ndia, Colombia is Passion). Not only is tourism an important aspect of nation brands, but also it is often the most visibly promoted aspect of a nation brand, since most governments and tourists boards invest heavily on 'selling' their countries around the world (Anholt, 2006).

The industry figures underscore the importance of branding in the tourism industry. However, scholars also point out that branding is underutilized in destination marketing (Cai, 2002; Konecnik & Go, 2008; Pike, 2005). This could be explained, in part, by the complexity of branding and promoting destinations. Tourism destinations have been valued as probably one of the most difficult products to market due to its diverse stakeholders and difficult-to-control brand images (Heath & Wall, 1991; Leiper, 1996, Palmer & Bejou, 1995; Palmer, 2002).

DMOs are often charged with the challenging task of building and managing the nation brand image of their respective countries. DMOs use a variety of communication strategies and tactics to convey a unique and favorable brand image to their diverse publics. Therefore, despite the complicated process of branding and promoting a destination, their communication efforts provide ample opportunity to study how they attempt to shape the image that key publics have of their nation. Therefore, this study examines the communication efforts for tourism promotion done by two countries: Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic. The purpose of this study to examine the communication of authenticity claims by these two popular tourism destinations to further our understanding of nation branding and to contribute to the scholarly discourse about the topic.

Authenticity in Tourism and Nation Branding

While research about authenticity in tourism dates back to over three decades, recently there has been a renewed interest in the construct (Camilleri, 2008; Knudsen & Waade, 2010; Wang, 1999). In tourism setting, authenticity was first introduced by MacCannell (1973, 1976). According to MacCannell (1973), the motivation behind tourism visits is a quest for authentic experiences; in other words, tourists visit places that they consider have social, historical, and cultural importance. Authentic tourism experiences, as MacCannell (1973) explains, provide tourists with an opportunity to participate or at least witness the real life of the places visited.

In search of the authentic experiences, tourists might opt for guides or tours, but when they use guided tours that make such experiences superficial, they are exposed to what MacCannell (1973) calls "staged authenticity". Cohen (1988) argues that such staged authenticity is a product

of commoditization of local life products and experiences that prior to tourism penetration were present in their real form. For instance, the local cultural and ethnic art, products, costumes, rituals, and food become touristic services or commodities that are produced or performed exclusively for tourists. As these cultural products lose meaning to local people, they become overly exaggerated to attract tourists and thereby "staged" to look authentic.

However, Wang (1999) argues that such object-related version to examine authentic tourism experiences ignores what he calls existential authenticity. Wang proposes that "In search of tourist experience which is existentially authentic, tourists are preoccupied with an existential state of Being activated by certain tourist activities" (p. 359). In other words, authentic tourism experiences are defined by individuals subjectively or intersubjectively as the process of tourism unfolds. According to Wang, in several other forms of tourism such as nature, beach, adventure, family, and visiting friends and relatives, tourists seek their own version of authentic experiences, irrespective of whether the toured objects are authentic.

More recently, Knudsen and Waade (2010) propose that authenticity is "neither a 'thing' you can possess nor a 'state of mind' but something people can *do* and a feeling which is *experienced*" (p.1, italics in the original). The authors argue that in this form authenticity is performed and hence call it performative authenticity. Through performative authenticity, entities such as tourism organizations, media, government, and other similar organizations can authenticate sites, places, and sights to enhance tourists' understanding and intimacy with the places and surroundings they visit. In other words, organizations can communicate and offer authentic tourism experiences to visitors.

The academic literature suggests that nation branding and tourism promotion efforts provide an appropriate context for developing and evaluating the conceptual framework of authenticity. In particular, tourism destinations contain the landscaping, buildings, and attractions that are based on one or more specific or central themes that provide an environment where the organizations can create the context and opportunities for interaction and experience on which the public's perception of authenticity will be based.

Additionally, public relations and strategic communication professionals working for promotion of tourism destinations are often entrusted with telling stories about specific or central themes of the destination to publics all around the world, and as Cook (2007) highlights, authenticity is an integral element of such story telling.

Although a tourism destination can highlight many aspects of their destination through their communication efforts, including their geography, heritage, people, and history (Anholt, 2006; Kotler & Gertner, 2002), this study is focusing primarily on how they communicate their authenticity. More specifically, this study explores the efforts to communicate that their destination is "trustworthy", "legitimate", "honest," "genuine," and "credible" (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Ladkin & Taylor, 2010; Molleda, 2010a, 2010b; Walumbwa et al., 2010; Wong & Cummins, 2009). Based on the review of academic literature, this study seeks to address the following research question:

RQ1: Do the Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) of Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic actively attempt to communicate their destination's authenticity?

RQ2: How do the tourism promotion efforts of Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic develop and communicate the construct of authenticity?

RQ3: Which authenticity frames are most salient in the tourism promotion efforts of

Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic?

Method

This study uses case study methodology. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2006), a case study is "a common qualitative research technique" which "uses as many data sources as possible to systematically investigate individuals, groups, organizations or events" (p. 136). In a case study approach, analysis of multiple data sources is conducted, which helps to improve the reliability and validity of the study (Rubin, 1984). In addition, a case study approach is recommended by scholars as a useful "research strategy that involves using one or more cases to create theoretical constructs, proposition and/or midrange theory from case-based, empirical evidence" (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007, p. 25). Yin (2003) mentions that case studies provide insightful evidences of particular instances of a phenomenon by drawing from a variety of data sources.

The case study approach employed for this research was based on Yin's (2003) method of explanation building, which has been used by public relations and advertising (e.g. Dewhirst & Davis 2005; Molleda & Roberts, 2008; Pompper & Higgins, 2007; Ragas & Roberts, 2009). Explanation building consists constructing "a description and illustration about the phenomenon under investigation, including causes, processes and outcomes based on the theoretical framework chosen to inform the situation or place it in context" (Ragas & Roberts, 2009, p. 271). Subsequently, the findings from the various methods of data gathering are used to answer the research questions for the case (Yin, 2003).

Data collection

A review of campaign materials was used to identify and evaluate the campaign and authenticity claims. The data for this study was collected using in-depth interviews and textual analysis of the countries' tourism promotion materials. The authors reviewed the documents and online and print communication material produced by Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic as part of their tourism promotion efforts. The documents included media kits, website pages, news releases, videos, images and the Facebook pages for both destinations. In depth interviews with members of public relations tourism promotion teams in the United States were also conducted.

Data analysis

In order to build an explanation of how these countries communicate the authenticity of their destinations, the authors constructed an authenticity analytical framework (see Table 1). The framework is based on a combination of Molleda's (2010b) proposed authenticity index and Gilmore and Pine's (2007) authenticity frames or genres (natural, original, exceptional, referential, and influential). Using this analytical framework, this study examined how the two countries develop and communicate the construct of authenticity to their internal and external stakeholders.

Table 1. Authenticity Analytical Framework for Tourism Destinations

Authenticity frames (adapted from Gilmore & Pine, 2007)	Authenticity measures (adapted from Molleda, 2010)
Natural authenticity	Communicate the nature of the commodities or products promoted (e.g. renewable, non-renewable natural resources). Communicate the heritage of the destination, its historical background, its offerings and its potential.
Original authenticity	Provide accurate representations of the original destination, events and/or landmarks. Communicates the originality of the products and services offered.
Exceptional authenticity	Communicate the quality of the destination's offerings.
Referential authenticity*	Communicate (through images or claims) the pleasure or fun that could be achieved when they encounter the destination. Communicate the values, beliefs and principles of the destination. Communicate the public's perception of the destination its promises and ideas.
Influential authenticity	Communicates efforts for sustainability and corporate social responsibility. Calls for becoming part of initiatives that goes beyond consumption.

For the purpose of tourism destinations, this was interpreted as being part of claims related to personal experience with the destination

Findings

The first research question asked if these countries' DMOs actively attempt to communicate their destination's authenticity through the promotional efforts. The interviewees from both countries were asked these questions, to which both responded that this was an important part of their promotional messages.

The representative for the Costa Rican DMO mentioned that they communicate authenticity by carrying the "sustainable tourism" message to their audience (Personal communication February 15, 2011). She further explained, "We believe that our message is unique and it reflects the importance that we give to the balance that we seek to achieve in the topic of environmental, cultural and socio balance in the tourism industry".

The representative for the Dominican DMO explained that they communicate authenticity by detailing how the destination has it all. She added, "It is authentic because of the cultural riches that make it unique and of course, because it is where the New World began. We have for the 'firsts' for America, which makes us unique" (Personal communication March 17, 2011).

To address the second research question (how authenticity is communicated), the researchers analyzed the transcripts of the in-depth interviews as well as tourism promotion material available online. Findings per destination are detailed below.

Authenticity Claims in Costa Rica's Tourism Promotion

Costa Rica's tourism promotion efforts make several explicit and implicit authenticity claims. One of its promotional brochures reads "Costa Rica is without doubt one of the most *authentic* expressions of beauty and national diversity, just as *authentic* as the kindness of its people" (Costa Rica General Information, 2011, p. 10, emphasis added).

In addition, one of the top news displayed on its official tourism promotion website informs the visitors that Hotel Punta Islita, one of Costa Rican company, has been acknowledged as a leader in sustainable tourism. The news article further mentions that award is "created to acknowledge leadership from individuals, companies, or communities in providing an *authentic* [emphasis added] experience in the place where their tourist operations are located through responsible campaigns" (Visit Costa Rica, 2011).

Further analysis reveals the presence of following authenticity genres in the country's tourism promotion communication:

Natural authenticity: This dimension of authenticity is the most prominent in Costa Rica's tourism promotional material, as is also evident from its campaign tagline, *No Artificial Ingredients*. The country promotes itself as a destination that offers one of the richest forms of biodiversity in the world in terms of species density. According to the public relations practitioner responsible for the North American public relations agency and the promotion of the country in the market, Costa Rica's tourism efforts are channeled to promote the country as a sustainable tourism destination (personal communication, Feb. 15, 2011). The homepage of its official tourism website welcomes visitors with the following message:

"In Costa Rica the visitor can enjoy lovely tropical beaches, the grandest adventures, the wonders of nature, scintillating culture, all the necessary components of an ideal vacation. No wonder, then, that thousands of tourists have made Costa Rica their top travel choice" (Visit Costa Rica, 2011).

The associations with nature are also communicated in the choice of colors and other visuals used on promotional material. Green and its tones are the dominant colors and images of beaches, national parks, and flora and fauna are prominent in promotional materials. In addition, the news articles and press releases published on the website often present the country as the perfect destination for nature and adventure.

The country also leverages on it cultural diversity and heritage. The mentions of more than 50 years of democratic tradition and peace also make natural authenticity claims. Further, images of local community and cultural experiences draw from historical traditions of a true Costa Rican experience that the country offers to visitors. For instance one of the posters available on the official tourism website carries the tagline, "You may be a tourist but your soul will be local" (Visit Costa Rica, 2011), implying that visitors will be able to experience the true Costa Rican culture and heritage during their stay.

Original Authenticity: Costa Rica makes claims of original authenticity through its Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) program. It is the first and only country in the world to implement the CST program whose purpose is to certify businesses and firms in the tourism industry according to the degree to which their operations approach sustainable model of natural,

cultural, and social resource management. Created in 1999, the program won the country a place among the top ten ethical destinations for 2011 by the Ethical Traveler, a global non-profit organization (Visit Costa Rica, 2011).

In addition, the country is the first to establish a Biodiversity Law (No. 7788), a legislation that promotes conservation, sustainable use, and equitable sharing of the natural resources in the country. Costa Rica was awarded the global prize "Future Policy 2010" by the World Future Council in recognition for its law to protect nature and developing policies that have positive effects on current and future generations.

Recently, Costa Rica also launched a program called "Get Going in Costa Rica" in partnership with the National Aquarium and the Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens to give visitors a chance to win a trip to Costa Rica. In the advertising message available on its official Facebook page, the country claims that "The original ecotourism paradise, Costa Rica has become a world leader in the quest doe environmental sustainability" (Visit Costa Rica, 2011).

Additionally, the official website promotes the originality of products and landmarks that make Costa Rica a unique traveling experience. The traditional oxcart and yoke (a wooden card) are presented as artifacts of Sarchi, a community recognized as the birthplace of Costa Rican arts and crafts. The website also boasts about canopy tours that were originally developed in the country in the 1990s.

Exceptional Authenticity: Costa Rica's tourism promotion efforts focus on how the country is an exceptional natural wonder included within the top 20 richest countries in biodiversity on Earth in terms of species density. Further, it claims to provide exception hospitality that provides tourists with unmatched travel experiences that they will never forget. For instance, one of the press releases on the official website mention:

> "This Costa Rican endeavor refers to authentic tourism products that allow visitors to live a unique experience within genuine and enriching conditions. The list includes: eco-tourism, adventure tourism, rural community tourism, well being tourism, business-related tourism, and others that are dedicated to strengthening the country as a tourism destination" (Costa Rica Press Release, 2011).

Referential Authenticity: The tourism promotion of Costa Rica conveys referential authenticity by sharing testimonials of visitors on its official tourism website. By communicating visitors' perception of Costa Rica, the country reinforces its promises of a unique travel experience. In addition, the images shown on print and online promotional material generate the feeling of pleasure and fun that tourists experience while engaging in various activities and indulging its nature and culture.

Influential Authenticity: The tourism communication efforts of Costa Rica are focused on environmental protection and sustainability. In addition, the country promotes human development and rural community enhancement to generate sustainable development with equity and a high participation of local investment. These explicit calls on human beings for higher goals suggest influential authenticity claims.

Personal interview with one of the public relations practitioners in-charge of promoting Costa Rica's destination brand in North America revealed ICT promotes "tourism development in Costa Rica with the intention to obtain a better socio-economical level for Costa Ricans and also to protect the environment, culture and infrastructure of the country" (personal communication, Feb. 15, 2011).

Costa Rica emphasizes its concern and respect for local communities and the environment in its tourism promotion messages. One of the main goals of its CST program is to protect the environment and promote human development by means of tourism (Costa Rica General Information, 2011). The Costa Rica Tourism Institute (ICT) has developed the Blue Flag Ecological Program that provides grants to local communities and schools to help protect the beaches from the imminent danger of pollution and its repercussion on public health and tourism industry.

In addition, ICT's mission is to "Promote a wholesome tourism development, with the purpose of improving Costa Ricans' quality of life, by maintaining a balance between the economic and social boundaries, environmental protection, culture, and facilities" (Visit Costa Rica, 2011). The institute also enforces policies to protect the physical and moral integrity of human beings and develop tourism activities to foster Costa Rican families' well-being. The institute claims that it will favor and foster tourism activities that are based on ethics, quality, and sustainability.

One of the sections on the website also discusses community rural tourism that the country promotes in order to foster development of rural communities. The country claims that its rural world is as diverse as its other tourism assets such as nature and history, emphasizing that community rural tourism is "an authentic tourism product impossible to imitate, an important tool for the development of the communities and the enhancement of the Costa Rican identity" (Visit Costa Rica, 2011).

Authenticity Claims in Dominican Republic Tourism Promotion

Authenticity claims were also found throughout the Dominican Republic's tourism promotion materials. In some cases, the claims were identified in the texts of videos and web or printed material; in others they were implicit in the images shown.

Natural authenticity: This was one of the most frequently used authenticity claims found in the tourism promotion messages. This relates to the communication of the nature of the commodities, as well as the heritage and history of the destination. History and heritage were highlighted in most of the tourism promotion material for the Dominican Republic. The diversity that resulted from the mix of cultures that make up the Dominican Republic was mentioned as one of the destination's main strengths. An example of such claim was, "There's no place quite like the Dominican Republic. That's because its history is the result of an unlikely mixture of influences; nowhere else will you find a blending of European, African, and native Taíno Indian cultures" (GoDominicanRepublic, 2011c, ¶1).

Similarly, in the media kit's "A quick look at culture" factsheet, the following claim was found, "As the first city founded in the America's and the DR's capital city (named the cultural capital of the Americas in 2010), Santo Domingo boasts a valuable collection of museums, historic sites, monuments, arts and music and more" (GoDominicanRepublic, 2001d, p.1).

Original authenticity: This was the most prominent in the videos and images promoting tourism in the Dominican Republic. Every image in the website [GoDominicanRepublic.com] contained representations of the landmarks and natural settings that could make the country an attractive tourism destination. One of the TV Spot videos available on the tourism website, showed a man going from a busy New York Street to a golf field and Dominican beach (GoDominicanRepublic, 2011e). Similarly, another video available on the country's Facebook page showed people playing merengue (the national music of the Dominican Republic) and

popular singers interpreting classic merengue songs in different popular places such as the Colonial Zone, the Model Market, and a view of downtown Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic Has it All, 2011b). Along those same lines, when asked if she considered the country's tourism offering authentic and why, the Dominican DMO representative replied, "Definitely. It is an authentic experience where the visitor in addition to vacationing will be able to participate in Dominican culture and idiosyncrasy" (Personal communication, March 17, 2011).

Exceptional Authenticity: this frame was implicit in much of the factual information, even though it was not salient in a single line or paragraph; it was the idea that resulted from the sum of the information. For example, the convenience of visiting the destination was an underlying idea of much of the information provided. For example, the Dominican Republic was described as "easy to get to," and containing "plentiful and reliable" transport between the country's regions (GoDominicanRepublic, 2011g).

Similarly, in a personal interview with liaison for the Dominican DMO, explained how the Dominican people make this destination exceptional. She said, "People are unique in DR. We have beautiful beaches, landscapes, golf courses, amazing zones, but our hospitality and are people are unique and our visitors always talk about that" (Personal communication, March 7, 2011).

Other claims were more specific as to the exceptional quality of the destination, for example, the tourism promotion website read:

"Whether you dance the night away with costumed devils at the Carnival celebrations in Santiago and La Vega, watch Dominican baseball's finest players at the winter season game, or dance to pulse-pounding merengue at festivals in the New World's first city, the Dominican Republic (DR) has it all" (GoDominicanRepublic, 2011f, p.2).

Referential authenticity: Together with natural authenticity claims, the promotional material for the Dominican Republic contained several *referential* authenticity frames. These were present in a number of reviews cited on the country's websites, media kits and news releases from Condé Nast publications, TripAdvisor.com, and USA Today, among other international sites and publications (GoDominicanRepublic, 2011g).

Influential authenticity: Although less salient, some claims of *influential authenticity* were also found. These were mostly present in mentions of the country's offerings and commitment to ecotourism. For example, "The DR is leader in environmental and sustainable tourism. Approximately 25 percent of the country's land and coastal shores are preserved as national parks, reserves and sanctuaries" (GoDominicanRepublic, 2011h).

Additionally, the media kit contained a factsheet on Dominican National Parks and protected areas. The document begins with this statement, "A thought-leader in ecotourism, the Dominican Republic government has long been preserving its country's magnificent beauty for the many generations to come" (GoDominicanRepublic, 2011i).

The last research question asked which authenticity frames are most salient in the tourism promotion efforts of Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic. Findings showed that both countries used all of the authenticity frames proposed by Gilmore and Pine (2007), but that some were more prominent than others. As detailed above, these most salient frames were different for the countries. While Costa Rica focused most on its natural authenticity, and its sustainable tourism offerings, the Dominican Republic focused most on its original authenticity and its cultural heritage. Influential authenticity was prominent in the Costa Rican material, but not as

salient in the Dominican promotional messages. However, for neither Costa Rica nor Dominican Republic, the referential authenticity claims seemed to be given prominence over any of the others.

Discussion

The purpose of this study of tourism promotion of Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic was to examine how these tourism destinations communicate their authenticity, in order to further our understanding of nation branding and to contribute to the scholarly discourse about the topic. Findings of in-depth interviews with representatives of the Destinations Management Offices in the United States and a textual analysis of the online promotional material suggest that not only do these destinations make authenticity claims in their promotional messages, but such claims are considered an important element of their promotional strategy.

By communicating its authenticity, a tourism destination seeks to communicate that it is "trustworthy", "legitimate", "honest," "genuine," and "credible" (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Ladkin & Taylor, 2010; Molleda, 2010a, 2010b; Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroech, & Avolio, 2010; Wong & Cummins, 2009). Or put simply, a desirable tourism destination. Communicating authenticity in destinations is important, because this is something that tourists are looking for when they travel. Although authenticity is defined subjectively, tourism promoters can actively participate in creating a sense of authenticity by communicating with their visitors.

Knudsen and Waade (2010) argued that DMOs can authenticate sites, places, and sights to enhance tourists' understanding and intimacy with the places and surroundings they visit. As shown in the findings, this is something that is being actively pursued by the Dominican and Costa Rican DMOs. In the case of Costa Rica, it is most notable in the sustainable tourism certification, and in the Dominican Republic in the mentions of history and cultural heritage of being the first city of the Americas.

It was surprising to find a weak focus on referential authenticity. This authenticity frame explains that "people tend to perceive as authentic that which refers to some other context, drawing inspiration from human history, and tapping into our shared memories and longings; not derivative or trivia" (Gilmore & Pines, 2007), and in this study was identified through the claims related to another person's or source's (i.e. magazine or rating agency) experience with the destination. Given the prominence given lately to the value of peer reviews in tourism purchase decisions (e.g. Amis, 2007; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; O'Connor *et al*. 2008), you would expect these DMOs to highlight insights and experiences from previous tourists. Such claims were not much emphasized suggesting that the destination promoters are more concerned with communicating their own perceived authenticity, rather than their publics'.

In addition to providing evidence of the authenticity claims communicated and the means through which they were communicated (i.e. press releases, videos, website information), this study also highlights how these two competing destinations use their authenticity claims to differentiate themselves from other tourism destinations. Given how important nation branding is to the economy of a country, and how important tourism is to the economies of both these countries, gaining a competitive advantage by differentiating themselves in the eyes of tourists, is very important for these nations.

As an initial exploration into authenticity claims in destination branding promotional messages, this study highlights how two leading destinations in the Americas employ authenticity claims, which may provide other DMOs with insights as to how they might include authenticity claims in their own promotional messages. Additionally, it contributes to the understanding of the role of public relations in the communication of a destination's authenticity.

However, one important limitation of this study is that it did not evaluate the perceived authenticity of these destinations. Because authenticity of a destination is subjective (Wang, 1999), it is important that future research incorporate the views of the key publics that the DMOs are attempting to reach.

This study adds to our understanding of the use role of authenticity-framed messages in tourism promotion and the contribution of public relations efforts in communicating a destination brand's authenticity. In doing so, it supports Molleda's (2010a, 2010b) claim for the potential of authenticity as a central concept for the study and practice of public relations, which can contribute to addressing the public's pressure for greater transparency, openness and responsibility.

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**Examining the Role of Social Media in Effective Crisis Management:
The Effects of Crisis Origin, Information Form, and Source on Publics' Crisis Responses**

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Abstract

Publics' increasingly use social media during crises and, consequently, crisis managers' need to understand how to strategically optimize these tools. Despite this need, there is scarce theory-grounded research to understand key factors that affect how publics consume crisis information via social media compared to other sources. To fill this gap, an emerging model helps crisis managers understand how publics produce, consume, and/or share crisis information via social media and other sources: the Social-mediated crisis communication model. This study tests essential components of the SMCC model through a 3 (crisis information form) x 2 (crisis information source) x 2 (crisis origin) mixed-design experiment ($N = 338$). The findings indicate the key role of crisis origin in affecting publics' preferred information form (social media, traditional media, or word-of-mouth communication) and source (organization or third party), which impacts how publics anticipate an organization should respond to a crisis and what crisis emotions they are likely to feel when exposed to crisis information.

During the 2009 U.S. salmonella outbreak a Health and Human Services Twitter account had 3,000 followers (Booz Allen Hamilton, 2009). During the 2010 Colorado wildfires a map created by a University of Colorado student that identified evacuation areas and response efforts received 1,825,095 views (Stephens, 2010). These and numerous other examples highlight publics' increasing interest in using social media during crises and, consequently, crisis managers' need to understand how to best strategically optimize these tools. Despite this need, there is scarce theory-grounded research to understand key factors that affect how publics consume crisis information via social media compared to other sources. Such research is especially important to conduct given that many communicators have reservations about the credibility of social media (Wright & Hinson, 2009).

Through a 3 x 2 x 2 mixed-design experiment ($N = 338$), this study tested essential components of a new model: the Social-mediated Crisis Communication Model (SMCC) (Jin & Liu, 2010; ___ et al., under review). Grounded in relationships among social media, traditional media, and offline word-of-mouth communication, this model helps crisis managers decide if and how to respond to influential online content creators through considering the crisis origin as well as the crisis information form and source. The findings indicate the key role of crisis origin in affecting publics' preferred information form (social media, traditional media, or word-of-mouth communication) and source (organization or third party), which impacts how publics anticipate an organization should respond to a crisis and what emotions they are likely to feel when exposed to crisis information. These findings run counter to dominant crisis management theories such as situational crisis communication theory that do not distinguish the effect of crisis information form and source on publics' acceptance of crisis messages, providing support for the SMCC model.[16]

Theoretical Framework

In this section, we first define social media, crises, and issues. We then summarize the SMCC model (Jin & Liu, 2010; ___ et al., under review) and review research associated with the primary SMCC components tested in this study.

Definitions

Social media is "an umbrella term that is used to refer to a new era of Web-enabled applications that are built around user-generated or user-manipulated content, such as wikis, blogs, podcasts, and social networking sites" (Pew Internet & American Life, 2010). In this study we operationalize social media broadly as various digital tools and applications that facilitate interactive communication and content exchange among and between publics and organizations as have others (e.g., Wright & Hinson, 2009).

A crisis is the "perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization's performance and generate negative outcomes" (Coombs, 2007a, p. 2-3). An issue is a "contestable point, a difference of opinion

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[16] See, for example, Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2009). Further explorations of post-crisis communication: Effects of media and response strategies on perceptions and intentions. *Public Relations Review*, *35*(1), 1-6.

regarding fact, value, or policy, the resolution of which has consequences for the organization's strategic plan and future success or failure" (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p. 93). Issues emerging online can be more unpredictable than issues that emerge offline (Coombs, 2008).

The Role of Social Media in Organizational Crisis Communication

During crises, publics' social media usage increases (Pew Internet & American Life, 2006), leading some experts to conclude that public participation is the new norm in crisis management (Baron, 2010). For example, a recent survey by the American Red Cross revealed that 69 percent of adults believe that emergency responders should be monitoring social media sites in order to quickly send help, and 74 percent expect response agencies to answer social media calls for help within an hour ("Web users increasingly rely," 2010). Furthermore, publics who are active social media users or become active during crises assign a higher level of credibility to social media coverage than to traditional mass media crisis coverage (Horrigan & Morris, 2005; Procopio & Procopio, 2007; Sweester & Metzgar, 2007). For all publics, social media provide emotional support after crises through enabling publics to virtually band together, share information, and demand resolution (Choi & Lin, 2009; Stephens & Malone, 2009). This online participation during crises often is replicated in offline participation in crisis resolution (Dutta-Bergman, 2006).

These findings reveal that organizations should no longer have a choice about whether to integrate social media into crisis management; the only choice should be how to do so. Therefore it is surprising that only 29 percent of U.S. companies have formal social media policies (eMarketer, 2010) and most public relations practitioners do not believe social media are as credible or as accurate as mainstream media (Wright & Hinson, 2009). As Coombs (2008) noted: "The rapid evolution of new media often results in the practice of public relations getting ahead of research. The practice of crisis communication is ahead of research in terms of social media" (p.1). Despite a plethora of attention to the use of social media in public relations professional publications, research is still needed to provide evidence-based guidelines to make the business case for integrating social media into crisis management practices. For example, Taylor and Kent (2010) found that 66 percent of the articles on social media in the Public Relations Society of American's *Public Relations Tactics* started with the assumption that the value of social media is a given. In the area of crisis communication where stakes are often high, it is especially important to provide evidence-based guidelines to effectively meet publics' expectations for communication via social media. To this end, we now summarize an emerging model that starts to address this challenge: The social-mediated crisis communication model (SMCC).

Social-Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) Model

Jin and Liu (2010) proposed the blog-mediated crisis communication as a roadmap for deciding if and how to respond to influential blogs before, during, and after crises (see *Figure 1*). The model presumes that crisis managers must first identify which bloggers key publics designate as influential because it is not possible to monitor all blogs. As such the model defines influence as derived from bloggers' issue-involvement and self-involvement and that bloggers exert the most influence when their information authority and credibility both are high. Therefore, the model contends that influential blogs affect blog followers by providing issue-fit opinion leadership that addresses followers' informational and emotional needs during a crisis.

In addition, the model posits that influential blogs affect non-blog followers indirectly through providing media with crisis information and offline word-of-mouth communication between blog followers and non-blog followers. Finally, the BMCC model provides a matrix for evaluating blogs' influence and recommended blog-mediated crisis communication strategies.

After testing the BMCC model with 40 American Red Cross communicators, researchers made significant revisions to the model. First, the model was renamed the social-mediated crisis communication (SMCC) model to better reflect that crises can be sparked and spread online through a variety of social media platforms and offline social interactions, not just by influential bloggers (___ et al., under review; see *Figure 2*). As Smith (2010) noted, researchers should consider "a socially distributed model of public relations, in which individuals with little recognized stake in an organization initiate and fulfill public relations responsibilities through online interactivity" (p. 333). This renaming of the model also was supported by survey research indicating that publics increasingly use social networking sites such as Facebook instead of blogs (ECAR, 2008; Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010) and the growth of Twitter as an effective crisis management tactic (Sutter, 2009).

This model renaming also led researchers to re-think the key publics featured in the model: (1) influential bloggers were converted to influential social media creators; (2) blog followers were converted to social media followers; and (3) non-blog followers were converted to social media inactives (___ et al., under review). In addition, to better depict the ubiquity of on and offline opinions shared among key publics, the SMCC model more clearly indicated how offline word-of-mouth communication occurs among the organization responding to an issue/crisis, influential social media creators, social media followers, and social media inactives. Researchers added a gray box (rather than the multiple arrows used in the original model) to indicate who participates in this offline word-of-mouth communication (___ et al., under review; see *Figure 2*).

Finally, to reflect factors that affect how organizations respond to crises via traditional media, social media, and offline word-of-mouth communication, the SMCC model added five considerations that emerged from the American Red Cross interviews: crisis origin, crisis type, infrastructure, message content, and message form (see *Figure 2*). These factors are listed under the organization in the center of the redesigned model. Having the organization as the central source for crisis information, however, does not indicate that only one organization is involved in any given crisis. As Adkins (2010) noted: "A disaster or crisis event rarely if ever has an impact that is limited to only one organization or entity...planning which is limited to the consideration of singular organizational perspectives is likely to fail" (p. 95). Therefore, the SMCC model represents a single organization's crisis management considerations while acknowledging that other organizations serve as additional sources of crisis information that affect how publics' respond to crises.

Crisis origin describes whether the crisis was initiated from an internal organizational issue (e.g., mismanaging funds) or from an issue external to the organization (e.g., a severe weather incident occurs that the American Red Cross responds to), which affects attribution of responsibility and thus the available crisis response strategies. Crisis type – victim, accident, or intentional – theoretically impacts how organizations should respond to crises that emerge on or offline as indicated in situational crisis communication theory (Coombs, 2007), but in the case of the American Red Cross communicators predominately relied on providing instructing or

adapting information. Therefore the revised SMCC model encourages organizations to more carefully consider how crisis type affects publics' acceptance of crisis responses.

Organizational infrastructure indicates whether the crisis should be best handled through a centralized organizational message or localized by individual branches, affiliates, or chapters. In the case of the American Red Cross, communicators revealed that centralized messages helped chapters deliver consistent messages and overcome resource constraints that limited their abilities to create original social media content. Content and form refer to attributes of the crisis message which provide emotional support for impacted publics, similar to what Coombs (2007) calls instructing and adapting information. Content refers to the information included in the message that helps publics respond to and make meaning of the crisis, and form is how the message is conveyed (e.g., via a Tweet, press release, etc.). In the case of the American Red Cross communicators, content decisions often were deferred to National Headquarters, but the preferred form was Twitter followed by Facebook. This study continues to refine our understanding of strategically managing crises on and offline through zooming in on four key variables highlighted in the SMCC model discussed in greater detail below: crisis origin, message strategy, crisis information form, and crisis information source.

Crisis messages strategies as a function of crisis origin. The SMCC model (Jin & Liu, 2010; ___ et al., under review) indicates that the crisis origin affects attribution of responsibility and thus the available crisis response strategies. In other words, publics perceive a crisis with an internal origin as more controllable than a crisis with an external origin and thus assign higher attribution of responsibility for crises with internal origins (Coombs, 2007; Jorgensen, 1993; Lyon & Cameron, 2004; Weiner, 1986).

In terms of available crisis response strategies, Coombs (1998) argued that an organization's reaction to conflict might vary from defensive to accommodative. Defensive strategies deflect crisis responsibility and become less effective when organizations are viewed as responsible for a crisis. Defensive strategies include attacking the accuser, denial, and excuse. Accommodative strategies emphasize image repair, which are needed as image damage increases and include ingratiation, corrective action, and full apology. Furthermore, Coombs and Holladay (2005) mapped post-crisis communication reputation building strategies on a range of actions from defensive responses (i.e., denial, scapegoat, excuse, and justification) to accommodative responses (i.e., compensation and apology), stating that an organization can incur more financial expenses when more accommodative strategies are used. More recently, Jin (2010) found that publics tend to experience anger, which leads to more support of defensive organizational crisis response, if the offense is perceived as from someone outside the organization and against publics or their wellbeing.

In addition, based on the continuum model of advocacy and accommodation embedded in the contingency theory of strategic conflict management, Jin (2010) categorized organizational crisis responses into defensive strategies to accommodative strategies: While a more accommodative stance generally led to the utilization of the strategies such as ingratiation, corrective action, or apology, a more defensive stance led to the utilization of the strategies such as attack, deny, excuse, and justify. In testing crises with an internal locus of control, Lyon and Cameron (2004) found that apologetic or more accommodative response were most appropriate, which was also recommended by Coombs (1999). In the SMCC model (___ et al, under review), locus of control is called crisis origin: Whether the crisis was initiated from an internal

organizational issue or from an issue external of the organization, which affects attribution of responsibility and thus the available crisis response strategies. Thus, we propose:

H1.1: Publics are more likely to accept an organization's defensive crisis strategies when the crisis origin is external.

H1.2: Publics are more likely to accept an organization's accommodative crisis strategies when the crisis origin is internal.

Form and source

The SMCC model further indicates that selecting the appropriate crisis message strategy is a function of form and source in addition to attribution of responsibility (Jin & Liu, 2010; ___ et al., under review). Form is how the message is conveyed (e.g., via a Tweet, press release, etc.) and source is who the information is sent by (e.g., by the organization featured in the center of the SMCC model, journalists, bloggers, other organizations, etc.). Although form and source largely are ignored by crisis communication scholars, there is emerging support for examining how these factors affect crisis message acceptance. For example, in some cases publics assign a higher level of credibility to social media than to traditional mass media as a form for obtaining crisis information (Horrigan & Morris, 2005; Procopio & Procopio, 2007; Sweester & Metzgar, 2007). Publics' involvement in a crisis also affects the crisis information forms they seek out (Avery, 2010a). Further, Twitter as a form has been found to be especially effective for communicating with publics actively involved in a crisis (____ et al., under review; Smith, 2010).

In terms of source, emerging research also indicates value in further exploring this factor in a crisis management context. As several scholars have noted most crisis research focuses on a single organization as the source for crisis information and rarely on the larger set of entities involved in a crisis response (e.g., Atkins, 2010; Waymar & Heath, 2007). When source is considered in crisis communication research it largely is in the context of which information sources are quoted within media coverage of crises (e.g., Liu, 2010a; Littlefield & Quenette, 2007) or specific attributes of single organizational sources, such as a spokesperson's ethnicity (e.g., Arpan, 2002). In the SMCC model, operationalized from publics' point of view, crisis information source amounts to who send out the message regarding a given crisis. Though the sources can come from a wide arrays of channels, the SMCC model categorizes the sources as either the organization (official crisis information reported by the organization at the center of the crisis) or a third party (any groups or individuals outside the organization, including other publics and the media). Outside the realm of crisis communication research, the source of information has been established as critical for establishing trust and credibility (e.g., Avery, 2010b; Callison, 2001), which affects message acceptance. Therefore, to explore the potential effect of crisis information form and source on publics' acceptance of crisis information strategies we ask:

RQ1.1: How, if at all, is publics' acceptance of organizational crisis strategies affected by crisis origin and the crisis information form?

RQ1.2: How, if at all, is publics' acceptance of organizational crisis strategies affected by crisis origin and the crisis information source?

Crisis Emotions as a Function of Crisis Origin

Emerging research finds that publics seek out social media because they uniquely provide emotional support during crises (e.g., Jin & Liu, 2010; Choi & Lin, 2009; Phillips, 2008; Kaye, 2005). The type of emotional support publics receive from all source types can directly impact their perception of crisis response strategies (Coombs & Holladay, 2005) as publics deal with their feelings (Jin, 2009, 2010). Research finds an association between high crisis responsibility and negative public emotions (Choi & Lin, 2009; McDonald, Sparks, & Glendon, 2010) as well as crisis engagement and all public emotions (McDonald, Sparks, & Glendon, 2010; Yang et al., 2010). Also, specific emotions have been tied to undesirable crisis outcomes. For example, anger predicts negative purchase intentions and negative word-of-mouth communication (Coombs, 2007b). Also, fear leads to negative word-of-mouth communication for crises that have internal causes (McDonald, Sparks, & Glendon, 2010).

Choi and Lin (2009) proposed two types of emotions: *attribution independent emotions* and *attribution dependent emotions*, both identified in understanding affective components of the situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) model. Choi and Lin (2009) suggested that emotions such as anger and contempt are likely elicited from the attribution process. In addition, according to the cognitive appraisal theory (e.g., Lazarus, 1991), there are other types of emotions (i.e., fear) without clear direction of attribution or blame, which might be categorized into attribution-independent crisis emotions. Choi and Lin (2009) further suggested that more research needs to be conducted to explore whether crisis emotions might change as a function of crisis type, depending on the locus of control (internal or external) and attribution of crisis responsibility. This corresponds to the SMCC model's argument on examining crisis origin, which defines whether the crisis was initiated from an internal organizational issue or from an issue external of the organization. Crisis origin thus is directly related to the attribution of responsibility: External crisis origin links to low organizational responsibility attribution, while internal crisis origin links to high organizational responsibility attribution. To answer this call for future research, this study integrates the conceptualization of crisis attribution from the perspective of SCCT theory and crisis origin for better understanding of how crisis origin is associated with different crisis emotions as a result of different crisis attribution.

First, for *attribution-independent emotions* such as fear, Jin (2009) found that low perceived crisis controllability and high uncertainly contributed to more feelings of fright. Jin (2009, 2010) also suggested that publics tend to feel more anxiety, another type of attribution-independent emotions, when they perceive the crisis situation as uncertain yet somewhat controllable. Therefore we propose:

H2.1: Publics feel more attribution-independent emotions (anxiety, apprehension, and fear) when the crisis origin is external.

Second, for *attribution-dependent emotions*, anger been studied extensively in crisis communication (Coombs & Holladay, 2005). For example, Turner (2007) found that anger can motivate people to take control of a situation and ameliorate the problem at hand from a behavioral perspective. According to Jin (2010), the core relational theme underlying anger is a demanding offense against "me" and "mine" (Lazarus, 1991), as individuals react with anger when they believe "the other person, either through neglect or intentionally, treats us with disrespect" (p. 275, Lindner, 2006). Cahn and Abigail (2007) identified anger as one of the primary factors that contribute greatly to the escalation of conflict. Jin (2010, 2009) found that

publics tend to experience anger when facing a demanding offense from an organization against them or their wellbeing. The ego-involvement of the public is engaged to preserve their identity or benefit in the situation. Reports of felt anger also were found to increase as perceptions of crisis responsibility increased (Coombs & Holladay, 2005). As McDonald, Sparks and Glendon (2010) recently summarized, internal controllable crises usually resulted in anger. Therefore we propose:

> **H2.2**: Publics feel more attribution-dependent emotions (anger, contempt, and disgust) when the crisis origin is internal.

Method

The effects of crisis information form and source were examined via a 3 x 2 x 2 mixed-design experiment with college students. The first factor was a between-subjects variable: crisis origin (external vs. internal). The other two factors were within-subjects variables: (1) crisis information form: word-of-mouth (WOM) vs. social media (SM) vs. older media (OM) and (2) crisis information source: third party vs. organization.

Stimuli Development

In order to develop the stimuli reflecting crisis situations involving our participants we interviewed 22 college students from the same university about their experiences of crisis situations and how they use media prior to, during and after crises that affected them directly. Questions on crisis incidents that most affected participants suggested a pool of crisis situations that seemed to be most relevant and important for college students in the given university. The top-ranked crises from the interviews, based on their relevance and importance from college students' perspective, were then incorporated into two sets of six fictitious crisis situation scenarios to be used in the experiment, incorporating the crisis information source and form conditions as within-subjects variables and organizational crisis responsibility as between-subjects variable, respectively: (1) Bomb threat (OM + Third Party); (2) Riots (SM + Third Party); (3) Blizzard (WOM + Third Party); (4) Disease outbreak (SM + Organization); (5) Embezzlement (WOM + Organization); and (6) Violent partying (OM + Organization). In all scenarios, the organization was the university where the participants attended school. The crisis information in each scenario comes from a combination of sources (either the university as the organization in crisis or a third party) and form (face-to-face communication, Facebook, or campus newspaper), embedded in the context of whether publics perceived the crisis origin as external (the organization is not responsible for the crisis) or internal (the organization is responsible for the crisis). Results of manipulation checks indicated that all conditions were successfully incorporated in the stimuli.

Participants and Procedure

A total of 338 participants completed the study in May 2010 via a participant pool system at a large East Coast university. Young adults were chosen for this study as research shows they are more frequent users of social media, and their social media use often sets trends for how the population as a whole views technology (ECAR, 2008; Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010).

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two groups: (1) 162 participants received experimental stimuli designed with internal crisis origin (high organizational crisis responsibility) and (2) 176 participants received experimental stimuli designed with external crisis origin (low organizational crisis responsibility).Within each group, six crisis situation stimuli were presented in six different orders by using counterbalance to randomly distribute variables and prevent order effects, such those caused by participant fatigue. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the orders. The within-subjects design in each group exposed individual participants to all condition combinations of crisis information form and sources. The individual served as his or her own control for individual differences, decreasing the need for a larger participant pool and accounting for extraneous variables such as IQ, interest and familiarity levels, and demographics. Therefore, our mixed design focused on the relative effect of crisis information form and source on the individual within each group, while testing the between-subjects effects as a function of crisis origin.

Measures

After reading each crisis scenario, the dependent variables for acceptance of a number of different organizational crisis responses and discrete negative emotions were measured by using a series of indexes in the questionnaire instrument.

Acceptance of organization's crisis response strategies. Eighteen organizational crisis communication responses taken from SCCT research (e.g., Coombs, 2007a; Heath & Coombs, 2006) and incorporated into the SMCC model were presented for the participants to respond to by indicating "how acceptable each of the actions taken by the University could be," measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale where "1 = Not Acceptable at All and 7 = Totally Acceptable." Principal components analyses with Varimax rotation rendered four different groups of crisis responses, explaining 62.83 percent variance: defensive responses (alpha = .81); supportive responses (alpha = .82); evasive responses (alpha = .81); and accommodative responses (alpha = .78). Based on Jin's (2010) study, we further grouped defensive and evasive responses as *defensive* strategies while supportive and accommodative strategies were grouped as *accommodative* crisis responses.

Crisis emotions. Nine negative emotions, selected based on crisis emotions literature (e.g., Choi & Lin, 2009; Jin, 2009, 2010), were listed for the participants to provide their likelihood of feeling each of these emotions by asking "what happened in the situation made me feel…" measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale where "1 = Very Unlikely and 7 = Very Likely." Principal axis factoring analyses with Promax suggested three different types of crisis emotions felt by the participants, explaining variance 2.91, 2.84, and 2.82 accordingly: (1) *attribution-independent emotions* (alpha = .89) of anxiety, apprehension, and fear; (2) *attribution-dependent emotions* (alpha = .84) of disgust, contempt, and anger, and (3) *self-attributed emotions* (alpha = .91) of embarrassment, guilt, and shame. The first two clusters of crisis emotions were according to Choi and Lin's (2009) argument of grouping crisis emotions as attribution dependent and independent ones. Thus, in this study, we included the indices of attribution-independent emotions and attribution-dependent emotions as the crisis emotions measures.

Results

The main effects (see *Table 1*) of crisis origin and evidence of its interactions with crisis information form and source were evident on publics' responses.

Acceptance of Organizational Crisis Strategies from Defensive to Accommodative

Defensive crisis strategies. An organization's defensive crisis strategies are operationalized in this study as including both defensive and evasive crisis responses. H1.1 proposed that publics are more likely to accept an organization's defensive crisis strategies, when the crisis origin is external. On one hand, for defensive responses, significant between-subjects main effects of crisis origin were evident ($F[1, 298] = 13.751$, $p < .001$, par. $\eta^2 = .044$). External origin (low organizational crisis responsibility) led to participants' higher acceptance of the organization's defensive responses ($M = 3.449$, $SE = .062$) than internal crisis origin did ($M = 3.115$, $SE = .065$) ($p < .001$). On the other hand, for evasive responses, significant between-subjects main effects of crisis origin were present ($F[1, 321] = 19.710$, $p < .001$, par. $\eta^2 = .058$). External origin (low organizational crisis responsibility) led to participants' higher acceptance of the organization's evasive responses *($M = 3.948$, $SE = .077$)* than internal crisis origin did ($M = 3.458$, $SE = .080$) ($p < .001$). Thus, H1.1 was supported.

Accommodative crisis strategies. An organization's accommodative crisis strategies are operationalized in this study as including both accommodative and supportive crisis responses. H1.2 proposed that publics are more likely to accept an organization's accommodative crisis strategies, when the crisis origin is internal. Significant between-subjects main effects of crisis origin were present ($F[1, 310] = 4.159$, $p<.05$, par. $\eta^2 = .013$) regarding publics' acceptance of an organization's accommodative responses. Internal crisis origin (high organizational crisis responsibility) led to participants' higher acceptance of the organization's accommodative responses ($M = 4.504$, $SE = .073$) than external crisis origin did ($M = 4.296$, $SE = .071$) ($p < .05$). However, no significant main effects were detected in terms of publics' acceptance of an organization's supportive responses. Thus, H1.2 was partially supported.

How crisis origin interacts with crisis information source and form. Two two-way interactions revealed significant results as related to publics' acceptance of evasive responses as one type of defensive crisis message strategy. RQ 1.1 asked how, if at all, are publics' acceptance of organizational crisis responses affected by crisis origin and the crisis information form. Crisis origin was found to interact with crisis information form ($F[2, 642] = 3.596$, $p<.05$, par. $\eta^2 = .011$). When the crisis origin was external (low organizational responsibility), participants were most likely to accept an organization's evasive responses ($M = 4.167$, $SE = .086$, $p < .05$) if the crisis information was delivered through OM.

RQ 1.2 asked how, if at all, are publics' acceptance of organizational crisis responses affected by crisis origin and the crisis information source. Crisis origin was found to interact with crisis information source ($F[1, 321] = 3.890$, $p<.05$, par. $\eta^2 = .012$). When the crisis origin was external (low organizational responsibility), participants were most likely to accept the organization's evasive responses ($M = 4.024$, $SE = .082$, $p < .05$) if the crisis information was sent by the organization.

Crisis Emotions in SMCC Context

Attribution independent emotions (anxiety, apprehension, and fear). H2.1 proposed that publics will feel more attribution-independent emotions (anxiety, apprehension, and fear) when the crisis origin is external. Significant between-subjects main effects of crisis origin were

detected ($F[1, 300] = 4.367$, $p < .05$, par. $\eta^2 = .014$). However, internal crisis origin (high organizational responsibility) led to more attribution independent emotions ($M = 3.987$, $SE = .082$) than external crisis origin did ($M = 3.750$, $SE = .079$) ($p < .05$). Thus, H2.1 was not supported.

  Attribution-dependent emotions (anger, contempt, and disgust). H2.2 proposed that publics would feel more attribution-dependent emotions (anger, contempt, and disgust), when the crisis origin is internal. Significant between-subjects main effects of crisis origin were evident ($F[1, 300] = 17.058$, $p < .001$, par. $\eta^2 = .054$). Internal crisis origin (high organizational responsibility) indeed led to more attribution-dependent emotions ($M = 4.164$, $SE = .082$) than external crisis origin did ($M = 3.692$, $SE = .079$) ($p < .001$). Thus, H2.2 was supported.

Discussion

  Our results indicate the complex nature of crisis communication in the new era of socially-mediated crisis communication. These findings also shed light on the importance of strategically matching crisis information form and source, depending on the crisis origin, in order for organizations to respond to crises more effectively.

Effects of Internal Crisis Origin

  Internal crisis origin leads to stronger crisis emotions and anticipation of more accommodative organizational crisis responses. Publics seem to be more likely to accept the organization's accommodative responses, taking a collaborative approach to a tough situation. This finding supports the observations from Jin's (2010) and Jin, Pang and Cameron's (2010) studies, based on the contingency theory of strategic conflict management. Crisis managers should consider recommending accommodative organizational responses to crises if evidence shows that publics perceive the organization is to blame for the crisis. Our findings also indicate that when publics perceive the crisis origin as internal, they tend to feel more crisis emotions in general, including both attribution independent emotions (such as anxiety, apprehension, and fear) and attribution dependent ones (such as anger, contempt, and disgust).

  When publics perceive the crisis origin as external, they are more likely to accept an organization's defensive responses. This insight provides justification for crisis managers when proposing a more advocative stance for the organization to take by defending itself when the organization has low perceived responsibility for the crisis.

  In addition, if the crisis information is disseminated by a third party through social media, publics' attribution-dependent emotions such anger, contempt and disgust are likely to be intensified or aggravated when the crisis origin is internal. This finding supports previous research that found an association between high crisis responsibility and negative public emotions (Choi & Lin, 2009; Jin, 2010; Jin, Pang, & Cameron, 2010; McDonald, Sparks, & Glendon, 2010), but adds that the source and form of crisis information affect publics' affective crisis responses. What was found in this study suggests that if an organization is to blame for a crisis, crisis managers might need to especially focus on how to deal with negative emotions expressed to the organization and be prepared to address anti-organization information spread through social media.

Effects of External Crisis Origin

When publics perceive the crisis origin as external, publics are most likely to accept an organization's evasive responses if the crisis information is sent by the organization. This finding supports previous research indicating that publics perceive a crisis with an internal origin as more controllable than a crisis with an external origin (Coombs, 2007; Jin, 2010; Jin, Pang, & Cameron, 2010; Jorgensen, 1993; Lyon & Cameron, 2004; Weiner, 1986), but adds that evasive information is most effective when disseminated by an organization rather than a third party. These findings imply that crisis managers need to be cautious about how to position the organization properly when a crisis happens. Organizations should react proactively, utilizing official organizational social media channels to establish information authority and accessibility, if the organization is not the cause of the crisis. As Jin (2010) mentioned, organizations can play the important role of crisis coping facilitator in circumstances where publics are in need of information clarification and reduction of uncertainty and negative feelings. Crisis managers and communicators should consider presenting further information and even partnering with publics and third-parties to cope with the crisis situation collectively.

Limitations and Future Research

Through a content analysis of the extant crisis communication research, Avery et al. (2010) concluded that: "Overall, it seems that the body of work could be less descriptive and more prescriptive through richer scholarly commentary and criticism" (p. 192). This study takes a first step in refining the SMCC's model components that predict how crisis attribution as well as crisis information form and source affect how publics respond to crisis communication strategies. As an initial step, however, the study is limited in several aspects, which suggest directions for future research to advance effective crisis communication knowledge.

First, the experiment included only one public, college students, in a series of university crisis situations. Additional experiments are needed with different publics and different crisis situations that highly involve these publics, so as to test whether the causal effects of crisis information form and source hold valid and reliable across different publics.

Second, the study only examined the effects of crisis origin and how this interacts with crisis information form and source during the crisis response phase. Additional research is needed for the pre-crisis and crisis recovery phases in order to provide a more thorough and comprehensive picture of how different crisis origins as well as various crisis forms and sources function along the crisis cycle. In addition, even at the stage of crisis response, sub-stages need to be further segmented. For example, publics could respond differently depending on whether it is the first time they are exposed to a given crisis or they have heard about the crisis and are in the process of deciding what to do and how to react.

Third, given the focus of the current experimental design, organizational crisis responses and publics' crisis emotions were analyzed as two dependent measures. It would be valuable for future research using a large sample survey via structural equation modeling to further examine the hierarchy of the crisis communication process in terms of how publics were affectively impacted by different forms and sources and how, in return, their crisis emotions further affect crisis response strategy acceptance.

Fourth, the current study focused on comparing the differential effects different forms and sources exert on individuals' responses, taking the direction of crisis attribution into

consideration. It would be important for future research to also explore the synergistic impact of multiple forms and sources of crisis information dissemination. A series of field experiments using ongoing real crisis situations would be most appropriate.

      Despite the above limitations, the findings from this study suggest the importance of the effects of crisis origin and crisis information form and source on publics' acceptance of crisis messages and publics' emotional responses to crises. Crisis origin affects publics' preferred information forms and sources in times of crisis, impacts how publics expect the organization to respond to a crisis, and affects they types of emotions they are likely to feel after receiving crisis response messages. These findings indicate the importance of revisiting dominant crisis response theories to explore how the introduction of social media influences crisis communication, and support the validity of the inclusion of variables in the SMCC model, such as crisis origin, form, and source.

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TABLE 1

Main Effects of Crisis Origin

	Crisis Origin		
Dependent Measures	Internal	External	F
Acceptance of Defensive Crisis Strategies			
• Defensive	3.12*** (.07)	3.45*** (.06)	13.751***
• Evasive	4.96 (.08)	5.07 (.08)	.860
Acceptance of Accommodative Crisis Strategies			
• Supportive	4.96 (.08)	5.07 (.08)	.860
• Accommodative	4.50* (.07)	4.30*(.07)	4.159*
Crisis Emotions			
• Attribution-independent	3.99* (.08)	3.75* (.08)	4.367*
• Attribution-dependent	4.16*** (.08)	3.69*** (.08)	17.058***

Note. Cell entries are estimated marginal means. Pairwise planed comparisons are adjusted for Bonferroni multiple comparisons. Standard errors are in parentheses. Significance for the multivariate F is based on estimates of the marginal means for the Wilk's Lamda statistic.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

FIGURE 1

Blog-mediated Crisis Communication Model
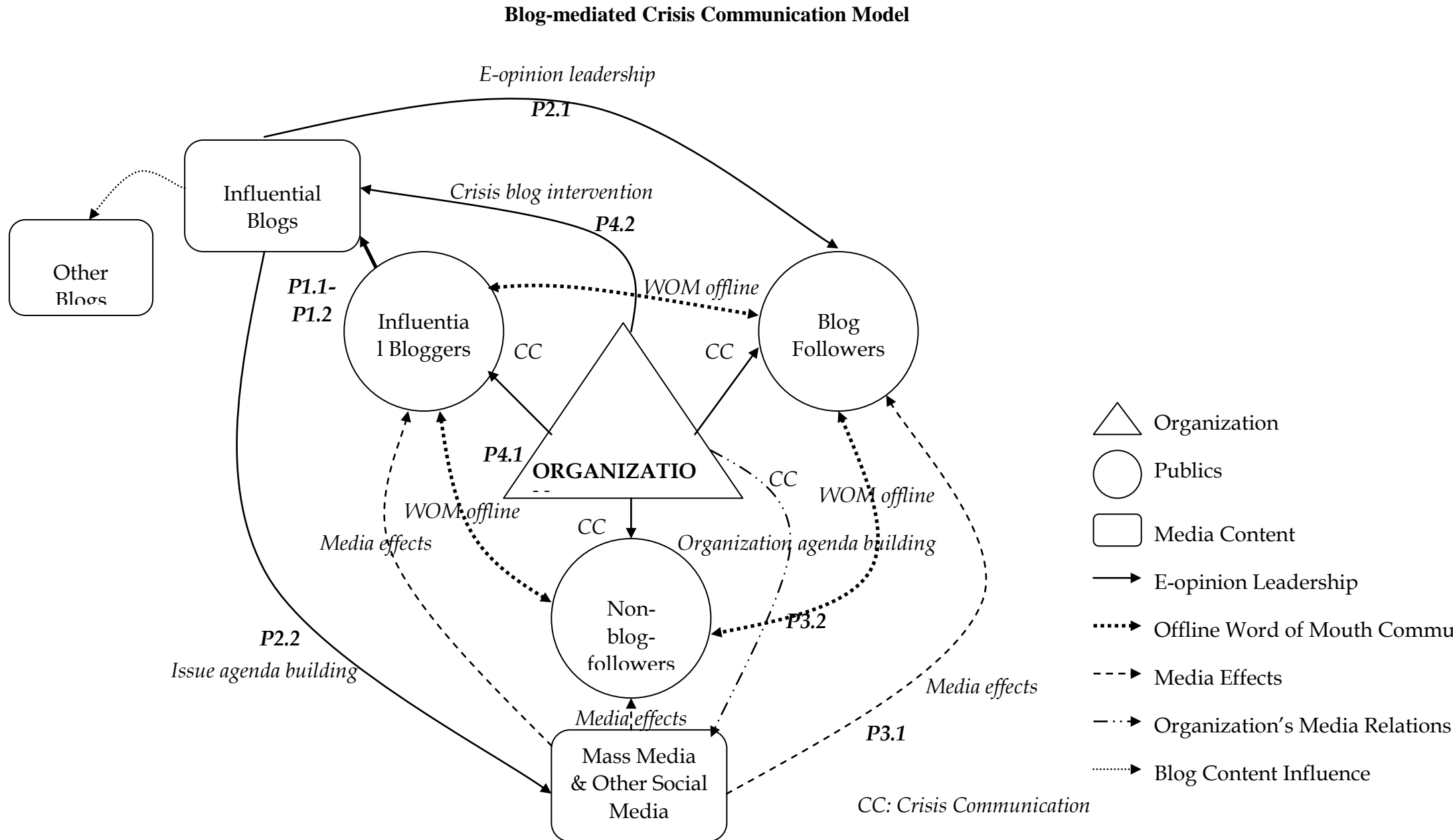
FIGURE 2

Social-mediated Crisis Communication Model
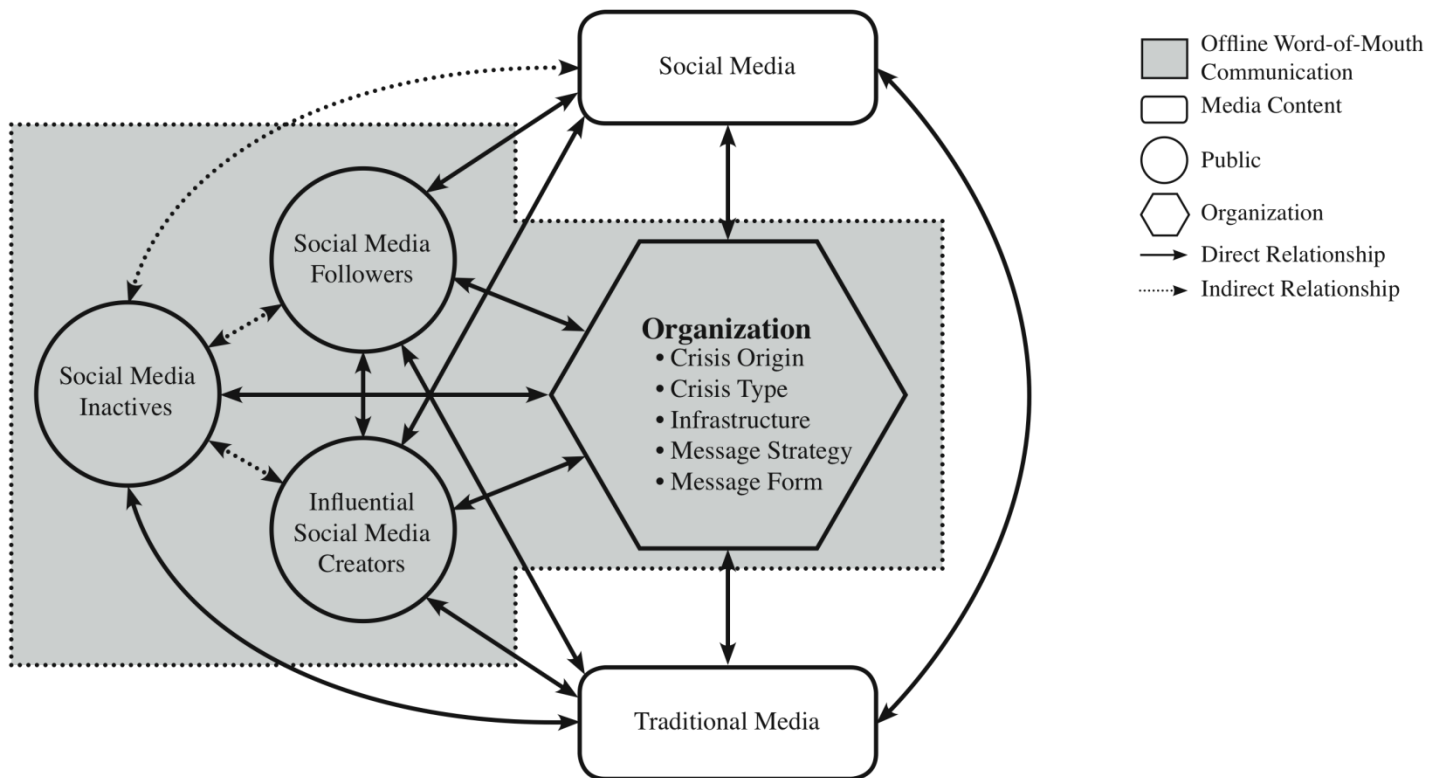
Pushing the Envelope of Relationship Management Theory:
Specifics for Advancing Practice

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Abstract

The relationship management theory of public relations was examined to identify gaps and reconcile potential contradictions in the theory's theoretical underpinnings. Craig's (1999) model of the communication discipline was applied to Ledingham's (2003) fourteen axioms of relationship management theory to reveal roots from the cybernetic, semiotic, phenomenological, and sociopsychological traditions. Negotiation theory, conversation marketing concepts, communication competence theory, and systems theory were applied to form fourteen new axioms of relationship negotiation theory. The new theory makes communication in the sense of conversation central to the process of developing and evaluating relationships between organizations and between organizations and publics. Effective relational communication shows evidence of mutual conversational and relational control, expresses a level of affiliation comfortable to participants, and is consistent with both individual and jointly constructed goals for the negotiation and the relationship (O'Hair, Friedrich, Wiemann, & Wiemann, 1997).

At its beginning, the field of public relations was defined by practitioner or technician functions with the measurement of success being number of mentions in the mass media (Bruning, Castle, & Schrepfer, 2004; Ledingham, 2006). Because public relations was not seen as a management function, business or marketing professionals were more likely to reach managerial positions than were public relations practitioners (Ledingham, 2006). However, the introduction of relationships as the primary focus of public relations has led to a new model (Ferguson, 1984 as cited in Bruning, Castle, & Schrepfer, 2004). Instead of measuring the quality of public relations by the quantity of communications, relationship management theory views communication as a strategy for creating and sustaining positive relations between organizations and publics (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). From the relationship management perspective, public relations is responsible for managing organization-public relationships by establishing a mutually beneficial affiliation and by maintaining that relationship through two-way communication (Ledingham, 2003). Research has shown that, "Public relations scholars who have adopted this approach have found it useful in the study of crisis management (Coombs, 2000), issues management (Bridges & Nelson, 2000), healthcare (Lucarelli-Dimmick, 2000), community relations (Wilson, 2000), global public relations (Kruckeberg, 2000), and education (Broom et al., 2000)" (Bruning, Castle, & Schrepfer, 2004, p.437).   Thus relationship management theory has become an influential theory affecting public relations understanding and practice.

Current State of Relationship Management Theory

Ledingham (2006) contends that four developments brought about the advancement of the relational perspective in the study of public relations. First, relationships overtook communication as the primary goal of public relations practitioners and scholars. Then, public relations was conceptualized as a management function including strategic management. This required public relations managers not only to possess solid communication skills, but also to develop proficiencies in analysis, planning, implementation, and evaluation (Ledingham, 2006). Next, public relations needs to measure the success of organization-public relationships in order to predict the public's behavior. Finally, a model based on interpersonal relationships was created to explain relationship management.

Relationship management theory, originally consisting of 17 dimensions taken from various communication contexts including interpersonal relationships, now consists of five dimensions that can be used to assess the quality of relationships: trust, openness, involvement, investment and commitment (Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison, & Lesko, 1997 as cited in Ledingham, 2006). Trust is defined as the public's belief in an organization's ability to achieve what it claims it can and will achieve. The public can predict the actions of trustworthy organizations with a high degree of accuracy. Openness is an organization's willingness to share organizational goals and plans for achieving them. The public also judges the organization's involvement and investment of resources in the community's welfare. Commitment is the organization's willingness to become involved with the community in an unspecified manner.

In addition to the five dimensions, the theory of relationship management is built on 14 axioms. These axioms are concerned with the nurturing of developing relationships, rather than the manipulation of communication to receive the desired effect. Relationships must be managed effectively to support two-way communication with an emphasis on interaction between organizations and publics. Publics are more likely to continue relationships when the quality of organization-public interaction is high and when the organization meets the publics'

expectations. Organization-public relationships can be defined as personal (an organization's representative and public's representative connect on an individual, relaxed level), professional (the relationship's focus remains on what the organization can do for the client), community (an organization's relationship within a geographic community), symbolic (based in communication), and behavioral (based on actions or events) (Ledingham, 2003). Ledingham and Bruning (1998) examined the 17 dimensions of organization-client relations to determine whether these dimensions influenced a telecommunications company's retention of customers. They found customers who decided to remain with the company scored higher in organization-public relationships, those who left scored lower on their organization-public relationship scale, and those who were undecided scored in the middle. The dimensions that most predicted a customer's decision to stay with the company were commitment, openness, and trust, followed closely by investment and involvement. Thus, the implication is that organizations that effectively manage relationships retain customers. Organizations must make building customer relationships a priority, and they must communicate involvement in activities that benefit the welfare of customers (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).

Ledingham, Bruning, and Wilson (1999) argued that not only were the five dimensions important aspects of the organization-public relationship, but time was a crucial element as well. Again, the researchers examined a telecommunications company to determine how the length of time a customer had been involved with an organization impacts loyalty. The longer a customer had been involved with a company, the more likely the customer was to remain loyal was to the organization rather than switch to a different provider. Because relationships are more likely to be dissolved early on, organizations must cultivate relationships in the beginning stages, as relationship management theory suggests, to establish strong long term customer relationships (Ledingham, Bruning, & Wilson, 1999).

In addition to relationship retention, Bruning and Ledingham (2002) applied interpersonal relationship theory to the ways agency-client relationships develop and decline. Interpersonal theory indicates that relationship development is constructed in five stages. First is the introductory phase in which the agency introduces itself to the client by advertisement or phone, and they form a relationship. Next is the exploration phase in which both parties begin to explore benefits through a face-to-face meeting. Then, the relationship moves to the escalating phase in which agency and client develop a personal relationship and communication becomes relaxed. The relationship then moves to the assimilating phase. In this phase both client and agency experience elevated levels of esteem and commitment to the relationship. Finally, in the fidelity phase, they openly express loyalty to each other.

However, Bruning and Ledingham (2002) also found that there are five stages of relationship decline, and that managing decline may be more important than mastering growth. In the first or contrasting phase, agencies and clients become aware of their differences. In the spiraling phase, the differences noticed in the contrasting phase become greater, and quality of communication declines. Next, the idling phase is marked by purely professional and often awkward conversation. In this phase the relationship neither declines nor improves. Then, in the evading phase parties are likely to avoid all communication. Finally, in the discontinuance phase one or both parties decide that the relationship is no longer beneficial, and the relationship is dissolved.

Relationship management as a theory of public relations is still under construction and actively researched. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) assert that the realm of public relations continually searches for the best theoretical framework to capture client-public relationships.

Still, there is a general consensus among scholars that the primary focus of public relations is no longer the act of communication, but rather the management of organization-public relationships (Ledingham, 2006; Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). However, the connection between quality of relationships and tangible outcomes has been difficult to establish. Bruning, Castle, and Schrepfer (2004) assert that the majority of research involving relationship management have outcomes that only infer, not demonstrate, the benefits of effective relationship management.

Relationship management may also need to be revised to be useful to practitioners. Although past research has centered on relationship management in the academic realm, it has been slow to be adopted in the professional world (Ledingham, 2008). Ledingham (2008) asserts that continued research in relationship management should center on the dissemination of scholarly findings into practice. Scholars should make recommendations for practice, define terms, encourage scholar-practitioner work, and devote time to form relationships with practitioners (Ledingham, 2008).

Gaps in the Current Formulation

Ledingham and Bruning (1998) suggest that public relations practitioners build and maintain relationships using two-way communication, striving to be transparent when communicating with key publics. Two-way communication requires feedback from key publics to facilitate mutual trust and understanding. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) identified five qualities of effective relationships: trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment. If relationships meet the five, then a company may be said to manage relationships effectively.

However, closer inspection reveals seven areas of ambiguity that make it impractical for practitioners to apply and inadequate to explain likely outcomes. (1) For example, the model is not exhaustive because environmental factors are not included. For example, a video rental company may need to increase rental fees to remain profitable. The company openly discloses that the cost of a video rental will increase. Before increasing the cost, the company asks its customers if they will continue to buy from the company, and the customers agree; many of the customers have rented from the company for years. However, when a new, cheaper video rental option becomes available, long-time customers rent from the new company. Although the video rental company demonstrated openness and a willingness to foster two-way communication, once loyal customers chose a cheaper option. This outcome is possible no matter how well the company manages customer relationships. Without addressing environmental factors, the five dimensions of relationship management fail to fully describe the communication process between an organization and its key publics.

In addition to the five dimensions, Ledingham (2003) created 14 axioms that can be briefly summarized as follows: Relationships between organizations and key publics should be nurtured rather than manipulated to foster continual growth and commitment to an organization. Relationships are created and maintained through two-way [symmetrical] communication. Relationships will be created and sustained if mutually beneficial to both organization and publics. Although the above conditions explain how to effectively manage relationships, more details are needed to implement the theory. (2) Also, the theory does not explain how to form an initial relationship between a company and public. (3) In addition relationship management does not explain how to tailor communication efforts to one particular key public. Key publics is a general term that might refer to employees, the media, the government, stockholders, or customers. The theory does not distinguish processes that might be effective with different types

of publics. It implies that all relationships develop and are maintained the same way. (4) Finally, relationship management does not operationally define quality interactions between an organization and its publics. Because of the gaps in definitions and incompleteness of the implied systems model, relationship management can be used neither to guide practitioners nor to predict specific behavioral outcomes. (5) Relationship management theory asserts that if a company demonstrates trust, openness, involvement, investment and commitment, relationships will remain positive and intact regardless of variables outside the model. As with the above example of the video rental store, maintaining openness and two-way communication did not accurately predict the behavior of customers. The outside factor of competition prevented the video rental store from retaining many of its customers. Was the relationship managed successfully even though customers were lost? Is this an example of effective or ineffective public relations according to relationship management theory?

(6) Relationship management asserts that all communication between an organization and its key publics should be dyadic; communication between both parties is needed to facilitate trust and understanding (Ledingham, 2003). However, it is possible that two-way communication would not lead to effective relationship management. If a company discloses to its key publics that it is financially sound while at the same time key publics receive contradictory information from the media, will the public perceive that the company has been open and trust it rather than supposedly disinterested evaluators like the media?

(7) Finally, it is difficult to apply relationships management theory without an operational definition of effective relationship management. Because effective relationship management is not defined in specific, measurable terms, it is difficult to judge as effective or ineffective. Furthermore, there is no necessary connection between effective relationship management and the retention of customers or other outcomes. Providing accurate information to employees, customers, and stockholders might not prevent or even mitigate crises. Without a clear definition of relationship management, an organization could not use the concept to predict customer relations. If effective relationship management leads to the retention of customers and an organization enacts the five dimensions of trust, openness, involvement, investment and commitment, a customer should not choose a different service provider because of economic factors beyond the company's control according to the theory as it now stands.

Nevertheless, relationship management is a useful theory in that it provides a philosophical framework for public relations practitioners. Although it cannot yet predict behavior, it can lead public relations practitioners to create a strategy that promotes relationships between an organization and its publics. Thus we suggest specifications and revisions to make the theory easier to apply and more accurate in predicting outcomes.

A Broader Communication Theory Perspective

Craig (1999) has provided a unifying view of communication theory as a field by organizing theories according to the traditions from which they developed. This overview is instructive not only for understanding communication theory but also for dealing with gaps and contradictions that arise in relationship management theory because of the different theoretical strains it brings together.

First, it is important to note that the literature on relationship management theory does not provide a specific definition of communication. There are many substantially different definitions available; it is not necessary to agree on one (Craig, 2007), but it is useful to identify

the perspective taken by the various contributors to relationship management theory. Ledingham's (2003) 14 axioms of relationship management theory include the following:

    8. Such relationships involve communication, but communication is not the sole instrument of relationship building.

    11. The proper focus of the domain of public relations is relationships, not communication.

    12. Communication alone cannot sustain long-term relationships in the absence of supportive organizational behavior. (Ledingham, 2003, p. 195).

These axioms imply that Ledingham is using communication to refer to traditional public relations artifacts such as press releases.

In contrast, Craig (2003) recommends a broader approach to communication, one that recognizes and explains how communication can create, not merely convey, meaning. This approach regards communication as the process by which individuals or organizations co-create meanings, including the meaning of their relationship. In this view, communication is a dynamic, interactive process by which parties use symbols to negotiate a shared view of reality. This use of communication implies that communication is always two-way, always interactive, and always mutual. While one can research a member's perception of the relationship, as did Bruning and Ledingham (1998), those perceptions are individual and thus not the same as the relationship itself, which is always mutual. One can discuss how one party affects the relationship, but the relationship itself is "between" the two entities. If so, any one party's understanding is partial and reflects that party's perceptions at a particular time, but does not measure the relationship itself.

Viewed in this way, communication is integral to relationship building. A form of symbolic behavior, through communication parties interpret and create shared understandings of actions. The parties involved must always negotiate the meaning of the actions for the relationship. For example, if a business refuses to sponsor a nonprofit group's fundraising activity, the action is declining sponsorship. But what declining sponsorship *means* for the relationship between the business and the nonprofit group is always open to interpretation and negotiation. If the business sponsors some groups but not others, a particular group might seek to know why it was not included. If asked for such an account, the business might provide reasons such as the following: The business might be following a parent corporation's community relations guidelines that restrict types of activities the business may support. The business might cite economic difficulties that have reduced the total funds available for sponsoring community events. A business might prefer to give smaller donations to a larger number of organizations rather than major donations to only a few. These are only some of the explanations the business might offer in its attempt to negotiate the meaning of its action for the relationship with that particular public.

In this view, communication is the fabric through which relationships are constructed. Because actions themselves are understood through the partners' creating shared meanings, without communication no relationship is possible. From this perspective, the proper focus of public relations must be communication, because it is through communication that relationships are created, understood, and maintained. Relationships are outgrowths of the communication process; without communication defined in this broader way, relationships do not exist.

As Craig (2007) notes, this view poses a view of communication as a metamodel that focuses on how meanings are co-created. Communication theory is a metadiscursive (communicating about theory and communication) practice that is both dialogical (attempting to

unify and create relationships) and dialectical (attempting to distinguish activities and ideas that are different; doing so may create disagreement). That is, conversations about theory serve both to make connections and to create distinctions between various theories and concepts. "Communication is not only something we do but also something we refer to reflexively in ways that are practically entwined with our doing of it (Craig, 2007, p. 70). Conversation about communication theory takes the form, "Theory x is more useful than theory y in solving a particular problem because, while x and y share some common assumptions, x's view of z process or variable is more helpful than y's in solving the problem at hand." Communication theory then consists of the conversation of problem-solving through both analysis and synthesis, both dialectic and dialog. Communication is unique in that the process of communicating about communication creates new meanings in a way that the process of communicating about physics or business, for example, does not. Communication is reflexive and creative so communication theory must consist of a metadiscourse or a discourse about discourses. Craig (2007) describes a metamodel that illuminates key features of other models, so it is appropriate to use the metamodel to examine relationship management, a "general theory" (Ledingham, 2003) or what Craig (2007) describes as a first-order model of communication "that highlights certain aspects of the [communication] process" (p. 68).

Based on this understanding, it is useful to explore some apparent contradictions in relationship management theory in hopes of coming to a shared understanding about the best approach to use in understanding and applying the theory. First, it is clear that relationship management theory borrows from different traditions, including positive theories that attempt to prescribe which actions are most effective in achieving desired public relations outcomes as well as theories that attempt merely to describe and explain, without recommending particular practices. Which tradition or combination of traditions is best? What dialectics emerge from the differing sources? It is apparent that much of the theory reflects what Craig (2007) calls the cybernetic model of communication. In this tradition, communication "is theorized as information processing and explains how all kinds of complex systems . . . are able to function and why they often malfunction" (p. 81). This model "points out surprising analogies between living and nonliving systems, challenges commonplace beliefs about the significance of consciousness and emotion, and questions our usual distinctions between mind and matter, form and content, the real and the artificial" (p. 81) as well as suggesting that communication is too complex to be adequately captured by linear models. As Ledingham (2003) notes, "relationship management is consistent with major theoretical concepts such as systems theory and the two-way symmetrical model of J. E. Grunig and Hunt (1984)." So systems theory provides the foundation for relationship management theory.

A second model evident in relationship management theory is the model of communication that focuses on sending and receiving messages. Aristotle's source-message-channel-receiver model (SMCR), as it is presented in introductory communication textbooks, reflects a transmission metaphor as does the information theory model (Shannon & Weaver, 1948), which falls under Craig's cybernetic tradition. The transmission metaphor is evident in the following axioms Ledingham (2003) suggests for relationship management theory:

1. Organization–public relationships are transactional.
2. The relationships are dynamic; they change over time.
3. They are goal oriented.
4. Organization–public relationships have antecedents and consequences . . . . (p. 195).

Both the cybernetic model and its transmission metaphor are evident in relationship management theory and in traditional conceptualizations of public relations as "pieces" of information or communication.

Relationship management theory, however, claims to shift the focus away from communication artifacts such as press releases to the broader goal of managing relationships. The idea of relationship comes from yet two other theoretical traditions that Craig describes. First, the phenomenological tradition of Buber, Gadamer, and Rogers (Craig, 2007) conceptualizes communication as "dialog or experience of otherness" (p. 79). Through dialog, individuals directly experience each other's commonality and difference, a difference that we become aware of in a prereflective experience not only of "the other as other to me but myself as other to the other" (Craig, 2007, p. 79). This abstract and philosophical language is more familiar to us as the belief that we should treat others as individuals, not objects, and that "supportive relationships are essential to our healthy development as human beings, and that the most satisfactory human relationships are characterized by reciprocity and nondomination" (Craig, 2007, p. 80). Thus, phenomenology provides the underpinning for the concept of relationship management reflected in axiom 13:

13. Effective management of organization–public relationships supports mutual understanding and benefit. (Ledingham, 2003, p. 195)

Yet the concept of "managing" relationships is contradictory to the phenomenological tradition because it implies a goal other than understanding and experiencing the other. If one "manages" a relationship with another, one reduces the other to an "It" rather than a co-equal "Thou." While the "management" in relationship management refers to a public relations practitioner's position in the organization, the concept as stated departs from the phenomenological tradition from which it is drawn.

However, the concept of relationship also arises from the "sociopsychological tradition: communication as expression, interaction, and influence" (Craig, 2007, p. 82). Experimental social psychology conceptualizes communication as "a process of expression, interaction, and influence, a process in which the behavior of humans . . . expresses psychological mechanisms, states, and traits and, through interaction with the similar expressions of other individuals, produces a range of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral effects." . . . Communication theorized in this way explains the causes and effects of social behavior and cultivates practices that attempt to exert intentional control over those behavioral causes and effects" (Craig, 2007, pp. 82-83). The sociopsychological tradition seems to provide the primary set of assumptions that underpin relationship management theory. These ideas are reflected in the following axioms:

1. Organization–public relationships are transactional.
2. The relationships are dynamic; they change over time.
3. They are goal oriented.
4. Organization–public relationships have antecedents and consequences and can be analyzed in terms of relationship quality, maintenance strategies, relationship type, and actors in the relationship.
5. These relationships are driven by the perceived needs and wants of interacting organizations and publics.
6. The continuation of organization–public relationships is dependent on the degree to which expectations are met.
7. Those expectations are expressed in interactions between organizations and publics. . . .

    9. These relationships are impacted by relational history, the nature of the transaction, the frequency of exchange, and reciprocity.

    10. Organization–public relationships can be described by type (personal, professional, community, symbolic, and behavioral) independent of the perceptions of those relationships. (Ledingham, 2003, p. 195)

Furthermore, the sociopsychological tradition in communication has produced research describing the characteristics of competent communication in relationships. Competent relationship communication competence involves:

1. Communicating a mutual distribution of control
2. Expressing a level of affiliation with which all participants are comfortable, and
3. Consistency both with individual and with jointly constructed goals for the relationship (O'Hair, Friedrich, Wiemann, & Wiemann, 1997).

The communication competence approach to relational communication provides criteria for judging relationships that take into account the dialogic imperatives of the phenomenological approach and express them in sociological terms.

So, while relationship management theory depends most heavily on the sociopsychological tradition, it also reflects the transmission model and the cybernetic tradition, with some elements of phenomenology hiding in the background. Conceptualized as a field that creates meaning through dialog and debate, communication as a whole also requires assumptions grounded in semiotic theory: signs and symbols are the means by which individuals and groups "mediate subjectivity," or share ideas and form relationships (Craig, 2007, p. 74).

Thus, we argue that relationship management theory combines elements of at least four of Craig's seven traditions. Like Craig (2007), we find no problem with the fact that relationship management theory draws from different traditions; this is typical of communication theories. However, Craig's model of the seven traditions captures both points of consistency and inconsistency that we argue are what hinder the implementation of the general theory in actual practice.

Below, we have reconstructed Ledingham's axioms in light of the traditions identified in Craig's model. We have reconceptualized relationship management theory from the broader concept of communication suggested above. For the purposes of comparison, we provide Ledingham's (2003) original formulation of the axioms in Appendix A and a summary of our axioms in Appendix B, as well as discussion of each axiom below.

Relationship Negotiation Theory

First, we have argued above that there can be no relationships without communication. Therefore in Axiom 1 we conceptualize communication as the process by which humans use symbols to co-create meanings with each other. This formulation is consistent with the idea of conversation marketing. Maister and Kelly (2006) argue that approaching publics and customers as though engaging in conversation is much more effective in marketing products. They write, "If you want to win my business, give me the chance to talk to you, person-to-person, about *my* needs, wishes, and wants. Make it easy and comfortable for me to share *my* secrets. In short, if you really want my business, let's talk; let's have a *conversation*" (p. 1). They identify four characteristics of a conversation. First, conversations are held between individuals, not between business "roles." People do not use contrived language in conversations. Next, both parties participate and, "what one says is dependent upon what the other has just said" (p. 1). The partners are not making speeches to each other but responding directly to each other's

statements. Third, the parties are not trying to defeat or "win" over each other but to work together to solve problems. Finally, conversations allow people with different views to learn from one another. Maister and Kelly (2006) summarize: "Marketing (and selling) begin to work when a conversation moves away from being a role-to-role exchange of capabilities, contracts, and costs, and becomes a person-to-person interactive dialogue about ideas, beliefs, and perspectives. Only then can it build the chemistry, confidence, and commitment that lead to new revenues" (p. 1). Conversation marketing's approach is consistent with the type of interactive, responsive dialog that companies use in social media to respond to customers or publics. Thus, relationships are negotiated through conversations between the parties. Communication creates relationships as we have argued earlier. So communication in the sense of conversation is crucial to public relations and negotiating relationships.

Next, the concept of relationship itself must be explored and clarified. The phenomenological tradition explained above requires that true relationships be equal. Instrumental relationships, those in which one or both parties enter the relationship in order to gain some benefit, are not viewed as true "I-Thou" relationships, in Buber's terms. Instead, they fall into the "I-It" category because they imply that at least one party is treating the other as an object, a means to an end, rather than as a subject or end in itself. This distinction can be clarified by using the example of romantic relationships. If two parties enter the relationship because of mutual feelings of respect and caring, they treat each other as "subjects," forming the relationship simply because of mutual attraction. If, however, one party hopes for some gain, perhaps prestige, wealth, social status, or the like from forming a relationship with the other, that relationship is viewed by phenomenology as inauthentic.

Is it realistic to describe relationships between organizations or between organizations and publics as "authentic" in this philosophical sense? Forming a business relationship is not like falling in love. As the sociopsychological tradition acknowledges, both parties enter a relationship because of it meets some need or conveys some benefit. From the sociopsychological tradition, this is not inauthentic, but merely realistic. In our capitalistic society, we do not expect organizations to sell products for purely altruistic motives. We recognize and reward a company's desire to be profitable and to structure relationships to its benefit. Therefore, the sociopsychological notion of relationships is the most appropriate for use in public relations relationship theory because it most accurately describes relationships between organizations. The characteristics identified above for competent relational communication are the touchstone for evaluating relationships. Effective relationships reflect a mutual distribution of control, express a level of affiliation comfortable to all participants (e.g., there is no tension between whether the relationship is open or exclusive; both parties define it similarly), and allow parties to achieve both individual and mutual goals (O'Hair, Friedrich, Wiemann, & Wiemann, 1997).

Next, it is useful to distinguish between first-degree relationships and relationships in which the two parties involved are represented by third or fourth parties who actually conduct the conversation to negotiate the relationship. For example, a first-degree relationship, like that between a small public relations firm and a small client, involves both business and personal relationships between the principals because both organizations are small. The personal relationship may even predominate. This kind of relationship best follows the steps that Bruning and Ledingham (2002) suggest in their research. It is noteworthy that the example they use is the relationship between a client and a public relations firm, not that between a public relations firm

and its key publics. So first-degree relationships approximate the relational growth and decline models that Bruning and Ledingham (2002) propose.

However, when relationships are formed between groups or individuals representing groups to each other, those relationships are best described as negotiated and the representatives as negotiators, just as third parties like law firms may negotiate labor management contracts. There are two advantages in using the negotiation rather than the relationship metaphor. First, in negotiation, we recognize that the parties may have both competing and cooperative goals. We do not expect negotiating parties to reveal everything about themselves to each other. Rather, we expect them to structure the conversation to their own benefit. By seeking individual benefit, the negotiating parties discover what is called the bargaining range (Holley, Jennings, & Wolters, 2009), or the range of possible solutions in which their interests overlap. In negotiations, the parties reach mutual agreement because each is trying to satisfy its own needs while being sensitive to the needs of the other that will produce points of agreement. Thus, most public relations situations are more accurately framed as negotiating relationships, whether forming new ones or adjusting terms of a current "relational" contract. The metaphor of negotiation is more accurate than the idea of a romantic or personal relationship between large organizations and their many key publics. The steps by which those relationships are formed follow the steps of negotiation rather than the steps of interpersonal relationship growth and development. Until trust has been established, the approach is likely to be competitive and the goals individual. In negotiation, bargainers usually move from a competitive to a more collaborative stance; this movement mimics that of businesses exploring a relationship with each other (Jones, 1988).

Thus, Axiom Two states that public relations practitioners are involved in negotiating relationships between their clients or organizations and leaders and members of groups that constitute key publics. It follows then that Axioms Three through Seven are stated as before, but with the understanding that dynamic, goal-oriented relationships are viewed as continuous negotiations. They are affected by ongoing actions, communication, and expectations, but in a slightly different way than actions, communication, and expectations affect relationships between two equal parties involved in friendship or romance. Negotiations need not occur between equal parties, and it is disingenuous to believe that most organizations want their public relations practitioners to form equal power relationships with publics. Public relations practitioners are most likely to form unequal relationships like those between parent and child or recipient and wealthy benefactor. Both parties benefit from the relationship, but the benefits and power in the relationship do not need to be equal for the relationship to be a good one.

Although it can be argued that most organizations who employ an internal PR department or an external firm would want to be the "parent" in the scenario while their constituents would be the "child," these roles can be reversed, especially in a crisis situation. For example, a major oil company has a devastating drilling accident. While the oil company works to rectify the mistake, its PR department is trying to take attention away from the negative effects of the spill, shed light on the positive clean-up efforts, and salvage the company's reputation. During this time, the oil company's customers have the power to choose another company to supply their needs. Although the organization might choose to highlight its clean-up efforts and what it is trying to do to help the public (provide compensation to individuals, families and entrepreneurs who were affected by the oil spill), the goal of this damage control is to limit the organization's financial tragedies, keep its current customers, and increase its potential to gain future customers.

While the first seven axioms are similar, Axiom 8 marks a substantial change: Communication is the process by which parties understand each other's behavior and negotiate

the meanings of relationships. Two new Axioms follow: 9. Because humans communicate with each other through symbols, shared symbols should be the focus of understanding relationships. 10. Because relationships are co-created or co-negotiated, overlap between both parties' conversation about the relationship is more accurate than individual perception in coming to understand the relationship's meaning for the parties involved. Axiom 11 continues the original Axiom 9: Like negotiations, organization-public relationships are affected by relational history as well as symbolic elements of the conversation.   Axiom 12 summarizes that the proper focus of public relations is using symbols and conversation to negotiate relationships between parties rather than to accomplish a goal by imposing a solution upon a key public. Axiom 13: While conversation alone cannot sustain long-term relationships in the absence of supportive organizational behavior, neither can actions alone sustain long-term relationships in the absence of communication and mutual understanding. Thus, Axiom 13 Effective negotiation of organization–public relationships supports mutual understanding and seeks solutions that convey mutual benefit. (Note that the benefit need not necessarily be equal to be mutual.) Finally, Axiom 14 states that the negotiation perspective is applicable throughout the public relations process and with regard to all public relations techniques. Negotiation more accurately describes the conversation between organizations and publics than does the type of interaction that creates and sustains a romantic relationship, although personal relationships between individual representatives of each group may more closely mimic the stages of growth and development of an interpersonal relationship than professional relationships do.

   Axiom Two states that public relations practitioners are involved in negotiating relationships between their clients or organizations and leaders and members of groups that constitute key publics. It follows then that Axioms Three through Seven are stated as before, but with the understanding that dynamic, goal-oriented relationships are viewed as continuous negotiations. They are affected by ongoing actions, communication, and expectations, but in a slightly different way than actions, communication, and expectations affect relationships between two equal parties involved in friendship or romance. Negotiations need not occur between equal parties, and it is disingenuous to believe that most organizations want their public relations practitioners to form equal power relationships with publics. Public relations practitioners are most likely to form unequal relationships like those between parent and child or recipient and wealthy benefactor. Both parties benefit from the relationship, but the benefits and power in the relationship do not need to be equal for the relationship to be a good one.

   To summarize, relationship negotiation theory, detailed in the 14 revised axioms, fills in some gaps and strengthens the original relationship management foundation. Furthermore, it has several distinct advantages over the earlier model. First, it properly defines and emphasizes communication as constitutive of the conversations used to negotiate relationships. Second, it adds context as a key systems variable. No matter how strong a relationship, economic and other environmental factors may interfere with the connection between the quality of the relationship and one or both parties' desired outcomes. Next, it makes consistent some of the contradictory theoretical traditions that relationship management theory reflects. It specifies specific communication characteristics that are likely to lead to an effective relationship. Effective communication conversations reflect mutual distribution of control, jointly constructed expressions of affiliation with which both parties are comfortable, and consistency with both individual and joint goals for the relationship (O'Hair, Friedrich, Wiemann, & Wiemann,1997). Such effective conversations will produce relationships characterized by trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment, although these concepts need to be further specified

and joint measures, not just individual perceptions of the relationship, still need to be constructed. The relationship negotiation perspective allows for different degrees of relationship depending on whether the parties represent themselves or are represented by third parties during negotiations. This perspective also allows for both balances and imbalances of power created by relationship and contextual factors, as is typical in negotiations. Relationship negotiation theory provides communication characteristics that allow practitioners to form effective relationships with different types of publics.

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Based on the collective findings from the literature review, the following axioms of organization–public relationships are offered:

The following revised axioms of organization–public relational communication are offered:
1. Organization–public relationships are transactional.
2. The relationships are dynamic; they change over time.
3. They are goal oriented.
4. Organization–public relationships have antecedents and consequences and can be analyzed in terms of relationship quality, maintenance strategies, relationship type, and actors in the relationship.
5. These relationships are driven by the perceived needs and wants of interacting organizations and publics.
6. The continuation of organization–public relationships is dependent on the degree to which expectations are met.
7. Those expectations and goals are expressed in interactions between organizations and publics.
8. Such relationships involve communication, but communication is not the sole instrument of relationship building.
9. These relationships are impacted by relational history, the nature of the transaction, the frequency of exchange, and reciprocity.
10. Organization–public relationships can be described by type (personal, professional, community, symbolic, and behavioral) independent of the perceptions of those relationships.
11. The proper focus of the domain of public relations is relationships, not communication.
12. Communication alone cannot sustain long-term relationships in the absence of supportive organizational behavior.
13. Effective management of organization–public relationships supports mutual understanding and benefit.
14. The relationship perspective is applicable throughout the public relations process and with regard to all public relations techniques.
                    (Ledingham, 2003, p. 195)

Appendix B
Relationship Negotiation Axioms

1. Organization–public relationships are co-created through communication.
2. Public relations practitioners negotiate relationships between organizations' key publics.
3. Relationships are dynamic; they change over time, and must be continuously negotiated.
4. Relationships are goal oriented; both parties enter them to accomplish individual goals.
5. Organization–public relationships have antecedents and consequences that affect the negotiation process.
6. The continuation of organization–public relationships is dependent on the degree to which expectations are met and individual goals are reached.
7. Those expectations and goals are expressed through communication in interactions between organizations and publics.
8. Communication is the process by which parties understand each other's behavior and negotiate the meanings of relationships.
9. Because humans communicate with each other through symbols, shared symbols best allow public relations practitioners to understand relationships.
10. Symbolic overlap between parties' conversation about the relationship reveals co-created meaning more accurately than one party's individual perception.
11. Like negotiations, organization-public relationships are affected by relational history as well as symbolic elements of the conversation.
12. Public relations properly focuses on using symbols and conversation to negotiate relationships between parties.
13. While conversation alone cannot sustain long-term relationships in the absence of supportive organizational behavior, neither can actions alone sustain long-term relationships in the absence of communication and mutual understanding.
14. The negotiation perspective is applicable throughout the public relations process.

A Cross-Cultural Study: American and Korean Public Relations Practitioners' Dissent Actions on Organization's Unethical Decisions

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Abstract

A survey of 378 public relations practitioners examined how similarly or differently American and Korean public relations practitioners use dissent tactics. The results showed that there was a clear distinction between sanctioned and unsanctioned tactics among six different dissent categories in both American and Korean practitioners. Assertive confrontation was found to be the most frequently adopted tactic among practitioners in both countries. Those similarities are consistent with previous studies. A difference was found in selection of unsanctioned dissent tactics: Korean practitioners were more likely to work to sabotage implementation of unethical decision, and to leak information to external stakeholders than the US counterparts. As one the seminal studies in public relations dissent, this study will contribute to our understanding of what kind of societal or cultural characteristics affect public relations' selection of dissent tactics against organization's unethical decisions in the US and Korea.

Introduction

It is not a new claim in public relations scholarship that practitioners should find a way to influence the dominant coalition, more specifically, strategic decision-making process (Broom & Dozier, 1986; Dozier, 1992). That argument was essential to establishing professional identity in public relations. Answering questions such as what public relations is, what role public relations is taking, and who its practitioners are supports such a claim. However, there is little research that suggests how practitioners should prepare to be influential (Reber & Berger, 2006). Moreover, obtaining a position within an organization does not always guarantee influence. Therefore, public relations practitioners must wield influence by using influence tactics and strategies to contribute to their organizations' success.

This discussion of influence seems to be more important when it comes to ethics. Ethical practice in public relations is not just limited to the realm of message production levels such as telling the truth or not exaggerating a stories. Public relations practice should be addressed from the perspective of strategic organizational decision-making processes (Bowen 2004; 2007). We need to know how public relations practitioners shape organizations' ethical decisions and actions, and what tactics are preferred or available to practitioners in the process. In this sense, public relations practitioners use dissent actions when they are not heard. Truly, as Reber and Berger (2006) noted, "influence is an antecedent to ethical and effective public relations practice (p.235)."

Over the last decades, Berger and Reber explored public relations practitioners' influence and dissent tactics (Berger, 2005; Berger & Reber, 2005; Reber & Berger, 2006). Though some of their study samples were drawn from multiple countries, the studies have not paid attention to cultural differences. No research has addressed dissent in public relations within a multicultural context. Exploring dissent in different cultural settings may help us to understand why one dissent tactic is preferred over others in different societal or cultural settings. We want to extend the public relations dissent discussion into a cultural context. As a first step, we will compare American and Korean public relations practitioners' dissent actions on organization's unethical decisions. We observe (1) similarities and differences of practitioners' preferred dissent tactics between the two countries, and (2) discuss how those similarities and differences can be interpreted for the success of public relations professionals as ethics advocates in their organizations.

Literature Review

Concept of Dissent in organizational behaviors and public relations studies

Dissent action is defined as "a particular form of resistance" among public relations practitioners "in the face of perceived organizational missteps or wrongdoing (Berger & Reber, 2006, pp. 169-170)." In organizational behavior studies, dissent refers to ''a particular form of employee voice that involves the expression of disagreement or contradictory opinions about organizational practices and policies'' (Kassing, 2002, p. 189), and it involves experiencing psychological, political, moral restraints, in addition to emotion (Kassing, 1997). Dissent can be regarded as a persuasive communication tactic in an organization, rather than as a destructive behavior, because employees are engaged in organizational discussion through dissent (Kassing, 1998). According to the Hirshman's (1970) Exit-Voice-Loyalty model, employees have two choices when expressing frustrations at work: They can leave their organization or voice their

frustrations. The decision depends on the employee's loyalty to the organization. Hirshman (1970) argued that loyal employees are more likely to choose voice over exit. Gossett and Kilker (2006) interpreted dissent as a problem solving process through communication. Dissent themes include asking for information, and discussions about leaving the organization on websites designed for organizational stakeholders to express dissent (Gossett & Kilker, 2006). Similarly, a public relations practitioner as a boundary-spanner brings publics' concerns, suggestions, and even complaints into the organizational decision making process in order to make the organization's decision more appropriate, ethical and socially legitimate. Indeed, dissent can be use in the way which is eventually beneficial to an organization (Redding, 1985). In short, underlying purpose of dissent would be to bring positive change into an organizations' plan, policy, or even climate.

Dissent: making influence through resistance in public relations.
Dissent can be also understood as a tool of promoting change through resistance (Berger & Reber, 2006; Knowles & Linn, 2004). Excellence theory, based on two-way symmetrical worldview, posits that empowered public relations practitioners should be included in the dominant coalition not to influence organizational decisions, but to " allow the organization to benefit from the expertise of the public relations profession" (L.A. Grunig, G.E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002, p.142). In many cases, however, public relations practitioners do not even obtain a seat at decision making table (L.A. Grunig, 1992). Although practitioners are at the table, it is not fully addressed how they are empowered, or how they handle ethically problematic or inappropriate decisions. Should practitioners merely accept and follow such decisions; should they advocate more passionately to deaf ears; or should they attempt influence through a riskier forms of dissent: resistance?

Knowles and Linn (2004) looked at resistance as a persuasion tool that reduce resistance to change or minimize avoidance forces. They cited such strategies as "seeking incremental gains rather than large changes, directly confronting resistance to try to defuse its power, making repeated requests, and reframing messages so that resistance to them actually promotes change" (Berger & Reber, 2006, p.55).

According to Kassing (1997), typical dissent process includes a triggering event, selecting a dissent strategy and the actual expression of dissent. Employees expressions of dissent take three forms: (1) articulate, (2) antagonistic and (3) displaced dissent. First, employees try to communicate with their bosses with an articulated skill and persistent advocacy effort. They attempt to change things by working within the system. Employees use such direct dissent when they expect to "effectively influence organizational adjustment" (Kassing, 1997, p. 326) and serve a corrective feedback function (Hegstrom, 1995). This type of dissent includes boat-rocking (Redding, 1985; Sprague & Ruud, 1988) and early stages of whistle-blowing (Stewart, 1980). Second, *antagonistic dissent* is used when employees believe they will be perceived as adversarial, but also feel they have some safeguards against retaliation. This type of dissent is typically used "for personal advantages issues" and "whenever they believe a captive or influential audience exists" (Kassing, 1998, p.190). The third type is *displaced* dissent. It is expressed "only to stakeholders who are clearly external" (Kassing, 1998, p.191), and thus does not expect confrontation or challenge. However, such displaced dissent does not directly reach those who can properly respond to concerns, but is expressed as collective action, such as strikes, which provide some degree of anonymity and reduce the likelihood of retaliation against individual employees. Employees experience dissent, but do not always voice their dissent

directly within organizations to the most effective audiences. All of these classifications enhance understanding of how employees attempt influence through dissent.

Two realms of dissent tactics within influence tactics

Though there are more diverse classifications in dissent tactics, both influence-tactics studies and dissent studies provides us with the concept of acceptable versus unacceptable or, more correctly, common versus uncommon ranges of dissent (Berger, 2005; Berger & Reber, 2006; Kipnis et al., 1980; Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990). These researchers identified eight influence dimensions such as ingratiation, rationality, assertiveness, sanctions, exchange, upward appeal, blocking, and coalitions. Among these, rationality was found to be the most prevalent when attempting to influence superiors. Assertiveness and sanctions were chosen primarily for influencing subordinates, whereas ingratiation, exchange, and upward appeals were used significantly more to influence subordinates and co-workers than to influence superiors. Blocking and coalitions were the least commonly used of the influence dimensions (Kipnis et al., 1980, p.449). Kipnis et al. (1980) noted that assertiveness is perceived as a common means of expressing dissent, whereas blocking or sabotaging is a less common and less acceptable means of presenting dissent. Similarly, Kassing (2002) categorized five strategies for dissent expressed to supervisors: direct-factual appeal (using facts and experiences to support one's position), repetition (repeating a dissent message until the audience is amenable), solution presentation (providing a solution as part of dissent), circumvention (intentionally going over the audience's head), and threatening resignation (letting the audience know that you would quit if the matter was not resolved) (recited from Garner, 2009).

Sanctioned or common forms of dissent work within a system and are not regarded as threatening. Constructing rational argument with professional knowledge and experience, building coalitions, enhancing political astuteness, and assertiveness (pressure) are examples of common dissent tactics (Berger, 2005; Berger & Reber, 2006). On the other hand, these tactics can counter unethical and inefficient decisions when they are "not used as approaches to advancing one's career or to carrying out instrumental directives more successfully or efficiently" (Berger, 2005, p. 18). Unsanctioned or uncommon forms of resistance consist of actions or approaches that are unacceptable to the organization and challenge it. Berger (2005) found public relations practitioners use several unsanctioned forms of resistance such as covert actions, alternative interpretations, whistle blowing, and association-level activism.

From the literature of organizational communication studies (Caruth et al., 1995; Hullman, 1995; Maurer, 1998; Recardo, 1995), Berger and Reber (2006) in a dissent survey classify dissent behaviors in public relations into six types as follows: (1) assertively confronting management about the inappropriateness of the decision; (2) working to sabotage implementation of the decision; (3) agitating others to join in arguing and working against the decision; (4) leaking information to external stakeholders about the decision; (5) using facts selectively in making a case against the decision; and (6) standing by and saying nothing. Among these, the first three were regarded as accepted or common tactics, and the rest unaccepted (Berger & Reber, 2006). The distinction was consistently found in the following study (Kang & Berger, 2010).

Dissent and cultural context

Not many scholars study public relations dissent, but there are several comprehensive studies in the field (*see* Berger, 2005; Berger & Reber, 2006; Reber & Berger, 2006; Holtzhauzen & Voto, 2002; Kang & Berger, 2010). Little to no research has explored public

relations dissent in the multi-cultural context. Indeed, dissent tactics need to be interpreted within a cultural context, because different cultural values affect perceptions of dissent and its selection. Berger and Reber (2006) provided a comprehensive dissent study among public relations practitioners, suggesting six different types of dissent tactics. However, it becomes necessary to examine how similarly or differently these tactics work in public relations practice beyond American organizational culture. This study assumes that dissent tactics can be effective communication tools in public relations practitioners' resistance to organizations' unethical decisions across cultures. As a ground study of cross cultural dissent in public relations, we designed a comparative study between US and Korea public relations practitioners in terms of their selection of dissent tactics.

Research Questions

Based on the literature review, we developed the following two research questions. RQ-1 examines the extent to which Korean public relations practitioners use specific dissent tactics. RQ-2 examines how differently the US and Korean public relations practitioners select dissent tactics in their organizations.

RQ-1: How similarly do the US and Korean public relations professionals take dissent actions on organizational unethical decisions?

RQ-2: How differently do the US and Korean public relations professionals take dissent actions on organizational unethical decision?

Methods

Samples

An online survey yielded 252 responses from a random sample of Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) members in August and September of 2008. The response rate was 4.6%. For the Korean sample126 responses were collected from November in 2009 to February in 2010. We selected several key organizations for the the Korean sample representing such organizational types as public relations agencies, corporations, non-profit organizations, and government agencies. Although we adopted convenience sampling in Korean surveys, we distributed only 3 to 5 surveys per organization to reach out as many organizations as possible.

Participants. Most (71.8%) of the respondents were women, and 19.4% of the respondents were in their 20s, 22.3% in their 30s, 27.3% in their 40s, 23.5% in their 50s, and 7.5% in their 60s. The majority (62.4%) had college degrees, and 36.7% had Masters or higher degrees. Average experience in public relations industries was 10-11 years, and average work experience in the current organization was 3-4 years. Participants represented diverse organization types: 18.4% of the respondents worked at PR agencies, 7.3% at communication agencies, 32.5% in corporations, 24.8% in non-profit organizations, 14.1% at government agencies, and 3.0% in educational institutions.

In the Korean sample, 60% of the respondents were women, and 44.1% of the respondents were in their 20s, 45.1% in their 30s, and 8.1% in their 40s. The majority (65.1%) had college degrees, and 33.3% had Masters or higher degrees. Average experience in public relations industries was 4-6 years, and average work experience in the current organization was 3-4 years. Participants represented diverse organization types: 46% of the respondents worked at PR agencies, 4.8% at communication agencies, 34.7% in corporations, 2.4% in non-profit organizations, 7.3% at government agencies, and 1.6% in educational institutions.

Measures

Dissent Tactics. Berger and Reber (2006) identified six dissent tactics that public relations managers might use. However, while Berger and Reber's study asked respondents how they would express dissent in hypothetical situations, this study captured the self-perception of PR managers' dissent in their "actual practice," i.e., their own actions against unethical organizational decisions. We asked survey participants to respond to this question: How often do you take the following action, when your organization has made a decision which is clearly immoral or unethical?

The measured tactics are as followed: (a) Assertively confront management about the inappropriateness of the decision, (b) Agitate others to join them in arguing and working against the decision, (c) Use facts selectively in making a case against the decision, (d) Work to sabotage implementation of the decision (e) Leak information to external stakeholders about the decision (f) Stand by and say nothing. All items were measured on a seven-point scale of agreement level from one to seven.

Results

Table 1 Frequencies of Public Relations Practitioners' Dissent Tactics over Organizational Unethical Decisions (Korea)

	1 Never (%)	2	3	4	5	6	7 Always (%)	Mean (S.D.)
Assertiveness	4 (3.2)	9 (7.3)	25 (20.2)	32 (25.8)	35 (28.2)	18 (14.5)	1 (.8)	4.15 (1.31)
Agitating	14 (11.3)	26 (21.0)	25 (20.2)	32 (25.8)	21 (16.9)	4 (3.2)	2 (1.6)	3.32 (1.43)
Selective use Of information	10 (8.1)	14 (11.4)	20 (16.3)	43 (35.0)	25 (20.3)	11 (8.9)	0 (0)	3.75 (1.37)
Sabotage	34 (27.6)	30 (24.4)	29 (23.6)	25 (20.3)	4 (3.3)	1 (.8)	0 (0)	2.5 (1.23)
Leaking information	40 (32.0)	41 (32.8)	17 (13.6)	20 (16.0)	5 (4.0)	2 (1.6)	0 (0)	2.32 (1.27)
Standby & Doing nothing	15 (12.0)	17 (13.6)	21 (16.8)	38 (30.4)	21 (16.8)	11 (8.7)	2 (1.6)	3.59 (1.52)

Note: N=126.

Table 2 Frequencies of Public Relations Practitioners' Dissent Tactics over Organizational Unethical Decisions (US)

	Never (%)	2	3	4	5	6	Always (%)	Mean (S.D.)
Assertiveness	8 (3.17)	4 (1.59)	12 (4.76)	35 (13.89)	53 (32.15)	77 (30.56)	63 (25)	5.40 (1.46)
Agitating	55 (21.83)	25 (9.92)	17 (6.75)	50 (19.84)	50 (19.84)	34 (13.49)	2 (8.33)	3.79 (1.97)
Selective use of information	60 (23.81)	32 (12.70)	12 (4.76)	41 (16.27)	51 (20.24)	35 (13.89)	2 (8.33)	3.71 (2.03)
Sabotage	164 (65.08)	46 (18.25)	20 (7.94)	15 (5.95)	5 (1.98)	1 (0.40)	1 (0.40)	1.64 (1.09)
Leaking Information	197 (78.18)	29 (11.51)	8 (3.17)	13 (5.16)	4 (1.59)	0 (0)	1 (0.40)	1.43 (0.96)
Standby & Doing nothing	126 (50)	44 (17.46)	24 (9.52)	39 (15.48)	14 (5.56)	5 (1.98)	0 (0)	1.15 (1.42)

Note: N=252.

Results of the RQ1

The findings are consistent with previous studies conducted on US practitioners (*see* Kang & Berger, 2010). The results of frequency analysis affirmed that "assertive confrontation" was the most frequently adopted tactic to resist an unethical organizational decision in both American and Korean practitioners. Of the Korean practitioners, 69.3% positively responded to select confrontation tactics, choosing 4 or above on the 7-point scale. 47.5% of Korean practitioners preferred to agitate others to join them in arguing and working against the decisions (*M*=3.32, *SD*=1.43), and 64.2% of the Korean practitioners use facts selectively in making a case against the decision (*M*=3.75). *Sabotage* and *leaking information* were found to be unacceptable dissent tactics both the US and Korean samples.

Results of the RQ2

While both American and Korean practitioners picked confrontation tactics the most for expressing dissent, Korean practitioners do not seem to confront top management as much as US practitioners do (*M*US=5.4 *vs. M*Korea=4.2, *F*=7.94, *df=1, p<.01).* On the other hand, we found interesting differences in selection of unacceptable dissent tactics between the two samples. Even though sabotage and leaking information are uncommon, Korean practitioners were more likely to work to sabotage implementation of the unethical decision than their US counterparts. (*M*US= 1.64, vs. *M*Korea=2.48, *F*=31.95, *df*=1, *p<.001*). Korean practitioners were even more likely to leak information to external stakeholders about the decision (*M*US=1.43 vs. *M*Korea=2.32, *F*=32.38, *df=1, p<.001*). Regarding the tactic of *doing nothing,* it seems to be more acceptable to Korean practitioners than to their US counterparts (MUS=2.15 vs. MKorea=3.58, *F*=25.68, *df=1, p<.001*).

Table 3

Dissent Actions	Mean		F	η
	US	Korea		
Assertively confront management about the inappropriateness of the decision**	5.15	4.67	7.94	.02
Agitate others to join them in arguing and working against the decision	3.65	3.62	.01	.00
Use facts selectively in making a case against the decisions	3.75	3.67	.01	.000
Work to sabotage implementation of the decision***	1.64	2.48	31.95	.08
Leak information to external stakeholders about the decision***	1.46	2.62	32.38	.08
Stand by and say nothing***	2.32	3.26	25.68	.07

Note: df=1, *p<.05, **p<.o1, ***p<.001; N(US)= 252, N(Korea)= 126;
Covariates: participation in decision-making process, age, gender & education.

Discussion & Conclusion

This study explored the similarities and differences between American and Korean public relations practitioners' preferred dissent tactics on organizations' unethical decisions. One clear similarity was that there was distinction between sanctioned and unsanctioned dissent tactics in both American and Korean practitioners. The results are consistent with previous research on dissent, and suggest the universal role of the public relations function: to protect organizational reputation (Berger & Reber, 2006; Kang & Berger, 2010). As a boundary spanner, public relations practitioners must build a bridge between an organization and its key publics (L.A. Grunig et al., 1992). Excellence theory always encourages practitioners to bring publics' voices into the organization's internal decision making process. However, public relations practitioners are called upon to advocate for the organization's reputation. Therefore, practitioners want to solve a problem internally without involving external stakeholders in their own issue. This may be one common reason why both American and Korean practitioners prefer sanctioned tactics: assertively advocate against the unethical decision, agitate others to join against the unethical decision, and selectively use information to build up counter argument.

American practitioners (*M*=5.15) seem to be more confident to assertively confront top management than their Korean counterparts (*M*=4.67; *F=7.94, df=1; p*<.01), although Korean practitioners preferred confrontation strategies most. Different perceptions about confrontation may explain this difference between the two countries. Confrontation may be regarded as one skill of small group discussions in American society, where individual opinions are respected. However, it may require additional courage in Korean society, where group conformity and harmony are much more respected than differences and diversity. It will be insightful for future qualitative study to investigate what confrontation tactics actually mean to public relations practitioners, and how differently American and Korean practitioners perceive them.

Meanwhile, differences in dissent selection between Korean and American practitioners may reflect on cultural and societal differences. Overall, Korean practitioners more consistently selected risky tactics such as sabotage and leaking information to external stakeholders compared with their American counterparts. Although this study does not provide direct evidence that explains these differences, several implications may be worth addressing. First, cultural differences may be a factor. As is generally known, Korean society is more collectivistic and has

larger power-distance than in America (Hofstede, 1984; 1991). In collectivistic society, opinion that is different from the majority is easily neglected or disrespected. People are afraid to be separated from their group by expressing different opinions, even though they have opposing thoughts. People are less tolerant to others expressing different opinions from themselves, and pursue in-group conformity. Meanwhile, in a society where power distance is large, people are more likely to obey authority. Expressing a disagreement against seniors or bosses makes people feel uncomfortable or even guilty (Hofstede, 1984; 1991; Hofstede & Bond, 1987). Consequently, such characteristics of collectivism and large power-distance may suppress communication.

In a sense, sanctioned dissent tactics such as confrontation, agitation, and selective use of information for developing counter argument are forms of direct communication, whereas unsanctioned tactics such as sabotage and leaking information are indirect communication forms. Korean practitioners may feel uncomfortable directly confronting top management and may not want to be isolated from other colleagues. Therefore, they may choose indirect ways of communicating, through risky tactics.

Second, differences in journalist and public relations practitioner relationships in America and Korea may account for differences in dissent-tactics selection. In particular, Korean practitioners were more likely to leak information to external stakeholders. Media relations in Korea mostly rely on human relationships between journalists and public relations practitioners, called *Cheong* (Kim, 1995). *Cheong* is regarded as a spiritual tie that is unconsciously established through direct or indirect contact and common experience (Berkowitz & Lee, 2004; Kim, 1995). Korean human relationships tend to be deeper, more self-disclosing than those in the United States (Park & Kim, 1992; Won & Doornink, 1991), and nurtured by *Cheong* (Han, 2002). Berkowitz and Lee (2004) found that *Cheong* is inevitably formed in journalist and practitioner relationships in Korea. It is very common for journalist and practitioner to have regular contact, frequently having meals together. The friendly relationship can be easily developed to the extent that a journalist and a practitioner talk about personal matters. Because *Cheong* emerges from familiarity, trust and consideration for each other, a practitioner may have many chances to talk about his/her organization's problems to a journalist "friend." Future study needs to explore how the journalist and practitioner relationship could be linked to the tendency of leaking information. Further study should closely address how the leaking information strategies work in both American and Korean context.

Lastly, an organization's structure can shape the way in which dissent tactics are adopted and tolerated. Although an organizational culture reflects on societal culture and values, each organization has its own cultural characteristics. A unique culture may foster particular dissent tactics. Kang and Berger (2010) found from a survey of US public relations practitioners that leaking information was more frequently selected when the organizational climate does not support open communication. Future study on dissent actions should explore the relationship between organizational conditions and dissent-tactic selections in Korea.

Limitations

While this study sheds light on a previously unexplored avenue of research, there are some limitations. The Korean sample was half the size of the US sample, although the 126 responses have been acceptable in the past researches on Korean practitioners. This may affect the validity of the study. Future studies should consider this problem and design a more precise comparative study. Second, the study results between US and Korean public relations

practitioners should not be generalized into a difference between Eastern and Western countries. How differently dissent tactics are perceived and selected should be explored in a more diverse cultural context in future studies. Despite of the limitations, we believe this study advances our understanding of dissent tactics taken by public relations practitioners in a multicultural context. Appropriate and successful selection of dissent tactics can contribute to ethical practice in public relations.

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Fortune 500 Foray: How the Nation's Largest Insurer Leverages Social Media

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Abstract

Ultimately, this study is a series of smaller case studies within State Farm Insurance to demonstrate how State Farm has been able to leverage, on multiple occasions and across multiple platforms, its presence as the largest provider of insurance in the United States. The study's goal is to show how a large, mature corporate entity is able to increase its presence with current and potential clients through social media.

Introduction

 The story of State Farm's foray into social media could be informed by a historical event from nearly three centuries ago. On July 31, 1715, a Spanish treasure fleet was traveling from North America back to Spain. A hurricane struck the off the coast of present-day Florida, sinking the fleet's eleven ships, along with all the riches they carried. The fleet was too encumbered with silver to maneuver away from the hurricane. In 2009, State Farm reported total assets of more than 100 billion dollars – more silver than any other personal lines insurer in the United States (State Farm Insurance 2010).

 The mission of State Farm is to help people manage the risks of everyday life, recover from the unexpected, and realize their dreams. State Farm's balancing act of maintaining core values while adapting to change underscores why the company insurers more homes and cars than any other insurer in the United States (State Farm Insurance 2010).

 Still, this technological advancement might prove to be different from the rest. A purely sociological impact notwithstanding, the sheer velocity of adoption in social media technologies has been staggering. A technology adoption timeline, from KDPaine & Partners measurement firm, provides a timeline for context compared with other landmark technologies.

TABLE 1: TECHNOLOGY AND NUMBER OF YEARS TO REACH 50 MILLION USERS

Technology	Years
Radio	38
Television	13
Internet	4
iPod	3
Facebook	9 months (100 million)
iPhone applications	9 months (1 billion)

 Further, the rate of adoption for a company with more than 67,000 employees is not as fast as smaller companies – smaller ships maneuver more readily. To understand exactly why, one must first appreciate the nuances of the insurance industry. One example: Each state has its own insurance department and commissioner. Therefore, each externally facing message faces scrutiny so it does not violate any state regulation. The result is a company with high-risk aversion and low risk tolerance.

 In the insurance and financial services industry, risks abound. The Insurance Information Institute provides unbiased information about insurance and serves as a resource for insurance professionals and consumers. To shed light on one of the many complicated issues surrounding insurance, the following is an example of insurance rate-setting procedure. The Institute explains this aspect of rate regulation, in brief:

 States monitor insurance company solvency. One important function related to this is

overseeing rate changes. Rate making is the process of calculating a price to cover the future cost of insurance claims and expenses, including a margin for profit. To establish rates, insurers look at past trends and changes in the current environment that may affect potential losses in the future. Rates are not the same as premiums. A rate is the price of a given unit of insurance—$2.50 per $1,000 of earthquake coverage, for example. The premium represents the total cost of many units. If the price to rebuild a house is $150,000, the premium would be 150 x $2.50. Rates vary according to the likelihood and potential size of loss. Using the example of earthquake insurance, rates would be higher near a fault line and for a brick house, which is more susceptible to damage, than a frame one (Insurance Information Institute 2010).

The aforementioned explanation of insurance rate determination, though brief, exemplifies the challenges social media presents for a company like State Farm. It is not only State Farm faces these challenges. Indeed, most Fortune 500 companies with a social media presence are troubleshooting issues with the advent of social media. With the inherent nature of insurance, major brands in this category have a doubly challenging experience.

This study attempts to describe State Farm's foray into the social media space, while providing context. A gap exists between what is considered best practice in social media, and what "doing social media" actually means.

State Farm launched its first social media platform in July of 2007, a YouTube page. What has the company done since then? How does the leader of an intensely regulated industry ensure success in user-generated media? How does it stack up versus other companies in the insurance vertical? The goal of this study is not to enlighten those who wish to discover best practice, but *a* practice – how the Fortune 31 insurance and financial services company has navigated the brackish waters of social media.

Background of the Case

A case study on State Farm's presence in social media serves multiple audiences. First, the current study serves as a benchmark for those in the insurance industry, and also as an example for other large service organizations. Ultimately, the use of case study is appropriate to fully examine State Farm's foray into social media.

State Farm Not Connecting

Kelly Thul, director of enterprise information systems at State Farm, presented a case study at Blogwell, a regular meeting of the Social Media Business Council, in February 2010. He presented the insurer's social media guidelines, as well as risks involved in the use of social media. His presentation began with, "Bless you people. When the choice is, end of day, and you could go to a gaming presentation or talk to the insurance guy for awhile – and you're here? Thanks very much for that." His audience comprised social media business leaders at large corporations. Outside of presentations of that kind, State Farm's social media presentations are made to the millennial generation – alongside other major brands and entertainment channels.

State Farm is not the only insurance company involved in social media. All the top four home and auto insurance companies have some sort of social media presence. While, in market share, State Farm is number one; Allstate, number two; GEICO, number three; and Progressive, number four – the gap between State Farm and Allstate narrows quickly.

Although State Farm has the largest share of market, the company does not have the largest share of voice. In the insurance category, brands can be bolstered heavily by PR/marketing/advertising; i.e. Progressive's quirky commercial spokeswoman, Flo.

According to the 2010 Brand Keys' Customer Loyalty Index survey, Progressive took the second spot behind Allstate, up from the fifth position in 2009. According to the research company's founder and president Robert Passikoff, the sudden rise is attributable to one thing: Flo.

Progressive's jump on the Customer Loyalty Index comes at the expense of companies such as State Farm, GEICO and Nationwide, which each moved down one spot (to third, fourth and fifth, respectively) Progressive slipped to fourth in market share in 2010, behind State Farm, Allstate and GEICO (Baar 2010).

To compound matters for State Farm, Allstate announced it had designs to dethrone State Farm and claim majority of the $235 billion market within ten years. In an April 30, 2010, memo, Allstate Senior Vice President Joseph Richardson told Allstate agents:

We've declared our commitment to be the No. 1 provider of consumer protection in the U.S.! That's a powerful statement. It's a statement about being the best! Yes, the best. Doesn't it feel good to say? Just think about how great it will feel when we achieve it, and State Farm — and every other competitor — looks up to us!(Ibid.).

And while Allstate proves to be State Farm's largest business competition, GEICO – rife with advertising cavemen, geckos, talking potholes and others – is rising quickly. This is most evidenced by the company's 2 percent market-share increase since 2005 (Fig. 2). In blogs and studies about social media, State Farm receives little to no mention – not the case for GEICO. Bernoff, 2009, wrote about what several insurers are doing to gain and maintain policyholder consideration in the social media space.

Beyond advertising gimmicks, GEICO also started social media platforms for motorcycle enthusiasts. MyGreatRides.com, in particular, allows motorcyclists to share photos, stories, posts and calendar events with like-minded people. Allstate's AllStateGarage.com offers a more user-friendly version of that concept. From posting rich media, to contacting agents about motorcycle insurance, the site taps into the need for customized content for motorcycle enthusiasts. State Farm currently has no niche platform to drive motorcyclists' consideration. The company addressed motorcyclists via a Facebook post on May 11, 2010: "May means motorcycles… let's hit the road! In honor of Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month, here's some resources from the Motorcycle Safety Foundation to help protect you on that ride. Find out about rider courses in your area, safety tips and more..." (facebook.com/statefarm n.d.).

After observing the rate of growth, GEICO seems to be the largest threat in the competitive landscape for State Farm. The former government insurance company owned by Warren Buffet's conglomerate Berkshire Hathaway offers insurance lines exclusive to transportation in the property and casualty insurance category. Buffet's mega-company is now number one on the list of Fortune's world's most admired companies in property and casualty insurance. State farm is number eight. The only other U.S.-based insurers in the top-eight are Travelers and Allstate at rankings four and five, respectively (Fortune 2010).

The research firm Hay Management Consultants conduct a parallel study to the Fortune Most Admired rankings to determine correlations between rankings and company goals. Their findings suggested that the World's Most Admired Companies are more than twice as likely as

other large companies to set non-financial goals for their executives. These include building human capital (66 percent compared with 30 percent) contributing to corporate social responsibility (21 percent compared with 10 percent) and building customer loyalty (76 percent compared with 30 percent). (Management Services 2000). From the introductory description, all of these goals could be bolstered with social media.

But does that mean the insurer is not using social media effectively? Sarah Evans is a self-described "social media freak," who initiated and moderates #journchat, the weekly live chat between PR professionals, journalists and bloggers on Twitter. She is also considered a thought-leader in public relations and new media. In a poll of her more-than-44,000 followers on Twitter, she asked the following: "When brands promote they're on a social network what do you expect from them?" The categories included deals or special offers; connection on a more personal level; customer service; news and information; links to their press releases; opportunity to connect on multiple platforms; inside look at the company/brand; response to my tweet/post/other; exclusive photos, video, etc.; and, I don't want to connect with brands on social media. Participants were allowed to click on multiple categories. Seventy percent voted that they expect news and information from brands they follow on Twitter (Evans 2010).

Though State Farm may not have a clearly defined personality in social media, Thul, in his Council presentation, said the company has been involved in the space for more than three years. This study will describe State Farm from a social media perspective, in order to fill the gap between effort and output in the company's social media ventures.

State Farm in Social Media

Preceding an in-depth examination of how State Farm uses social media to communicate externally, it should be noted that the company is recognized consistently as a communication leader in other areas – both internally and externally. State Farm Red Magazine, one of the insurer's internal communication vehicles, has been awarded a Bronze Anvil from the Public Relations Society of America. The Bronze Anvils recognize the "best of the best" in public relations and communications. Red was the winner in the category of magazines. The team that produced it is recognized consistently among major companies of its expertise in employee communications (PRSA 2010).

On the external side, State Farm was awarded the Silver Anvil in 2008. The company's campaign, 50 Million Pound Challenge, won the award. The campaign was an innovative effort in the African-American community to help people get fit, lose excess weight and stem the toll of weight-related diseases that threaten millions of Americans – which inherently includes many State Farm policyholders.

State Farm's collaboration with Dr. Ian Smith started in April 2007 with a Challenge tour of major U.S. cities beginning in Washington, DC. Each event included nutrition and exercise tips, free health screenings, entertainment and presentations from celebrities, a community walk for healthy living, and nutrition and health professionals. The program included online resources at 50millionpounds.com, where total pounds lost are tallied, upcoming events are shared, and Challenge kits are made available with a menu and fitness advice, CD, brochure, and a pedometer to count steps (Participants have lost more than five million pounds, in total.

The Silver Anvil, the highest honor accorded by the public relations profession in the United States is sponsored by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and recognizes

outstanding achievement in strategic public relations planning and implementation. State Farm won in the Multicultural Public Relations – Business category (State Farm Insurance 2008).

"The Silver Anvils are the Oscars of the public relations profession and these finalists exemplify the best practices in the country," said Joice Truban Curry, 2008 PRSA Silver Anvil Committee chair and President/CEO, c3 Communications, Inc. The State Farm sponsorship of the 50 Million Pound Challenge ended in 2009 (Ibid.). With the company's communications credibility established, the study will now focus on what State Farm has done in social media to maintain excellence.

State Farm's famous slogan, Like a Good Neighbor, State Farm is There®, debuted in 1971, in a jingle written by Barry Manilow. In 2009, the slogan was selected for addition to the Madison Avenue Advertising Walk of Fame. Today, if a person were to use the world's most popular search engine, Google.com, to search the term, "Like a good neighbor," the results are a mix of consumer complaints, State Farm marketing and iterations that fall under both categories.

The years 2009 and 2010 have been tech-heavy for State Farm's social media infrastructure. The company has introduced services making it possible to connect with policyholders more efficiently and transparently than in previous years. State Farm Pocket Agent launched as a free application for the iPhone and iPod Touch, as well as Android-based smart phones. This was, perhaps, a direct result of studies suggesting more and more people use mobile technology to supplement traditional websites, especially in social media. According to the Pew Research Center (2010), a large portion of the online population gravitates to mobile access and wireless to supplement their home high-speed wired connections. Therefore, the demand for being present in this space – both mobile and social – has increased. State Farm, along with other institutions, are issued greater incentives to optimize their customers' online experiences. Further, more people have greater opportunity to share their advice and observations online – like which insurance company to choose (Horrigan 2009).

The Pocket Agent allows users to experience the functionality of statefarm.com on a mobile application. Agent allows State Farm policyholders to locate a Select Service® repair facility, find a State Farm agent, submit a claim or access their State Farm Bank and Mutual Fund balances. Users flocked in large numbers to our social media Internet sites. State Farm CEO Ed Rust called attention to the company's social media efforts in the enterprise-wide 2009 Year-In-Review: "More people than ever saw what we were doing in their neighborhoods by visiting us on Facebook, Twitter and Flickr and our YouTube channel" (State Farm Insurance n.d.).

State Farm initially became involved in social media through the 50 Million Pound Challenge, as that program was not aligned with the company's core business. This provided State Farm with the opportunity to begin its foray into social media without facing the privacy, risk and management issues associated with the heavily regulated industry (Sernovitz 2010).

State Farm Adopting Social Media

As pressures mounted and market share slipped, the 80-year-old company began taking a hard look at social media and what it could offer. The 50 Million Pound Challenge provided the pilot the insurer needed to maintain its high risk aversion stance, while experimenting with the various social media nuances. The researchers have compiled a timeline of the company's most prominent social media milestones.

TABLE 2: NOTABLE SOCIAL MEDIA MILESTONES FOR STATE FARM

Date	Milestone
July 2007	Launch of State Farm YouTube channel
Sept. 2008	Launch of State Farm Twitter account
Oct. 2008	Launch of Teen Driver Safety Facebook page
May 2009	Launch of State Farm Facebook page
June 2009	Launch of State Farm Careers Facebook page
Sept. 2009	YouTube channel reaches 1 million views
Nov. 2009	Release of social media guidelines for employees
Feb. 2009	State Farm Facebook pages reaches 10,000 fans (now listed as "likes")
March 2010	Agents approved to create Facebook business pages AND OK Go! video launches on YouTube

In a July 2009 study of social media use by employees while at work, Nucleus Search found companies lose an average of 1.5 percent of total office productivity when employees have access to Facebook during business hours. Interviews Nucleus conducted with 237 randomly selected workers resulted in some potentially alarming findings to businesses. Seventy-seven percent are on Facebook. Of those, nearly two-thirds access Facebook during working hours. Those who have access spend 15 minutes per day on the site, on average. Eighty-seven percent could not provide a business reason for using Facebook during work. Perhaps most telling of the current power of social media: One in every 33 workers built their entire Facebook presence *while at work*.

The research firm also noted that several employees claimed to use Facebook as a proxy for e-mail. For more secure companies – like State Farm – this poses a risk because corporate IT cannot monitor Facebook activities as it can with in-server e-mail. One example Nucleus found involved a doctor who had added his patients as friends on Facebook. The firm advises this could lead to potential violations of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which places strict rules on electronically transmitting patient information (Nucleus Research 2009).

Still, this lack of access to social media does not seem to translate into lower employee morale. To be sure, State Farm is recognized consistently as one of the nation's top employers. In 2009, Equal Opportunity Magazine awarded the company a Reader's Choice Award for being a top-50 place to work. For both 2009 and 2010, Fortune Magazine has recognized State Farm as one of the World's Most Admired Companies in the property & casualty insurance industry (State Farm Insurance n.d.).

State Farm holds privacy in the highest regard. To demonstrate, an article in the weekly independent insurance publication Thompson's World Insurance News featured one example of the culture behind the safeguards State Farm has in place to protect policyholder privacy. After one of the company's customers experienced an accident, State Farm hired a private investigator (PI) to determine whether or not the other party's injury claim was legitimate. This is common practice among insurers. A third-party lodged a complaint and Canada's Office of the Privacy Commissioner (OPC) citing that the info should be disclosed . The PI and State Farm refused to

turn over tapes captured during the process. The company's response is an example of its dedication to policyholders' privacy:

> State Farm is committed to protecting the privacy of its customers and those it does business with, and supports valid regulation intended to promote privacy interests. This litigation deals with the federal Privacy Commissioner's jurisdiction in regards to the disclosure of evidence in a provincial civil lawsuit where a plaintiff is suing one of our policyholders. We believe provincial civil courts have jurisdiction to deal with all aspects of the case, including document disclosure and what is appropriate information collection by the parties. State Farm's primary focus is not on the broad question of federal jurisdiction over privacy law, but on its application to provincially regulated litigation. (Weatherbie 2010)

As reiterated from the introduction, several corporate communicators and academics discuss social media by way of concepts and philosophy. However, few have discussed what it means to actually "do" social media. Logically, much of the information surrounding day-to-day practice is considered proprietary – as competition could possibly benefit from learning how State Farm is leveraging the social media base. Still, the authors contend that social media, innately, is visible to all who have Internet access and are not blocked by a firewall – like most employees at State Farm.

The insurer uses four primary modes of communication in social media – Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Flickr – and all serve a unique purpose and audience. Though page-specific information is inaccessible externally, a comparison at analytics site compete.com found all social media sites State Farm uses trump the traffic figures of statefarm.com. Facebook, the most popular social network, attracts more visitors than statefarm.com by a margin of more than 70-to-1. This study focuses primarily on the insurer's use of Facebook for this reason.

Facebook, launched in February 2004, allows people to add friends and send them messages, upload rich content, and update their personal profiles to notify friends about themselves, among other uses. People using Facebook can browse categories organized by college, school, workplace or interest. The website's name stems from the U.S. university administration practice of providing new students with directories to allow them to get to know fellow students. The site also allows cross-integration with other websites, allowing Facebook users login to various participating sites through Facebook. With more than 135 million unique visitors per month, it vies with Google as the most visited website on the Internet.

State Farm started its official Facebook page in May 2009, but this was not the insurer's first Facebook presence. The company's program to educate teens about driving safely, aptly named Teen Driver Safety, started a page in October 2008. The presence is used to promote all things Teen Driver Safety, from re-posting stories about Graduated Drivers Licensing laws, to links to studies from State Farm's research partner, the Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania (State Farm Insurance n.d.). A post from February 25, 2010, reads: "Parents with new teen drivers will want to be sure to check out our brand new Steer Clear Mobile app, now available for iPhone and iPod touch. This great new tool not only helps teens become safer drivers, it also helps them qualify for up to a 15% discount on auto insurance!" As of June 2010, the page had approximately 1,700 fans (now listed as "likes").

Another of State Farm's Facebook presences, titled State Farm Careers, features information about starting a career at State Farm. The crux of this page, from its information tab:

"ONE COMPANY. LOTS OF CAREERS. We may be the No. 1 insurer of autos and homes in the U.S., but careers here go way beyond insurance. From research to telecommunications; from law to IT – you can stay put and still go places. Search jobs and apply at statefarm.com/careers" (State Farm Insurance n.d.). Posts on this page range from current job listings at State Farm, to people posting inquiries regarding how to get a job at the company. The page had more than 10,000 fans as of June 2010.

The aforementioned Facebook pages garner the largest followings for State Farm besides it main page, facebook.com/statefarm. However, when conducting an initial search for State Farm in Facebook, several other pages appear, including: State Farm Home Run Trivia Challenge, State Farm Bayou Classic, State Farm Research and Development Center, State Farm Territorial Cup Series, State Farm (as an interest), and several others. Another page, titled plainly "State Farm Insurance," has more than 2,000 fans and says State Farm started in Denver, Colorado. All of these are examples of both brand diversification and splintering.

The content State Farm uses to populate its main Facebook presence facebook.com/statefarm, spans from advertising promotions to information about loss mitigation for policyholders. More than any of its other social media presences, the company uses Facebook to cross-promote media from other social media platforms. For example, when State Farm invited Jim Cantore to test weather-simulation machines in its Building Technology Research Lab for a series of morning segments on The Weather Channel, the insurer linked to photos taken at the event on Flickr. From April 7, 2010: "If you missed the Weather Channel's Jim Cantore broadcasting live from our Building Technology Research Lab, check out the pictures on our Flickr page" (facebook.com/statefarm n.d.). Posts like this underscore a key function of social media, expanding the breadth and depth of awareness for public relations activities. In contrast, the post's comments speak to one of the most pressing challenges State Farm and other brands face in social media: lack of control. This is one of the comments from the Tornado Week post in April:

> Why would you advertise tornado week when YOUR COMPANY SENT MY PARENTS WHO ARE IN THEIR 80s a letter in Feb. telling them you are canceling their policy because they live in a hurricane state?! And they have been with State Farm forever. Shame on you for doing this to people in their 80's!!!!!They have been faithful customers for more years than I can (facebook.com/statefarm n.d.)

The post details a customer experience one person had and shared in the comments channel. The authors found several instances in which a post had nothing to do with the subsequent comments. People commenting on State Farm Facebook posts are using the channel mostly to vent about negative experiences. Further, and perhaps more surprising, State Farm did not address the negative post. That is, at least the State Farm page did not address it. Here is a comment immediately following the negative comment:

> Michelle, I'm truly sorry about your parents dilemma, but if you want to blame someone for your parents being canceled, I would start with the Florida governor... Kenny is right, there is a lot behind Florida and the insurance issue. Not just with State Farm, but the entire insurance industry in that state (facebook.com/statefarm).

The comment author does not identify himself as a State Farm employee per se. Upon further investigation, his Facebook page lists his location as Bloomington, Ill., home to the State

Farm Headquarters. Relying on the crowd to police negative comments seems to promote a direct violation of the company's Code of Conduct. It reads in part: "Only respond to inquiries about State Farm if you have authority. Media contact and public discussion about State Farm should be conducted through authorized spokespersons" (State Farm Insurance n.d.).

To remedy issues like people trolling its social media properties, State Farm mitigates brand and reputational damage on Facebook and YouTube by establishing clear participation rules. In an attempt to maintain a level of understanding around privacy and, perhaps, some level of control in social media, State Farm sets clear rules for its platforms. A sidebar on the company's Facebook page reads: "The State Farm Facebook page is a place where people can share, discuss and discover great information and ideas. We ask that participants adhere to the following guidelines: Protect your personal info; Be courteous; Stay on topic; Keep it safe." State Farm goes even further, providing a disclaimer:

> Disclaimer: Comments made by the public are not always verified, and do not necessarily reflect the views, policies or practices of State Farm. By using this page you agree to the following: 1: You accept personal jurisdiction in the United States of America, State of Illinois of and your actions will be governed exclusively by the laws of the United States of America, State of Illinois. 2: You grant State Farm the permanent, irrevocable and fully transferrable right to reproduce your comments, images or other posted content for business purposes. 3: You agree to hold State Farm harmless from claims against State Farm related to your postings or use of this Service. State Farm reserves the right to modify or change these guidelines without notice, and to delete any post or ban any user at any time and for any reason. (facebook.com/statefarm n.d.).

By including terms of participation, State Farm hopes to create a user-friendly, and brand-friendly, venue for both policyholders and various other publics to discuss and comment on State Farm content. This, coupled with terms of service on all social networking sites the organization uses, helps mitigate the risk of the sites becoming a venue exclusively for complaints and ranting about negative experiences. A few examples of this are available in the discussion section.

Although exceptions exist, the available research suggests that most social networks primarily support pre-existing social relationships. Facebook is used to maintain existing offline relationships or solidify offline connections, as opposed to meeting new people. These relationships may be weak ties, but typically there is some common offline element among individuals who friend each other. In State Farm's case, this could be policyholders who have the same agent. The company is positioned uniquely with its agent model of business.

More than 17,000 agents spread across United States and Canada provide an offline opportunity unmatched in State Farm's category. This smacks of social media opportunity for the nation's largest insurer. Pew Research found that 91 percent of U.S. teens who use social networks do so to connect with their offline friends (Boyd and Ellison 2007). To engage millennials, State Farm must continue to enable its agents to own a share of those conversations. The line between online and offline continues to blur.

Social media, as well as gambling, pornography and other sites, are blocked for most local employees at State Farm. As of May 2010, only 4,500 of 68,000 employees had some kind of social media access because of their job description (Denham 2010). About the same amount of agents had agent Facebook pages. State Farm has provided the naming convention "NAME –

State Farm Agent." The use of this naming convention is one of the requirements agents must satisfy to have a Facebook presence. Providing agents with uniform access to Facebook has positioned State Farm to take advantage of unique opportunities, ideas and reach available on the world's most popular social network.

"They're not encouraged to sell product on Facebook," said Matt Edwards, a social media team member who helped created the agent training program. "They are encouraged to be out there as a member of the Facebook community. It's easier to connect with people, they can provide interesting insights if their policy holders are following them" (Calderon 2010).

On March 1, an internal online training program was made available to all agents to train them in ways to use Facebook to effectively bolster their State Farm businesses. Agents provide localized State Farm content to their fans after completion of the training course, which opens up a content bank to agents (Ibid.).

"It's been very helpful for me. I use it with my existing clients as a way to broadcast need-to-know information specific to State Farm, as well as the industry," said Chad Gregorini, an agent in Aspinwall, Penn. His agent page had 211 fans as of June 2010. His page was part of the initial State Farm pilot program. He has been using Facebook professionally since 2009 (Ibid.)

Though State Farm, like many other insurance companies, seems to have fallen to the laggard end of the diffusion of innovations continuum on many things regarding social media adoption, the company was first – in all categories – with a bold advertising act in April 2009. Us Weekly sold sponsorship of its then-new Facebook profile to State Farm. It was a first time for any brand to do that on the social network website, as well as a first for a company's fan page. The State Farm sponsorship on Us Weekly's Facebook page extended a campaign the company ran with the celebrity magazine. It was a controversial business decision at the time because Facebook received no revenue from the deal (Ives 2009).

Administrative controls ensure only the proper staff speak on behalf of the company for State Farm's official outreach efforts on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. "We expect our employees to use all of our resources primarily for business usage," said Marcia Oyer, manager in State Farm's human resources business office (Ibid.). Kelly Thul, during his presentation to the Social Media Business Council, talked about how it's crucial for employees to understand the separation between professional and social lives on social networking sites.

YouTube is a public video-sharing website people use to interact with video content, ranging from casual viewing to sharing videos in order to maintain relationships socially (Lange 2007). YouTube was designed and then released in 2005 by three previous employees of the PayPal online payment service. YouTube operates on the principle of buzz; people upload and view content, sharing videos they find useful or interesting with their social media connections. The website itself started by this principle, with no traditional marketing dollars. Since Google purchased YouTube for $1.65 billion in October 2006, the video-sharing site has seen an exponential increase in unique visitors. This is due, in part, to Google incorporating YouTube results into searches and indexing videos in a way that optimizes them for Google searches. (Google buys YouTube for 1.65 billion 2006). The site now averages more than 90 million unique visitors per month (compete.com 2010). Brands, like State Farm, have since tried to capitalize on the site's large user base.

The State Farm YouTube channel began in July 2007, initially as a way to re-broadcast commercials to an online audience. In September 2009, the channel reached a milestone: one million upload views. While this seems to be quite an accomplishment for a channel, it is a meager amount of views when compared viral videos, or memes. For example, Greyson Chance, a 12 year-old singer, performed the Lady Gaga song "Paparazzi" at one of his sixth grade recitals. Since, the video became a viral sensation. He has appeared on major TV shows. As of June, 2010, the original video had garnered more than 25 million views on YouTube (greyson97 2010).

Arguably the most successful social media venture for State Farm came in the form of a viral video in March 2010. The company leveraged it visibility from previous concert sponsorships to create a relationship with the band OK Go, an already viral sensation from a previous YouTube video release.

Guitarist Andy Ross sent lead vocalist, Damian Kulash, a video featuring a Rube Goldberg machine in August 2009. The machine works by creating a perpetual-motion chain reaction. After researching several of videos featuring the machines online, OK Go wanted to make one of their own for a music video. Kulash began searching for engineers.

At the same time, State Farm was looking for artists to support, to further expand consideration among music avids. OK Go's record label, Capitol Records, knew the company from its concert sponsorships and connected the two parties.

Kulash met with State Farm marketing representatives, apprehensive of the insurer wanting too many obvious brand placements in the video. The lead vocalist explained that the band's fans were as media-savvy as the band; a brand placement video would never become viral. To his surprise, State Farm granted complete creative license. Kulash said the brand placements were tasteful and State Farm representatives attended the shoot for twenty minutes.

"The guys really had the idea for the video ahead of time, but they were partners in the truest sense of the word," said State Farm National Sponsorship Manager Todd Fischer. "They were leading the brainstorming themselves, in terms of how we could best integrate State Farm...Both of us really put our heads together as to what would be most credible and most natural" (Johnston 2010).

The result was the most visible social media content State Farm has been associated with, to date. In six days after its March 1 release, the video already had six million upload views. As of June 2010, the video had reached more than 13 million total views. For sense of scale, State Farm celebrated one million total upload views in September 2009...for its entire channel.

Twitter is a micro-blogging service that enables its users to send and read messages known as tweets. Tweets are posts of up to 140 characters displayed on the author's profile page. These posts appear on others' pages if they subscribe to the person sending the posts. These people are called followers. Twitter users can send and receive tweets via the Twitter website, text messaging or smart phone applications. The site has become popular in part by its ability to democratize content, as described in the literature review (Sagolla 2009). More than 21 million people visit the website each month. It has more than 100 million users, worldwide (Reuters 2010).

State Farm began using Twitter in September 2008, under the handle @statefarmins. It was started following an advertisement gone awry. In the commercial, State Farm depicts bicycle riders as oddly dressed people who are embarrassed by biking to work. The commercial stated:

"State Farm can get you back behind the wheel by saving you hundreds on car insurance. And you can pay your way with a plan that fits your budget. Call, click or visit and start saving your way. Like a good neighbor, State Farm is there." The end features a man wearing cycling shorts in an office setting, who is ridiculed by a coworker. Bicycle enthusiasts were irate over the subversive tone of the commercial. The blog post had 59 comments, with almost all echoing the post (Naparstek 2008).

State Farm listened and pulled the advertisement. Tim Van Hoof, director of marketing communications for State Farm, penned an e-mail to those who reached out to State Farm directly. It addressed the power of responding to customer feedback: "We value direct consumer input as we make decisions about our advertising messages and safety programs. As a mutual company with no stockholders, we work hard to be good stewards of our policyholders' money (Van Hoof 2008). The authors believe the company began its Twitter account to listen more directly to conversations to help mitigate another incident like the bicycle commercial. And several opportunities have come from the account since.

In January 2010, Charlene Li, co-author of "Groundswell," a primer on social media's impact on business, tweeted to her 29,500 followers, "Demo'ing power of social. Reply w/name of your car insurance carrier & on scale of 1 to10 if you would rec'd them (10=Yes!)" Li's reach and use of a 1-to-10 scale produced 89 responses during the following several hours.

Immediately after her question, recommendations for State Farm and Progressive spiked. Several insurers noticed and rebroadcast Li's call to their followers, in this order: AAA, State Farm, AllState, AmFam, Progressive, USAA. After USAA tipped off their large, loyal fan base, their numbers shot up past State Farm and Progressive. The final tally (insurer, number of recommendations, average score): USAA, 21, 9.9; State Farm, 17, 8.8; Progressive, 11, 8.0; AllState, 10, 8.6; GEICO, 4, 8.5; Amica Mutual, 3, 10.0; AmFam, 3, 9.3. Seventeen other insurers were mentioned, including AAA, Liberty Mutual, and Nationwide, but no mention of Travelers, Esurance, or Farmers. One response read, "I don't even know who my car insurance is with!" The results, though not empirical, underscore the power of Twitter as a communication and feedback channel.

Compared with other Fortune 50 companies in social media, State Farm has a strong Twitter presence. While several other companies have more followers than the insurer, that while factoring in the aggregate of followers spread over more than one account. Of Fortune 50 accounts with only one handle, State Farm is second only to the popular retailer Target (see appendix). In property and casualty insurance, State Farm ranked second only to USAA in April 2010. @stateafarm accounted for 5,600; @usaa_news, 8,700 followers.

More potently, State Farm uses Twitter as a customer service channel, addressing positive and negative comments, and providing messaging when situations arise. For example, in November 2009, a customer complained via Twitter that State Farm was sending him mail from three separate agents. All three mailings were advertisements. On October 22, 2009, he posted the following tweet: "Got the same direct mail piece from 3 different State Farm Insurance agencies on the same day. #MailFAIL" (Baraga 2009). On October 27, 2009, @statefarm replied: "@JBaraga, I fixed your mail issue, & it shouldn't happen again. Have a great day!" (Ibid.). He subsequently replied, thanking State Farm for fixing the issue.

Baraga, who also has a blog, wrote a blog post about the Twitter customer service State Farm provides and its implications for businesses. In the post, he wrote about social media and customer service while describing his point of view as a consumer. It read, in part:

State Farm is a $61 Billion company, yet they had a one-on-one online conversation with me – a guy from Pittsburgh who commented about a simple direct mail flub – and in doing so, earned some kudos and generated positive buzz about their company. By simply showing that they were paying attention to me, the marketplace, and the online conversations about their company, State Farm did a great deal to restore the image of their company in my mind. They adopted an emerging technology, they used it to listen to the marketplace, and they responded (Baraga 2009).

By reaching out to customers via Twitter and providing immediate feedback, State Farm turned a negative customer experience into a positive one. While State Farm and other companies have been providing customer service for several years, Twitter provides a larger voice for positive – and negative – customer experiences. As for negative experiences, one could not write about State Farm on Twitter without referencing two of the company's most salient opponents: Angela Russell and Larry Chiang.

Spurred by a personal tragedy in February 2005, Angela Russell is the most visible social media opponent of State Farm. Her campaign, State Farm Sucks, features a website, several Twitter handles and various other social media platforms. In November 2009, Angela Russell increased her number of anti-State Farm accounts to thirty, started promoting an online petition, and accelerated the rate of automated, duplicate updates she sent to followers. Here is an average tweet from Russell: "Please read how State Farm Ripped off a widow & 2 little girls after their house burned http://bit.ly/37GVU." She uses bit.ly, a shortened URL service, to track how many people have clicked her Twitter links. This informs the frequency of her specific tweets and which messages to polish.

Twitter suspended many of Angela's thirty State Farm-related Twitter accounts, and left her with three. She has since expanded that to seven: @statefarmsucks; @Cunning_Punt; @sf_s_twit_jail; @DUMP_STATEFARM; @Toast_n_Jammies; @PeterGargan; and, her most recent, @state_farm_pr. In June 2010, Russell had 23,967 total followers, up from 3,339 in December after her suspensions.

These serial accounts alone are in violation of Twitter's prohibition against mass account creation. Other spam violations of hers include follower churn, multiple duplicate updates, and unsolicited @replies, all in an attempt to garner more followers. Russell created @sf_s_twit_jail the day after 27 of her accounts were suspended, to mock Twitter's action against her.

Her latest, the aforementioned @state_farm_pr, violates Twitter's impersonation rule. While she attempts to cover herself with the parody exclusion (by including a disclaimer in her bio), Twitter's Parody Policy says her username and communications with users are too deceiving to be protected.

This particular Twitter account came only a few days after the launch of a similar, ant-corporation Twitter handle was started. @BPGlobalPR produces regular content from internal British Petroleum public relations staff meetings, as well as 140-character missives about the company's involvement in the worst man-made disaster in U.S. history. One tweet from the web page reads: "In honor of World Ocean Day we held a company screening of "Deep Blue Sea"

this afternoon. [#bphalfday](#)" (Stick 2010). The Twitter presence rose to world-wide fame through social and traditional media. When British Petroleum representatives were asked if they would like to take the site down, they responded in the negative – even though it violates Twitter's terms of services. Perhaps @state_farm_pr followed the same reasoning.

Russell's tactics led to several re-tweets and petition signatures, because she started getting many more messages in front of many more eyes. Also, following Russell's tactical adjustment, the researchers noticed a tripling of the number of "State Farm" mentions on Twitter, from all of her updates. At her most prolific spamming, Angela produced more than 40,000 updates in 12 days. Several social media Web sites recommend public relations practitioners search their company's brand, followed by "sucks" to find and address detractors. The term has proven effective for spreading Russell's message.

Larry Chiang is a Business Week blogger who mounted an offensive against State Farm over what he feels is an unfair settlement for repairs to his wrecked car. Chiang recorded a video with both cars and explained what happened at the scene of the accident. He then posted messages about State Farm to Twitter, which were rebroadcast by his more than 3,500 followers. In Spring 2010, he hosted an anti-State Farm party at the social media/music conference SXSW.

In Febuary 2010, a blogger took notice of Larry Chiang's Twitter posts and began to write about it. The post featured State Farm and highlighted the company's apparent lack of response to Chiang's plight. In the post, titled, "Scared of Something?", Amy Freeland said State Farm was making a grave error by not responding to Chiang's persistent posts. "Something tells me this State Farm story is destined to end up a social media cautionary tale (Freeland, Scared of Something? 2010).

According to a subsequent post, State Farm's Griffin Hammond – the person in charge of Twitter for the insurer – contacted Freeland via Twitter, saying he would like to explain State Farm's side of the story. She obliged. He said State Farm has been in touch with Larry over a variety of platforms and that Chiang's personal State Farm agent is working with him to resolve the issue. He also explained how State Farm uses Twitter to resolve customer service issues, like Chiang's.

Because the social media team, though in the same department (public affairs), is not part of the customer service team, complaints that come through Twitter are then rerouted to someone with authority and credentials to help. Griffin is often the first point of contact because he is often the first person to see complaints through social media monitoring. To explain how State Farm builds a relationship with people like Chiang, Griffin provided Freeland with this message:

> Our goal is to be there for all our policyholders, customers, and claimants, wherever they want us to be, so I love that social media provides another communication opportunity. That being said, communication is communication, and the platform doesn't change our relationship, our responsibilities, our desire to help, or our willingness (or theirs) to come to a mutually beneficial agreement (Freeland, Like a Good Neighbor, State Farm is...Everywhere 2010).

The researchers gathered all tweets shared between @statefarm and @larrychiang on Twitter from the time of Chiang's initial claim in December 2009. Tweets supported by third parties as well as other social media posts regarding the situation are included. Direct mentions and other types of conversation are not included, as they are not public record (see Appendix B).

A plethora of options exist for people to share photos via social media. The photo-sharing site Flickr, for example, allows users to upload photographs, view photos created by others, comment on those photos, etc. As is common to other social media sites, Flickr allows people to designate others as ``contacts'' and to track their activities in real time (Lerman and Jones 2006).

Analysis of State Farm's Flickr presence shows the insurer started using the site in July 2009. The first set of photos posted were from the 2009 State Farm Home Run Derby. Other photo sets include: screen captures of State Farm iPhone applications, State Farm's sponsorship of College Game Day in Champaign, Ill, and the company's sponsorship of the State Farm LPGA Classic, among others. The site is linked to frequently by the company's Twitter and Facebook pages and is essential in its cross-promotional efforts (Flickr n.d.).

Also, in an attempt to provide policyholders with accurate and timely insurance information, State Farm launched The Learning Center in January 2010. Registrants must be State Farm policyholders and provide all policy information in order to register. The Learning Center provides an online source of auto insurance information and information from State Farm as well as other industry experts. Social media capabilities on the site included a question and answer portion, but that functionality ceased in early 2010, shortly following the Learning Center launch. The site also features a cross-integration of Yahoo! Answers content. Users interact with content through social bookmarking/sharing, comments and article rating (State Farm Insurance n.d.).

While this case study is not exhaustive, it is descriptive of State Farm's major outputs in strategies in social media. The company uses social media channels for promotion, as well as monitoring and responding to negative sentiment. Though several other brands are involved in social media in a much more visible way, one must consider the type of product State Farm provides before declaring the company a failure in the space. In only a few years, the insurer has managed to develop a listening channel and responding process for social media complaints. Moreover, it's mobilized the largest insurance agent base in the world – providing more than 17,000 with the option and necessary information to pursue social media to help engage with policyholders. State Farm also had the understanding of social media to sponsor Ok Go in what became one of the most successful YouTube viral videos in the website's history – perhaps unheard of for a corporate sponsorship. So the authors contends that State Farm will not be caught in the hurricane and lose its silver. In true social media form, boats of all sizes are coming to lighten State Farm's bounty – brand advocates. And the State Farm fleet and helpful boats are well on their way to shore.

Discussion

From all gathered research, analysis, interpretation and observation, State Farm appears to be executing social media effectively. The company began in social media only a few years ago. It faces heavy regulation and challenges in the social media space. But the Good Neighbor seems to be defying its traditional, closed reputation. That is, State Farm is currently doing what all other insurers – all other organizations – are currently doing: exploring the waters.

The authors also contend – at least for companies in State Farm's category – share of voice on social media might not trump traditional advertising placements and promotion. After all, if the goal of social media entrance is to satiate market share by simply having a presence, then

State Farm already has a developed strategy it could analogue for social media: sports sponsorships.

The Good Neighbor insurer is consistently recognized as one of the top sports advertisers in the world. In a May 2010 issue of "Sports Business Journal," State Farm was featured as one of the top 25 brands in sports marketing. Competing with GEICO and Allstate among sports ad buyers in its category, the company has been innovative in its sports advertising to differentiate itself. For example, at more than 40 colleges around the country, State Farm used an opportunity in basketball marketing no other sponsor had previously examined.

The space between the basketball hoop's backboard and support beam bear the words "State Farm" and the company's red-and-white State Farm Insurance logo. The result is a constant consideration piece fans see during every lay-up and exciting dunk. Moreover, State Farm could appear serendipitously in other media because of the strategic placement.

In the eighth inning of a Major League Baseball game between the Philadelphia Phillies and St. Louis Cardinals, a 17-year-old male jumped over a fence and ran through the baseball stadium, Citizens Bank Park. A Philadelphia police officer fired a Taser gun at the boy, causing the running boy to collapse, lifelessly. He was seized in left-center field, in front of a large State Farm wall panel advertisement.

The Associated Press photo of the 17-year-old became the choice graphic for print, web and television journalists alike. While stories may not have mentioned State Farm – though several people commented on posts to that effect – the brand was still there. This is just one example of unintended publicity surrounding advertising placements.

"Consumers consume media differently from three years ago," said Mark Gibson, assistant vice president for advertising at State Farm in Bloomington, Ill. "It's not enough to just run a 30-second commercial in a program." State Farm's goal – similar to the OK Go placement – is "naturally, seamlessly integrating the brand into a venue in a way that doesn't take away from the event," Mr. Gibson said (Elliot 2007).

Indeed, for social media best practice to be employed, people share content like the boy running across the field and being halted by a rotund security guard. Normatively, in the newly emerging world of social media, this is a prime piece of social content. There are several reasons the 17-year-old boy gained social media attention. First, it is a case of wrongdoing by a publicly paid authority figure. Then, there is physical pain involved, a recurring theme in Internet memes. Finally, the story stirs people into public debate. Though no sane company would ever encourage this sort of thing – especially not an insurance company – it is stories like this that most often gain attention in social media. This is one of the reasons State Farm's sponsorship of the OK Go video was so innovative. The insurer insisted the brand placements not make the video feel like a corporate sponsorship.

Because of social media's inherent ubiquity and ambiguity, organizations –especially large ones like State Farm—have struggled to provide one clear voice among all channels. One reason might be the "silo" of large corporations. Instead of traditional systems theory, which states that any set of interrelated parts can influence and control one another through communication and feedback loops, silos are completely disconnected within organizations (Baran and Davis 2006).

Each department sincerely – and convincingly – believes it owns social media. Certainly the scale and scope of social media could lend itself to a variety of departments. In an insurance

and financial institution like State Farm, several departments could perceive issues in social media to directly affect them. State Farm spreads social media strategy, leadership and response duties among several departments, including: Public Affairs, Marketing, Enterprise Internet Solutions, Strategic Resources and Human Resources all have a seat at the social media table.

In their aptly named article, A Communication-Based Marketing Model for Managing Relationships, Duncan & Moriarty propose a communication-based model of "relationship marketing" and discuss how communication is the foundation of the "new" customer-focused marketing efforts. In doing so, the two show the intersections between marketing and communication.

Duncan and Moriarty believe marketing and communication overlap at three points-messages, stakeholders, and interactivity-they then develop a communication-based model of marketing. The scholarly work's primary purpose is to teach marketers communication theory. The authors demonstrate how interactive communication at three levels-marketing, marketing communication, and corporate –lead to building successful long-term relationships with stakeholders.

Moreover, several studies have attempted to identify both the best department and structure for social media ownership within organizations. Of these structures, the one most traditional organizations employ is the multiple hub and spoke model. In this model, large companies that offer several products comprise departments that function almost autonomously. This organizational model requires constant communication from all teams to be coordinated which can result in excessive internal noise. Executives must buy in to all initiatives prior to launch, which can mitigate the chance of a well-developed project or idea being "killed" in later stages of development.

The advent of social media brought with it several semantic definitions. The descriptions of social media, as stated in the social media overview, are "social" enough to allow anyone to participate. Though, this creates silos in businesses. And, the authors indicate, for older businesses like State Farm, this only compounds the confusion and layers of bureaucracy. In a blog post on Advertising Age, titled, "Why Owns Social Media Anyway," the author describes what the innovation has done to the current landscape within corporations:

> PR firms see social as an extension of their birthright in influencer marketing; ad agencies see it as a new frontier of high-impact ad impressions (for example, earned media); the growing crop of word-of-mouth agencies and buzz-monitoring firms see this as birthright (Blackshaw 2010).

What was once spent on major advertising campaigns has since been differed, in part, to social media. And this harkens to the study's initial question: "What do organizations that "do social media" actually do? The probable answer lies in Blackshaw's quote: outsourcing social media projects to vendors who claim to be experts. But how effective can vendors be from the outside in a channel that demands more engagement and transparency than ever before?

The result of the confusion is a missed opportunity for brands that hemorrhage capital in a desperate attempt to share voice with consumers who would rather watch a home video of 12-year-old Greyson Chance playing a piano pop song at his sixth grade recital. State Farm and other Fortune 50 companies must decide: Are they willing to do what it takes to compete with that?

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The Effects of Transparency Efforts of an organization to its Reputation:
How a Public React to a Truth Claim Online?

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this study is to experimentally test the impact of claims to open procedures an organization follows to generate news releases on participants' perceived message credibility; evaluation of transparency efforts; and perceptions of organizational reputation. Additionally, the current research explores how people differently assess information that is varied by different channel.

Introduction

With the increasing popularity of crisis communication and the substantial impact of social media in communicating with a public (Stephens & Malone, 2009; Wright & Hinson, 2008), a line of public relations research investigating conditions that impact the organization-public relationship has piled up (Sweetser, 2010). Especially, in times of a crisis, organizational reputation as an important asset for an organization is formed by its stakeholders (Coombs, 2007). Specifically, stakeholders evaluate an organization's reputation based on information from three different categories: information directly generated from the organization, mediated information such as news media and second-hand information from other public (Coombs & Holladay, 2007). A press statement is crisis information created from an organization and distributed through the Internet, thus most public first search for (Coombs, 2007); the organization needs to assess a potential impact of such organization-generated information.

When it comes to estimating impacts of information directly came from an organization on its reputation, scholars suggest that transparent public relations efforts are conceptually and practically related to organizational reputation (Rawlins, 2009; Sweetser, 2010). Stakeholder evaluations of organizational transparency can lead to reputational benefits but there is a gap of research on the public's assessment of different level of transparency efforts in social media. That is, if the practical value of transparency is to increase public trust, the next concern is to examine transparency in the eyes of potential stakeholders, not from an organization itself. In other words, how transparency practices of organizations is delivered to a public within the new media platform. Understanding how a public reacts to content having relatively greater transparency or less transparency enables public relations practitioners to gauge potential effects of the content. Moreover, in tailoring public relations messages, the organization should estimate the public's expectations toward such transparency efforts in order to preserving the organizational reputation.

Previous literature on transparency research mostly explicated transparency as either the passive availability of information (i.e., display information to public view) or the active disclosure of it (i.e., provide more detailed information such as the person who creates contents, a process of newsgathering, and motivations in reporting an event; Allen, 2008; Craft & Heim, 2009; Mitchelle & Steele, 2005). Accordingly, little is known of "how important these practices are to stakeholders" (Rawlins, 2009, p.96): how the concept of transparency is defined in public relations and how much transparency of an organization, of information, and of public relations practices are expected by the general public. What it means is whether and how either opening more detailed information for an official announcement (i.e., active disclosure) or making a limited set of information available to a public (i.e., passive availability) affect a public's perceptions of an organization.

Therefore, the primary purpose of this study is to experimentally test the impact of 1) claims to provide more detailed information as active disclosure and 2) self-asserted claims to truth as a merely available statement on participants' evaluation of transparency efforts and perceptions of organizational reputation. Additionally, as an attempt to understand social media impact on corporate transparency, the current research explores how people differently assess information that is varied by different online channels (e.g., a corporate Web site vs. a corporate Facebook). All in all, this study uses a 2 (channel: a corporate Web sites vs. a corporate

Facebook) X 2 (claims to disclosure detailed information: presence vs. absence) X 2 (claims to truth: presence vs. absence) mixed subjects experiment. The findings of this study provides substantial implications for public relations scholars and practitioners seeking to attain a better understanding of public's perceptions on transparent message claimed by an organization and evaluation of such transparency efforts that possibly lead to their favorable perceptions of organizational reputation.

Literature Review

The Concept of Transparency

There has been a lack of research concerning the effects of transparency to public relations practices. Transparency comes from the Latin preposition "trans," which means movement and "parent" which means visible. According to this origin, transparency is "allowing everything to be visible" (Plaisance, 2007). Started by existing definitions of transparency in terms of journalists and their practices of transparency, the current study defines perceived transparency of an organization in the eyes of public relation. Previous studies have defined the concept of transparency in two ways: 1) to make information available by visibly showing information in public view and 2) to disclose more information by further opening a process of newsgathering or one's motivations to create news to readers (Allen, 2008; Craft & Heim; 2009; Mitchell & Steele; 2005). By doing so, a value of the transparency practice is to increase public trust toward journalists.

Craft and Heim (2009) said globalization and the spread of democracy, promoted by the increasing popularity of new media, lead to a more interdependent world, which forces people to be much more transparent in explaining their actions. Craft and Heim (2009, p.219) also pointed out two different conceptualizations of transparency: "passive availability of information" (i.e., the state in which documents, statistics, procedures, motives and intentions are open, accessible to public view) or active "disclosure of it" (i.e., a process for bringing more detailed information into public view); but the two concepts are not mutually exclusive, rather conjunctive. That is, "under the availability perspective, decision makers can merely respond to questions about their motives, under the disclosure perspective, they need to offer more active explanation such as editor's note" (Craft & Heim, 2009, p.221). In line with this research, Mitchell and Steele (2005) equated transparency with disclosure into three areas in blogging: 1) the principles you hold, 2) the procedures you follow, and 3) the person you are.

Accordingly, Allen (2008) explicated how transparency is practiced by journalists and how it impacts journalists, journalistic institutions and newer forms of media. By quoting Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001), Allen (2008) insisted that the concept of transparency is a necessity for journalists in times of new media and the concept is operated as disclosing the methods of their newsgathering as a way to increase reliability of their news. In other words, Allen (2008) suggested that the concept of transparency not only requires journalists to provide enough information for the public, but also to make ethical decisions in revealing procedures or motivations when journalists are suspicious about the truthfulness of information. In other words, Allen (2008) illustrated the normative value of transparency in reforming journalism. That is, "the news media are facing increased examination of their news that leads to more and more criticism, the best way to respond to that criticism is by letting people see how those news are created" (Allen, 2008, p. 324).

In terms of value of transparency, Craft and Heim (2009) asserted that for a journalist transparency is regarded as worth promoting to earn public trust toward its institution, because "greater accountability may be achieved, greater credibility may be enhanced, and truth may be told" (p.222). What this means is a journalist's transparency effort is a way to increase trust among investors, consumers, and regulators through enhanced accountability of information; and the accountability (i.e., in their article, accountability refers to explanations of why transparency efforts were reasonable and acceptable) is increased by a public's evaluation toward transparency effort such as revealing the motives and decisions (e.g., through an ombudsman's column to reveal their newsgathering process or to invite readers in news meetings, p.218, Craft & Heim, 2009). By referring to substantial completeness by Klaidman and Beauchamp (1987), Rawlins (2009) also ascertained the need of the receiver for obtaining substantial information from the sender, which ensures truthful information. In summary, prior studies have conceptualized that transparency might be executed by making information clear to public view (availability perspective) and/or by offering more detailed information (active disclosure).

The concept of transparency in public relations practices

There is consensus about the benefits of having transparency in increasing trustworthy of information itself and of journalists. But what is the potential value of transparent communication in a context of public relations? In terms of relationship literature, the public's perception of an organization as transparent is related to its reputation of being honest, open and concerned about society (Rawlins, 2009). Likewise, public relations research concerning organization-public relationship (Grunig & Huang, 2000; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000) points to the importance of espousing transparency practices. The concept of transparency is tied to corporate reputation.

Grunig (2001) initially articulated four principles (relationship, accountability, disclosure, and symmetrical communication) of crisis communications, which highlight the important role public relations play in crisis situations. Not only a timely, direct response to a public, but also being open to them, increases a public's trust toward an organization. We can clearly see transparency practices which both disclose more explanation and stating available information to public view reflect all four principles. Regarding the pathway from transparency practices to public's trust, Jahansoozi (2006) also stated that trust on and transparency of an organization were of paramount importance in building a relationship with a community by providing mutual support, collaboration and cooperation between the community and an organization. That is, for an organization, executing transparency enhances the organization's accountability through which complaints and issues along with its responsibilities become clear. Thus, the greater accountability of an organization achieved by perceived transparency builds on a community level of trust toward the organization.

On the other hand, Sweetser (2010) empirically examined what can damage a relationship between an organization and a public; for instance, the lack of information disclosure, which is operationalized as hiding a truth during an organization's campaign, is considered unethical behavior. He noted the intent of disclosure as "to build trust with public by revealing all information needed for responsible decision making" (PRSA code of ethics, 2000). Based on this assertion, the author conducted an experiment in order to examine the effects of disclosure (i.e., the participants watched a viral video made by a company with the purpose of

promotion and with the disclosure that the company created it) or nondisclosure (i.e., the participants watched the viral video, but the company denies it produced the viral video) on the company's relationship with a public. Findings indicated that unethical behavior of an organization (i.e., the nondisclosure condition) negatively affected public-organization relationships, specifically communicated relational commitment, responsiveness/customer service, positivity/optimism, and responsiveness to criticism (Sweetser, 2010). Quoting Bowen (2004), Sweetser (2010) confirmed that perceived trust and openness toward organizations in a dialog help to build a foundation to establish positive relationship with its publics.

Based on the relationship between an organization's transparency and reputational benefits, Rawlins (2009) constructed measures regarding stakeholder evaluation of organizational transparency in terms of three transparency reputation traits (integrity, respect for others, openness) and four transparency efforts (participation, substantial information, accountability, and secrecy). Rawlins (2009) incorporated four instruments measuring transparency: a) the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI, 2002) report as guidelines for organizations to follow to maximize their transparency; b) The Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) which has similar guidelines for governmental agencies; c) the principles of authentic communication developed by Bishop (2003); and d) the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA, 2000) code of ethics provision on disclosure of information. The most intriguing findings are: a) efforts for transparent communication lead to greater reputation of "having integrity, respecting others, being open, and being ethical" (Rawlins, 2009, p.94); and b) sharing substantial information (i.e., accurate, timely, complete, reliable, comparable, understandable, and relevant statements) had the strongest associations with reputational assets. In addition, Rawlins (2009) indicated that these transparency efforts can be controlled by public relations practitioners, thereby giving them direct contributions to an organization's reputation.

Based on Rawlins's initial measure of organizational perceived transparency (2009) as well as previous transparency research, this study limits its scope to concerning an organization's practices to pursue transparency in times of a crisis: 1) For an emerging crisis a public's perceptions on transparency of an organization is primarily formed by information generated from an organization (e.g., an official announcement); and 2) the perceived transparency of an organization is evaluated based on information itself. In line with these conceptual framework, Holtz (2009) asserted that "transparency is the degree to which an organization shares information its stakeholders need to make informed decisions (p.2)."

Going back to previous literature, an organization can formulate transparent communication on its official announcement in two ways: either displaying information clear to public view (i.e., availability perspective) and/or by disclosing more detailed information (active disclosure). When it comes to matching these practices to Rawlins' initial measure of four transparency efforts (participation, substantial information, accountability, and secrecy, 2009), the availability perspective is overlapped to making information to be forthcoming, clear, reliable, and easy to understand (i.e., items for substantial information, p.89). In addition, Coombs and Holladay (1996) confirmed a need to change perceptions of the organization in crisis by using positive discourse. Specifically, in explaining three objectives of crisis response strategies, they emphasized to lessen the reputational damage due to a crisis by altering not only attributions of the crisis, but also perceptions of the organization in crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 1996). From this point of view, an official announcement or press statement generated by an

organization is a message to inform its concern of a crisis and responding strategies; and a self-asserted claim to truth may maximize its voice as having positive attributes. Rawlins (2009) bolsters our assumption that making the information to be visibly stated as a way to prevent a public's perceived secrecy. In addition, such increased transparent information ensures organizational reputation as a whole. Thus, hypotheses 1a and 1b are submitted:

H1a: Participants are more likely to evaluate an organization claiming truthfulness of its official announcement as more transparent than when the claim is absent.
H1b: Participants are more likely to have favorable reputation toward an organization claiming truthfulness of its official announcement than when the claim is absent.

At the same time, the active disclosure perspective reflects offering more active explanation, thus not leaving out important details in the information (i.e., items for accountability and secrecy, p. 90, Rawlins, 2009). Consequently, disclosing more explanation are perceived as more transparent, which in turn affect organizational reputation. Thus, hypotheses 2a and 2b are proposed as the following:

H2b: Participants are more likely to evaluate an organization disclosing more information on its official announcement as more transparent than when the information is absent.
H2b: Participants are more likely to have favorable reputation toward an organization disclosing more information on its official announcement than when the information is absent.

However, as Allen (2008) stated, either an official announcement claiming its truthfulness or the announcement with more detailed information may not enhance an organization's perceived transparency. Allen (2008) differentiated truth, defined as "the transparent nature of dialogue," from transparency efforts: transparency acquired by more information is just one way to pursue truth, but not a truth itself. In other words, there might be cases where transparency claims for an official announcement of an organization merely increases the flow of information, not enhancing mutual understanding of it.

On the other hand, from Rawlins (2009), among the four transparency efforts traits, secrecy refers to "statements about sharing only part of the story, using language that obfuscates meaning, and only disclosing when required. (p. 88)". Additionally, secrecy is negatively associated with organizational reputation. For this reason, it could be expected that both opening more explanations and stating information as the truth can be considered as overcoming perceived secrecy in eyes of a public. In other words, a self-exploratory statement that a fact, an opinion, or a view an organization released is true can affect a public's assessment of transparency. Therefore, the current research examines the effects of publics' true estimation of transparency during a crisis, operationalized by the effects of a self-asserted truth claim and a disclosure claim having more detailed information on a written press statement. Considering interaction effect for the two claims to our dependent variables, the first research question is submitted:

RQ1: Does a statement claiming truthfulness of its official announcement interacted with a disclosure claim have an impact on the participants' 1) perceptions of an organization's reputation, and 2) evaluations of its transparency efforts?

Social Media Impact on Corporate Transparency

Given that the concept of transparency reflects an organization's efforts to foster transparent communication, an organization can execute the transparency practices through a variety of channel. That is, in responding to a crisis organizations need to understand when people call for greater or lesser transparency in potential media outlets: whether publics expect much more transparency efforts of an organization within its own online platform (e.g., a corporate Web site) and its social media (e.g., a corporate Facebook).

Regarding this claim, Coombs and Holladay (2009) conducted an experiment designed to assess how people would perceive a crisis situation which was interacted with an organization's crisis response strategies and communication channels of them (e.g., print format versus visual media format). Although their findings did not yield significant impact of the two channels on stakeholder perceptions of a crisis, they ascertained that crisis communication research should not ignore an important channel effect. Whether video presentations of crisis information may have a different effect on its viewers is not our research focus. However, our focus is on organization-generated information (e.g., official announcement and stories appeared on the organization's web page and its formal Facebook page) which an organization is able to control. Coombs (2007) described three important channels of a public to gather information regarding a crisis: information distributed from an organization such as an official statement, the mediated information such as a news story, and second-hand crisis information delivered by other public. With respect to this matter, Coombs and Holladay (2009) pointed out an important concern regarding news media in such a way that an organization cannot guarantee its official statement is used in the crisis news coverage. Furthermore, an organization is not able to control over information generated from other public.

In the same vein, an organization tends to explain a fact and an opinion regarding a crisis either through official announcement on its Web site or through social media. In other words, such online outlets play an important role to disseminate the organization's information such as its press statement. Additionally, Sweetser (2010) asserted that organizations need to deal with not only their stakeholder and public but also their non-customer who could also access to the online information the organization provided. In terms of potential importance of social media to a crisis, Stephens and Malone (2009) concluded that organizations must utilize new media prior to a crisis in order to provide information for their stakeholders and to let their publics expose to the organization-generated information first.

Placing this debate on transparency in social media, Walton (2010) stated that "Web 2.0 forced transparency upon organizations (p.14)," while claiming that the more transparency eventually enables organizations to develop better relationships with their stakeholders. From stakeholders' perspectives, scholars argued that publics expect more detailed information to the social media, thus future research should examine how organizations are using the new media to develop more of a dialogic relationship with their publics (Stephens & Malone, 2009). This raises our question of if an organization's transparency claims as displayed on a corporate website or a corporate Facebook; the two conditions have different impacts on stakeholder perceptions on the organization. Consequently, guided by empirical research concerning the channel effect, the second research question indicating moderating effects of online venues on two dependent variables is proposed:

RQ2: Does online channel have an impact on the participants' 1) perceptions of an organization's reputation, and 2) evaluations of its transparency efforts?

Method

Design

This study used a 2 (online channel: a corporate website vs. a corporate Facebook) x 2 (statement claiming truth of an official statement: presence vs. absence) x 2 (claims to disclose more detailed information: presence vs. absence) posttest-only mixed-subjects experimental design in which each participant read different versions of an organization's official statement appeared on a corporate website and a corporate Facebook. Online channel was a within-subject factor, thus each participant read two news releases appeared on both a corporate website and its Facebook.

Claims to disclosure more information of an official statement and its truth claims were between-subject variables –participants were assigned to either a condition of presenting disclosure claims in responding to stakeholders' request (i.e., active disclosure condition) with claims to make information to be truthful (i.e., availability condition), a condition of presenting such disclosure without the self-asserted truth claim, a condition of absenting any detailed information regarding the stakeholders' request with the truth claim, or a condition of absenting any such detailed information without the truth claim.

Participants

A hundred and thirty three (N=133) students were recruited from undergraduate courses in different departments at a mid-west university. Participants were randomly assigned to the experimental conditions and given extra course credit as an incentive to participate. College students were considered appropriate participants in the current study because the online platforms (e.g., a corporate website versus a corporate Facebook) used as stimuli are popular among students and young adults. A larger percentage of participants were females (69.9%, n = 93) rather than males (30.1%, n = 40). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 56, with an average age of 21.33. The majority of participants were Caucasian (70.7%, n = 94), while 14.3% (n = 19) were Asian, 6.8% (n = 9) were African American, 3.8% (n = 5) were Hispanics, 1.5% were Native Americans (n = 2), and 1.5% identified themselves as others (n = 2).

Stimuli

Taco bell crises story as an emerging crisis was selected for our stimulus scenarios. Lawsuits over the real ingredients of their taco products were adequate to our study since the truth was not settled and people expected truth claim from the organization. Taco Bell was accused of false advertising about "meat" mixture containing binders and extenders which did not meet the standard of USDA to be labeled as the "meat" product. The accuser was no harmed in terms of medical/physical conditions, but he wanted Taco Bell to be honest in their advertising. In responding to this lawsuit, Taco Bell provided their "gratitude statement" on their official website and revealed the ingredients in their products. We used those official announcements as our stimulus.

Residing with our within-subject factor, the same contents in two different versions were provided for the online channel effect: news releases in Facebook and the corporate website. In

terms of the between-subject variable, two versions of news releases were created with similar wordings, but differed from claims of detailed procedures related to a news release. Dimension of both self-asserted truth claims was also manipulated by either adding one or two sentences regarding each factor or excluding such sentences. For example, "*So, here is the truth about our beef, 88% beef and 12% seasonings*" was used for the truth claim, and "*we are sharing our actual recipe to some extent.*" was used for the claim to disclosure condition. To match the same design and word counting, we used short history of Taco Bell to replace manipulation sentences. Screenshots of each online channel was provided, and everything but the manipulated two transparency claims as independent variable was identical. Dimension of the online channel was manipulated by differentiating the actual platform of Taco Bell's official announcement using its Facebook and official website. Considering its order effect, participants were randomly assigned to one of two different orders (e.g., Facebook-a website versus. a website-Facebook; see Appendix A).

Procedure

The experiment took place in a computer laboratory. Participants entered into the laboratory, and were randomly assigned to one of the four between subject conditions. They were welcomed by researchers, and were offered online informed consent. Then, participants were informed that they would be reading Taco Bell crises and related news releases in teo difference versions. Prior to viewing an organization's news releases, participants were guided to rate their baseline reputation of the stimuli company (e.g., Taco Bell) and other four companies (e.g., McDonalds, Burger King, Wal-Mart, and Chipotle) as well as demographics items regarding gender, age, and education level (Coombs & Holladay, 2009). After evaluating their baseline organizational reputation, participants viewed the first official announcement as one of two experimental conditions – (1) an official statement appeared on a corporate Web site or (2) the same version on a corporate Facebook. Participants then were guided to respond to questions asking for their evaluations of the organizational reputation and their perceptions on organizational transparency. This process was repeated twice. The procedure was identical for every condition. Upon completing the questionnaire, each subject was thanked, debriefed, and dismissed. The experiment lasted about approximately 15 minutes.

Dependent Variables

Prior reputation. The participants' prior reputation was measured by the one-item scale adopted by Coombs and Holladay (2009): "Overall, my impression of 'the company X' is. . ." range from very unfavorable to very favorable.

Organizational Reputation. The organizational reputation was measured by the 5-items of Coombs and Holladay (2002) Organizational Reputation Scale: (a) "The organization is concerned with the well-being of its public," (b) "The organization is basically dishonest," (c) "I do not trust the organization to tell the truth about the incident," (d) "Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what the organization says," and (e) "The organization is not concerned with the well-being of its public" ($\alpha = .94$).

Perceptions on Transparency Efforts. The participants' evaluation of an organization's transparency efforts was measured by the 17-items of Rawlins (2009) Communication Efforts Scale, having three constructs: 1) Substantial information (i.e., "The organization provides

information that is easy for people like me to understand; information that is complete; information in a timely fashion to people like me; information that is relevant to people like me; information to people like me in language that is clear; and information that is reliable."); 2) Accountability (i.e., "The organization provides information that can be compared to previous performance; information that can be compared to industry standards; information that is balanced; information that is balanced; admit mistakes when it has made mistakes; be forthcoming with information that might be damaging to the organization; be open to criticism by people like me."); and 3) Secrecy (i.e., "The organization would provide information that is unclear to people like me; often leave out important details in the information it provides to people like me; only disclose information when it is required; be slow to provide information to Running head: Organizational Transparency, Credibility, and Reputation " people like me; blame outside factors that may have contributed to the outcome when reporting bad news.") (α = .96).

Results

Manipulation Check

All manipulation worked as intended. In order to measure presence of a truth claim on a given official announcement, the participants were asked to indicate their level of agreements on a 7-point likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) to whether the official statement they just read included true facts claimed by Taco Bell. Similarly, for measuring the disclosure condition the participants were also asked to rate their level of agreements on a 7-point likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) to whether the official statement of Taco Bell they just read included the company's disclosure regarding its actual recipe. To measuring online channels, the participants were asked to indicate their level of agreements on a 7-point likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) to whether each official statement they just viewed appeared on a corporate Facebook or its website.

The manipulation check of truth claims as well as disclosure was tested using independent samples t-tests. The results of the t-tests indicate that participants in the condition of presenting a true fact claimed by Taco Bell significantly agreed more that the official announcement they read included sentences claiming the fact is truth (M = 5.58, SD = 1.28) compared to participants in the condition of absenting such claim (M = 4.873, SD = 1.53, t (131) =-3.50, p <.01). Similarly, participants in the condition of presenting claims to share Taco Bell's actual recipe significantly agreed more that the official announcement they viewed included the company's disclosure regarding the recipe (M = 5.08, SD = 1.68) than participants in the condition of absenting such detailed information (M = 3.51, SD = 1.84, t (131) =-5.14, $p < .001$).

Paired samples t-test was used to test the manipulation of online channel by creating composite scores from two items. The results of the paired sample t-test indicated that participants agreed more that the online channel they viewed was a corporate Facebook when they viewed the Facebook condition than when they viewed a corporate website condition (MFacebook = 5.54, Mwebsite = 2.21; t (132) = 16.66, $p < .001$).

Hypothesis Testing

H1a and H1b predicted that the participants would report greater perceived transparency of an organization (H1a) and more favorable perceptions of an organization's reputation (H1b) in the condition of claiming truthfulness of its official announcement. The effect of truth claims on

organizational transparency and its reputation perception was tested using MANCOVA with the organization's prior reputation as a covariate. The present experimental design included potential three dimensions of independent variables: two between-subjects factors (i.e., truth claims and disclosure claims) with two levels, one within-subjects factor (i.e., online channel) with two levels, and the participants' prior reputation of stimuli organization (e.g., Taco Bell) as a control variable. The Pearson correlation indicated that a moderate, positive, and significant relationship exists between prior reputation of Taco Bell and post organizational reputation after reading an official statement, r (131) = .43, $p < .001$; and a strong, positive, and significant relationship exists between the company's prior reputation and its perceived efforts to pursue transparency, r (131) = .86, $p < .001$. Based on these procedures, the organization's prior reputation served as a control variable because this variable is assumed to influence the two dependent variables and thus needed to be adjusted for in order to obtain a more precise analysis.

The results of MANCOVA revealed that the effect of the truth claim was significant on the two dependent variables, Wilks Λ= .852, F (2, 129) = 11.24, $p < .001$, η^2 = .148. Specifically, the participants who viewed sentences claiming truthfulness of the official announcement (M = 4.60, SE = .14) perceived Taco Bell to be more transparent than those who read the announcement absenting such claim (M = 3.88, SE = .14). Thus, H1a was supported. Moreover, participants had more favorable reputation toward Taco Bell when the company claimed true facts of its official announcement (M = 4.41, SE = .10) than the company absented the claim (M = 3.74, SE = .10). Therefore, H1b was also supported.

H2a and H2b predicted that the participants' perceptions on organizational transparency and its reputation would be affected by the conditions of the disclosure of more detailed information. The effect of disclosure claims on the two dependent variables was tested using MANCOVA with the organization's prior reputation as a covariate. The results of MANCOVA yielded that the effect of active disclosure was not significant on participants' perceptions on transparency of an organization, Wilks Λ= .994, F (2, 129) = .42, $p=.66$, η^2 = .006. According to subsequent univariate analyses, Taco Bell's official announcement disclosing more information (M = 4.14, SD = .11) and its official announcement without disclosure (M = 4.02, SD = .11) did not have a statistically different on participants' perceptions on transparency of an organization [F (1, 130) = .628, p = .43, η^2 = .005]. Similarly, the official announcement with active disclosure (M = 4.29, SD = .14) and the announcement without disclosure (M = 4.20, SD = .14) did not have a statistically different on participants' perceptions on organizational reputation [F (1, 130) = .193, p = .66, η^2 = .001]. Thus, H2a and H2b were not supported.

RQ1 asked whether a statement claiming truthfulness of its official announcement interacted with a disclosure claim have an impact on our two dependent variables. The results of MANCOVA revealed that the effect of the truth claim on two dependent variables did not significantly interact with the effect of disclosure [Wilks Λ = .992, F (2, 127) = .502, p = .61, η_{p}^{2} = .008]. In sum, the combined dependent variables of perceived transparency of an organization and its reputation were significantly affected only by the truth claim; and the truth claim accounted for 15% of the variability in our dependent variables after controlling for the participant' baseline reputation of Taco Bell. Table 1-1 and 1-2 show the results of MANCOVA with two independent variables (See Appendix B).

RQ2 asked whether online channels would impact the participants' perception of an organization's reputation, and evaluations of its transparency efforts. A repeated measures of

MANCOVA with Taco Bell's baseline reputation as a covariate was used to examine the main effects of online outlets of the official statement on the two dependent variables. The multivariate results showed that the combined dependent variables of perceived transparency of an organization and its reputation were not significantly affected by the conditions of online channels, Wilks $\Lambda = .978$, $F (2, 127) = 1.44$, $p = .24$, $\eta^2 = .022$. However, there was a statistically significant interaction effect between the conditions of the truth claim and online platforms on two dependent variables, Wilks $\Lambda = .943$, $F (2, 127) = 3.86$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .057$. The findings of the following univariate analyses showed that there was a significant interaction effect between conditions of truth claim and of online channels on the participants' evaluations of organizational reputation [$F (1, 128) = 6. 74$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .050$]. In the condition of absenting truth claim, participants were more likely to project favorable organizational reputation when viewing an organization's statement on a corporate website ($M = 4.03$, $SE = .14$) compared to its Facebook ($M = 3.73$, $SE = .15$). Conversely, in the condition of presenting the truth claim, participants were more likely to project favorable organizational reputation when viewing the organization-generated statement appeared on Facebook ($M = 4.62$, $SE = .15$) than when viewing it through the corporate website ($M = 4.59$, $SE = .14$). Figure 1 illustrates this finding (see Appendix B).

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore whether two types of organizational claims to enhance its perceived transparency affect readers' perceptions on transparency of an organization and organizational reputation.

The first hypotheses examined whether the stimuli organization's claims to assert truthfulness of an official statement would lead to readers' favorable perceptions on its reputation and transparency efforts. The findings of our study showed that participants perceived the organization to be more transparent and have higher reputation when truth claim is available than it is not. The findings are in accordance with our expectation. In addition, it is worth mentioning that the effect of truth claim was thoroughly tested since we examined participants' previous reputation toward the stimuli organization (i.e., Taco Bell) with other companies before they read the stimulus. Our participants' perception on Taco Bell's baseline reputation wassignificantly lower than other four companies compared (e.g., McDonalds or Burger King; $M_{Taco Bell} = 4.08$, $M_{Others} = 4.42$, t (132) = -2.49, p < .05).

To recapitulate, in spite of the fact that the participants reported relatively bad prior reputation toward a company, claims to assert the company's official statement as true facts led them to perceive the corporate to be transparent and thus, to have favorable reputation. This posits valuable implication for public relations practitioners. That is, public relations practitioners need to construct and release crisis information (e.g., an official statement) as to be more transparent by stressing out the information as true facts in a way that our data suggests. By doing so, PR practitioners would reduce an organization's reputational damage caused by a public's doubts during a crisis: it is that an official statement which an organization does visibly state truthfulness of it tends to stress out a more authentic voice of the organization to a public view.

On the other hand, our data suggests that a sentence claiming that an organization is disclosing more information does not necessarily enhance its perceived transparency of an organization and its subsequent reputation. Additionally, the disclosure claims interacted with

truth claims does not affect people's perceptions on organizational transparency and its reputation. Instead, people did not perceive an official statement disclosing Taco Bell's detailed recipe of it seasoned beef as being more transparent compared to an official statement without disclosing anything, but presenting the company's history.

There are two possible explanations regarding these results. One possible explanation directly comes from our findings: the condition of "active disclosure" of an organization and the nondisclosure condition presenting rather the company's history were not conceptually different in perceived transparency efforts of an organization and its reputation. These results illustrate an important point that disclosing more explanations and facts does not always ensure truthfulness of an organization and presenting an organization's history would be another option for public relations practitioners in releasing its official statements. By applying Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action (1984), Burkart (2007) describes a similar concern with our findings that public relations practitioners need to make a public understand their actions as well as the validity of organizational claims together to achieve the public's understanding. In particular, from Consensus Oriented Public Relations (Burkart, 2004), the author explained that a public will doubt not only a legitimacy of a company's interests or a truth of its presented facts, but also a trustworthiness of a company as communicators (p. 252, Burkart, 2007). It might be a fact that a public tend to equate the official statement providing an organization's history with the statement disclosing more information in terms of their estimation of the trustworthiness of the organization. Still, since our manipulation check successfully distinguished the disclosure condition from the nondisclosure condition, participants considered the disclosure statements as offering more detailed crisis information. However, it was not good enough for an organization to be considered as transparent or credible. Therefore, this study poses a further research examining whether an explanation of a company's history or value as well as disclosing claims increase the message recipients' perceptions on credibility of the content and overall trustworthiness of a company.

Second, although context information that our participants received was the same in both conditions of disclosure, the perceived quality of the two statements or the amount of information could be different. Our participants might regard the disclosure claims of an organization emphasizing detailed evidence as to be self-protective, which in turn assess the content as being rather suspicious. In other words, the relatively a lot of facts in the disclosure condition would either merely increase the amount of information or create a lizard of content itself. We assume that the dissimilar nature of disclosure claims exists: there are different levels of disclosure claims causing a perceptual gap of message recipients. In regards to this concern, Whittington and Yakis-Douglas (2010) give an insight: two types of a disclosure exist which are either a voluntary disclosure or a more mandatory disclosure. Specifically, they showed that if people thought the information disclosure was mandatory and inevitable for an organization, the effect the disclosure would be not be critical. We controlled possible confounds of a stimuli message which are the amount of information and content (e.g., wordings and materials presented) and crisis response strategies used, however, in terms of the sentence of the disclosure condition (e.g., "*in responses to a consumer request, we are sharing our actual recipe,*" see Appendix B), the participants might regard this condition as more mandatory disclosure than voluntary disclosure. Future research needs to see whether different levels of disclosure claims

cause such organizational claims as being more suspicious or more reliable and thus, create a halo effect to other crisis outcome variables.

Our second research question explored whether the participants' evaluations of transparency efforts of an organization were affected by the online platform-where the official statement would be displayed. The findings illustrate a statistically significant interaction between truth claims and the online vehicles. To be more specific, when a company's official statement does not include claims asserting it as truth, people tend to assess a corporate web site to pose more favorable reputation of the company than when they are exposed to a corporate Facebook. On the contrary, if participants viewed an official statement claiming truth of the content, they were more likely to have favorable reputation of a company stating the announcement on Facebook than when the statement was presented through the organization's web site. In regards to these findings, a corporate Facebook turns out to be maximizing the effect of truth claim compared to a corporate web site on organizational reputation. That is, a public tend to regard social media platforms as more human voice, because the venues are where *people* get to interact with others. Similarly, Gonzalez-Herrerov and Smith (2008) explained a public's expectations toward online messages. On the internet, the public expect to see authentic, truthful conversation in a more interactive tone, not company messages delivered in one-way, corporate tone (Gonzalez-Herrerov & Smith, 2008, p.144). Moreover, Schultz, Utz and Göritz (2011) showed the stronger impact of a medium than crisis response strategies used on participants' perceptions on organizational reputation in a crisis. For instance, crisis communication via Twitter led to higher reputation than crisis communication appeared on blogs or a traditional newspaper site. Although these were not directly related to our comparison between a corporate web site and a corporate Facebook, our findings bolster the main argument that a corporate Facebook would be more efficient platform to present crisis information for claiming truthfulness of an organization. However, there is also a limitation. The study did not only control crisis response strategies but also exclude different crisis types. What an organization does as well as whether a crisis is severe affect stakeholders' assessment of a crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 1996; Coombs, 2007), therefore, further research should include those concerns to capture the holistic nature of crisis situations.

Still, this is the first study that experimentally tested the effects of the two types of organizational claims to pursue truthfulness of an official statement on two important crisis outcome variables: perceived organizational transparency and its reputation. Surely, public relations practitioners cannot get rid of stakeholders' doubts solely by a claim or a statement. It is very likely though that an organization's claim to assert it as truth is suitable for preserving an organization's reputation, especially when the organization uses its Facebook.

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Appendix A

Figure 1 Official Announcement of Taco Bell on its Facebook (e.g., presenting the truth claim and disclosing more detailed recipe)

Figure 2 Official Announcement of Taco Bell on its Facebook (e.g., absenting neither the truth claim nor the detailed information regarding its recipe)

Figure 3 Official Announcement of Taco Bell on its own website (e.g., presenting the truth claim, but not sharing the recipe)

www.tacobell.com/company/newsreleasearticle/Statement-Regarding-Class-Action-Lawsuit

UPDATED STATEMENT REGARDING OUR SEASONED BEEF

We have experienced a lawsuit based on completely inaccurate facts. The lawsuit on behalf of a Taco Bell customer and Montgomery-based law firm Beasley Allen contends that since the meat filling sold at Taco Bell is only 36 percent beef, it does not meet the requirement set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to be advertised as "beef" as currently practiced. The claims made against Taco Bell and our seasoned beef are absolutely false.

So, here is the truth about our beef: 88% beef and 12% seasonings! Our beef is 100% USDA inspected, just like the quality beef you would buy in a supermarket and prepare in your home.

It is then slow-cooked and simmered with proprietary seasonings and spices to provide Taco Bell's signature taste and texture.

Taco Bell Corp. is the nation's leading Mexican-style quick service restaurant chain. Taco Bell serves tacos, burritos, signature quesadillas, grilled stuft Burritos, nachos, and other specialty items such as Crunchwrap Supreme, in addition to the Why Pay More Value Menu. Taco Bell serves more than 36.8 million consumers each week in nearly 5,600 restaurants in the U.S.

Taco Bell prides itself on serving high quality Mexican-inspired food with great value. We plan to take legal action for the false statements being made about our food. In addition, we will continue to correct misleading claims and open a forum for it. For more information about our ingredients, please visit our Web site: http://www.tacobell.com.

Figure 4 Official Announcement of Taco Bell on its own website (e.g., absenting the truth claim, but disclosing the recipe)

Appendix B

Table 1-1. Multivariate Analysis Results for Two Dependent Variables

Effect	Wilks' Λ	F	p-value	Partial η^2
Prior Reputation	.759	20.22	.000***	.241
Between Disclosure	.994	.38	.687	.006
Between Truth	.852	11.03	.000***	.148
Between Disclosure × Between Truth	.992	.50	.606	.008

*Note. Hypothesis df = 2, error df = 127 for all F tests. *** p < .001.*

Table 1-2. Univariate Analysis Results for Two Dependent Variables

Effect	Dependent Variable	df	MS	F	p-value	Partial η^2
Prior Reputation	Reputation	1	41.830	3.61	.000	.208
	Transparency	1	7.941	11.61	.001	.083
Between Disclosure	Reputation	1	.181	.15	.704	.001
	Transparency	1	.382	.56	.457	.004
Between Truth	Reputation	1	17.433	14.02	.000	.099
	Transparency	1	15.122	22.10	.000	.147
Between Disclosure × Between Truth	Reputation	1	.628	.51	.479	.004
	Transparency	1	.029	.04	.836	.000
Error	Reputation	128	1.240			
	Transparency	128	.680			

Figure 1. Interaction Effect between Truth Claims and Online Channel on Organizational Reputation
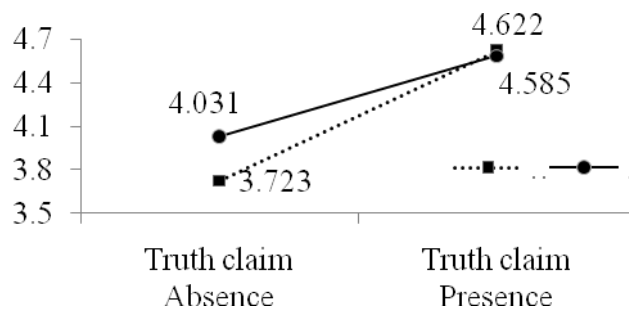
Making the Grade:
What Constitutes a Successful PR Education?

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Abstract

By interviewing both established and young public relations professionals, this study sought to find what a successful public relations professional means in today's industry and media environment. Established professionals indicated that they expect new graduates to be far more capable than being effective communication technicians. They expect new graduates to be strategic, critical thinkers who can be problem solvers at the same time. Young professionals who were selected by these established professionals agreed with their bosses when asked about the qualities that make one successful in the PR industry. They valued public relations education that gave them chances to gain both theoretical and practical knowledge, collegiate experiences that helped them gain communication, management, and leadership skills, and parents, peers, teachers, and mentors who provided them various experiences resulting in increased knowledge and skills.

Introduction

Preparing students for the industry is always a topic of conversation between public relations practitioners and educators. This topic is especially relevant and important today as the communication environment changes constantly and rapidly. Regardless of the type of organizations they work for, public relations practitioners today find themselves in an increasingly demanding environment that requires them to be strategic and critical in their thinking and versatile in their skills.

In the 12th Annual International Public Relations Research Conference in 2009, we presented the findings of a study that examined how well public relations education prepares future practitioners for the industry. We asked employers of PR organizations to rate their new employees on a series of skills and knowledge areas, and we asked new practitioners to evaluate themselves regarding the same areas. We found that employers and employees were not necessarily in accordance with each other on these evaluations. Employers believed that their employees should be more effectively trained in both skills and knowledge areas. New practitioners, on the other hand, believed that they possess an adequate or above adequate level of skills and knowledge (Kim & Johnson, 2009).

After observing this gap between the employers and employees, we became interested in determining the elements that differentiated the new hires who satisfied and impressed their employers from the new employees who made employers believe that they should have been prepared more effectively. We wanted to locate the new hires who employers believe to have shown many signs of developing successful careers as public relations practitioners and to ask them what have prepared them to become who they are today.

Related Studies

Are public relations students ready for the changing industry?

For many years, both public relations practitioners and educators have paid close attention to ensuring university public relations programs reflect changes and growth in the industry. In the two latest reports published in 1999 and 2006, the Commission on Public Relations Education (CPRE) suggested a series of knowledge and skills that are essential for future practitioners to thrive in a "technological, multicultural and global society" (CPRE, 1999, p.2). Adopting the CPRE's suggestions, university PR programs in the past 20 years have created a series of courses and trained aspiring practitioners to obtain these knowledge and skill sets.

Previous studies have revealed both positive and negative findings about the state of public relations education. The good news is that public relations practitioners and educators largely agree with each other when it comes to what makes successful public relations practitioners. Stacks et al. (1999) and DiStaso et al. (2009) demonstrated a high degree of agreement between practitioners and educators in terms of desired educational outcomes, desired qualities among new practitioners, and essential PR curriculum content. When Gower and Reber (2006) measured students' perception of the importance of skills and concepts identified in related studies, they found that students, too, perceived them as important.

However, other findings call for our attention. In Stacks et al.'s (1999) study, public relations practitioners and educators rated all of the 24 items used in the study as "highly desired outcomes," but they reported that only 3 of these 24 items (good attitude, word processing, and

typing) were highly "existent" among students and job applicants. A later update of this study found similar findings. Only word processing/e-mail and Internet skills were frequently found, but highly desired skills such as research, understanding protocol with the media, current events knowledge, and understanding business practices were not frequently existent among entry-level applicants (DiStaso, et al., 2009). In addition, a study of PR students showed that students tended to feel less prepared for qualities and characteristics they perceived important to PR practitioners (e.g., revenue and expense profiles, new technologies, financial and budgeting skills, electronic communication, crisis planning, and others) (Gower & Reber, 2006).

While it is not surprising that practitioners and educators found more *highly desired* outcomes and fewer *highly present* outcomes among students and entry-level applicants, it is worrisome to find that strengths and weaknesses among students and entry-level applicants have remained unchanged over 10 years. More specifically, studies closely investigating this topic reported that students and entry-level applicants continue to lack professional skills that require research, planning, and development (Stacks, et al., 1999; DiStaso, et al., 2009; Gower & Reber, 2006).

Preparing students for the changing communication environment

While generating competent public relations practitioners has always been a difficult task for educators, the challenge seems to be particularly hard today due to rapidly changing communication environment. The fast evolution of interactive communication technologies has provided PR practitioners with numerous tools such as blogs, podcast, online social networks, among others. (Eyrich et al., 2008). Moreover, it has transformed the nature of communication between PR practitioners and publics from traditional, one-way communication to interactive, two-way communication mode (e.g., Payne, 2008; Wright & Hinson, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). In addition to simple dissemination of messages, communication management, relationship building, and strategic communication have become increasingly important facets of public relations practice in recent years.

Interactive communication technologies have transformed the ways in which people gather information and communicate with one another, and PR practitioners have to adapt to this changed environment. A recent online user study reported that as of August 2008, about 78 million people visited blog sites everyday (Technorati, 2009), 55 percent of online teens use social networks, 55 percent have created online profiles, and 47 percent of online adults use social networking sites, up from 37 percent in November 2008 (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith & Zickuhr, 2010). PR practitioners, however, have been rather slow in adopting new communication technologies. Earlier studies of use of new technologies among PR practitioners indicated that PR practitioners were often slow in accepting and using new technologies (Porter et al., 2001), and even when they recognized the importance of new technologies, adopting them in their practices occurred slowly (Porter et al., 2006). However, a more recent study (Eyrich et al., 2008) found that PR professionals have clearly adopted the more established and institutional tools such as e-mail (96.1%) and intranet (68.2%) and a significant number of people use newer technologies such as blogs (41.7%), podcasts (35.2%), and video sharing (30%) in their practice.

While PR professionals adopt new technologies at different rates, almost all of them seem to recognize the impact of new technologies on their practice. In a recent national survey of public relations practitioners and students, 95 percent of participants said that communication and

media technology have had a positive impact on the practice of public relations, and 94 percent of professionals predicted that technology would continue to have a positive impact in the next five years (PRSA, 2007). In Eyrich et al.'s (2008) survey, PR professionals believed that various social media were being used in the industry, and PR professionals' use of social media and their perceived adoption in the industry showed statistically significant correlation ($p < .005$). Wright and Hinson's (2009) most recent and the fourth survey among PR practitioners within and outside the U.S. also revealed a commonly-shared belief that new media are transforming public relations and the way it is practiced. The authors reported that the majority (93%) of respondents spent part of the average workday with some aspect of blogs and the social media and that over 70% of participants believed that the emergence of blogs and social media have changed the way their organizations communicate (Wright & Hinson, 2009a).

Research Questions

RQ1. What is the definition of successful public relations professionals?

RQ2. What conceptual ability do successful public relations professionals possess?

PQ3. What professional skills do successful public relations professionals possess?

RQ4. What personality characteristics do successful public relations professionals possess?

RQ5. How or where did promising young professionals gain the abilities mentioned in RQ2, 3, and 4?

Methods

As this study was conducted as a follow-up of our 2009 study, employers who participated in our previous study – PRSA members, IABC members, and other public relations practitioners in Illinois and Indiana – were contacted again and asked to give one to three names of practitioners who were hired in the past five years and have shown many signs of developing successful careers.

In the e-mail sent out to employers, we asked if they would be interviewed for a few questions. Nineteen employers agreed to be interviewed. Of the 19 people, several said that they have not hired any new employees in recent years, and thus, were unable to give any names and contact information for new hires. This issue limited the number of new employees who could be interviewed for the study to only eight individuals. Additional interviews with employers and new hires continue as more people respond to our request. However, this study is reported at the exploratory level relying on answers provided by extremely limited number of people.

Those who agreed to be interviewed were contacted by researchers via telephone between January and March 2011. Two groups of respondents were asked more or less similar questions, but respondents gave the answers representing the perspectives of their position. Based on their unique answers, researchers could make comparisons between the two groups.

To determine whether or not employers and recent hires think alike when they define what successful PR practitioners mean today, respondents were asked to define what a successful PR practitioner means to them. Then, we asked both groups of respondents to list conceptual abilities, skills, technological proficiency, and personality characteristics that are required for public relations practitioners to be successful in today's environments. New hires were asked an additional question regarding how or where they obtained these abilities, skills, and/or characteristics.

Findings

Who are successful PR practitioner today? Strategic thinkers rather than communication technicians

When asked to define a successful public relations practitioner, the professionals' answers revolved around one clear point: They no longer expect the first role of young professionals right out of college to be that of a technician.

In the study of public relations roles, researchers have found that public relations professionals fill four roles and that three of those are management roles. When the roles are defined by function, the only role not a management role is that of the communications technician who is considered adept at communication and journalism skills. These practitioners write, edit, news stories, newsletter articles, Web content, and other information and often handle media relationships. These practitioners are not usually present when management debates issues, defines problems, suggests solutions or determines courses of action. They are usually brought in to produce the communication tools and implement the programs. Technical skills are needed in all four roles, but are usually thought of as most prevalent at the technician level. The technician is not expected to think strategically nor to be particularly sensitive listeners or problem solvers.

Bowen, Rawlins & Martin, in their book, *An Overview of the Public Relations Function*, put it this way: Most practitioners begin their careers as communication technicians. This role requires executing strategies with the communication tactics of news releases, employee newsletters, position papers, media placements, Web site content, speeches, blogs and social media messaging. Practitioners in this role are usually not involved in defining problems and developing solutions, but base their tactics on the technical skill of writing" (Bowen, 26–27).

Yet when professionals were interviewed for this study, the characteristics they wanted to see in beginning practitioners went beyond good writers, editors and designers. Answers included: "Due to progress in technology, young public relations professionals have entered the workforce with advanced proficiency in two-way communication. These young professionals are now charged with how to use this technological ability for their respective clients and organizations' business objectives."

Responses from recent hires resonate this view. All of the recent hires acknowledged the importance of basic functions new practitioners perform as communication technicians. However, they seemed to realize that being a communication technician is not enough to become successful in the field. To them, successful PR practitioners are those who can think critically and strategically, assess the environment, and apply the assessment to predicting the organization's well being. One respondent who is working for a national insurance company said, "To be successful in this field, you need to have an ability to adapt to changes because of digital media and social media. You need to be a continuous learner and constant listener. You should be able to scan the media environment. The ability to multitask is also important." Another respondent who works for a public relations firm mentions similar elements by saying, "Three things come to my mind. First, you need to be media-savvy and know what is going on in the media. Second, you have to develop an ability to predict the market and trend. For example, when you hear that Starbuck's began using a new logo, how does it affect consumers? Third, you have to be a good writer."

In addition to strategic and critical thinking skills, recent hires mentioned the importance of adaptability and flexibility, the ability to work for diverse clients, and the ability to allocate resources amongst clients. "Multitasking" or "juggling" was the words often used by respondents.

What conceptual ability and skills do public relations practitioners need today?
In talking about conceptual abilities and technical skills, a respondent with previous hiring experiences said, "In order to be successful, a new employee has to have a positive attitude and understand the audience he or she is trying to reach with an appropriate message so the audience will 'hear' what is said."
Another respondent suggested that today's new professional "needs to be able to demonstrate value and business results for clients and organizations, not just communications output. He/she understands that the industry is evolving into a business discipline. They need a holistic approach to the practice. As an example, the professional comprehends public relations' correlation to marketing, finance, business development, human resources, etc."
A respondent who is working for the state bar association identified strong strategic, analytical thinking skills, being able to think long-term, and ability to interpret the environment as important conceptual abilities for successful PR practitioners. The ability to interpret the environment and to apply that interpretation to benefitting the organization was mentioned by several other people. For example, a respondent suggested new hires needed to understand how their work fit into the overall mission of the organization and the strategic plan of the department. He told this story: A new hire, just out of college, but who had done a summer internship with the company, was told her new role would include running social media campaigns for the company, including blogging. The manager was surprised when the young lady came in to work a few days later and said, "I started blogging for the company last night." Upon questioning her, the manager found she had decided to do this with no concept of how the blogging fit into the strategic messages the organization was attempting to deliver nor into the over all communications plan for the organization. Her new boss had expected her to know that this new blog needed to fit strategically into the overall activity of the communications department and to realize she needed approval before anything was posted, however the new hire did not. The expectation was there for more than a good technician, but the new hire did not necessarily fill the bill.
In addition, concerning skills, an interviewee said: "It's a combination of education, internship experience and personal skills. The students need to have class work and the theory, be able to put it into practice, but also need to be naturally curious, driven to succeed and continually learning and updating skills. Including strategic thinking."
Responses from recent hires again emphasized similar elements. Many commented the importance of knowledge in journalism. A practitioner working in a New York based PR firm said, "Majoring in journalism, understanding the media, and being able to write in different formats have been tremendous help" for her. Another practitioner also based in New York stated, "Knowledge in journalism was essential to me, because I understand the media cycle better."
In addition to journalistic background, recent hires seemed to appreciate knowledge in specialized area, which again indicated their idea of a successful PR practitioner goes beyond being an effective communication technician. Although the specialty area varies from political

campaigns, finances, accounting, to marketing, they acknowledged the diverse nature of clients and the need to have knowledge that can help their clients to be successful in the field.

As for skills necessary to PR practitioners today, recent hires mentioned a wide range of skills that included writing, editing, communication, research, language, technology, time management, organization, and leadership skills. Of these, communication skills, especially good writing skills, time, client, and/or resource management skills, and leadership skills were mentioned more frequently. Two quotes reflect this point. One respondent based in Raleigh, North Carolina, said, "I'd say time management and organization skills are the most important. You work with so many different clients, and you need to know how to manage your time and stay organized. You also have to possess leadership skills. You have to be a self-starter and know how to take initiatives." Another respondent based in Washington, D.C., indicated that a leadership ability that she developed while working on campaigns is one of the most important skills to have and "an ability and willingness to work with others by clearly communicating the goals of a campaign" is also essential.

What is the role of technology skills?

When we asked the importance of technology in developing a successful career, virtually everyone said technological skills are essential. Professionals who have been in the industry for a while and have hired recent graduates took young professionals' technological skills for granted. Their responses indicated that they are highly interested in using new technologies such as Facebook and Twitter for their organizations, and they wanted their new hires to take the leadership role on that front.

When we talked to young professionals, the importance of social media was most frequently mentioned. Regardless of the presence of a digital team in the organization they work for, these young professionals were involved with the use of social media in their practice to a certain degree by either updating or monitoring contents in various social media platforms. Many said that it is important to pay close attention to emerging media. They recognized that social media platforms are changing constantly, and they need to stay willing and ready to learn the new platform. Young professionals also acknowledged that to be successful, one has to go beyond simply being able to use new technology. A respondent based in New York puts it this way: "You need to pay attention to what's being newly developed. But, your job does not end there. One has to understand the technology and think about how to use it for your organization. The platforms are changing constantly, and you need to change your practice accordingly."

Additional technology skills mentioned included research skills using the Internet, presentation technology skills, abilities to use and interpret Excel, abilities to use graphic design programs, and skills to read and understand financial charts.

Successful Practitioners' Personality Characteristics

Several respondents explained that all personalities could be successful in the public relations industry. Although there seems to exist a stereotypical image of bubbly, extroverted individual as a typical PR representative, many said that quiet, hard-working introverted persons could be very successful in the industry because they often are thorough, detail-oriented, and take a nuanced approach in their practice.

Among young professionals, some additional characteristics emerged. Many recent hires described a successful practitioner's personality characteristics using such words and phrases as "personable, sociable, outgoing, open-minded, willing to work with others, quick on the feet, thick-skinned, go-getter" among others. A New York based young professional said, "You should be a go-getter. You need to be able to be adaptable for the fast-paced media environment. You should be personable. You need to be willing to talk to people. You should also be thick-skinned. You should not take things personally and let things bother you. You need to maintain a work ethic." Patience, persistence, and open-mindedness are also mentioned by several respondents including a professional working in Washington, D.C.: "You have to be personable, sociable, and willing to work with others. You need to stay open-minded and be able to take feed back and apply it to your work. Patience, persistence, and tenaciousness are important qualities to have."

What Has Prepared Young, Successful Professionals with These Abilities and Qualities?

We asked recent hires to explain how they have come to possess these conceptual abilities, skills, and personalities. We wanted to determine if these young professionals are inherently driven, hard-working individuals who were to be successful regardless of the field they are in or if they have learned and acquired these abilities, skills, and qualities through education and experiences. If the latter is the case, PR educators can apply what we learn from the study to their curricular decisions.

According to the participants of this study, public relations education, well-rounded university education, and personal experiences all play parts in preparing individuals for the PR industry. Young professionals in this study expressed their appreciation of theory-based conceptual courses in public relations, but said that the courses that forced them to apply those theories to practice and to run public relations campaigns were what helped them the most.

Overall excellent collegiate experiences, even if they were not directly related to public relations, also prepared them to get ready for the profession. One respondent who had a study abroad in Spain said, "My entire stay in Spain was about learning how to communicate with different people. I had to study constantly how people in Spain communicated and interacted with each other, which was quite different from communication in the U.S." Another respondent said that her experience working in student organizations such as her sorority helped her develop leadership skills. She pointed out working with members, planning and organizing events, and thinking about how to execute those events have many similarities to what she does as a young public relations professional.

Personal experiences including upbringing, respondents said, influenced who they are today too. Respondents expressed that they felt pretty comfortable using new media because new media, especially the Internet, have always been a part of their lives growing up. Some respondents said that their parents and grandparents have always challenged them to become better at what they did. One respondent said, "They always supported me and the decisions I made. But, they never just gave it to me." The role of friends and peers were mentioned, too. Respondents stated that interacting with friends gave them a chance to learn about leadership. Teachers and mentors both at school and at work were influential in shaping young professionals too according to respondents.

Discussions and conclusion

This study's findings tell us that the expectation from new graduates seems to be higher than ever before. When asked about "successful public relations practitioners today," over and over, the interviewees used the words "strategic thinkers, visionaries, problem-solvers." They seemed to take it for granted the recent graduates would have good communication, writing and editing skills. They also thought they should have skills and experience beyond that. Established practitioners suggested that interns should have had previous internships before they would be hired as an intern in their firms. They did not want to be the ones to teach them to get to work on time, or to dress appropriately, yet they expected them to be able to suggest solutions to problems and have experience at problem-solving.

Young professionals in this study were recommended by established professionals as showing many signs of developing a successful career. Perhaps because these were a group of selected people, our interviews with them convince us to believe that these individuals are bright, articulate, driven, and hard-working professionals. They appreciated a balanced public relations education that is both theory and practice driven and fosters strategic and critical thinking ability. They believed that the skills necessary to be successful in the field go beyond good writing and editing skills. Good writing and editing skills to them is something that is assumed and simply a part of good communication skills. They valued the power of new media technologies, especially social media, in their practice. Again, they pointed out the importance of understanding and applying new technologies to their practice. Stopping at knowing how to use new media is not meaningful enough to our respondents, because new media platforms are and will be changing constantly. They believed that people who know how to apply those technologies for the benefit of the organization would be truly successful.

Finally, young professional said that their education, collegiate experiences, and personal background helped them to become who they are today. They valued the courses that taught them a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge, the experiences that helped them gain leadership, communications, and creative skills, and parents, peers, teachers, and mentors who have helped cultivating their characters.

Because the study's findings rely on interviews among a small number of young professionals, generalization of the findings is difficult. However, this study is worth being expanded to include more interviewees. Public relations educators should include in their courses further opportunities for students to practice theories being taught, engage students in the activities in which they can learn critical and strategic thinking skills in addition to other skills such as leadership, encourage them to take courses in various related disciplines, prod them to actively seek out internship experiences, and help them expand the scope of their experiences as much as possible.

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**Exploring Effects of Corporate Social Media Messages on Audience Behavior:
Relationship Management Perspectives**

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Abstract
Grounded from a relationship management perspective, the purpose of this investigation is to explore the effects of corporate social media messages on the audience's communicational intentions. It explored how the relationship outcomes can be demonstrated on Twitter messages, and how it can affect audience's behavioral intention. Particularly, a 2x3 experimental study was conducted with 182 undergraduate students at a state university. The between-subject design study tested how the relationship types and the response cues (i.e., re-tweet) of messages affect audiences' intention of engaging with the messages. Our findings suggested a significant correlation between the type of relationship of Twitter messages and audience's behavioral intention to communicate on Twitter.

Relationship management is one of the major public relations theoretical perspectives, and scholars have emphasized the effectiveness of relationship outcomes on public behaviors. Repeated purchasing intention or commitment was explored to evaluate the consequences of relationships, and in the communication field, public's communicative behavioral intention has also been explored as one of the major consequences of relationship outcomes (Foster & Jonker, 2005). Behavioral intention was explored in terms of the online communication, comment or word-of-mouth (i.e., Foster & Jonker, 2005; Shanahan, 2010; Yang & Kang, 2009).

When the Internet was first introduced, its potential for public relation practices was greatly explored as a tool for building relationships between organizations and the public, and dialogic communication had also been emphasized for strategic public relations (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Public relations practitioners needed to monitor public opinion online and also needed to communicate with public interactively.

More recently, relationship management framework has been expanded into the social media context such as blogs, Facebook, or Twitter, and the impact of emerging social media on public and society has been studied in various communication fields (i.e., Das, 2010; Kent, 2008). Twitter, which launched in 2006, has grown to become one of the most popular social media venues. Surprisingly, not many empirical studies have been conducted.

Hence, the purpose of this current study is to explore the impact of corporate Twitter on customers' communication behavior from a relationship management perspective. In particular, corporate messages were manipulated in terms of the type of relationship and interactivity indicators in an experimental setting. Based on the research findings, Twitters potential is discussed as a persuasive communication tool.

Literature review

Relationship Management

Relationships is one of the most important perspectives in the public relations field (Ferguson, 1984), and the nature of organization-public relationships has been a central domain of many social science fields. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) defined the relationship as "the state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political and/or cultural well-being of the other entity" (p. 62), and the scholars suggested five dimensions of relationships: Trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).

Hon and J. Grunig (1999) also elaborated relationship framework suggesting a guideline to measure organization-public relations. According to the scholars, the six relationship outcomes were control mutuality, trust, commitment, satisfaction, communal relations and exchange relations. From the relationship building perspective, these relationship outcomes are the important assets of an organization, and practitioners should monitor relationship antecedents and consequences.

To define the nature of relationships, Hung (2005) suggested two types of relationships: Communal and exchange relationships. A communal relationship is usually found among friends or family when one concerns the welfare of the counterpart; while an exchange relationship is found in a business setting when social and economic returns are expected (i.e., Clark & Mill, 1979; Goffman, 1961). The importance of communal relationships was emphasized by public

relations scholars and practitioners for the long-term success of an organization. Edman (2010) defined the two types of relationship as follows adopting from Hon and Grunig (1999), and he demonstrated the two types of relationship into the manipulated corporate Twitter messages (Edman, 2010).

> *Communal relationship: mutually beneficial relationship where both the organization and its publics give benefits to each other even when they receive nothing in return: Posts that indentify communal relationships will show the company's desire to do good deeds and include posts that demonstrate the company provides benefits to the public because they are concerned about the welfare of that public without the need for getting something in return. These posts can include helpful information, directing uses to appropriate people to talk to about complaints, etc.*

> *Exchange relationship: tweets that exemplify exchange relationships will demonstrate obvious marketing techniques. These posts will also show the company helps the Twitter user out because they expect something in return. If the company gives information about products or services they sell, this will fall under exchange relationship because they are helping the user to buy ITS products/services (This doesn't include information on how to get help regarding an already purchased product/service. This includes information pre-purchase by the other users). In addition, promotions will be considered exchange relationships (p. 120-121).*

Moreover, scholars have emphasized the role of interactive relationship management in the online communication field (i.e., Kent & Taylor, 1998, 2002; Ki & Hon, 2009). Sweetser and Metzgar (2007) revealed that social media such as blogs can help organizations to communicate with the public immediately, allowing them to personalize their communication style to build a favorable relationship with the public (Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007).

Social media and public relations

Emerging social media (i.e., blogs, YouTube, Twitter, or Facebook) have changed audiences' communication patterns of information processing, media consumption, and social interaction, and the impact of these social media venues has been largely studied in communication fields and in public relations (i.e., Rheingold, 2008; Xifra & Huertas, 2008). Twitter is one of the recently growing and emerging social media, where users can post short messages limited to 140 characters about their current status, feelings, or thoughts (Java, Song, Finin, & Tseng, 2009). Scholars have studied its potentials as an online communication and marketing tool to keep the mass public informed with immediate news and to interact with the mass public at once. Even though a few research studies were conducted in YouTube and Facebook settings (Das, 2010), the impact of these Twitter messages has not been fully explored in public relations.

Among the several online communication tools, blogs are one of the most well studied social media forms in public relations. Rheingold (2008) defined a blog as "a Web page that is updated frequently, with the most recent entry displayed at the top of the page" (p. 103), and public relations professionals suggested blogs as powerful persuasive communication tools to analyze and monitor public opinion and trends (i.e., Edelman & Intelliseek, 2005a, 2005b; Kent,

2008), and it also has the great potentials for strategic public relations (i.e., issue management) (i.e., Baran & Davis, 2000; Cohen, 1963; McCombs & Shaw, 1976; Kent, 2008).

Defined as a type of microblogging, Twitter also became a useful tool to exchange ideas and opinions between organizations and their key public (Java, Song, Finin, & Tseng, 2009; Riemer & Richter, 2010). Scholars highlighted its professional uses for managers demonstrating interactive communication and maintaining their relationships with key publics through "human voice" (Kelleher, 2009, p. 172). Using Twitter, an organization can customize messages for its target public audience, and it affects relationship outcomes (i.e., trust and satisfaction) of an organization (Kellerher, 2009).

Interactivity

One of the widely explored characteristics of these social media tools (i.e., blogs or Twitter) is interactivity through dialogue between an organization and its key public (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). Edelman and Intelliseek (2005a) said, "blogs represent a paradigm shift that presents new challenges and opportunities for the advertising, public relations and marketing communities-challenges and opportunities that require quick responses, protocols and policies" (p. 7). Social media tools such as Facebook enable organizations to interact with their target public audience with customized messages through two-way communication (Bernard, 2010; Porter, Trammell, Chung, & Kim, 2007).

Prior scholars have defined interactivity in several ways. Rogers (1995) defined it as "the degree to which participants in a communication process can exchange roles and have control over their mutual discourse" (p. 314), and Ha and James (1998) defined it as "the extent to which the communicator and the audience respond to, or are willing to facilitate, each other's communication needs" (p. 461). Rafaeli (1988) described it as "an expression of the extent that in a given series of communication exchanges, any third (or later) transmission (or message) is related to the degree to which previous exchanges referred to even earlier transmission"(p. 111). Also, Kiousis (2002) introduced three dimensions of interactivity of the structure of technology, communication context and user perception, suggesting the three major components of each dimension. In addition, perceived interactivity was identified with several dimensions of proximity, sensory activation, speed and telepresence (Bretz, 1983; Chesebro & Bonsall, 1989; Kiousis, 2002).

Contemplating the context of a political election, scholars found that the interactivity of a candidate's campaign web site can have favorable impressions toward the political candidate (Sundar, Kalyanaraman, & Brown, 2003). Smith (2010) suggested corporate Twitter pages along with other social network sites can enable the corporation to inform the public to interconnect with the public and to engage with social issues through its interactive features (i.e., retweets or hashtags). Through the pages, users can also retrieve and distribute information to the mass public interactively (Smith, 2010).

Behavioral intention on communication

Public relations researchers and practitioners have examined public relationship outcomes including organizational reputation, community relationships, conflict resolution, or public attitude and behavior (i.e., Plowman, Briggs, & Huang, 2001; Coombs, 2001; Ehling, White, & Grunig, 1992; Xavier, Patel, & Johnston, 2004). Measuring these outcomes, scholars

evaluate the impacts of public relations strategies and goals. Moreover, communicational behavioral intention (i.e., word-of-mouth) has also been emphasized as the factor that affects the effectiveness of public relations practices (i.e., Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007; Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, & Chowdury, 2009).

This communicational behavior such as word of mouth took a role to convey information from one to the other, and let people share attitudes, opinions, or reactions toward particular brands or organizations (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, & Chowdury, 2009). Hence, scholars expanded the discussion into online communication media such as Facebook or Twitter, emphasizing their powerful medium impacts on citizen-to-citizen discussion. These online-based conversation increased public deliberation and engagement with social, economic, or cultural issues (i.e., Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007; Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, & Chowdury, 2009).

Twitter as microblogging also contributed to information conveying between publics and to sharing attitude or opinions toward an organization. Agrifoglio, Black, and Metallo (2010) said Twitter can be used as both informal and formal communication tools. Analyzing more than 150,000 Twitter messages (tweets), Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, and Chowdury (2009) revealed that a large portion of the Twitter messages contain public comments on brands, which suggests that Twitter can be considered as an online tool for managers' branding and marketing communication.

Hence, the purpose of this study was to explore the impacts of corporate Twitter messages on customers' behavioral intentions from relationship management perspectives. Particularly, communicational behavioral intention was explored. Corporate messages were manipulated with the type of relationship and interactivity indicators in an experimental setting.

For the direct relationship between the two independent variables (type of relationships and the perceived level of interactivity) and dependent variable (behavioral intention on communication), the following hypotheses have been proposed.

H1: The type of relationship of corporate tweets will affect customers' behavioral intention on communication toward the corporation.

H2: The perceived level of interactivity of corporate tweets will affect customers' behavioral intention on communication toward the corporation.

Method

Participants and Design

A 2×3 between-subjects factorial design was employed with 182 undergraduate students from a large state university. The experimental conditions had two categories of relationship type (communal and exchange relationship) and three levels of interactivity (low, medium, and high). In a classroom setting, participants were randomly assigned to each of the six experimental conditions.

First, participants read a Twitter page of a local supermarket chain brand that was created for the study. The experimental stimuli and a questionnaire were prepared as a booklet, and participants read the stimulus (Twitter page) for at least five minutes before they answer the questionnaire. The experimental stimulus page consisted of the standard features of a Twitter page such as the number of followers, tweets, and a brief introduction of the brand.

Independent variables and measurements

The type of relationship was our first independent variable, and it was manipulated as two categories of communal and exchange relationships (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Messages on the communal condition page included tweets about benefits (i.e., helpful tips) provided to the customer without immediate returns; while messages on the exchange condition page included tweets about the company's marketing and sales promotions (Edman, 2010). To measure the type of relationship, ten 5-point Likert scale items were used adopted from the previous research (i.e., this organization would not especially enjoy giving others aid) (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Our next independent variable was interactivity determined by the functional responsiveness of the company, and it had three conditions of low, medium, and high (Edman, 2010). High interactivity condition page had more hyperlinks, retweets, and direct responses from the customers. To measure the level of interactivity, eight 5-point Likert scale items were used adopted from previous research studies (i.e., I would feel that the corporation readily answers to its audience) (Bretz, 1983; Chesebro & Bonsall, 1989; Kiousis, 2002; Smith, 2010).

Dependent variables and Measurements

The dependent variable was the participants' behavioral intention on communication, and it was measured by four 5-point items that were modified from previous scales (Brown, Barry, Dacin, & Gunst, 2005; Yang & Kang, 2009): How likely would you act on the advice that is offered in the message? How likely would you recommend the advice you've read in the messages to another person? How likely would you forward the messages to your acquaintances online? And how likely would you retweet the messages on your Twitter?

Results

Demographics

One hundred eighty-seven undergraduate students participated in this experimental study of which five responses have been removed due to the large number of missing values, About 81% of the participants were females, and the majority of participants were juniors (41%) and sophomores (37%). Half of the participants have been using Twitter.

Manipulation checks

In terms of the type of relationship, the participants were assigned into two different conditions of communal and exchange relationships. Between the two groups, the level of communal relationships (communal $M = 26.24$, exchange $M = 23.98$, $t = 4.434$, $df = 179$, $p < .001$) and exchange relationships (communal $M = 8.75$, exchange $M = 8.07$, $df = 178$, $t = -2.25$, $p < .05$) were significantly different. Also, the interactivity indicators were perceived significantly different among the three conditions (high $M = 25.58$, medium $M = 24.25$, low $M = 22. 76$, $F = 9.556$, $df = 178$, $p < .001$). Then, cronbach's α was used to check reliability for dependent measures. The level of the reliability score was satisfactory for the behavioral intention on communication toward the corporation (Cronbach's α = .84).

Hypothesis testing

Descriptive analysis of the mean and the standard deviation was reported in Table 1. The average mean score of the behavioral intention of communication was 11.01 out of 20 ($SD = 3.37$), and the mean scores were significantly different between two relationship conditions. The mean score of the communal relationship group ($M = 11.72$, $SD = 3.24$) was higher than the exchange relationship group ($M = 10.33$, $SD = 3.37$) ($t = 2.83$, $df = 179$, $p < .05$).

On the other hand, the mean scores of behavioral communication intention were not significantly different among the three conditions in terms of the interactivity. (Low $M = 10.87$, $SD = 3.03$; Medium $M = 10.88$, $SD = 3.51$; High $M = 11.27$, $SD = 3.60$) ($F = .279$, $df = 2$, $p > .05$).

To test the hypotheses, two-way univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted using General Linear Model on SPSS (significance level of .05). The summary of two-way ANOVA on participants' behavioral intention of communicating on Twitter is shown in Table 2. The main effect of the type of relationship ($F = 7.862$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$) was found while the main effect of the interactivity was not found ($F = .345$, $df = 2$, $p > .05$).

Hypothesis 1 proposed a correlation between the type of relationship of corporate Twitter messages and customers' behavioral intention to communicate on Twitter about the corporation. The significant main effect of the relationship on the communicative behavioral intention was found to support hypothesis 1 ($F_{(1, 177)} = 7.862$, $p < .05$).

Hypothesis 2 proposed a correlation between the level of interactivity of corporate Twitter messages and customers' behavioral intention to communicate on Twitter about the corporation. However, no significant relationship has been found between the variables ($F_{(2, 177)} = .345$, $p > .05$). Hence, hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Discussion

This current study explored the impact of corporate Twitter messages on audience behavior. In particular, relationship and interactivity indicators were manipulated in an experimental setting to examine the predictors of the audiences' behavior intention (i.e., word-of-mouth intention). Evidence from the experiment suggested that the relationship indicators played a role as a predictor of behavioral intention, while interactivity indicators on Twitter messages did not show a significant influence on the dependent variable. This finding can be interpreted that the corporations' effort for customer relationship portrayed in the message content has more persuasive power than the functional aspect of message deliverance.

Specifically, the data showed that communal relationship messages had a more positive influence on the intention than the exchange relationship message. The results indicate that the audience is more likely to engage in online conversation when corporations appear to care about their customers' welfare and the quality of the service, not expecting immediate benefits in return. It added supportive evidence that a communal relationship is much more beneficial to build a favorable relationship from a business context.

Corporations use social media (i.e., Twitter) to interact with their audience and to engage with social issues. Users search, retrieve and disseminate information interactively through retweets or hashtag functions (Smith, 2010). Scholars suggested that the interactivity of online media can contribute to the favorable impressions of the communicators (Sundar et al., 2003). However, the results of this study did not reveal the main effect of the interactivity indicator on the audiences' behavioral intention. This result suggested that the effect of online/social media communication should be explored together for both content and function of messages.

Practically, the data indicated that corporate social media messages can enhance positive communication consequences toward the corporation when the corporate messages reflect that they care about their customers' needs and well-being. Moreover, this current study explored whether the motivations of Twitter use were related to the audiences' behavioral intention. As

the correlated results indicated, customers' communication behavioral intention was closely related to their motivation to seek interaction with either the corporation or other customers.

The major theoretical implication of this current study is to extend a relationship management perspective into social media context such as Twitter and Facebook. As demonstrated in literature, the concept of this relationship is one of the core domains of public relations research (Ferguson, 1984; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998), and the nature of the relationship was explored with its antecedents and outcomes (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). Multiple-items were developed to measure the relationship outcomes including trust, commitment, and control mutuality (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Hon & Grunig, 1999), and the outcomes can be influenced by the type of relationships (i.e., communal and exchange relationships) (Hung, 2005).

Another theoretical implication of this study is to discuss communication behavior as the consequence of a relationship management approach online. The dialogic features of social media became critical for organization-public relationship management. Especially, researchers emphasized the potentials of microblog (or social network site) to enhance a positive relationship between organizations and their key audience (Kent & Taylor, 1998, 2002; Ki & Hon, 2009).

Despite the theoretical and practical implications, there are limitations that need to be addressed. First, this experimental study was not conducted on an online interactive setting. Considering the great potential of interactivity and the dialogic functions of social media, future studies need to be conducted in the interactive communication setting (i.e., actual Twitter Brand pages).

Finally, repeated investigations should be designed with other types of interactive media tools (i.e., Facebook or Youtube) to be able to generalize the correlation between relationship indicators and behavioral intention. These series of investigations will add to our understanding of persuasive roles of online communication, which will help to discuss the potential of strategic online communication for public relations scholars and practitioners.

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Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of dependent variable

Dependent variable	Type of relationship	Interactivity	M	SD	N
Behavioral intention on communication	Communal relationship	High	11.67	3.79	33
		Medium	11.74	3.77	27
		Low	11.75	3.79	32
	Exchange relationship	High	10.97	3.36	30
		Medium	10.07	3.10	29
		Low	9.93	3.64	30

Table 2. Two-way ANOVA for the behavioral intention on communication

Variables	ANOVA Behavioral intention on communication toward the corporation F
Relationship	7.862*
Interactivity	.345

*$p < .05$

Crisis and Stock Performance in Japan: For Public Relations and Crisis Communication

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Abstract
    This study discusses the relationship between crisis management and stock performance from the viewpoint of public relations studies. I researched the relationship between corporate scandals and stock performance between 1992 and 2007 in Japan. When companies experience crisis, investors and consumers pay attention to how to these crises are managed and how these businesses communicate with the public. In this context, I will discuss crisis communication, including a case study in Japan.

Introduction

In the 1990s, after Japan's bubble economy collapsed, Japan experienced many corporate scandals (corporate misdoings). Corporate scandal is an important social issue, and a problem that should be prevented. Japan has developed preventative measure such as corporate governance and Corporate Social Responsibility regulations; however, corporate scandal has not been eliminated, nor will it be as long as companies are managed by human beings. Whether or not a company can survive a scandal is based in large part on how that company manages its corporate crisis.

Last year, the Toyota Motor Corporation, a notable global Japanese company, was subjected to harsh criticism because of brake problems with the Prius. Toyota's reputation suffered, and Toyota experienced a substantial drop in sales. This is typical of any company that experiences a crisis publicly. By researching investor opinions, we can obtain direction for public relations and crisis communication studies.

In this study, the relationship between market valuation (stock performance) during the scandal and the stock market is empirically analyzed using event study methodology for 70 corporate scandals (misdoings) that took place between 1992 and 2007 in Japan.

Review

Event study methodology is used as a tool to analyze various research fields, including micro-information such as corporate mergers and acquisitions, financial statements, and macro information such as trade deficits and regulatory changes.

Event study methodology can be used in to evaluate both positive and negative influences (Mitchell and Netter, 1994). Good news is news that has a positive influence on the market, while bad news is that which has a negative effect. Corporate scandals are typically bad news, as they almost always result in damage to the company's reputation and economics.

A number of studies have analyzed scandals and stock prices. Davidson et al. (1994) measured the extent of negative effects caused by corporate scandal. Karpoff and Lott (1993) estimated the abnormal return of scandalized companies using 132 American companies and measured the decrease of stock prices during the corporate scandal. The majority of the abnormal returns were explained by loss of the confidence in the affected businesses, a major factor in the decrease of their stock prices.

Prince and Rubin (2002) researched the reaction of stock prices to corporate scandals concerning product liability suits in the United States. These corporate scandals were found to have had a negative influence on stock prices in the automotive and new medical industries due to loss of confidence in these companies. However, Garber and Adams (1998) measured the stock prices of scandalized companies relating to product liability and found that scandal did not have a significant influence on stock prices. Jallrell and Peltzman (1985) and Barber and Darrough (1996) reported that recall information in product liability had a negative influence on stock prices, while Hoffer, Pruitt, and Reilly (1988) found no such influence.

In Japan, there have been a number of studies of corporate scandals and stock prices. Kawaji (2005) researched the problem of identity theft.[17] Shirosu and Yoshida (2007) addressed money scandals and administrative penalties concerning listed insurance companies. Osano and Hori (2006) conducted a now-famous experimental study on corporate scandals and stock prices performance in which they determined that different types of corporate scandal had different influences on abnormal returns. The types considered included violations of compliance and law, product liability, patents, the destruction of the production base, and pollution of the environment. Only scandals that violated compliance and law had a negative influence that began several days before the press report and continued well after. In the case of corporate scandal involving environmental pollution, the company's stock was increasingly purchased after the scandal became known, as investors saw the opportunity for profit.

Thus, while a large number of studies concerning corporate scandals and stock performance exist, none has been conducted from the viewpoint of public relations. In the public relations of crisis management, social responsibility and ethics are vital (Cutlip et al., 2006, p. 119).

In this study, I researched the relationship between corporate scandals and stock performance from the perspective of public relations, with particular attention given to social responsibility and ethics.

Method

Classification of Corporate Scandals

I researched the relationship between corporate scandals and stock performance from 1992 to 2007 in Japan. Scandals were classified into four groups (see Figure 1); broadly, these scandals were classified on an axis according to whether they were caused by incomplete measures (for example, a recall) or by dishonest or fraudulent activity, and on a second axis according to whether they were they concerned products and services or took place at the corporate or organizational level.

The corporate scandals of Group 1 involve dishonest or fraudulent behavior and cause immediate damage to consumers. Such a scandal may involve misrepresentation of the quality of a product. These scandals cause damage to consumers because of unethical corporate behavior.

Scandals in Group 2 also involve unethical behavior, but these affect consumers indirectly. Examples include the *sōkaiya* corporate racketeering scandals and falsified securities reports. These scandals are clearly illegal and unethical.

Scandals in Group 3 have negative influences on consumers because of defects in products and services; these are inadvertent rather than unethical. Examples include patent litigation, recalls of defective products, and leaks of corporate information. These scandals can be prevented through corporate diligence and precautionary measures.

Scandals in Group 4 are also inadvertent; these take place at the corporate level, and may involve factory construction or the environment. These do not have a direct influence on consumers.

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[17] The co-opting of another person's personal information (e.g., name, Social Security number, credit card number, passport number) without that person's knowledge and the fraudulent use of such knowledge.

Event Study Methodology

In this study, I researched the relationship between corporate scandals and stock performance using event study methodology; my research was based on media reports of corporate scandals. The date when an article on the scandal was first published was set as that scandal's event day. In cases when reports on the Tokyo Stock Exchange were not published because of holidays, the event day was adjusted accordingly. Newspaper articles about corporate scandals were collected using *Asahi Shimbun*'s *Kikuzo* database. When the exact date could not be determined, *Yomidas*, *Yomiuri Shimbun*'s database, was used.

This study used newspaper articles published from 1992 to 2007. Keywords used included product liability, defect, camouflage, recall, liability for damages, misrepresentation, cover-up of defective vehicles, collusion, bribe, false deal, patent violation, patent litigation, factory fire, ship accident, environmental pollution, and contaminant. A total of 97 corporate scandals were identified between 1992 and 2007. Of these, this study used 70 because of limitations in acquiring stock price data from the study period. According to this study's method of classification, 11 scandals fit in Group 1, 29 in Group 2, 16 in Group 3, and 14 in Group 4.

For this study, daily closing stock prices were obtained from Yahoo! Finance. The Nikkei stock average was used for market portfolio data on acquisition possibilities. The daily closing prices on the Nikkei stock market of the 70 companies under study were gathered through the Yahoo! Finance database.

There is no particular methodology for event study; this study uses the method set forth by Campbell, Lo, and MacKinlay (1997). In an event study, normal stock prices are estimated on the basis of the assumption that the event under consideration had not occurred. I used the market model to estimate normal stock prices. The market model is as follows.

$$R_{it} = \alpha_i + \beta_i R_{mt} + \varepsilon_{it} \qquad (1)$$
$$E(\varepsilon_{it}) = 0, \ Var(\varepsilon_{it}) = \sigma_{\varepsilon i}^2$$

R_{it} : price-earnings ratio; i brand, t business day

R_{mt} : earning rate of market portfolio

α_i : intercept

β_i : parameter: i brand

ε_{it} : error term

Next, abnormal returns (AR) for the event period were estimated. An abnormal return is the difference between the expected return and the actual return. An abnormal return is influenced by unusual events within a company. AR is as follows.

$$AR_{it} = R_{it} - (\hat{\alpha}_i + \hat{\beta}_i R_{mt})$$

AR_{it} : abnormal return; i brand, t business day

$\hat{\alpha}_i$: OLS of intercept α_i

$\hat{\beta}_i$: OLS of parameter β_i

Following this, the average abnormal return (AAR) was calculated.

$$AAR_t = \sum_{i=1}^{N} \frac{AR_{it}}{N}$$

N ： samples

AAR at the period from event *T1* to event *T2* was totaled, and the average cumulative abnormal return (ACAR) was calculated.

$$ACAR_{T_1,T_2} = \sum_{i=T_1}^{T_2} AAR_t$$

Results of the Event Study

Figure 2 shows the ACAR of each of the four groups. The return measured by ACAR can be considered the proxy variable of the corporate value. The *t* in Figure 2 represents the event day, the day that news of the scandal was published in a newspaper.

The scandals in Group 1 had the largest negative influence on stock prices. The ACAR for the group had a value of -27.7% five days after event day. While the value began to improve after this, it will take a long time to recover.

Group 2 showed a continuing decrease in stock value after event day; neither these companies nor their stocks will ever recover. Companies involved in scandals of this type are no longer trusted, and investors want nothing to do with them.

Group 3 showed a positive response on event day, and the immediate negative influence of the scandal was small. While value decreased over the first six business days, it began to increase after 16 business days. The negative values ranged from -0.1 to -1.1%, and the negative influence was small. By this point, investors thought that the scandal had already been taken into consideration. Throughout the process, consumers evaluate the events of the scandal, the apology, the explained causes, and the stated measures for preventing its recurrence.

Group 4 did not experience a substantial negative influence. However, a great deal of time and resources are necessary to rebuild production facilities destroyed by fire or accident and to clean up environmental pollution.

The possibility exists, however slight, that a member of Group 3 could avoid a negative response from consumers by taking appropriate action. While product and service errors are not excused, failure due to faulty practices is within consumer tolerances. Scandals involving lies and deceit, as in Group 1, provide more severe problems.

Case Study

This study will now consider the case of Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., Ltd. (now Panasonic Corporation) and its crisis with National FF-type kerosene heaters. The manner in which management response influenced stock prices is verified by event study methodology. This case involved two fatal accidents.

Figure 3 shows a graph of the cumulative abnormal return (CAR) estimated following the first fatal accident. A negative influence was not measured, and the CAR value had a positive tendency. Flat-screen televisions made by Matsushita, which had been selling well, experienced a slight decrease in sales. It is likely that investors considered the accident to be a scandal of the insufficient measures type. The product presumed to have caused the accident was manufactured between 1985 and 1992, and it is difficult to determine whether the accident was due to degradation of the product, a design flaw, or a mounting error.

In the case of the second fatal accident of the second person, the behavior turned to be forestalled, and the CAR showed a negative tendency (See Figure 3). This accident led to a recall. It became public that the number of heaters recalled made up 36% of Matsushita's total sales, and consumers began to lose confidence in the company. Moreover, because the hose that was to be inspected and repaired became detached, the inpatient went out. This situation was not reported to the Matsushita headquarters. This defect was clarified in succession. This had a negative influence on Matsushita's stock price. Consumers viewed this behavior as dishonest or unethical.

After the second fatal accident, a task force under direct control of the company president was set up. Public crisis communication, including new television commercials (TV-CM), took place. To apologize to consumers and notify them not to use the product, various forms of crisis communication were conducted (See Table 1). Figure 3 shows the CAR at the time of the press conference announcing new advertising. The CAR, which had decreased, began to show a positive tendency. By various means, Matsushita communicated to consumers that the company considered them the most important; this contributed substantially to the restoration of Matsushita's reputation.

This case study illustrates how consumer decisions can be affected by a company's crisis management behavior.

Discussion

This study makes the following recommendation for post-crisis public relations activity. Following publication of a scandal caused by incomplete measures, corporate behavior is extremely important, as it largely affects consumer behavior. Different responses can expand or limit damage.

When company management behaves dishonestly or unethically, there will be a severe negative impact on the company. Following publication of the crisis, the behavior and statements made by the company's top management are crucial, and whether these company leaders have behaved unethically makes a substantial difference.

In these cases, a company's top management must communicate with the media in new ways. From a public relations perspective, communication should be done with present journalists but also with victims and consumers who are viewers and readers.

Position within a company is sometimes a factor in unethical behavior. Final approval on unethical behavior can be made by only a company's top management, whose role is to dictate organizational behavior. Company leaders must use common sense to recognize and enforce ethical behavior within the company; if these leaders cannot judge what leads to unethical behavior, crisis management will not succeed.

Recall did not decrease Matsushita's market value. Recall itself is not bad; however, unethical behavior in handling the recall was a discredit to the company.

Unscrupulous behavior and fraudulent statements by company leaders in crisis communication further damages consumers' opinion of the company. In the case of the Toyota Prius recall, Toyota management's statement that "this (problem) is the customers' feeling" angered the Japanese public. Consumers were not inclined to believe that Toyota had its customers' best interests in mind.

In a crisis caused by incomplete measures, such as a recall, Japanese companies tend to fare poorly because they insist upon the quality of their products. In such cases, company leaders must understand that damage can be caused not only by defects but also by poorly handled public relations and crisis communication.

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Figure 1. Classification of corporate scandals

Product & Service

Group3. ·Recall ·Information leakage etc.	Group1. ·Deceptiveness ·False quality etc.
Group4. ·Destruction of factory ·Environmental pollution etc.	Group2. ·Bid-rigging ·Give profit to corporate racketeer etc.

incomplete
measures

deviated
from the
norm
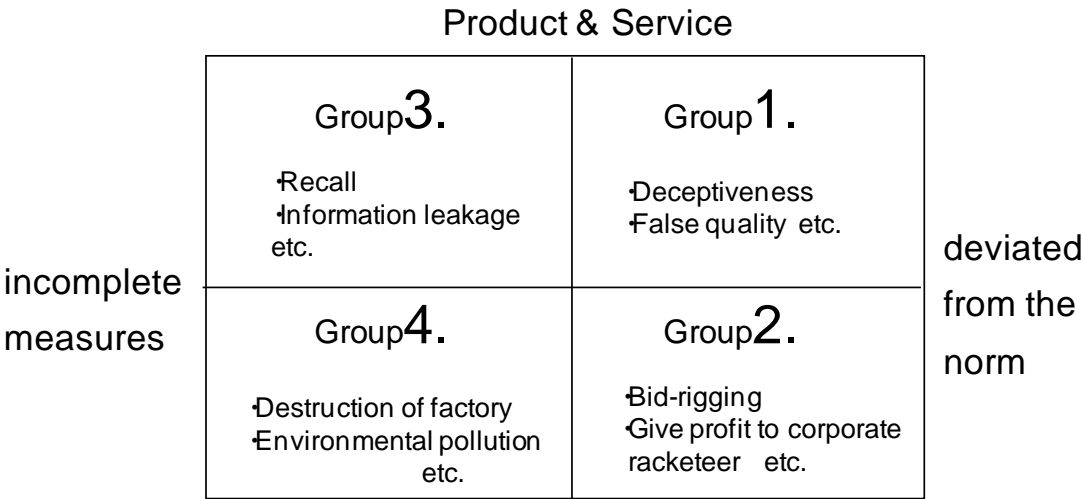
Corporate & Organization

Figure 2. ACAR of the four groups (*t*-20－*t*+20)
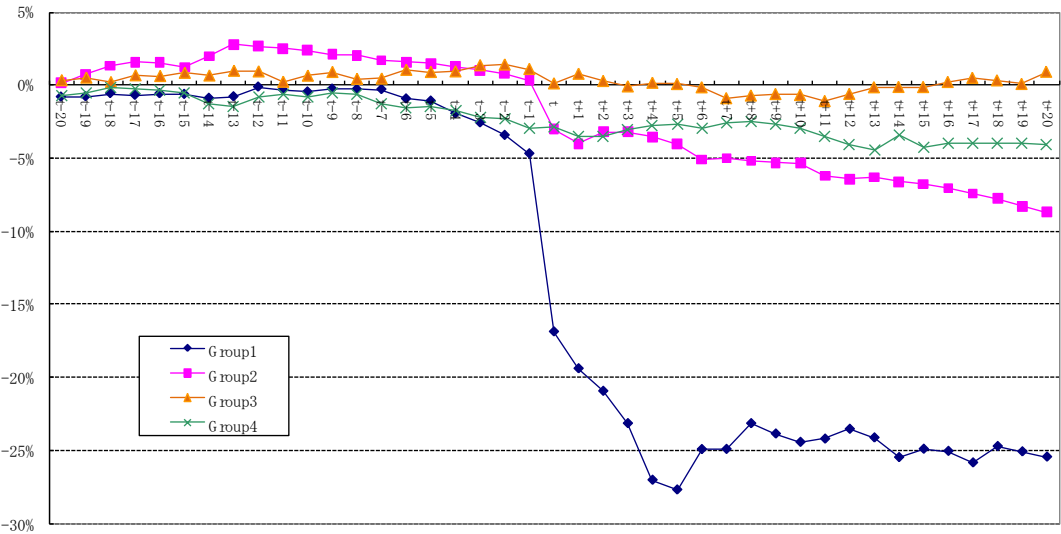
Figure 3. CAR of the Matsushita crisis (t-20－t+20)
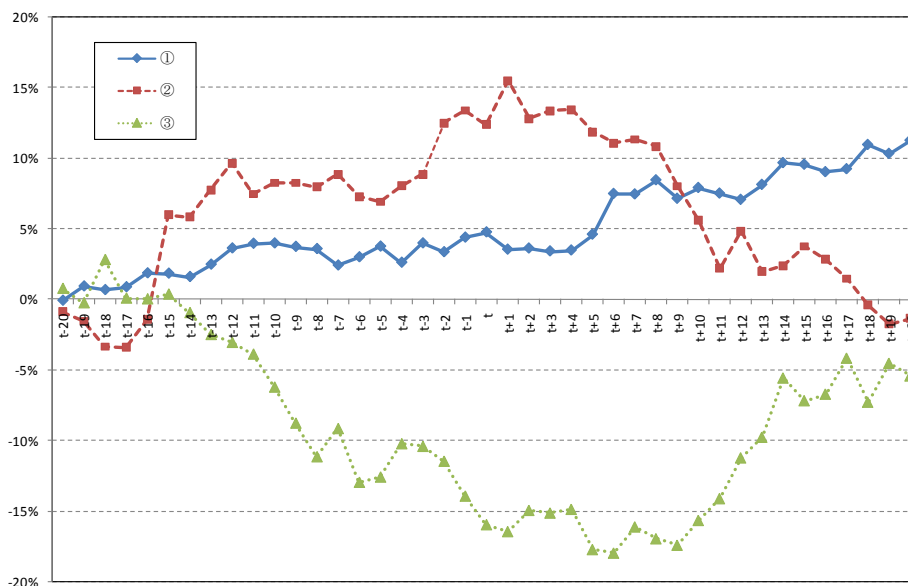
Table 1. Main Crisis Communication of Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., Ltd.

	Details
TV- C M	Matsushita replaced its normal TV-CM with a TV-CM announcing a recall and another for its "Informed and Asked" program. This announcement was made 28,000 times by April 30.
Employees	Matsushita employees visited personal residences individually to identify National FF-type kerosene heaters. 200,000 employees participated.
Mail Service	From January 28 to the middle of February, a notification postcard concerning "Informed and Asked" was mailed to Japanese households nationwide.
Newspaper Advertisement	The advertisement containing an apology, information on the recall promotion, and the second damage expanded prevention ran in newspapers.
Other	・An announcement handbill was bundled to the products. ・The handbill was posted on the bulletin board of the self-governing body. ・The handbill was distributed to employees, electric power inspection personnel, and showrooms. ・Advertising was done in regional town magazines and on the corporate homepage.

Public Relations Characters Have Split Personalities:
A Thematic Analysis of Film-Based Public Relations Characters

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Abstract

In this study, participants responded to open-ended questions about public relations characters in movies that aired between 1995-2010. Responses included physical and behavioral traits, job titles, and work duties performed. Study results were derived from the open-ended portion of a content analysis study. Findings revealed back-handed compliments about physical traits; primary polished social attributes; attributes that ranged on a continuum; dichotomous descriptions, and a continuing focus on tactical tasks. The theoretical framework, applied a posteriori, was relational dialectics (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) and the construct of "morally ambiguous characters".

Introduction

The media have a history of framing public relations in a negative way, whether in news stories (e.g., Keenan, 1996; Kinsky & Callison, 2009) or in movies (Lee, 2009; Miller, 1999; Yoon & Black, 2007). Such images are not without consequences, however. According to DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989), "People can use the mass media as sources, either deliberately or without conscious awareness, from which to acquire guides to appropriate behavior that will help them adapt to the complex world in which they live" (p. 226). The pervasiveness of such images extends beyond the initial viewing. Such on-screen image and language "influence our perceptions of women and men in the real world" (Lauzen & Dozier, 1999, p. 16).

With the profession of public relations so visible in American society—typically the agent, publicist, handler and planter most associated with celebrities (Tilson, 2003)—it is no surprise that the depiction of public relations professionals on screen has been the source of several research studies. Scholars have explored public relations in television (e.g., Yoon and Black, 2007; Priest 2004; Lauren and Dozier, 1999; Tavcar, 1993), public relations in film (e.g., Lee, 2001, 2009), public relations in both television and film (McFarlane, 2002), and public relations in film and other media (e.g., Miller, 1999). Scholars have also taken a subset of the phenomenon, studying how "public relations" and related terms are depicted in television news broadcasts (e.g., Kinsky and Callison, 2009; Keenan, 1996). Research has determined that print and broadcast media depictions of public relations professionals are often negative (Miller, 1999).

Social expectations for public relations practitioners are determined by the media first and foremost, next by organizations where practitioners work or the companies and clients they represent, and finally by the public(s) being served. "Now that we have some indications that both news media and entertainment media representations of public relations are not positive, a linkage between audience exposure to these media portrayals and their perceptions of the profession should be established" (Yoon & Black, 2007, p. 35). A character-level analysis of public relations practitioners in film could provide a more comprehensive perspective about public relations depictions.

The current study, the qualitative portion of content analysis research, offers a stream of research that focuses primarily on character depictions rather than industry implications. The purpose of the present study is to extend current scholarship by analyzing physical, behavioral and professional attributes of public relations characters from the perspective of graduate public relations students. This study is expected to inform scholarship in relational dialectics (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) and renewed research in the concept of morally ambiguous characters (e.g., Braun, 2000; Krakowiak, in press).

Theoretical Framework

According to Baxter and Montgomery (1996), people experience life as an ongoing set of contradictions. Though inevitable, the scholars state that such contradictions can be constructive. Rather than choosing either/or as Grunig and Hunt's (1984) symmetrical and asymmetrical models of public relations do, relational dialectics theory enables conflicting forces to coexist. As an interpersonal theory, relational dialectics can exist within a relationship (internal) and

between a couple and their community (external). The theory provides a lens through which public relations practitioners can consider the relationships they have with their clients (internally) and the public (externally). Depictions of public relations characters encompass multiple interpersonal contexts, thus providing a connection to the study focus.

Equally informative for the present study is renewed research interest in the construct of the morally ambiguous character. Public relations scholars have identified the unethical-yet-affective juxtaposition within character depictions (see, e.g., Ames, 2009; Less; 2009; Miller, 1999; Priest, 2004). Such depictions are clearly not limited to films. Braun (2000) noted the intriguing progression of a morally ambiguous character in television series. "'Good' characters may develop in frighteningly sinister ways; villainous ones may surprisingly reveal complex and selfless motivations" (p. 89). Despite how compelling such characters are for television and film viewers, little research has examined them (Krakowiak, in press). The parameters of the present study limit the application of morally ambiguous characters, but the construct does provide compelling clues about how public relations practitioners develop on screen.

Literature review

Research about how public relations is depicted on screen has indicated that the image of public relations has changed over time, though not always for the better. Ames (2009) discovered that the presentation of public relations was becoming more positive and less mysterious over time. Her research revealed job duties were depicted in more detail; they were more realistic, challenging and respected. Notably, the researcher found that the most recent movie in the study portrayed the public relations professional beyond the press agent model of public relations and aligned with the two-way symmetrical model (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). According to Ames (2009), her findings contrasted samples in previous studies, where practitioners were by definition liars, cheats, scoundrels, or failures at some other job.

Priest (2004) found her research contradicted previous public opinion and content analysis research. In her study, public relations and its practitioners were portrayed positively or favorably. Lee (2001) noted that public relations professionals were, on balance, depicted neutrally on screen in his research in contrast to previous research. Characters in the 20 films he reviewed were depicted as comic figures, tragic figures, and various stages of life. Additionally, the characters depicted a mixture of good and bad traits and appeared in comedies and dramas.

Keenan (1996) studied media coverage of public relations topics by reviewing network television news stories about public relations. He discovered an increase in coverage from 1980 through 1995. Specifically, the 79 stories dealing with public relations during the 16 years studied represented an average of just under five stories per year. During the eighties, the average number of stories per year was 1.6. In the nineties, the number of stories has increased to 10.5 per year through 1995. By contrast, Tavcar (1993) found that public relations professionals were often cast in the older model of press agents and publicists rather than the modern-day model of symmetrical public relations (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). By the time Lee (2001) conducted his research, images had changed substantially. Half of the movies in the researcher's sample were produced in the 1990s even though the research included 50 years of movies. This suggests that public relations characters' roles have grown during the years.

Public relations professionals are often depicted doing their jobs effectively—but not necessarily ethically. Ames (2009) found that almost all of the public relations professionals in

her sample were proficient at public relations despite a penchant for unethical behavior. This trend was particularly visible in the early films in her sample. Also in 2009, Lee discovered that characters sometimes were loyal to their organizations rather than being truthful, a clear indication that effectiveness and ethical behavior are in conflict. According to Lee, this depiction reinforces suspicions that viewers likely have about public relations as a profession. Likewise, Priest (2004) discovered three frames in an analysis of The West Wing: "image building" (making the public relations practitioner's organization and employer look better than the other guy), "puppet master" (using any means possible to control a particular situation, circumstance or event) and "patriotism" (when the public relations practitioner characters acted on behalf of a love for the United States). Although the research described the characters as trustworthy, honest, and responsible, the framing analysis revealed that such traits were limited by the characters' moral compass in a given situation and loyalty to their employer first. Miller (1999) noted antisocial behaviors among the public relations characters depicted in her research. Behaviors included lying, alcohol abuse, and promiscuity; traits included greed, cynicism and manipulation. Interestingly, Miller identified the fact that the characters were skilled nonetheless—despite their ethical shortcomings.

Government and politics are frequently the focus of on-screen depictions of public relations. In a study of positive, negative, neutral and proper operational definitions of public relations in broadcast news, Kinsky and Callison (2009) learned that politics/government were the most popular story topic followed by war/military. Lee (2001) dedicated an entire study and follow-up (2009) to how government public relations professionals are depicted in film. Stating that government and public relations have been depicted negatively onscreen, he studied the intersection of the professions. Priest's (2004) research fell into this category due to its story focus: The White House. The researcher analyzed the portrayal of public relations and its practitioners on The West Wing to ascertain how public relations was framed, what frames dominated, what models of public relations were presented, and how public relations practitioners were portrayed.

Government public relations positions are typically strategic-oriented and feature men. In 2001 and 2009, Lee identified this trend as he explored and followed up on an analysis of onscreen depictions of government public relations professionals. In 2009, the researcher noted several movies about the space program and its impression on popular culture. In 2001, Lee identified that the characters were mostly male and the agency's missions involved uniformed professions such as the military. The fact that such movies also feature majority-male casts reveals an additional dimension of sexism. Successful television public relations practitioners were mostly male and they often were depicted wielding power through government in Yoon and Black's (2007) study. The authors also noted men mainly worked in government. Keenan (1996) studied media coverage of public relations topics by reviewing network television news stories about public relations. Stories about politicians and foreign governments were the most likely to use the terms.

Conversely, on-screen depictions of entertainment public relations is most often depicted requiring little work and featuring women. Although Kinsky and Callison (2009) found that entertainment stories in network news broadcasts that mentioned the term "public relations" used the term positively, that appears to be the only bright spot researchers have uncovered in depictions of entertainment public relations. According to Yoon and Black (2007) entertainment

public relations was often depicted as magic, inordinately easy, and usually performed by women. Even worse, the term "PR" was mentioned when characters were engaged in simplistic, meaningless duties but never when they were engaged in ethical work.

McFarlane (2002) identified a more disheartening tone to the depictions of women onscreen. Her study revealed women were disproportionately portrayed as physically attractive, involved in social activities, stylishly dressed and engaging in sexual acts. The only upside to such depictions is that the females are typically the main character and likeable. Likewise, Lauzen and Dozier (1999) conducted research about how women are depicted on television in prime time; specifically, the relationship between women working behind the scenes and on-screen portrayals of female characters. The researchers had several interesting findings. They learned that women remained underrepresented in front and behind screens; shows appear to minimize or omit the female voice and women usually have fewer opportunities to speak. The study only partially addressed the key issue of women's depictions on screen.

Research about public relations on screen has also suggested that public relations activities are limited in scope. Despite finding public relations being varied and complex, Ames (2009) also discovered that onscreen, the profession is limited to media relations, event planning and production, and image consulting. Worse, Yoon & Black (2007) noted several public relations characters doing trivial things, albeit successfully. The researchers also found a focus in duties on publicity and special events. Similarly, McFarlane (2002) identified the focus of public relations characters as creating hype and generating publicity. Tasks included media releases, launches, media relations and addressing press conferences. While the characters were depicted as reliable and reporting to upper management, they showed no sign of career advancement and were not respected by colleagues. Characters never moved past the press agentry stage (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Lee's (2001) study indicated that most of the characters had minor roles, they appeared in few scenes, and many were engaged in media relations as their primary activity.

Several themes have emerged from the study of public relations depictions onscreen: The image of public relations has changed over time, though not always for the better; public relations professionals are often depicted doing their jobs effectively—but not necessarily ethically; government and politics are frequently the focus of on-screen depictions of public relations; government public relations positions are typically strategic-oriented and feature men; entertainment public relations was most often depicted requiring little work and featuring women, and public relations activities are limited in scope.

Deeper levels of character analysis to assess a more nuanced perspective of on-screen character development. Thus, the research questions for the current study were as follows:
R1: What physical traits do public relations characters have?
R2: How are public relations practitioners portrayed?
R3: What kinds of public relations activities are depicted?

Method

Participants in this study were graduate students enrolled in communication courses at two universities: one a public institution in the Southeastern United States, the other a private institution in the Eastern United States. Participants viewed a total of 36 movies and completed a code sheet for the content analysis portion of the study.

The current study is based on the open-ended portion of a content analysis study, in which participants responded to a series of questions to assess character physical attributes, social and psychological attributes, job role and work-related activities. Examples of attributes were included as a guide for participants and are identified below in parentheses:

1) Describe the character's physical attributes. (Attractive, hair color, nerdy, fat, skinny); 2) Describe the character's social and psychological attributes. (Ditzy, cynical, nerdy, manipulative, misfit, accomplished, anti-social); 3) Describe the role of the public relations character (spokesperson, publicist, media relations, crisis communicator, writer, press secretary); 4) What work-related activities does the public relations character engage in? 5) What training does the public relations person appear to have? The question, "What training does the public relations person appear to have" was discarded because the participants had no basis for which to judge the experience and/or education the character had for the job.

Although there is no single comprehensive database of movies with public relations characters, scholars have uncovered a number of valuable sources for identifying on-screen depictions of public relations characters: Netflix, the Internet Movie Database, and the American Film Institute Book. Other researchers have compiled convenience samples initiated by friends and colleagues and related databases of media professionals. This researcher selected movies aired in U.S. movie theaters between 1995 and 2010 and featured characters who worked in public relations roles. These years were chosen to provide a manageable and meaningful population of study. The researcher reviewed the plot summaries available on the Internet Movie Database and Rotten Tomatoes movie review websites to ensure the films were suitable for study parameters. Both sources contain extensive plot summaries and character descriptions.

Because the researcher is the instrument in qualitative research (McCracken, 1988), the researcher analyzed responses looking for repeated patterns via thematic analysis. Thematic analysis can involve identifying themes through pattern recognition within the data where emerging themes become the categories for analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) or identifying categories and applying them to the data and refining the categories into broader themes (Simons, Lathlean, & Squire, 2008). The open-ended format enabled participants to use their own language to describe public relations characters. Participants integrated a myriad of terms; thereby constructing a level of value and depth they afforded the given categories.

Findings

Participants identified multiple conceptual frameworks during study completion. The meanings participants ascribed to the characters extended beyond the example attributes. In order to ensure participant perspectives were the focus, themes were labeled using participants' own words. Participant's words, in turn, gave the researcher insight into their worlds. "Insiders' accounts of reality…inform your descriptions and interpretation" (Daymon & Holloway, 2002, p. 137). The researcher reread the responses and identified and labeled repeated ideas, words, and phrases. These labeled categories were themes. During the analysis, the researcher wrote down key insights or ideas. This analysis of open-ended questions and statements led to the following five thematic categories: 1) back-handed compliments: "pleasantly plump"; 2) primarily polished: "extremely concerned with personal grooming; 3) continuum characters: "sees the good in everybody when there is none"; 4) dichotomous descriptors: cynical,

manipulative…high-class professional", and 5) tacticians & technicians: "how to interface with the public".

Back-handed compliments: "Pleasantly plump"

The overarching theme in attributes was mixed messages. As the title of this theme indicates, although the character was overweight, it was pleasantly so. Much of the descriptive phrasing pointed to what appeared to be tolerable physical flaws among the public relations characters. This theme was illustrated by coupling terms that could ordinarily depict opposing thought patterns. Participants appeared to defend their opinions, interjecting conjunctions such as "and" or "but". Examples of how these characters were described are identified below:

> Older and balding, but fashionable and presentable—(Lee Phillips, America's Sweethearts)
> Pleasantly plump—(Bridget Jones, Bridget Jones' Diary)
> Graying hair, average build, showing his age—(Mitch Preston, Showtime)

It is notable that these descriptions were not limited to physical traits. Participants identified behavior patterns as well that illustrated such mixed messaging. One public relations character, Constance Spano, (Independence Day) demonstrated this theme through her messaging to the press as the American public was facing an alien invasion. Her character created a strategy to keep both her colleagues and the press out of the loop. She stated flatly "Our official position is that we have no official position". This inclusion of a purported statement that was devoid of details mirrors the surface-level descriptors some participants used to identify character traits.

> He is an amicable fella' with a bit of a delusional 'good-guy' complex, not a fault really but adorable—(Ray Embrey, Hancock)

The participant describing Ray Embrey (Hancock) accepted the limitations of the character. This public relations professional, though flawed, remained "adorable" and was not to be faulted for these shortcomings. Unfortunately, unprofessional and unethical characters were also uncovered by participants:

> Putting a positive spin on [a] play even though [he] knew it was not a good production—(Eli Wurman, People I know)
> He fakes working—one scene shows him pretending to be on an important call as his client walks in…tries to take credit for his client getting on 'Wake-up L.A.'—(Morley Orfkin, For your consideration)

Some character flaws are acceptable, but others perpetuate the stereotypically negative images of public relations practitioners. The next theme includes both positive and negative myths associated with the smooth practitioner.

Primarily polished: "Extremely concerned with personal grooming"

The vast majority of the public relations characters were described as polished and professional. In fact, character depictions could be encompassed by one participant's description of Joel Myers (Miss Congeniality 2) "extremely concerned with personal grooming". Such compliments were focused on physical dress but could have extended to behavior considering the intimation of over-emphasis on appearance. These characters were alternately described as "well-dressed", "well-groomed", "put together", and "stylish". So pervasive was the polished public relations character that it was the rare character that did not measure up. Characters that did not fit the profile were portrayed in extremes, reaching the level of caricature.

He is unkempt, clothes were outdated, wrinkled, and too big…appearance was ragged—unshaven, messy hair—(Eli Wurman, People I Know)

He is unattractive, thick black eyebrows…spraying his feet w/what I think is an odor-reducing powder; talks w/his mouth full—(Morley Orfkin, For your consideration)

As with the previous theme, portrayals of extreme character flaws included physical as well as behavioral traits. Participants lambasted characters with questionable ethics, overtly chafing at yet another depiction of unethical public relations practitioners.

She engages in behavior that exemplifies the negative stereotypes often describing the field of public relations: casts spokespeople that fit a desired image, embellishes events for audience appeal, stages situations to accentuate preferred elements—(Chase Renzi, Showtime)

Surprisingly, the public relations characters in the movie sample had multiple character traits, as described fully in the next thematic category.

Continuum characters: "Sees the good in everybody when there is none"

Public relations characters in the sample existed along a continuum from positive to negative. Such patterns of behavior provide a rarely depicted image of the public relations practitioner. Viewers may consider such representations to be an encouraging sign given the predominantly negative images that have existed on screen. However, the positive character depictions lacked depth and provided little beyond one-dimensionality.

He sees the good in everybody when there is none or little and wants to change the world—(Ray Embrey, Hancock)

The continuum of character descriptions included mildly negative accusations of general incompetence, such as the lovable loser Bridget Jones.

She is not very good at her job, not very driven, not confident—(Bridget Jones, Bridget Jones' Diary)

Sadly, negative descriptions were in no short supply, with participants blasting characters in terms well beyond the terminology provided as suggestions.

He is a free-loader, power-thirsty and greedy—(Ziggy Keane, Paperback Hero)
He is slimy, unconscionable and sleazy—(Dominic Foy, State of Play)
Utilizing competition between media and manipulating information for the celebrity of his client…giving bribes such as tickets for information and utilizing it for publicizing his client…divulging supposedly secret information on purpose in order to get that information publicized—(Stuart Shephard, Phone Booth)

One intriguing character embodied many traits along the continuum. The participants describing Constance Spano (Independence Day) provide insights about the character's social status while simultaneously addressing multiple work duties her job required.

She is the only woman in the dominant coalition of high profile men (a.k.a., general secretary of defense, etc.); babysitter for the President's daughter and bedside caretaker for the dying First Lady—(Constance Spano, Independence Day)

That such traits coexist in the same character foreshadowed the next theme that emerged in the character descriptions.

Dichotomous descriptors: "Cynical, manipulative…high-class professional"

Some characters embodied opposing attributes. It was unclear whether participant descriptions emerged as a result of contradictory character behavior on screen or film plots that situated the characters in unexpected sittings. Participants defined Bridget Jones (Bridget Jones' Diary) as "unconventional" and "eccentric"; Nick Naylor (Thank you for smoking) as "persuasive, even manipulative", and Kara Monahan (Valentine's Day) as a "misfit in love life but accomplished and on the ball otherwise". A particularly striking example was evident when participants would outline a litany of negative traits only to conclude with a positive descriptor.

> He is upbeat, social, ambitious, jovial, exuberant, extroverted, immature, friendly, selfish, phony, misguided, attention-seeking, but overall likeable—(Trey Sellars, Showtime)
>
> He is extremely cynical, manipulative, and doesn't care about how ethical his actions and decisions are. From the other hand, though he seems to be a high-class professional—(Jerry Ross, Mars Attacks!)
>
> Bridget Jones is ditzy, sometimes a misfit, clumsy and often talks without thinking it over. But on the other hand, she is funny, ironic, quick-witted and courageous—(Bridget Jones, Bridget Jones' Diary)

In some cases, participants described characters whose dichotomy extended to their work roles. Such characters appeared completed many of the duties common to public relations practitioners. The dichotomy, then, came with an unexpected aspect of their responsibilities.

> He helps plan press junket; keeps track of actors; works with photographers, press; assists veteran publicist; leaks tape to press—(Danny Wax, America's Sweethearts)
>
> He works for a firm that handles corporate clients, including sleazy ones—(Dominic Foy, State of Play)

The most comprehensive example of a dichotomous character occurred in the film Sliding Doors. In this film, the lead character (Helen Quilley) lives parallel lives which come together in the end. In one life, she is a public relations practitioner who dislikes her job to the point of calling it "bullshit", is fired from her job, and is living with a cheating boyfriend unbeknownst to her. In her parallel life, she ends the relationship when she discovers her boyfriend's indiscretions, resigns from work, and starts her own successful public relations business. Although the movie focuses on the character's love life, the two depictions of Helen Quilley portray near inverse views of a public relations practitioner.

Tacticians & technicians: "How to interface with the public"

Despite the variety that exists in the public relations industry, participant responses indicated that character's roles were limited to technician-oriented duties. Although characters held multiple positions—publicists, agents, image consultants, lobbyists, event planners and press secretaries among them—the vast majority were engaged in public relations tactics rather than high-level decision-making on behalf of their companies or clients. Public relations characters briefed reporters (Robin McCall, The American President), provided reputation counseling (Russ Duritz, The Kid), selected a spokesperson for company advertising (Gilbert Sipes, Gordy), and organized press conferences (Constance Spano, Independence Day).

> Generating goodwill & conflict resolution; doing pitches to corporate executives and client; teaching client how to 'interface with the public'; coaching client how to handshake or engage the public/speak in public—(Ray Embrey, Hancock)

Only one character performed duties outside scope of tactical duties, yet they still involved media relations.

He created a strategy of framing alien invasion for the US and world public—(Jerry Ross, Mars Attacks!)

Discussion

It is heartening to note that the present study did not align with all of the antisocial characteristics Miller (1999) found. On balance, the characters in the current study comprised a broader variety than was anticipated given the number of studies that have discovered one-dimensional and stereotypically negative portrayals. The present study did support Miller's (1999) finding that characters were unethical but effective: "That people with such characteristics are good at what they do is hardly complimentary" (p. 23). Similarly, the unethical-yet-effective public relations role has been explored by other scholars (e.g., Ames; Lee 2009; Priest, 2004). This suggests the industry continues to struggle under the weight of years of propagandist images and, frankly, practitioners.

The present study parallels Lee's (2001) findings regarding dichotomous character traits. In two movies he analyzed, the public relations expert was depicted both positively and negatively. Several participants in the current study identified character traits that were simultaneously positive and negative. Few movie characters reach the level of complexity that would fully depict the nuances of a public relations practitioner. However, transitioning to characters that embody positive and negative traits may signal a different shift to more accurate images on screen—even if said characters turn out to be "morally ambiguous".

Study results provided limited support to Broom & Dozier's (1986) finding regarding public relations roles falling into two primary types: technicians and managers. Technician-oriented duties were most common among the work-related activities identified by participants. It is not surprising that public relations characters are one-dimensions and, thus, engaged in tactician activities versus the strategic duties Grunig and Hunt (1984) identified. The one-dimensional space that movies occupy limits the ability of filmmakers to move beyond the screen context.

The present study supports previous studies revealing negative stereotypes about public relations (e.g., Yoon and Black, 2007). A level of disdain was evident in the terminology used to describe character's negative traits. "Power-thirsty", "unconscionable," and "sleazy" were especially troubling descriptors, particularly considering that the participants—all public relations graduate students—would be expected to view the characters through a more objective lens.

Unlike Priest's (2004) study, in which practitioners were portrayed positively or favorably, the current study's positive depictions were primarily limited to physical appearance. Yoon and Black (2007) found a similar focus on physical attractiveness of public relations characters in primetime television programs. The researchers attributed such physical attractiveness to a program format that "demand[s] a steady supply of interesting story lines and "prefer[s] single and attractive characters who can conveniently engage in love plots" (p. 31).

The current study extended the frames of findings from McFarlane (2002). She found that women in public relations roles were disproportionately portrayed as "physically attractive, involved in social activities, stylishly dressed, and engaging in sexual acts". Results in the present study appeared to provide a more nuanced view, depicting attire in a positive way uncoupled from the negative adjectival references McFarlane identified.

In keeping with Yoon and Black (2007) and Lee (2001), the present study revealed a substantial portion of characters engaged in "publicity". Media relations, pitching, and media training were recurring activities, suggesting a continued lack of awareness regarding the depth and breadth involved in public relations The number of terms and their focus on publicity may also simply indicate that participants were particularly perceptive in identifying multiple terms related to public relations skill sets since they are graduate students pursuing master's degrees in the field are expected to have a depth of understanding and perspectives in relation to public relations.

Limitations

The present study provides a more comprehensive perspective regarding public relations characters portrayals in film. Still, some limitations exist. There is no comprehensive database available of movies with public relations characters. Additionally, the researcher's decision to focus on movies that aired during a 15-year timeframe limited the total number of movies analyzed and, thus, generalizability of the study's findings.

Conclusion

Film roles of public relations characters continue their subtle shift. The positive depictions that recent research has revealed were evident in the current study, but typically in physical rather than social attributes. Filmmakers appear to be providing multiple roles for public relations characters—yet those roles seem to be either extremely good or extremely bad. The most fully-developed public relations characters occupy the unenviable space of "moral ambiguity" completing their jobs effectively by using unethical approaches. One would hope that future character development leads to ever more comprehensive depictions.

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Public Relations Movie Characters

MOVIE	CHARACTER(S)	GENDER	AGE	JOB
America's Sweethearts	Danny Wax	Male	30	Assistant to film publicist
	Lee Phillips	Male	50	Film publicist/Agent
Bridget Jones' Diary	Bridget Jones	Female	35	Publicist for publisher
For Your Consideration	Corey Taft	Male	40	Publicist
	Pam Campanella	Female	35	Publicist
	Morley Orfkin	Male	55	Publicist/Agent
Gordy	Gilbert Sipes	Male	40	Public relations director
Hancock	Ray Embrey	Male	35	Publicist
Independence Day	Constance Spano	Female	30	White House press secretary
Jersey Girl	Ollie Trinke	Male	30	Publicist
	Arthur Brickman	Male	25	Publicist
Mars Attacks!	Jerry Ross	Male	35	Press secretary
Miss Congeniality 2: Armed & Fabulous	Joel Meyers	Male	35	Public relations consultant/Stylist
Paperback Hero	Ziggy Keane	Female	35	Publicist
People I Know	Eli Wurman	Male	60	Publicist/Event planner
Phone Booth	Stuart (Stu) Shephard	Male	35	Publicist/image consultant
Sex And The City	Samantha Jones	Female	50	Publicist
Showtime	Chase Renzi	Female	35	TV producer
	Trey Sellars	Male	35	Spokesperson
	Mitch Preston	Male	55	Spokesperson
Sliding Doors	Helen Quilley 1	Female	25	Public relations practitioner
	Helen Quilley 2	Female	25	Public relations practitioner
State Of Play	Dominic Foy	Male	35	Public relations executive
Thank You For Smoking	Nick Naylor	Male	35	Lobbyist
	B.R.	Male	50	Lobbyist
	Bobby Jay Bliss	Male	35	Lobbyist
	Polly Bailey	Female	30	Lobbyist
The American	Sydney Ellen	Female	35	Lobbyist

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President	Wade			
	Robin McCall	Female	30	Press secretary
The Big Tease	Candy Harper	Female	55	Publicist
The Kid	Russ Duritz	Male	40	Image consultant
	Amy [no last name]	Female	30	Assistant
Valentine's Day	Kara Monahan	Female	25	Publicist
Wag The Dog	Conrad Brean	Male	50	Consultant
	Amy Cain	Female	30	Press secretary
	John Levy	Male	35	Press agent

Top Management Pressure That Leads to Suicide: A Critical Analysis of the France Telecome Suicide Crisis from the Perspective of the Linguistic Image Restoration Model

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Abstract

The current paper makes use of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and the Image Restoration Theory (Benoit, 1995) to develop a model of crisis communication. The purpose of the model is to determine the ethics within the crisis discourse. Since literature in crisis communication foregrounds the need for corporations to engage in open communication, admit to their wrongdoing, and address the victims first (Anthonissen, 2008, Benoit, 1995, & Coombs, 2007) determining the nuances and connotations of the words within the crisis discourse that allude to notions of power, power imbalance, and hegemony is paramount in understanding the ways in which corporations should respond so as to display concern and care for the victims of the crisis. The model allows for the analysis of the unconscious use of words that denote power which will ultimately reveal the semantic agent, i.e. the agent that emerges as responsible for a crisis as a result of their unconscious choice of words.

Using the case of France Telecom (FT) the European telecommunications giant where 23 employees committed suicide after complaining about top management pressure, we applied the model that we call the Linguistic Image Restoration Model (LIRM) to analyze the discourse and the voices that emerged in the aftermath of the crisis. Our analysis revealed that FT and its primary shareholder, the French government engaged in one-way communication and delivered messages that emphasized authority and power and tried to dismiss the accusations of bearing the moral responsibility for the death of the employees. On the other hand, the union representatives and employees made less use of words that would denote power and appealed to emotion in an attempt to redefine the suicides as "a cry for help."

We consider that the model we proposed would help critical scholars in organizational communication in their analyses of crisis responses by allowing for a semantic and syntactic insight into the discourse. Additionally, the model could assist organizations in designing messages that promote two-way communication and that allow for a democratic participation of various stakeholders in the ongoing process of crisis management.

France Telecom Crisis

France Telecom (FT) is one of the world's leading telecommunications operator and its key-brand Orange is ranked 50 in the Millward Brown Optimor top of the most powerful brands worldwide. France Telecom operates in 32 countries, has 203 million customers and an annual profit of about 44.8 billion dollars. The company's values revolved around concepts like family, friendship, and closeness which were consistently found in the company's commercials, product promotions, internal communication as well as in its slogan "The future's bright. The Future's Orange."

In January 2008 the company had to face a morbid scenario as several of its employees committed suicide at the workplace. For example, between January 2008 and January 2010 thirty- four France Telecom employees either killed themselves or attempted to, after they had left behind farewell notes in which they blamed the top management for oppressive and barbaric leadership.

For example, in September 2009, Stephanie, a 32-year-old Law graduate and FT employee threw herself out of the window of her office after she had sent a farewell email to her father in which she justified her decision:

> I love you, daddy. I am sorry that you receive this sort of message, but I am more than lost…I can't accept the new reorganization in my department. I'm getting a new boss and I'd rather die…I haven't told my boss, obviously, but I am going to become the 23rd staff member to commit suicide. I'm leaving my handbag with my mobiles and keys into the office, but I'll take my donor card with me ("Why do FT employees commit suicide, 2009, para.1).

In a similar vein, a 52–year-old employee from Marseille left behind a farewell note in which he accused the company of overworking its employees and enacting management by terror: "I am committing suicide because of my work at France Telecom. That's the only reason" ("Wave of staff suicides at France phone group," 2009, para.6).

Several suicide attempts also occurred but the employees were rescued in due time. For example, a 49-year-old FT employee stabbed himself in the stomach during a meeting in which he was told of his transfer: "It happened when they told me I was good for nothing. I couldn't take it anymore" he said in an interview with the AFP. Another FT employee was saved from suicide by hanging, after his colleagues received his farewell text messages and intervened in due course of time.

While FT employees were blaming the top management for creating miserable working conditions with extended hours and no real possibility of promotion, experts attempted to identify what triggered the suicide crisis and what kind of employees were more prone to put an end to their lives. In this respect, Marie Peze, a renowned French psychoanalyst told to the Associated France Presse (AFP) that:

> The people who commit suicide are usually the strongest employees in the team, the most genuine people who are the most involved in their work and who carried out tasks to the letter in order to do the best job possible. And then they are told that their job can be done in any which way and that that's not important ("France Telecom-Employee commits suicide, 25th case, " 2009, para.3).

France Telecom's suicide crisis triggered outrage worldwide because, apart from being the responsibility of the company, the loss of the employees also pointed at the French government which owned 27-percent of the company. The government intervened in the crisis management process and aimed at finding solutions that would put an end to the suicide crisis. For example, the Labor Minister Xavier Darcos scheduled regular meetings with the France Telecom executives and the President Nicolas Sarkozy's chief of staff urged FT to examine the situation rigorously (France government steps in over France Telecom, 2009, para.3).

The Image Restoration Theory

Benoit's (1995) Image Restoration Theory assumes that, when accused of wrongdoing, organizations would communicate in an attempt to save their reputation. The two major assumptions that underlie Benoit's theory (1995) are: 1) the goal-oriented process of organizational communication and 2) the attempt of organizations to avert the deterioration of their image when they are held accountable for an undesired act.

The Image Restoration Theory (Benoit, 1995) provides the possibility to critically analyze the responses of organizations to a crisis and offers guidance for companies to engage in ethical crisis communication discourse with the ultimate goal of saving reputation. The five major types of crisis responses that comprise Benoit's model of crisis communication are: denial, evading responsibility, reducing the offensiveness of the event, corrective action, and mortification.

Denial: Simple denial
    Shifting the blame
Evading of Responsibility
    Provocation
    Defeasibility
    Accident
    Good intentions
Reducing offensiveness of the event
    Bolstering
    Minimization
    Differentiation
    Transcendence
    Attack accuser
    Compensation
Corrective Action
    Mortification

Depending on the circumstances in which crises occur and the degree of accountability, organizations make use of one or several of the aforementioned communication strategies.

Denial

One type of crisis response that organizations provide when they attempt to restore their image involves showing that they bear no responsibility in a crisis. The strategy presupposes

either the denial of accountability (*simple denial*) or the transfer of the responsibility to other organizations, individuals, or external factors that triggered the crisis (*shifting the blame*).

Evading of responsibility

Evading of responsibility represents a communication strategy by which organizations attempt to show that the crisis was triggered or provoked by other factors. Its use implies that organizations only responded to a specific provocation which, in turn, led to the crisis (*provocation*). Companies may also provide justifications and admit to the lack of information or skills that could have averted the crisis (*defeasibility*). Additionally, organizations respond by emphasizing their initial intentions to do well (*good intentions*) or by framing the crisis as an unavoidable *accident*.

Reducing offensiveness of the event

According to the Theory of Image Restoration Discourse (Benoit, 1995) organizations that bear responsibility for their wrongdoing focus their efforts on reminding their stakeholders of their performance history (*bolstering*) and/or on minimizing the negative effects or the magnitude of the crisis (*minimization*). At times, organizations aim at distancing themselves from the negative event and frame it as disruptive and uncharacteristic of the organizational culture and performance (*differentiation*).

In addition, organizations could also make use of *transcendence,* a rhetorical strategy whose ultimate aim is deflection. *Transcendence* places the crisis in a larger context and allows organizations to point at more important issues that the crisis triggers than those for which the organizations are held responsible.

Finally*,* organizational communication in times of crisis can comprise statements whose goal is to wane the credibility of the accuser (*attacking the accuser*) or can overemphasize the *compensation* of the victims so as to decrease the perception of the accountability of the organization.

Corrective action

A discourse that is characterized by *corrective action* will revolve around the measures that a company has taken or is planning to take in order to avoid similar situations in the future. Stakeholders are more prone toward "forgiving" the organization as long as the latter assures them that it is responsible enough to learn from the crisis and take the necessary measures to avoid future reoccurrences of similar wrongdoings.

Mortification

Lastly, the Image Restoration Theory (Benoit, 1995) assumes that organizations would apologize for the wrongdoing and show consideration for the stakeholders who are affected by the crisis and who have the potential to affect the organizations.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1992, 2005; Huckin, 2002; Wodak, 2004) has been so far used in fields such as sociology, education, linguistics, or politics as a methodology by which researchers determined the conscious and unconscious choice of words within the

discourse. Its purpose is to unearth "the silent and often non-deliberate ways in which rhetoric conceals as much as it reveals through its relationship with power/knowledge" (McKerrow & Raymie, 1989). In the field of communication, some of the studies that used CDA as a methodology analyzed issues management in Latin America (Peñaloza de Brooks & Waymer, 2009) as well as public relations efforts in the political arena (Roper, 2005). However, Peñaloza de Brooks and Waymer (2009) point out at the scarcity of research in the field of communication that makes use of CDA to analyze public relations strategies.

Huckin (2002) laid out some of the advantages of the use of CDA and called it "a context-sensitive form of discourse analysis" (pag.2) that represents "a powerful arsenal of analytical tools that can be deployed in the close reading of editorials, op-ed columns, advertisements, and other public texts" (pag.3). For example, CDA can "address societal issues, seeking to show how people are manipulated by powerful interests through the medium of public discourse" (pag.2). Moreover, CDA can reveal the ideologies and the power structures that emerge at the semantic and syntactic level through the use of linguistic tools such as *presuppositions, metaphors, foregrounding, or modality*.

Consequently, CDA represents a method of analysis that brings to light covert aspects of rhetoric by going in depth into the connotations of the words that may be overlooked by the use of other methodologies of analysis.

The Linguistic Image Restoration Discourse

In this study we propose a model of crisis communication analysis that we call the Linguistic Image Restoration Model (LIRM). Drawing on Benoit (1995) and CDA we consider that a paradigm that combines the Image Restoration Theory (Benoit, 1995) with the possibility of identifying the overt connotations within the discourse allows for an analysis of the way in which power and hegemony emanate from crisis communication process. The premise of the model consists in communication being goal-oriented and performed by organizations in an attempt to save reputation (Benoit, 1995).

Literature in crisis communication emphasizes the need of ethical crisis communication and transparency in times of crisis (Anthonissen, 2008; Benoit, 1995; Coombs, 2007; Hearit, 2008; Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2007). Thus, an analysis from the perspective of the LIRM can unearth hidden agendas and power imbalances in the ways in which an organization responds to crisis.

The model implies an analysis of each of the statements within the crisis communication discourse at the semantic and syntactic level within the framework of the Image Restoration Theory (Benoit, 1995) and could be represented as follows:

Denial:	*Word/phrase level*
Simple denial	*Classification* (A certain slant is given to an event.)
Shifting the blame	
Evading of Responsibility	*Connotation* (Certain terms are coded with the purpose of having a specific meaning only for an exclusive group of people.)
Provocation	
Defeasibility	
Accident	*Metaphors*
Good intentions	
	Presuppositions (The choice of certain words makes specific inferences.)
Reducing offensiveness of the event	
Bolstering	*Modality* (Modal verbs like *should, would, could, must* give away authority.)
Minimization	
Differentiation	
Transcendence	*At the sentence level*
Attack accuser	
Compensation	*Transitivity* (The fact that the text makes reference to the same agent is a sign of attribution of power and makes the agent responsible for the event mentioned in the text.)
Corrective Action	
Mortification	
	Foregrounding (The placement of the most important element at the beginning of the sentence for the purpose of emphasis)

Method

For the purpose of this analysis, we selected newspaper articles from the Associated France Presse (AFP). Using the Lexis-Nexis database we performed a search with the keywords "France Telecom" and "suicide." We selected the newspaper articles that appeared between January 2008 when the first suicide case occurred in FT and October 2010 the moment when we started the project. We decided to select the articles from the AFP based on the agenda setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1993) under the assumption that, being an elite medium, the AFP influences the rest of the coverage in France and worldwide and thus, reflects the way in which other media reported on the crisis. Based on the aforementioned criteria we selected 26

newspaper articles. We later eliminated the articles that comprised press releases and we finalized our study using 19 articles that entailed only interviews. Since press releases are written in a standard format we considered them inadequate for a study that uses the methodology of CDA. Surprisingly, the France Telecom suicide crisis did not get the extensive coverage we were expecting. Yet, our sample allowed us to apply the model and perform the analysis. Our aim was to determine: 1) the way in which France Telecom responded to the crisis as well as 2) how other stakeholders communicated about it. We considered that the analysis of the statements that came from various stakeholders involved in the crisis would allow us to determine the ethics of the company's responses by revealing not only the type of response but also the issues of power imbalances and the use of hidden agendas.

Analysis

On September 14, 2009, an AFP article quoted from the President Nicolas Saskozy's chief of staff Claude Gueant who spoke for the first time about the FT crisis:

> Suicide is a very serious, personal affair and we cannot reduce this phenomenon at France Telecom to an organizational problem at the company ("French government steps in over France Telecom, 2009, para.3).

The aforementioned statement reveals *denial* through *shifting the blame*. Further on, the response entails a clear *classification*: it defines suicide as a personal matter and not as an issue that FT should bear responsibility for. Additionally, it *presupposes* that other factors that belonged to the sphere of the personal led dozens of employees to put an end to their lives. *Modality* is also emerging as a sign of authority when the chief of staff asserted "*we cannot reduce this phenomenon*" and, consequently, implies that neither the government nor the company has the power to change things at a professional level: suicide remains a personal issue outside their realm of authority.

Further on, authority is also revealed through the use of the modality "*must*" which is present in the statement made on the behalf of the French government by the Budget Minister Eric Woerth who urged the FT management to take action and told the company that it "*must take, very, very seriously this incredible string of suicides in one company*" ("French government steps in over France Telecom, 2009, para.4). In addition to *modality*, the statement contains an important *metaphor* whose purpose is to *deny* the crisis and *shift the blame.* Thus, the lives lost in FT are a "string of suicides" a *metaphor* whose purpose is to *classify* the crisis as a chain reaction among employees which was determined by the private issues that the company cannot solve. In this example, the *metaphor* "string of suicides" plays a double role: it gives the crisis a slant that would extricate the company from blame and classifies it as a personal tragedy that came to be emulated by other employees who found it hard to grapple with their personal issues.

As a response to the government's statements, the union representatives made use of *foregrounding* (the positioning of a word at the beginning of the sentence for the sake of emphasis) and thus rendered the company prominent in the crisis:

> *This* is a company which has a single goal of making money and inevitably, the employees at France Telecom, who were used to another work relationship with customers, are asked to turn a profit ("French government steps in over France Telecom, 2009, para.5).

The union's reaction further framed the crisis through the use of a *metaphor*. Thus, the situation in FT was not a "string of suicides" but rather "a cry for help."

> These are not personal tragedies. We know that suicide stems from some personal problems but to commit this act at the workplace is *a cry for help* tied to the place where the action is taken. ("French government steps in over France Telecom, 2009, para.6).

The use of the *metaphor* "a cry for help " allows the union to give voice to the inner struggles of the employees: it manages to position the crisis in a different light through an emotional appeal. The *metaphors* continued to emerge in the union's discourse of the crisis and pointed at the fact that FT employees were described as "numbers" and treated like "sausage meat."

> It's shameful…There was a real indifference, no humanity, all they talked about was *numbers* and workers were treated like *sausage meat*. ("French government steps in over France Telecom, 2009, para.8).

Pointing out at the fact that the number of the suicides was escalating while the company seemed not to have taken the necessary measures to put an end to the crisis, the union's determination to enact power to bring about changes emerges through the *modality* used in one of their assertions: " *We thought* management would have learnt a lesson" ("French government steps in over France Telecom, 2009, para.8).

In an article dated September 29, 2009, the AFP revealed that FT was engaging into *corrective action* by changing its internal policies to reduce the employees' stress. One of the internal rules being changed was the "Time to move" policy whose aim had been to compel managers to change posts every three years. However, despite the CEO Didier Lombard's assurance that France Telecom was changing its working environment, the French Socialist party intervened and urged the company to change its top executives. The statement makes use of *presupposition* and implies that the company's assertions regarding the measures the management was taking were spurious:

> Rather than stepping up his *PR efforts*, *we believe* a responsible leader should resign. That is the only possible outcome to this case right now (France Telecom boss under fire over staff suicides, 2009, para.2).

Further on, the representatives of the Social Party emphasized the necessity of a change in management: "*We need* a symbolic gesture within the company to get labor relations back on the rails (France Telecom boss under fire over staff suicides, 2009, para.3). In the aforementioned statements *modality* appears twice ("we believe," "we must") and denotes the involvement of the party in making sure that the company is engaging in *corrective action*.

While pressure from the union and the Social Party called for the resignation of the France Telecom's CEO, the head of President Sarkozy's ruling right-wing party, Xavier Betrand rendered the gesture irrelevant to the current state of affairs and asserted that:

> *All managers have to* be trained to deal with suffering in the workplace, and to take account of suicide risks (France Telecom boss under fire over staff suicides, 2009, para.7).

Betrand made use of *transcendence* and attempted to deflect attention from the suicide crisis toward the need of more training of the management for emergency situations in general.

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His statement reveals power that emanates toward the management through the use of *foregrounding* ("all managers") and *modality* ("have to").

Similarly, the union's response whose aim was to provide reasons for the CEO's resignation makes use of *foregrounding* and reveals the emphasis that the union places on the responsibility of FT: "*The company's* image has been damaged. Internally, workers are saying 'Management, Time to Move' (France Telecom boss under fire over staff suicides, 2009, para.8). In this case the statement of the union, which is presumably a quote from the employees' view of the resignation of the top executives, entails a *connotation*. "Time to Move" makes reference to one of FT's internal policies and is meant to be understood only by a specific group, i.e. the employees.

A later intervention of the government in FT's crisis revealed *presupposition* in an attempt to deny the role played by the company in the crisis. For example, the Economy Minister Christine Lagarde expressed her support for the company's CEO and her "full and complete confidence" that he would "lead the company through this difficult and painful period." The *presupposition* aims to diffuse the crisis and makes it unclear as to whether she considered it a painful period for the employees, for the top management, or for the company as a whole.

The last article that covered the FT crisis mentioned the reactions of ADEAS, a group of shareholders. They expressed their views of the company's intentions to put an end to the suicide crisis by taking internal measures such as a cease on staff transfers. The group of shareholders that was holding a four-percent stake in the company denunciated the latter's actions and called for "capitalism with a *human face*" ("French government backs France Telecom, 2009, para.7). The statement of the group entails a *metaphor* and makes a *presupposition*, hinting at the fact that the company had enacted inhumane business practices.

Based on our analysis, the company's crisis communication efforts were focused on denial by shifting the blame and on framing the crisis as a personal issue. Additionally, in an attempt to engage in corrective action the company pointed out at the measures it decided to take such as putting a freeze on internal transfers in an effort to forestall future cases of suicide. In the units of analysis, FT responded to the crisis mainly through government officials, thus resorting to the use of a higher authority to maintain legitimacy and to possibly wane the stakeholders' perceptions of guilt. Both the FT representatives and the government officials made use of linguistic structures that inadvertently revealed their use of power, authority, and hegemony mainly through the use of *metaphors*, *presuppositions*, *foregrounding*, and *modality*.

While power and hegemony prevailed in the company's and the government's responses to the crisis, the union and employees enacted communication strategies that revealed a lesser degree of power. For example, *foregrounding* (the positioning of a word or phrase at the beginning of the sentence for the purpose of making it prominent) was fewer times found in other responses but those of FT. However, the employees' definition of the crisis proved to be more powerful than that of the company. While for France Telecom the crisis was an "incredible spiral of suicides" for the employees it was a "cry for help." The power of the *metaphor* lies in the emotion it manages to convey and its *presupposition* implies that the FT working conditions became unbearable.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to propose a paradigm that we called the Linguistic Image Restoration Model (LIRM) and that we developed expanding on the Image Restoration Theory (Benoit, 1995) to incorporate linguistic concepts at the levels of phrase and utterance. Elements from the critical discourse analysis (Huckin, 2002) such as *foregrounding*, *classification*, *metaphors, presuppositions, and modality*, if included in the analysis of the crisis management responses can shed light on power imbalances and hidden agendas as these concepts play out in the discourse of the stakeholders in particular and the dynamics of the crisis management process in general. Since ethical crisis communication implies transparency and concern for the victims, the LIRM is useful in determining unconscious and conscious choices of words and phrases that reveal the degree to which a crisis response is ethical.

Our analysis applied the LIRM to the crisis communication discourse that emerged in the aftermath of the FT suicide crisis. Thus, we analyzed the statements of the company, of the French government and those of the union and the employees. Our analysis revealed the presence of power imbalances during the dynamics of the discourse. Thus, FT made use of phrases and sentence structures through which it emerged as a semantic agent (Huckin, 2002), or a key/dominant actor in the crisis. According to the CDA, a semantic agent within the discourse will emerge as the one who has more power and authority and would be more prone to be held responsible for causing an event. This is an important aspect because the LIRM points out that, by unconsciously using certain sentence structures and phrases, corporations can inadvertently emerged as responsible for a crisis.

Analyses of crisis management responses from the perspective of linguistics and rhetoric, as combined in the model proposed shed light on the ethics enacted by the corporations by making allowances for the subtle connotations and nuances of the words and expressions that corporations use in an attempt to restore their image. Critical analyses performed by the application of the Linguistic Image Restoration Model (LIRM) can help scholars determine the degree to which an organization engages in ethical crisis communication and, at the same time, can assist organizations in building two-way communication strategies that would engage various stakeholders in a democratic process of crisis management.

The LIRM is based on critical discourse analysis and on the Image Restoration Theory (Benoit, 1995)which are research methodologies conducted from an inductive/deductive approach. More specifically, they involve a laborious engagement with the material to reduce the subjectivity of the interpretation. One limitation of the LIRM is the fact that it cannot provide replications of the studies performed. However, the model can be used together with quantitative data to determine the effectiveness of a crisis response. Additionally, it can be used in consulting in times of crisis as a tool to craft effective messages.

Note: Information on the France Telecom performance was taken from the company's official website www.orange.com and the units of analysis were taken from the Lexis-Nexis database.

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Cultural Values Reflected in Corporate Pages on Popular Social Network Sites in China and the United States: A Cross-Cultural Content Analysis

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Abstract

This study examines cultural differences in the use of communication appeals on corporate pages of leading social network sites (SNSs) in two culturally diverse countries, China and the United States. Findings from a content analysis suggest that appeals to interdependence, popularity, high social status, luxury, emotions, and symbolic association are more frequently used in societies with a more collectivistic, greater power distance, and high-context culture such as in China, whereas appeals to individuality and hedonism are more frequently used in an individualistic society like the United States. Overall, findings indicate that communication appeals on social network sites reflect the dominant cultural values in each country. Implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

In recent years, the increase in marketing activities on new media has been phenomenal (An, 2007). Among these new interactive media channels, social network sites (SNSs) are recognized as an integral part of many individuals' daily life, making SNSs an indispensable venue for companies, nonprofit organizations, and even politicians to stay connected with netizens (Utz, 2009). According to Boyd and Ellison (2008), a *social network site* is a web-based service that allows individuals to construct a public or semipublic profile, build and maintain connections, and display their social connections to other members. Integrating various web-based services and technologies, such as blogs, bulletin billboard systems (BBSs), and social games, SNSs constitute powerful multimedia platforms that provide numerous utilities, including information sharing, entertainment, and social networking.

Because of their viral power, SNSs are recognized as an important public relations tool for companies to promote products, maximize brand exposure, and create dialogues with today's Internet-savvy consumers. As noted by Darragh (2009), "a broad social media footprint is important for every brand," and communicators need to "take their message to the places where netizens are already investing their time and trust" (p. 37). Companies and brands are now striving to build and maintain SNS public pages to improve their social network salience among Internet users. However, despite the numerous hypes and speculations regarding the effectiveness of SNSs as a marketing communication tool, existing literature on SNSs focuses mainly on interpersonal communication issues such as managing impressions, formulating and structuring relationships, and bridging online and offline connections. Scholars have also explored how identity factors including ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and religion are enacted and shaped within SNSs (e.g., Gajjala, 2007; Hjorth & Kim, 2005). Other topics that have been examined include security and privacy issues (George, 2006; Jagatic et al, 2007), civic engagement (Byrne, 2007), and political usage of SNSs (Wu, 2009; for a review, see Boyd & Ellison, 2008). However, few studies have explored how corporate communicators use SNSs to interact with consumers.

Furthermore, the popularity of SNSs has become a worldwide phenomenon. Although some American sites like Facebook have acquired a loyal following overseas, various culturally adapted native sites have been embraced by local consumers in many countries, such as Renren in China, Mixi in Japan, and Orkut in India. Yet, prior studies that examined dissimilar cultural orientations reflected in marketing communication contents were primarily concerned with offline materials and ignored the increasing significance of online communications. The limited scholarship on online contexts has focused on corporate websites (An, 2007; Baek & Yu, 2009) and examined issues such as website design (Kim et al., 2009) and localization versus standardization (Shin & Huh, 2009). For instance, Okazaki (2004) scrutinized the information content, cultural values, and creative strategies adopted by multinational corporations' local websites in Japan, Spain, and the United States, and reported that dependence and competition appeals are used differently across the three countries. Although empirical evidence suggests that members of different societies have different communication predispositions and Internet behaviors (Barnett & Sung, 2005; Kim et al., 2009), the influence of cultural differences on communication appeals on the new genre of marketing communications—social network sites— has not been adequately analyzed from a cross-cultural perspective.

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The current project is intended to bridge this gap by analyzing the content of corporate pages on leading SNSs in two culturally diverse countries: China and the United States. In addition to describing the similarities and differences, this study attempts to delineate the underlying reasons for the potential differences, and is among the first to do so. SNSs from China and the United States are studied here because these two countries represent important markets with huge Internet populations but with dramatic cultural differences. This exploratory study is based on the widely adopted theoretical frameworks proposed by Hall (1989) and Hofstede (1980) in cross-cultural research. The study employs a content analysis to identify cultural orientations observed in communication appeals of the corporate pages on leading SNSs in China (Renren) and the United States (Facebook).

Facebook Versus Renren

	Built	Interface Design	Users	Customization	Unique features
Renren	In 2005	Identical	College students➔Everyone	Color, Scheme & other design elements	Footprint management, tiered award systems, Live Journal, BBS, movie center, on-line shopping mall, Renren community "daily star"
Facebook	In 2004	Identical	College students➔Everyone	No	

Launched in 2004, Facebook has rapidly established itself as one of the most popular SNSs in the United States and worldwide (Zhang, 2010). According to Facebook (2010), the site has more than 500 million active users and more than 70 translations available. Users can create personal profiles, add people as friends, exchange messages or comment on friends' walls; and can join various networks organized by workplace, school, college, or interests. Users maintain their online network by updating their personal profiles, sharing pictures and photos, and notifying friends about their updates. Recognizing its tremendous potential for communicating with consumers within their online communities, Poynter (2008) called Facebook "the future of networking with customers."

Similar to the overwhelming popularity of Facebook and Twitter in the United States, Chinese SNSs have established a prominent presence in the digital landscape of China, which is an important emerging market with the world's largest Internet population (Chen & Haley, 2010). According to the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC, 2010), 210 million people in China, or half of the country's Internet users, were registered SNS users in June 2010. More importantly, these Chinese SNS members are some of the country's most desirable consumers—relatively young, wealthy, and well educated—making SNSs an indispensable communication medium for advertisers. China's top four social networks (Renren, Kaixin, Qzone, and 51.com) serve slightly different functions and have different user bases (Social Beat, 2010). Users of Qzone and 51.com are primarily from third-tier cities and rural areas, while users of Renren and Kaixin tend to be concentrated in first- and second-tier cities. For this comparative study, Renren was selected for several reasons. Established in December 2005, Renren is among

the "most popular, most open and best-financed social network sites" in China and has more active users than Kaixin (Social Beat, 2010). Nicknamed the "Facebook of China" (The Economist, 2010), Renren is generally considered the Chinese equivalent of Facebook in terms of interface design (see Appendix for a snapshot of Renren and Facebook login pages). Also, similar to Facebook, Renren gained its initial traction among college students and then began targeting a broader audience of young Chinese professionals. In 2009, the site (formerly known as Xiaonei, or "within college" in English) was renamed Renren, which literally means "everyone" (Social Beat, 2010).

Despite the fact that Renren is modeled upon Facebook, Renren offers several unique features. Whereas all Facebook pages share a standardized look, Renren allows many more customization possibilities for both individual users and corporate communicators in terms of different color schemes and design elements. Renren also allows users to see who has recently visited their personal pages via a "footprint management" feature. In addition, Renren has a tiered award system (e.g., 1st, 2nd, and 3rd levels and VIP members) that functions to encourage daily login, constant posting, and frequent networking with other users through interactive features such as sharing or commenting. Active users can enjoy privileges such as hiding one's visits to others' pages, changing the design skins of personal pages, and obtaining special symbols and expression icons for posting and commenting, as well as free virtual gifts for themselves and friends. In general, Renren offers more functions than Facebook, including a public page displaying the hottest posts and updated statistics (e.g., most clicked video and most read post). Other features for personal pages include Live Journal (for lengthier writings), BBS, movie center, and even an online shopping mall, many of which are privileges accessible only to elite members. Members with the most daily clicks are celebrated as the Renren community's "Daily Star" on the site's public page.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Marketing communication materials are key carriers of cultural values (Cheong et al., 2010), and significant differences in cultural values can be observed in the appeals and strategies of marketing communications of different countries. On the basis of survey results involving 40 countries and three regions, Hofstede (1980) proposed four dimensions for understanding cultural differences: individualism/collectivism, high/low power distance, high/low uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity/femininity. According to Hofstede's culture index, cultural orientations of individualism/collectivism and high/low power distance are substantially different between China and the United States; thus in this study we used these dimensions as the theoretical basis for examining corporate usage of SNSs in the United States and China (see Figure 1). To be specific, Chinese culture is characterized as collectivistic and of high power distance, while American culture is characterized as individualistic and of low power distance. These cultural differences have been well documented in existing literature. For example, Albers-Miller and Gelb (1996) studied advertising appeals from 11 countries using Hofstede's cultural dimensions, and found that power distance had the most impact on advertising appeals. Other researchers reported that individualism/collectivism significantly influenced communication appeals in Western and Eastern countries (Baek & Yu, 2009; Kim et al., 2009). The masculinity and uncertainty avoidance dimensions were not examined in this study.

-------- Figure 1 here --------

Individualism and Collectivism

Cho et al. (1999) found the individualism/collectivism dimension to be one of the most important criteria in explaining Eastern and Western culture differences. Individualistic societies, such as the United States, place a high value on independence, individuality, autonomy, uniqueness, and self-realization (Hofstede, 1980). In an individualistic culture, one's behavior is mainly determined by personal goals and individual welfare. In contrast, collectivistic cultures such as China are "we" societies in which interdependence with others is valued and emphasized. Group goals and collective welfare take precedence over personal achievement. An individual's identity is predominantly defined by one's role in various interpersonal relationships. Prior studies suggest that compared to U.S. advertisements, Chinese advertisements are more likely to feature collectivistic appeals like popularity, collective benefits, and group achievement, and less likely to use individualistic appeals like uniqueness, independence, hedonism, and adventure (Cheong et al., 2010; Ji & McNeal, 2001). Thus we propose the following four hypotheses:

H1a: Compared to corporate pages on Facebook, those on Renren are less likely to use appeals to individuality, uniqueness, or independence.

H1b: Compared to corporate pages on Facebook, those on Renren are less likely to reflect self-reliance, hedonism, or self-fulfillment.

H2a: Compared to corporate pages on Facebook, those on Renren are more likely to reflect belongingness to a social group or interdependent relationships with others.

H2b: Compared to corporate pages on Facebook, those on Renren are more likely to appeal to popularity, or conformity to or harmony with a social group.

High and Low Power Distance

According to Hofstede (1980), power distance explains how different societies address inequalities and hierarchies in terms of social status, wealth, and power. In countries with high power distance, hierarchy dictates various aspects of social interactions, and authorities (including elders) are respected and privileged. In societies with low power distance, equality is treasured and authorities are often challenged (Ji & McNeal, 2001). Albers-Miller and Gelb (1996) noted that in high power distance countries, persuasive communication with consumers tends to use expensive, luxurious symbols and high-status appeals such as celebrity endorsement to accentuate power, wealth, and elitism; while in low power distance countries, down-to-earth appeals and association with common folks are preferred, as they imply humility and equality between people. Given China's long history as an authoritative country whose high power distance score is double that of the United States, it is hypothesized that

H3a: Compared to corporate pages on Facebook, those on Renren are more likely to appeal to high social status.

H3b: Compared to corporate pages on Facebook, those on Renren are more likely to appeal to vanity, glamour, or luxury.

H4a: Compared to corporate pages on Facebook, those on Renren are less likely to appeal to humility.

H4b: Compared to corporate pages on Facebook, those on Renren are less likely to emphasize inexpensiveness.

Communication Context

Another widely adopted means of conceptualizing intercultural communication is Hall's (1989) framework based on high- and low-context cultures (An, 2007; Cho et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2009). *Context* refers to the situational or environmental information that must be known in order to understand the meaning of an event or subject. Hall (1989) categorized cultures into high-context and low-context cultures according to the degree of context dependence. In high-context communication, "most of the information is already in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit transmitted part of the message"; whereas a low-context communication or message is "just the opposite, i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code" (Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 8). In other words, low-context communication tends to be more direct and less dependent on context (Kim et al., 2009), and to contain more factual information (Gudykunst, 1998). High-context communication tends to be more indirect and ambiguous, favoring metaphors and symbols, and thus is less apprehensible to those outside the culture. Prior studies indicate that high/low contextuality determines significant cultural differences in communication styles, which in turn are reflected in various types of media content (e.g., Kim et al., 2009; Zhang & Shavitt, 2003). In low-context communication cultures such as the United States, commercial messages tend to adopt a hard-sell approach, using rational cues such as product features, the functional value of the product, and comparative appeals or explicit references to competing brands. In contrast, in high-context cultures, messages about products or brands are communicated in a more indirect and implicit manner—for example, emphasizing the intangible aspects (e.g., image) and subjective features of the product, rather than its tangible aspects or practical benefits (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). Persuasive communications are also more likely to use emotional appeals and symbolic association with a celebrity or lifestyle; for example, Cheng's (1994) study indicated that Chinese advertisements tended to feature values that were symbolic and suggestive of human emotions. Recent Internet studies also show that websites from low-context cultures like the United States tend to provide more product-specific information, while sites from high-context cultures like South Korea are more likely to offer information about consumers' connections to their community (Lee et al., 2007). Thus, it is expected that

H5a: Compared to corporate pages on Facebook, those on Renren are less likely to mention product features and characteristics.

H5b: Compared to corporate pages on Facebook, those on Renren are less likely to mention competitive products or use comparative claims.

H5c: Compared to corporate pages on Facebook, those on Renren are less likely to address consumers' practical or utilitarian need for the product.

H6a: Compared to corporate pages on Facebook, those on Renren are more likely to use emotional appeals or address the affective or intangible aspects of a product.

H6b: Compared to corporate pages on Facebook, those on Renren are more likely to use metaphors or aesthetic expressions.

H6c: Compared to corporate pages on Facebook, those on Renren are more likely to associate a product with a particular situation or type of person or lifestyle.

SNSs can also be a powerful tool for stimulating interactions and building relations with consumers at a more personal level. As confirmed by a preliminary review, corporate posts might wish fans a happy holiday or refer to special events without mentioning the company's product. Prior studies indicated that companies from high-context cultures in particular strive to build relationships with consumers through the soft-sell approach (Pollay, 1983). For example, having consumers like the ad is particularly important in high-context countries like China and Japan, as indicated by the prevalence of celebrity endorsements and humorous and emotional appeals (Johansson, 1994; Ramaprasad & Hasegawa, 1992). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H7:   Compared to corporate pages on Facebook, those on Renren are more likely to include references that are irrelevant to the product.

Methodology

Marketing communication on SNSs is a relatively new development. A content analysis is thus pertinent to exploring this new phenomenon. In addition, previous empirical studies on SNSs have relied on content analysis as their research method (Zhang, 2010).

Sample

This study used corporate profile pages as the sampling unit. Only official corporate profile pages that were created by marketers (rather than by enthusiastic fans) were selected. Temporary promotional pages were excluded. We studied all the 43 corporate pages that were available on Renren at the time of the investigation; of these, 21 were Fortune 500 companies that had Facebook counterparts. To have a comparable sample size for the Facebook data, we selected these 21 Facebook counterparts, plus an additional 22 Fortune 500 corporate pages chosen at random, for a total of 43 Facebook pages. Thus a total of 86 corporate profile pages on Renren (43) and Facebook (43) were included in our sample.

Coding Scheme and Procedure

All coding categories for this study were adapted from previous research (Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996; Cheong et al., 2010; Cho et al.,1999). Consistent with Albers-Miller and Gelb's (1996) approach, communication appeals (i.e., high- vs. low-context) are considered the primary method for gauging cultural values reflected in marketing communications. We used only the communication appeals whose relations to Hofstede's cultural dimensions were verified by Albers-Miller and Gelb (1996). Items that coders rarely observed in corporate pages on Renren and Facebook in a pretest were discarded, such as explicit emphasis on benefits to the individual or to the social group. In addition, the coding scheme for contextuality was adapted from that used in Cho et al.'s (1999) study of how cultural values are reflected in advertising themes and executions. If any of the cultural values or communication styles appeared on a corporate SNS page, it was coded as being present, and each page could be coded with multiple values. Finally, to explore whether the use of graphic features varied across Facebook and Renren, six categories were created to code the profile pictures on the corporate SNS pages. These categories were brand logo, product photo, text-only brand name, photo of brand endorser, brand name with illustration, and brand icon (e.g., the Pillsbury Doughboy).

Two bilingual coders coded the corporate pages on Renren and Facebook. The unit of analysis was the corporate profile page. Cultural values may be reflected through any media forms, including text, picture, video, or audio (Zhang, 2010). Following Cho et al. (1999), the coders evaluated only whether each cultural dimension was reflected on the SNS pages, as it is difficult to discern the level of cultural values reflected in media content. The coders scrutinized the first page of each corporate SNS profile that users see after signing in and where users have access to all the main elements of the SNS (such as photo album and message board). The details examined on each page were restricted to items that were readily observable (Marcus & Krishnamurthi, 2009). The two coders used a standard coding sheet written in English. During the training session, the coders coded a small set of Facebook corporate pages, and inconsistencies in coding were discussed and clarified.

The two coders each coded half of the corporate SNS profile pages from Facebook and Renren respectively and independently in October 2010. Intercoder reliability was determined by using the Perreault and Leigh (1989) formula as a rigorous test. Disagreements in judgment were resolved by extensive discussion between the coders. The overall intercoder reliability for the cultural dimensions was quite high, ranging from .92 to .98.

Results

To examine the cultural differences reflected in the communication appeals adopted by the corporate pages on Renren and Facebook, a Chi-Square test was used. Table 1 shows a cross-tabulation between the American and Chinese SNSs and the individualism/collectivism dimension.

-------- Table 1 here --------

H1a and H1b proposed that individualistic appeals would be used more frequently in American corporate SNS pages than in the Chinese pages. Corporate pages on Facebook were found to appeal more to individualistic values such as originality, individuality, or independence ($\chi2 = 5.89$, $p < .05$) and self-reliance, hedonism, or fulfillment ($\chi2 = 11.1$, $p < .01$). Therefore, both H1a and H1b were supported. Similarly, H2a and H2b, which deal with the usage of collectivistic cultural appeals, were supported, as corporate pages on Renren appealed more to collectivist values such as interdependence or belonging to a social group (($2 = 16.29$, $p < .01$) and popularity, conformity, or harmony (($2 = 10.93$, $p < .01$).

-------- Table 2 here --------

Table 2 shows the proportion of corporate SNS pages that used appeals regarding the power distance dimension. H3a and H3b addressed the communication appeals that project high power distance. As hypothesized, corporate pages on Facebook were less likely than those on Renren to appeal to high social status (($2 = 12.05$, $p < .01$) and to vanity, glamour, or luxury (($2 = 9.43$, $p < .05$). However, with respect to appeals revealing low power distance, the frequency of humility was similar in the two countries (($2 = 0.095$, $p > .05$), and the difference in the usage of the inexpensiveness appeal was not statistically significant (($2 = 9.03$, $p > .05$), disconfirming H4a and H4b.

-------- Table 3 here --------

In terms of contextuality, hypotheses 5 and 6 addressed high- and low-context communications. It was hypothesized that appeals pertinent to a low-context culture would appear more commonly in corporate pages on Facebook than on Renren. As shown in Table 3, product features and references to consumers' need for the product are emphasized frequently in both markets, rejecting H5a and H5c. It may be that corporate communicators across cultures want to capitalize on the prevalence of SNSs and are using these sites for disseminating product information, especially among their existing customers and fans. H5b claimed that more comparative references to competitive products would be featured on Facebook than on Renren. However, this appeal is rarely used on either site, and H5b is not supported. All hypotheses pertinent to high-context communication (H6a–H6c) were supported. High-context culture was reflected on Renren in terms of higher usage of emotional appeals (($2 = 24$, $p < .01$), metaphors (($2 = 21.77$, $p < .01$), and celebrity or lifestyle association (($2 = 12.61$, $p < .01$). H7 was also supported, as references that are irrelevant to the product, category, or company were more prevalent on Renren ($n = 29$, 67.4%) than on Facebook ($n = 12$, 28%), and such differences were statistically significant (($2 = 12.86$, $p < .01$), indicative of the soft-sell approach and relationship-oriented communication typical of high-context cultures.

With regard to visual appeals, the types of profile pictures used on corporate SNS pages were examined. Table 4 presents the frequency of various types of corporate profile pictures on Facebook and Renren. A Chi-Square test provided tentative support for the notion that the types of profile pictures used on the two sites were indeed different ($\chi2 = 20.96$, $p < .01$). The findings were rather mixed. Among graphics that convey concrete and straightforward meanings about the product, brand logos were used more frequently on Facebook, whereas product photos were relatively uncommon on both sites. Unexpectedly, 3 Chinese companies used purely textual graphics as their profile pictures. These textual representations were not consistent with the brand name images or typography posted on their corporate websites, and thus should not be considered brand logos. Graphics that contained ambiguous or indirect brand meanings, such as photos of brand endorsers or images of brand icons, were more likely to appear on the Chinese site, even though the number was small.

-------- Table 4 here --------

Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to ascertain how national differences across various cultural dimensions might impact the communication appeals employed by corporate communicators on SNSs. This study provided support for the notion that communication appeals on SNSs are susceptible to cultural differences between China and the United States. Despite the apparent similarities between Renren and Facebook, findings suggest that communication appeals on Renren do not reflect the dominant American values.

By analyzing the dissimilar cultural orientations reflected in communication appeals on social media, this study not only provides new evidence indicating that global marketers should adapt their communication strategies and styles when communicating with consumers in

different societies, it also provides guidelines for their localization attempts. Specifically, the results indicate that to a large extent, corporate pages on Chinese SNSs tend to promote the cultural values of collectivism and high power distance, and demonstrate a high-context communication style. By contrast, American SNS corporate pages appeal more to individualistic values. But with regard to the low power distance dimension and low-context communication style, no significant differences were found between the two countries. It is possible that cultural convergence may have occurred around these cultural dimensions for online communications, and more research efforts are warranted for understanding the emerging cultural trends in the new media contexts. The following is a more detailed discussion of these results and their implications for research and practice for global corporate communicators.

Collectivism and individualism were found to dominate Chinese and American SNS corporate pages respectively. On the corporate pages on Renren, collectivistic references such as "we," "our," "together," "friends," and "peers" were prevalent in the wall posts. In addition, in the online advertisements or pictures posted on the Renren corporate pages, people are often portrayed in groups rather than individually. In contrast, independence and uniqueness appeals were enunciated on Facebook, and self-fulfillment and self-reliance were commonly observed. Differences in the basic features of the sites also reflect the differences in the individualism/collectivism dimension. For example, a user on Renren can create groups of "special friends" and "special attention" to track people who are closely related to him or her, and such specifications are visible to others who visit the individual's personal page. Such a feature entails a collectivistic orientation that underscores interpersonal relationships and interdependence.

This study provides mixed findings for Hofstede's power distance dimension. Results show that corporate pages on Chinese SNSs tend to use more high power distance communication appeals—such as high social status, luxury, and glamour—than those on American SNSs. However, cultural appeals regarding low power distance in terms of humility (i.e., common folks, down-to-earth) and inexpensiveness (i.e., affordability) which were expected to appear more frequently on American SNSs, were rarely used in either country. Furthermore, the distinct features on Renren exemplified the high power distance cultural characteristics in China. With a complexly tiered system for granting privileges to users of different participation intensity and history, the hierarchy within Renren is well accepted and explicitly reinforced. Users who enjoy higher status within the Renren community are acknowledged and praised on the public page, exhibiting the power and high status endowed by the hierarchy.

With regard to contextuality, the findings suggest that the high-context Chinese culture was mirrored by the indirect communication appeals used on its SNS corporate pages. These include emotional appeals, intangible aspects of the product (e.g., a happy family using the product), and association between brands and a particular lifestyle or type of person (e.g., a celebrity endorser). In terms of visuals used, the findings provide partial support for the notion that high-context cultures favor symbolic visuals while low-context cultures tend to use literal visuals (An, 2007). Compared to American SNS corporate pages, the Chinese pages relied less on brand logos, but employed a greater variety of graphics. Kim and Papacharissi (2003) found that authors of personal websites in Korea (a high-context culture) were more likely to use illustrations such as cartoons and photos of media characters, rather than their own photos, to

represent themselves. Consistent with these findings, Chinese corporate communicators used more symbolic visuals such as illustrations and endorsers' photos on their SNS pages. These visuals were relatively indirect or ambiguous, again revealing a high-context communication style. By contrast, the Facebook pages were dominated by brand logos, which provide straightforward brand recognition and are indicative of low-context communication (An, 2007; Kim & Papacharissi, 2003).

Furthermore, an important finding of this study is that in the high-context Chinese culture, corporate communications contained more references that were not relevant to the brand, company, or product category. Closer examination revealed numerous references to local holidays, as well as simple personal greetings, in the wall posts on Renren. For instance, a corporate post on an eyewear company's page evoked a highly personal tone to warmly remind its SNS fans to drive home safely after a hard day's work, without mentioning the product at all. In a high-context culture like China, consumers rely heavily on extended social networks for information, and value trust and relationship with the company over explicit product information. In such a context, corporate communicators also tailor their SNS messages to consumers' social needs; they emphasize being personable and acting like a caring friend, which captures the essence of social networking sites.

Unexpectedly, however, the frequency of low-context communication appeals was not statistically different between Chinese and American SNS corporate pages. Both sites provided plenty of product information that addressed consumers' practical needs. Comparative claims were rarely observed on either site. Contrary to Okazaki's (2004) notion that Western marketing communication is getting emotional, the findings of this study suggest that Eastern marketing communication may be becoming more informative, at least in the case of using social media to disseminate product information.

Conclusion

As one of the earliest attempts to examine the corporate usage of social media, specifically social network sites in China and the United States, this study advances our understanding of marketing communications on social media from a cross-cultural perspective. The findings provide significant theoretical and practical implications. Overall, 9 of the 14 hypotheses were supported, suggesting that Hofstede's and Hall's theoretical frameworks are useful analytical tools for understanding different communication appeals in the context of SNSs. For managerial implications, we provide new evidence for how cross-cultural differences affect companies' marketing communications in the new media landscape, and how global corporate communicators can localize their communication appeals to stay culturally relevant with consumers in different markets.

Despite the pioneering explorations of this study, several limitations should be noted and addressed in future research. First, this study is limited by focusing on only two countries and on only a few cultural characteristics. Future studies should look into how other countries at similar stages of Internet evolution may vary on cultural values projected on SNSs. Also, we only examined one leading SNS from each of the countries studied. Any generalizations based on such a limited sample should be interpreted with extreme caution. Finally, because of the inherent limitations of content analysis, we could not answer questions regarding consumer response or effectiveness of the appeals. Kim and Faux (2006) found that users belonging to a

collectivistic culture are more likely to use the Internet to extend their offline networks, while those from individualistic cultures are more likely to keep their offline and online connections separate. Therefore, collectivistic users might show a higher level of preference for relationship-oriented messages from companies on SNSs. Additionally, only the manifest content was reviewed in the current study; advertisers' decision-making processes regarding the use of specific cultural appeals were out of the scope of the current study. Such decisions might be affected by multiple factors, such as dissimilar reasons for using SNSs in marketing communications, and culture may just be one factor. Finally, this study focused on examining the content of the first page after login, instead of conducting an extensive and in-depth analysis involving all the content available on the corporate pages. More detailed analysis of the message content, such as company posts as well as user comments, should be conducted to provide a richer understanding of how cultural orientations are reflected in real corporate–user interactions on social media. Incorporating users' voice into the analysis can help understand the effectiveness of communication appeals in relation to specific cultural dimensions. Future researchers can replicate and update this study by expanding the research setting to other cultural contexts and by including many other SNSs. Today's social media landscape is highly diversified, with various social media communities serving distinct interest and lifestyle groups and offering many unique functions. Researchers may focus on a specific type of SNS, such as photo sharing or business-oriented network sites, to see if any different patterns emerge.

Table 1
Appeals to Individualism/Collectivism on Renren vs. Facebook

Cultural dimension	Renren (China)	Facebook (U.S.)	χ2
Individualism			
Originality, individuality, independence	15 (34.9%)	24 (57.1%)	5.89*
Self-reliance, hedonism, self-fulfillment	8 (18.6%)	22 (52.4%)	11.1**
Collectivism			
Belonging to social group, interdependence	32 (74.4%)	13 (31%)	16.29**
Popularity, conformity, harmony	19 (44.2%)	5 (11.9%)	10.93**

Note. Degree of freedom (1), **p < .001, *p < .05.

Table 2
Appeals of Power Distance on Renren vs. Facebook

Cultural dimension	Renren (China)	Facebook (U.S.)	χ2
High power Distance			
High social status	15 (34.9%)	2 (4.8%)	12.05**
Vanity, glamour, luxury	11 (25.6%)	1 (2.4%)	9.43*
Low power Distance			
Humility, down-to-earth	12 (27.9%)	13 (31%)	.095
Inexpensiveness	5 (11.6%)	8 (19%)	9.03

Note. Degree of freedom (1), **p < .001, *p < .05.

Table 3
Communication Context on Renren vs. Facebook

Cultural dimension	Renren (China)	Facebook (U.S.)	$\chi2$
Low-Context			
Product features	28 (65.1%)	27 (64.3%)	.006
Comparative claims	11 (25.6%)	10 (23.8%)	2.1
Consumers' practical need	27 (62.8%)	25 (59.5%)	.95
High-Context			
Emotional appeal, intangible features	37 (86%)	18 (42.9%)	24.0**
Symbols, metaphors, illustrations	32 (74.4%)	10 (23.8%)	21.77**
Celebrity/lifestyle association	23 (53.5%)	7 (16.7%)	12.61**

Note. Degree of freedom (1), **p < .001, *p < .05.

Table 4
Profile Pictures on Renren vs. Facebook

Types of profile pictures	Example	Renren (China)	Facebook (U.S.)
Brand logo .		21 (48.8%)	30 (70.0%)
Product photo		5 (11.6%)	4 (7.0%)
Text only		3 (7.0%)	0
Illustration		3 (7.0%)	0
Brand name with illustration		2 (4.7%)	7 (16.3%)
Photo of brand endorser		4 (9.3%)	2 (5%)
Brand icon		5 (11.6%)	0

Cultural Dimensions	USA	China
Individualism	91	20
Power Distance	40	80
Uncertainty Avoidance	46	30
Masculinity	62	66

Figure 1. **Hofstede's cultural dimension scores.** Source: Hofstede & Hofstede (2005).

Appendix
Snapshots of Renren and Facebook Login Pages

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Strategic Leadership in Public Relations: Dimensions, Measurement, and Validation

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Abstract

This paper investigates strategic leadership in public relations by proposing a set of dimensions measuring public relations executives' perceptions on leadership. A measurement methodology was applied and suggested to facilitate empirical investigation. Data from two groups of public relations executives ($N = 384$) nationwide were used to assess the validity and reliability of the leadership dimensions. Results from both groups demonstrate strong support for the proposed leadership dimensions in public relations. The established higher-order measurement model of leadership in public relations indicates six major dimensions: self dynamics, ethical orientation, relationship building, strategic decision making capability, and communication knowledge management capability.

Introduction

The topic of strategic leadership has received significant attention from scholars in public relations and strategic communication research recently. They have recognized the importance of applying leadership skills to develop successful communication professionals and apply appropriate leadership style in practice. A small body of research has suggested that public relations leaders are crucial to increasing the value of public relations, to achieving effectiveness in and for organizations, and to helping organizations make strategic choices and do the right thing (e.g., Aldoory & Toth, 2004; Berger & Meng, 2010; Berger & Reber, 2006; Berger, Reber, & Heyman, 2007; Choi & Choi, 2009; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Meng & Berger, 2010; Werder & Holtzhausen, 2009). However, we have to admit that existing studies explored public relations leadership in only one aspect or another. One important area that has received little attention is the conceptualization of the public relations leadership construct and its crucial dimensions, as well as the development of reliable and valid measurement.

Leadership research has long been a central but controversial topic in strategic management and organizational behavior research. The controversy centers on: 1) varying definitions of leadership, and 2) competing views about the extent to which leaders actually influence individual and group behaviors and organizational performance (e.g., Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Pfeffer, 1977). Leadership studies have yielded mixed findings in this regard, e.g., leaders strongly impact the organizational performance vs. leaders are inextricably bound by a variety of internal and external constraints (Bertrand & Schoar, 2003; Hannan & Freeman, 1984, 1989). Nevertheless, it remains that leaders shape organizational strategies, culture, resource allocations, and performance.

Scholars in organizational behavior research also suggest that fully understanding the effects of leadership on organizational performance requires examining multiple levels of executive leadership simultaneously. Such levels and corresponding capabilities might include, for example, psychological capabilities at the individual level, leader-follower interaction at the small group level, and role modeling of organizational culture and values at the corporate level (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003; Bertrand & Schoar, 2003; Chatman & Kennedy, 2010; Hunter, Bedell-Avers, & Mumford, 2007; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). As the importance of strategic communication and effective public relations practice has been gradually recognized in organizations, consideration of leadership application is also necessary to fully capture the range of managerial functions of public relations executives.

In this paper, we focus on senior public relations executives, the members in the "dominant coalitions" of organizations, and their perceptions on the importance of applying leadership skills in facilitating strategic communication actions. However, we also would like to extend the test of senior executives' perceptions to a group of medium-level public relations practitioners to further validate the predictive power of the leadership construct and its dimensions. We fully recognize that, as a new area, research in public relations leadership is experiencing a process of theory construction segment by segment until we could obtain a whole view of this construct. Currently, no available and widely recognized theoretical framework of public relations leadership exist within the public relations and communication management literature and most of what has been written about leadership has its basis in practice rather than in theory construction. In addition, the measurement of leadership has been a major block in

investigating the construct and relevant phenomena, not only in managerial leadership but also presenting similar issues in public relations research. Lack of reliable quantitative measures can perplex researchers' efforts in evaluating the predictive power of theoretical constructs.

Thus, this paper attempts to bridge this gap in the literature by proposing an integrated theoretical basis for the dynamic process of public relations leadership from the literature on managerial leadership, public relations research, and organizational behavior. The research reported here has four primary purposes: (1) to argue that leadership is a central element in strategic public relations practice, (2) to define the meaning of leadership in public relations, (3) to conceptualize major leadership dimensions in effective public relations practice, and (4) to suggest and validate specific measures of leadership dimensions developed.

Conceptualization: Strategic Leadership in Public Relations

Previous research on the construct of leadership has contributed substantially to conceptual and methodological advancement in the disciplines of organizational performance and communication effectiveness and has provided coherent, but largely segmented, sets of knowledge (e.g., Yukl, 1989). In this paper, the construct of public relations leadership is conceptualized as being related to, but distinct from, communication effectiveness at the organizational level. The process of achieving leadership effectiveness in public relations presents the dynamic nature of the construct itself by mapping the relationships between the constructs of self attributes, leader behaviors, team collaboration, relationship management, and strategic communication management as public relations practitioners progress from the technical level to the top management team in the organization.

Leadership is defined here as the capacity of individual practitioners to exert their influence in the organization. Based on the analysis of recent research in public relations leadership, we propose a comprehensive definition for this construct and the conceptualization is presented as:

Leadership in public relations is a dynamic process that encompasses a complex mix of individual skills and personal attributes, values, and behaviors that consistently produce ethical and effective communication practice. Such practice fuels and guides successful communication teams, help organizations achieve their goals, and legitimizes organizations in society.

Unlike those in most previous research, this definition offers an integrated perspective which synthesizes different streams of research in leadership process, including personal attributes, leaders' behaviors, role relationships, influence over followers, skills and application, and organizational philosophy. This comprehensive definition, outlined in Figure 1, proposes that public relations practitioners move toward several equally important dimensions to become the effective leaders. Using this integrated conceptual measurement model, the researchers argue that excellent leadership in public relations is a complex and dynamic process; and those dimensions represent the core of excellent leadership in public relations. As a reflection of this argument, we also propose public relations leaders can produce positive outcomes at the team, organizational and societal levels, but the achievement of leadership effectiveness does not only rely on the public relations practitioners but also be mediated by external environment, notably organizational culture and structure and societal culture. This integrated conceptual model consists of the following propositions:

1. Within the concept of excellent leadership itself, public relations leaders can apply traits and explicit knowledge and take actions to reduce constraints, strengthen internal and external relations, and favorably influence strategic decision-making process in the organization.
2. The attributes and entities associated with a specific culture not only predict organizational structure and culture, but also influence public relations leaders' behaviors that are most frequently enacted to achieve excellence in leadership in that particular culture.
3. At the same time, the achievement of excellence in leadership may be mediated by strong situational influences such as the organization structure and culture, as well as the belief and values associated with the society.

The brief overview of the concept underlines the relevance of leadership in strategic public relations practice. Because of the significance of leadership to the strategic decision making and relevant managerial actions, exploring the role of applying leadership skills in effective public relations practice seems critical. The following section outlines six key dimensions of strategic leadership in public relations.

<Insert Figure 1 here>

Dimensions of Strategic Leadership in Public Relations

There have been many attempts to outline measures of leadership in strategy and organization theory (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Day & Lord, 1988; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). Although understanding of the strategic leadership phenomenon has advanced greatly during the past two decades, previous theoretical frameworks were not specifically developed with public relations executives and strategic communication practice in mind. Additionally, a common point that has been widely criticized in managerial leadership research is a lack of establishment of consistent measurement. It becomes difficult to assess the relative merits of a set of leadership dimensions when there is little indication of its measurement reliability and validity. Therefore, the approach taken in this paper attempted to (1) narrow the focus to strategic leadership within the public relations executives of an organization, (2) propose the multidimensional nature of strategic leadership by defining six leadership dimensions relevant to effective public relations practice, (3) develop a set of indicators of leadership to facilitate the influence of public relations executives in organizations, and (4) apply developed indicators to two samples for empirical testing.

As outlined in Figure 1, the construct of public relations leadership we have proposed encompasses six major dimensions to describe public relations practitioners' leadership function, and they are self-dynamics, team collaboration, ethical orientation, relationship building, strategic decision-making, and communication knowledge management. These leadership dimensions applied in this research are defined as follows:

Self-Dynamics as the Indispensable Quality

This is perhaps the most commonly cited type of leadership; it is based on individual leader's skills and traits, including aspects of personality, needs, motives, and values (Bass, 1981, 1990; Katz, 1955; Stogdill, 1948, 1974; Yukl, 1989, 2010). In this study, the dimension of self-dynamics refers to the extent to which excellent leadership is perceived to be an inherent part of the leaders' personal attributes, which include the leader's personality, skills, values, and

envisioning ability. Two sub-dimensions, *self-attributes* and *shared vision,* enable maximization of leaders' self-dynamics.

This dimension of leadership has been incorporated into many definitions and research trends in leadership literature (e.g., Bass, 1990; Northouse, 2007; Stogdill, 1974; Yukl, 1989). Since it emerges as one of the most important facets of leadership throughout the history of leadership research, it is necessary to keep the dimension when discussing excellent leadership in public relations. The traditional trait approach, skills approach, and style approach of leadership research have identified certain qualities, personalities, and attributes associated with successful leaders (e.g., Bass, 1990; Stogdill, 1948, 1972; Yukl, 1989). Consistent findings are also identified in limited research on public relations leadership. For instance, Choi and Choi (2009) identified a number of personality and skills, such as assertiveness, commitment, confidence, and responsibility, as important features in defining leadership in public relations. Berger, Reber, and Heyman's (2007) study also acknowledged the importance of positive personal traits to professional success in public relations. Some of the most desired characteristics in hiring public relations professionals include enthusiasm, energy, confidence, and flexibility. The consistent findings across the literature support the conclusion that the personal attributes cannot be ignored when we define dimensions of leadership in public relations. The qualities and attributes associated with public relations leaders are a diversity of dynamic forces in defining excellent leadership.

As indicated in the literature, the exploration of personality traits relevant for effective leadership has continued over the years. Recent trait research has been focusing on managerial motivation and specific skills (e.g., Chemers, 1997; Yukl, 1989); therefore, to define this dimension more clearly, we would like to relate public relations leaders' self-dynamics consistently to managerial effectiveness or advancement by suggesting two sub-dimensions: *self-attributes* and *shared vision*.

The sub-dimension of *self-attributes* refers to the extent to which leaders know their strengths and weaknesses and understand public relations environments in order to adapt strategies and achieve organizational goals (London, 2002). Leaders who do not understand themselves or do not present traits such as high self-confidence, emotional maturity, initiative, and stress tolerance are unlikely to have an accurate view of the situations or to be sensitive to the environments. The sub-dimension of *shared vision* refers to the envisioning ability of public relations leaders and the extent to which organizational members are inspired by the shared vision which specifies organizational values and personal beliefs in making things happen and personal desires to change things (Leonard, 1995; Kouzes & Posner, 2002). As an important feature of being a leader across different professions, being visionary can not only convey a clear view of the future and desired direction of the organization but also incorporate a system of organizational values (Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001). More importantly, only creating a compelling vision is insufficient to significant changes: leaders should have the ability to enlist followers into that shared vision to reach the shared values. The importance of providing vision was also identified by Choi and Choi (2009). They suggested that, as a single unit being aligned with other divisions in the organization, public relations leaders should provide organizational members with a clear vision about the organization's public relations policies and strategies. The perceptual measures of this dimension generated through literature and refined through pilot

testing are listed in Table 1.1. The item reduction and refinement process is explained in the method section. All items are measured using seven-point Likert scales.
<Insert Table 1.1 here>

Team Collaboration and the Group's Development

The dimension of team collaboration refers to the leaders' abilities to support the public relations team and the organization to execute public relations strategies and to achieve excellence in communication management. Kouzes and Posner (2002) interpreted collaboration as "the ability to lovingly cooperate that will determine success" (p. 242). It should be integrated as one of the public relations leaders' role requirements to create a climate of trust and flexibility within the team, to facilitate positive interdependence among team members, and to support face-to-face interaction between team members and leaders.

Previous research on leaders and their immediate groups indicated that leadership has great impact on its group of members as a collective entity. The group's drive, cohesion, selection of goals, and attainment of goals are likely to be influenced by the leader (e.g., Bass, 1990; Bramel & Friend, 1987). Diverse aspects of leader-group relations also have important effects on a team's development of a stable structure (e.g., Heslin & Dunphy, 1964). Stogdill (1972) identified three possible main effects of the leader on the development of organized groups: productivity, drive, and cohesiveness. Effective leader-group relations further result in more efficient interaction among the team members. Working together as an intellectual effort describes the nature of public relations and communication practices. By recognizing leadership as a sufficient condition for effective team performance, public relations leaders have the responsibility to foster team collaboration. Thus, team collaboration works as an essential dimension to support leadership effectiveness for public relations practitioners. Table 1.2 presents the measures for the team collaboration dimension.
<Insert Table 1.2 here>

Ethical Orientation

The dimension of ethical orientation refers to the extent to which public relations leaders believe in and enact professional values and standards when ethical and legal dilemmas arise and responsibilities and loyalties conflict (Bowen, 2004; J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992; Heath & Bowen, 2002). The discussion of ethical leadership can be located in a great amount of management literature, which has been generally defined as "ethical leadership theory" (Northouse, 2007). Ethical leadership emphasizes an organization's actions to achieve goals of maximizing profits while creating the greatest good for the greatest amount of people (Craig & Gustafson, 1998). Related discussion about communication ethics, media ethics, and business ethics has contributed to the development of ethical knowledge in public relations.

As a major concern in the field of public relations, ethical performance cannot be ignored when we try to propose theoretical framework for excellent leadership in public relations. Most public relations researchers endorsed the idea that public relations professionals acting as the ethical conscience of their organization (Heath & Bowen, 2002). Public relations professionals' expertise in relationship building, crisis management, and reputation management has made ethical concern a natural response. Public relations practitioners feel it is their role to serve as ethics counselors to the dominant coalition (e.g., Bowen, 2004; Choi & Choi, 2009).

Thus, ethical orientation is an inherent dimension of public relations leadership if the goal of communication management is to achieve excellence. Table 1.3 presents the measures for the ethical orientation dimension.

<center><Insert Table 1.3 here></center>

Relationship Building

The dimension of relationship building refers to the extent to which network resource sharing and relationship building are perceived to be crucial for public relations leaders to facilitate mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and its publics. The relationship building capability encompasses public relations executives' efforts in building both internal and external relations. Internal relations specifies the responsibilities for public relations leaders to facilitate a productive environment among team members and organizational members, as well as an open, participative, and less authoritarian relationship between employees and senior managers; while external relations focuses on a wide variety of public relations functions to balance the interests of the organization and its external publics.

This dimension of leadership in public relations explains the importance of relationship and networking in achieving excellence in communication management, since the nature of public relations is about developing and nurturing relationships (e.g., Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000; Bruning, 2000, 2002; J. Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Ledingham, 2001, 2003). Relational theory in public relations has acknowledged the unique and potential value of relationship building in public relations: To be viewed as idealistic, critical, and managerial, public relations leaders strive to maintain mutually beneficial relationships with key publics (e.g., Bruning, 2002; Ledingham, 2001).

Empirical research also identified the importance of relationship building to the success in communication management for public relations executives (e.g., Berger, Reber, & Heyman, 2007; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999). Researchers found that most public relations professionals recognized the importance of building relationships with internal and external audiences to be able to gain influence and maintain consistently high performance. Thus, relationship building is another inherent role required for public relations leaders. The involvement of interaction, transaction, exchange, and linkage between an organization and its publics makes excellence in communication management more pronounced. Table 1.4 presents the measures for the relationship building dimension.

<center><Insert Table 1.4 here></center>

Strategic Decision-Making Capability

The dimension of strategic decision-making capability refers to the extent to which public relations leaders understand external sociopolitical environments and internal organizational structures, processes and practices, and are able to translate relevant knowledge into effective advocacy and to get involved with strategic decision-making processes in the organization.

As a unique dimension, strategic decision-making capability refers to public relations leaders' astuteness about an organization's external sociopolitical environments, as well as the internal power relations. The concern for organization's external sociopolitical environments is reflected in public relations leaders' behaviors of taking responsibilities for interpreting the organization's non-commercial functions and managing what happens in the public affairs arena.

The concern for organization's internal environments will be a challenge for public relations leaders to balance internal power relations and exert upward influence in the organization. The ability to identify power relations structures, to use a variety of resources and tactics, and to engage in various forms of communications with both internal and external publics becomes an indispensable feature for public relations leaders (e.g., Berger, 2005; Berger & Reber, 2006; Choi & Choi, 2009).

More critically, public relations leaders should have the ability to get involved with the decision-making processes in their organization and to persuasively sell new ideas to higher-ups. Especially when the organization operates in a rapidly changing, complex environment, public relations leaders who possess the competence and knowledge to deal with the environment will have more decision-making influence than those who do not. As a leader of the communication team, the individualization of career is not only the ultimate goal of personal achievement, but more importantly, it is a process of stimulating leadership development and expanding the influence and value of public relations within the organization. Table 1.5 presents the measures for the strategic decision making dimension.

<center><Insert Table 1.5 here></center>

Communication Knowledge Management Capability

The dimension of communication knowledge management capability refers to the extent to which public relations leaders possess, apply and convert public relation knowledge and communication expertise to enhance the effective conveyance of communication messages to other members in the organization and to the publics. Sharing knowledge and expertise with dominant coalitions and outsiders is seen as an effective way to improve the value of public relations to organizations. The application of communication knowledge and expertise can be used to adjust strategic decision-making, solve new problems, and improve organization effectiveness.

The dimension of communication knowledge and expertise covers the multiple functions a public relations leader ought to acquire to succeed in communication management. This concept has its roots generally in the management and organizational behavior literature (e.g., Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001; Grant, 1996; Ofter & Polterovich, 2000; Sanchez & Mahnoey, 1996); however, it focuses on the intellectual ability and behavior power of public relations leaders in supporting individual success and organization performance in this study.

As a major part of training and/or education programs for public relation professionals, accumulating relevant professional knowledge, making the knowledge applicable, and converting the knowledge into plausible action plans become one sign of effective leaders. For public relations professionals, the scope of communication knowledge is far beyond the level of technical skills such as writing and speaking. Instead, this dimension encompasses all vital communication skills, such as using the power of research, converting knowledge into plans of action and strategies, applying knowledge to diverse media channels, and evaluating communication programs, that will eventually support the organization performance and manifest the value of public relations to the organization. The complex applications of communication knowledge and expertise specify the distinctive features of public relations leaders from other types of leaders. Table 1.6 presents the measures for the communication knowledge management dimension.

<Insert Table 1.6 here>

Together, these six dimensions define what we have proposed, strategic leadership in public relations. It is important to note, however, that other leadership dimensions or theories (e.g., transformational leadership, gender, cross-cultural leadership, etc.) may also be relevant as well. We considered the six dimensions outlined here to be the most important and relevant leadership sources of effective public relations practice. We also admit that their generalizability could be limited since other social and organizational sources of structure and power have not been represented.

The following section discusses methods of measuring strategic leadership in public relations and outlines the approach we have used to test the perceptual measures.

Research Design and Method

The Measurement of Dimensions of Strategic Leadership in PR

The design of measurement is based on the philosophy of developing and testing reliable and valid measures of the theoretical constructs (e.g., Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Churchill, 1979). To assess the validity of our research model, measures of all six dimensions of leadership in public relations are developed. Since single item measures generally frame concepts narrowly, the measurement of complex organizational phenomenon is suggested to be done through multiple-item measures (Churchill, 1979). Multiple-item measures are generally believed to enhance the reliability of the constructs of interest and the measurement of relevant variables will be more consistent.

To ensure construct validity, which is what is measured is indeed what is intended to be measured, the researchers followed the recommended procedures to ensure the quality of appropriate measures (Churchill, 1979; Jacoby, 1978). First, we conducted an intensive search of existing literature and theories in leadership and public relations to specify the theoretical domain of interest and identify the necessity for developing new measures and models. However, due to the lack of abundant empirical investigation into the subject of public relations leadership, the measures we developed are largely derived from theoretical statements made in the literature or from assessments of professional literature on excellent study, managerial leadership, strategic leadership, and organizational behavior.

Secondly, based on existing knowledge, we generated an initial set of 85 items thought to represent the conceptualization of public relations leadership in this study. The set of items was assessed and refined through several techniques, such as item evaluation reports by two senior public relations professors and a pilot testing by using a panel of 35 senior public relations executives and professors. The initial item reduction was carried out by giving the panel of the definition of leadership in public relations and explaining to the panel the purpose of their ratings. The initial item reduction efforts finally generated a list of 45 statements representing six proposed dimensions of public relations leadership. These items are listed in Tables 1.1-1.6. All 45 retained statements were formatted into seven-point rating scales, which could provide the advantage of standardizing and quantifying relative effects (Nunnally, 1978), and adapted for the final survey instrument.

Third, we tested the cleaned measures in the actual field by using two online samples. A series of statistical testing such as internal consistency analysis, item aggregation, confirmatory factor analysis, model specification and refinement, were applied to the field data. The final public relations leadership scales possessed sound psychometric properties and demonstrated significant reliability of response consistency, which is addressed in the data analysis section.

Overall, the primary research method in this study is the online survey of mid- and senior-level public relations professionals nationwide. The following section explains the samples used in this study.

Sample Requirements and Sample Profiles

To ensure the measurement invariance of proposed perceptual indicators and the measurement model, the researchers recruited two different groups of samples in this study: the Primary Group and the SPRF Group. The Primary Group consisted of 222 senior public relations professionals nationwide and recruited through Heyman Associates, a PR executive search firm in New York City. Respondents in the second sample, the SPRF Group, were 162 public relations practitioners holding an entry- or medium-level position in organizations of the Southeastern region in U.S., and they are members of the Southern Public Relations Federation (SPRF).

Sample 1: The Primary Group

Specifically, the researchers used a stratified convenient sampling strategy to recruit respondents for the Primary Group through an online survey. To try to capture a representative group of professionals, the researchers deliberately drew the sample to more or less match the current characteristics of the public relations industry in the United States, though such data are sketchy. The sampling strategy requires that respondents meet the following criteria: (1) respondents must be key organizational informants[18]; (2) the distribution of organization type has to be considered to match the public relations industry; (3) the distribution of gender has to be considered to match the current status in public relations industry, and (4) multiple respondents can be obtained from organizations. By administering these criteria to separate samples from different organizations, we aimed at eliminating response bias concerning gender-related and organizational barriers.

The online survey invitation was sent out through Heyman Associates to 1,000 senior public relations executives nationwide. Eventually, of the 1,000 invitations, 338 visited the survey link and 257 subsequently participated in the survey, which resulted in a high retention rate of 76.04%. Finally, 222 completed questionnaires were deemed usable, yielding a 22.2% response rate.

The descriptive data of the Primary Group indicated that 40.1% of the sample were male (n=89), and 59.9% were female (n=133). The majority of the sample has been working in the field of public relations for more than 15 years (n=170, 76.60%). Most of them work for public corporations (n=83, 37.40%), private corporations (n=43, 19.40%), or public relations agencies

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[18] Key organizational informants are defined as those holding mid- to senior-level positions in public relations or communication in the organization, residing as vice president of communication or above, and possessing many years of experience. The support for using key informants stems from their knowledge and leadership positions in the organization.

(n=39, 17.60%). In terms of educational background, the majority of respondents majored in Journalism, English, or Communication in college (n=117, 52.7%). Most in the sample were Caucasians (89.2%), with African Americans and Hispanics comprising the next two largest groups (3.6% respectively).

Sample 2: The SPRF Group

The researchers used the same data collection approach—online survey—to recruit respondents for the SPRF Group. The Southern Public Relations Federation (SPRF) is a network of more than 1,200 public relations professionals in the Southeastern region. Most members of SPRF hold an entry- to medium-level public relations position in organizations. To assess how well proposed measures and model generalize across groups of individuals, the researchers argue it is important to have members of SPRF participating in the study.

Similarly, the researchers used a convenient sampling strategy to the SPRF Group. The online survey invitation was sent to all SPRF members through the professional association. A total of 305 members visited the survey link and 202 participated in the study. Finally, the sample included 162 completed surveys. The retention rate for the SPRF Group was 66.23% and the response rate was 13.67%.

For the SPRF Group, the descriptive data indicated that the final sample size was 162. Females (n=129, 78.7%) heavily outnumbered males (n=35, 21.3%). Caucasians (n=149, 91%) and African Americans (n=10, 6%) were the main ethnic groups in this group. The majority of the respondents obtained a Bachelor's degree (n=100, 61%) or a Master's degree (n=51, 31%). Years of experience were varied: people working for more than 15 years (n=57, 35%) and between five to ten years (n=44, 27%) have dominated this group. The respondents themselves indicated a medium-level representation in the profession, with the majority assuming the position of public relations assistant, regional director, public relations account coordinator, and so on.

Results

Analytic Approach and Statistical Criteria

Given the theoretical driven approach this study has used to develop construct, the analytical procedure of confirmatory factor analysis provides an appropriate means of assessing the efficacy of measurement items and the consistency of the pre-specified hierarchical measurement model. First, the researchers used the data set collected from the Primary Group to conduct a psychometric evaluation of the test instruments and to validate the constructs. Second, the researchers used the SPRF Group data to conduct the repeated assessment of the measures. The major purpose is to assess how well the *a priori* measurement model generalizes across groups of individuals. All models were tested by using structural equation modeling (Bollen, 1989; *Jöreskog & Sörbom*, 1989). The LISREL 8.8 program was used for the data analysis (*Jöreskog & Sörbom*, 2007).

Check for Statistical Assumptions and Scale Reliability

An initial analysis was done to evaluate the normal distribution of the variables. To test the univariate normality of each measurement item, the researchers inspected frequency distribution to spot skewness and kurtosis values of each variable. Items with extreme values were removed from the pool. Since SEM is also known to be very sensitive to outliers, the researchers verified

the presence of outliers by analyzing standardized residuals. The results indicated that there is no extreme value.

Before testing the measurement model, a series of tests were run on the individual item and the scales to improve the reliability of the proposed constructs. The values of coefficient reliability and item-total correlations were analyzed. The results indicated reasonably high item-total correlations for all constructs in both samples (e.g., range of item-total correlations = .757 to .813). Similarly, the internal consistency reliabilities on six dimensions were generally high in both samples: Cronbach's alpha ranging from .78 to .86 for the Primary Group, and .79 to .88 for the SPRF Group, satisfying Nunally's (1978) minimum criterion of .70 for internal consistency.

Item Aggregation and Composite Indicators

As a multidimensional construct, the measurement of leadership in public relations consists of several components which try to capture the underlying construct of interest (see Figure 1 for path graphic). To represent the relationships among the components in a best way, the researchers used Bagozzi and Edwards' (1998) approach for construct specification. Bagozzi and Edwards (1998) argued that, to largely reduce the amounts of measurement error and to estimate common, specific and error variance of the indicators, high-order confirmatory factor analysis models with aggregated indicators are preferred (Baggozi & Edwards, 1998, pp. 50-53). The primary advantage of forming aggregated indicators is the reduction of the number of parameters to be estimated, which eventually could decrease the amount of measurement error associated with each item. In addition, the approach of partially aggregating items into a more abstract level provides the possibility of specifying a higher-order factor model (e.g., second-order factor models) to separate common variance, specific variance, and measurement error (see Landis, Beal, & Tesluk, 2000).

Therefore, the researchers used an empirically equivalent method described by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) to aggregate measure items and to create "truly empirically equivalent composite measures" (Landis, Beal, & Tesluk, 2000, p. 189). To be more specific in the method itself, the researchers first computed item means, item standard deviations, and item-total correlations for each construct by using the Primary Group data set. The next step was to create two composites for each construct based on the statistical properties of each item. Specifically, items with approximately same mean, standard deviation, and item-total correlations were identified as a pair. One item from the pair was placed into one composite and the other item was placed into the second composite. The procedure was finished until all items in one construct have been assigned to one composite. Since several constructs (e.g., self insight, team collaboration, and ethical orientation) had odd number of items, the extra item was evaluated by the researchers and put into the composite that best equated the two subscales. Eventually, for each construct, two composites with empirically equivalence were formed, which resulted in a total of 14 composite indicators (Table 2 presents the measure items and the composites they formed). Aggregated items were averaged and the correlations were generated between each composite. The correlation matrix of 14 composite indicators with standard deviation was used as the LISREL input for model analysis (see Table 3). The researchers repeated the similar approach to generate the aggregated indicators and correlation matrix for the SPRF Group (see Table 4).

<Insert Tables 2-4 Here>

Measurement Model Testing and Fit Criteria

As suggested by the approach of confirmatory factor analysis, the researchers tested the first-order measurement model with seven constructs[19] first by using the correlation matrix of the 14 composite indicators. The model fit indices indicated that the use of composite indicators extensively reduced the Chi-square value and the degrees of freedom. The model fit indices exhibited significant values: χ^2 (56) = 127.58, NFI = .976; NNFI = .978; CFI = .987; SRMR = .036; RMSEA = .073 with 90 percent confidence interval of [.056; .092]. The approach of aggregating items and forming composite indicators suggested an overall good fit of the conceptual model at the first level, which further indicated the possibility of specifying a higher-order measurement model. As the researchers have outlined in the conceptualization section, the major purpose of the study is to test the proposed second-order measurement model of strategic leadership in public relations. Table 5 presented the standardized loadings of composite indicators, composite reliability, and average variance extracted by each construct of the first-order measurement model.

<Insert Table 5 Here>

To further explore the relationships among the six constructs and their contribution to the construct "leadership in public relations," the second-order measurement model was tested. A major advantage of higher-order factor analysis is to provide a more parsimonious account for the correlations among lower-order factors. The pattern and magnitude of the strong correlations among the six constructs in the first-order CFA solution have driven the researchers to propose a single higher-order factor as constituting relatively abstract dimensions of the global construct "leadership in public relations." The conceptual basis for the specification of a single higher-order factor is that, as a global construct, leadership in public relations is believed to account for the correlations among the first-order factors (e.g., self insight, shared vision, team collaboration, etc.). All six first-order factors are believed to represent styles of leadership aimed at improving communication effectiveness at a managerial level.

The test of the second-order model yielded significant model fit indices: χ^2 (71) = 156.26; NFI = .969; NNFI = .978; CFI = .983; SRMR = .043; RMSEA = .074 with 90 percent confidence interval for [.058; .089]. Since the higher-order model was overidentified based on the number of parameters estimated, the researchers used the nested Chi-square difference test to determine whether the specification produced a significant degradation in fit if compared to the first-order solution. The results indicated that $\Delta \chi^2$ (15) = 28.42, p<.05. As the critical value of χ^2 with *df* = 15 is 25.00 (α = .05), the researchers argued that the higher-order measurement model is significantly superior than the first-order solution. Since the analysis of a higher-order solution was fully confirmatory, the researchers would argue there is no need for additional conceptual justification (see Figure 2 for the graphic presentation of the final model).

<Insert Figure 2 here>

In addition, as exhibited in Table 6, the completely standardized estimates from the higher-order solution indicated that each of the first-order factors loaded strongly onto the

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[19] The dimension of self dynamics has two sub-dimensions, which results in seven constructs with 14 composite indicators at the first-order measurement model.

second-order factors (range of loadings = .766-.951). The estimates from the diagonal of the psi matrix indicated that the single higher-order factor accounted for a high percentage of the variance in the first-order factors, ranging from 72.2% to 90.4%. Therefore, it can be concluded that the higher-order model provided a good account for the correlations among the first-order factors as a practical matter.

<Insert Table 6 here>

Therefore, as an acceptable solution to address the key dimensions of the complex construct, the model testing and re-specification process confirmed that the public relations leadership construct encompasses six essential dimensions: *self dynamics, team collaboration, ethical orientation, relationship building, strategic decision-making capability, and communication knowledge management capability*. Although the procedure of model testing indicated that the final results exhibited a slightly deviation from the originally proposed theoretical dimensions (e.g., the combination of self insight and shared vision into a single dimension of self dynamics representing the variance of the leadership construct), the researchers would argue the re-specification process did not change the nature of the construct itself: leadership in public relations still represents a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Instead, the confirmatory approach helped the researchers detect the conceptual redundancy and increase the level of parsimony in the measurement model.

Repeated Test of the Higher-Order Measurement Model
To further test the generalizability or the higher-order measurement model, the researchers believe it is important to extend the analysis from one established group, the Primary Group, to a different sample, the SPRF Group, which could indicate entry- to medium-level public relations practitioners' perceptions about applying leadership skills into public relations practice. Therefore, as a follow-up investigation, the researchers re-tested the measurement model by using the SPRF Group.

The tests of the second-order measurement model indicated that the model fit the SPRF data well. For the SPRF group, the selected model fit indices showed that the Chi-square is 139.82 (df = 71, p < .01); NFI = .971; NNFI = .982; CFI = .986; SRMR = .042; RMSEA = .074 with 90% confidence interval of [.054; .093]. The completely standardized solution for the model also indicated significantly high loadings on the lower-order factors, ranging from .701 to .939. Each of the first-order factors loaded strongly onto the second-order factor (leadership in public relations), ranging from .767 to .974. Using the estimates from the diagonal of the Psi matrix, the researcher confirmed that the higher-order factor accounted for 59%-95% of the variance in the first-order factors.

In sum, the results from both samples support the contention that strategic leadership is a complex and multi-dimensional construct in public relations practice. Public relations executives are able to learn and apply leadership skills to influence strategic outcomes to the extent they possess leading functions. Overall, the study provides strong support for the reliability and the predictive validity of the public relations leadership dimensions developed.

Discussion and Conclusions

In this study, the researchers have argued that leadership is a strategically important area in public relations and communication management. However, although research in strategic management has widely acknowledged this proposition as a reality, theoretical and empirical studies have tended to lag because of difficulties in conceptualizing and measuring leadership in public relations teams. By extending the discussion of leadership in public relations, this study aimed at providing a theoretical foundation and methodological procedure for future research, as well as practical implications for public relations educators and practitioners.

As an exploratory effort to look at the dynamic leadership process in public relations, this study was motivated by a desire to understand how leadership has been defined in the field of public relations and how we could develop reliable quantitative measures to specify this complex construct and extend our analysis to multiple groups. Therefore, a central goal of this research was the development and validation of a set of leadership dimensions in public relations and their measurement. The results from two samples strongly supported the validity and reliability of proposed constructs and the inter-relationships among the constructs. Results from the first sample, the Primary Group, demonstrated the rigorous approach the researchers have used to refine measures, test conceptual models, and re-specify measurement models. The test process confirmed that multidimensionality, internal consistency, and discriminant validity of the proposed constructs. Results from the second sample, the SPRF Group, further confirmed the generalizability of the perceptual measures of leadership in public relations. It provided support for the predictive power of the six dimensions in a test of a group of entry- to medium-level public relations practitioners. Although this is clearly only a first attempt, and more work is needed to refine each of the measures to enrich the global construct of public relations leadership, the results of this study can offer public relations scholars both a framework and a measurement methodology that may greatly facilitate empirical work in this understudied area.

Overall, the findings are consistent with those in traditional managerial leadership research and communication management research. As indicated in the management literature, leadership has been defined as a process that encompasses leaders' attributes and behaviors that can influence task objectives and strategies, commitment and compliance in task-related behavior to achieve those objectives, group maintenance and identification, and the culture of an organization (e.g., Fiedler, 1978; House, 1971; Kerr & Jermier, 1978; Vroom & Yetton, 1973; Yukl, 1989). Therefore, the various streams of literature gave us the broad foundation that can serve as the basis for the definition of excellent leadership in public relations, which defines leadership in public relations comprehensively to include the major controversies and issues in leadership research, as well as some unique features associated with communication effectiveness, to specify this complex, multifaceted phenomenon.

Previous literature has largely failed to empirically examine the leadership concept in an integrative approach and as a multi-dimensional construct. That shortcoming has been addressed through the development of the measurement model, which integrated the key dimensions to form the overall leadership construct in a global scope. The conceptualization, the model testing and re-specification process finally have validated six essential dimensions of the multifaceted construct: *self dynamics, team collaboration, ethical orientation, relationship building, strategic decision making capability, and communication knowledge and expertise management*

capability. An examination of the factor loadings at the lower-order and the higher-order factors did not indicate that any one aspect is more important than any other. Therefore, the researchers would like to interpret the global construct of leadership in public relations as a mathematical composite of all six dimensions. Importantly, no single dimension itself was sufficient in describing or predicting the leadership phenomenon. Each of the dimensions contributed uniquely to the overall capability of an effective leader in public relations.

A direct implication for future research is that this perspective offers extremely useful insights into operationalizing measurement scales and testing key relationships empirically. The establishment of the construct and its key dimensions and associated item indicators implied that such studies can be launched by the research community in the future. Researchers may analyze leadership in public relations for insights into its impact on individuals and on the interaction between leaders and followers to increase communication effectiveness.

For the field of public relations, leadership can be complex and unfamiliar. While the results of this research cannot address all potential issues and situations that practitioners may face in their request to maximize communication effectiveness organizational-wide, it did imply that certain capabilities are must-have factors for effective leadership. Specifically, practitioners who wish to develop effective leadership capabilities and exhibit expertise along dimensions of excellent leadership will tend to be conducive to increasing credibility and getting involved in the strategic decision-making processes. For public relations practitioners, an understanding of how dimensions of leadership could influence their individual achievements and the communication objectives at the organizational level would benefit themselves in the practice. From the organization's perspective, understanding the sequence of developing essential capabilities of leadership will provide a road map for organizations planning to undertake communication management efforts.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1.1. Item measures of the dimension of self dynamics and its subsets

Self dynamics	An excellent public relations leader should exhibit…
Self Insight	
S1	The nature of being dependable.
S2	The nature of being trustworthy.
S3	The nature of being proactive.
S4	The capacity for engaging in strategic decision-making.
S5	The capacity for acting as a changing agent.
S6	The awareness of applying diverse strategies.
Shared Vision	
V1	The nature of being forward looking.
V2	The nature of having a vision of PR as a managerial function.
V3	The capacity for enlisting others in a shared vision.
V4	The capacity for providing a vision of potential changes in areas affecting the organization.
V5	The ability to provide a clear vision about PR values and role.
V6	The ability to provide a clear vision of how PR goals are congruent with organizational goals.

Note, the items are measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale with "1=a little bit" and "7= a great deal."

Table 1.2. Item measures of the dimension of team collaboration

Team Collaboration	An excellent public relations leader should exhibit...
T1	The ability to collaborate with members to define PR strategies.
T2	The ability to actively cope with crisis situations.
T3	The ability to develop a proactive and professional communication team.
T4	The ability to facilitate positive interdependence among team members.
T5	The ability to bring diverse groups together to collaboratively solve problems.
T6	The ability to inspire and motivate other members.

Table 1.3. Item measures of the dimension of ethical orientation

Ethical Orientation	An excellent public relations leader should have…
E1	The ability to maintain the core values of PR as professional standards.
E2	The ability to integrate these core values into actions.
E3	The ability to represent the organization without engaging in deceptive practices or communications.
E4	The ability to act promptly to correct erroneous communications of team members and other coworkers.
E5	Understanding the process of representing consistent behaviors that can be trusted by others inside and outside of the organization.
E6	Understanding ethical differences which grow out of diverse cultures.

Table 1.4. Item measures of the dimension of relationship building

Relationship Building	An excellent public relations leader should have…
R1	The ability to foster trust and credibility with organizational decision makers.
R2	The ability to develop coalitions to support proposed ideas or actions.
R3	The ability to mentor and help young professionals achieve success on the job.
R4	Being sought out for advice and counsel by executives in the organization.
R5	Understanding the process of regularly briefing members of the organization about public relations programs and results.
R6	The ability to cultivate relationships with key external publics.
R7	The ability to foster trust and credibility with media representatives.
R8	The ability to understand the needs for key publics.

Table 1.5. Item measures of the dimension of strategic decision-making capability

Strategic Decision-Making	An excellent public relations leader should have…
D1	The ability to be proactive in the organization's internal decision-making processes.
D2	The ability to span internal/external boundaries and interpret information from publics for organizational decision makers.
D3	The knowledge of the organization's business and its environment.
D4	The knowledge of the organization's decision-making processes, practices, and structures.
D5	Been included in strategic decision-making groups in the organization.

Table 1.6. Item measures of the dimension of communication knowledge management

Communication Knowledge Management	An excellent public relations leader should have…
C1	The ability to apply public relations knowledge to crisis situations.
C2	The ability to systematically evaluate communication programs and results to increase quality and effectiveness.
C3	The ability to obtain sufficient resources to support needed strategies and projects.
C4	The ability to use knowledge of mass and specialized media to help the organization communicate effectively with publics.
C5	The ability to strategically use new technologies to help the organization communicate and interact with publics.
C6	Known the process of using research to develop appropriate strategies, messages, and activities.
C7	Known the process of using research to help solve communication problems.
C8	Known the process of converting knowledge about publics and policies into effective and representative advocacy of these publics with decision makers.

Table 2. Item aggregation for composite indicators for both samples

Construct	14 Composite Indicators	Individual Items
Self Insight	S11	S1, S4
	S12	S3, S5, S6
Shared Vision	V11	V3, V5, V6
	V12	V1, V2, V4
Team Collaboration	T11	T5, T6
	T12	T1, T3, T4
Ethical Orientation	E11	E1, E4
	E12	E2, E5, E6
Relationship Building	R11	R2, R5, R8
	R12	R1, R4, R6, R7
Strategic Decision Making	D11	D3, D5
	D12	D2, D4
Comm Knowledge Management	C11	C2, C3, C4, C8
	C12	C1, C5, C6, C7

Table 5. Model testing results for the first-order measurement model ($n = 222$)

Construct/ Composite Indicators	Standardized Loading (t-value)[a]	Standard errors	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted
Self Insight			*.576*	*.404*
S11	.477 (9.50)	.050		
S12	.449 (8.96)	.050		
Shared Vision			.735	.581
V11	.537 (12.85)	.042		
V12	.475 (11.69)	.041		
Team Collaboration			.773	.632
T11	.669 (13.11)	.051		
T12	.546 (13.46)	.041		
Ethical Orientation			.815	.692
E11	.455 (11.74)	.039		
E12	.592 (15.05)	.039		
Relationship Building			.825	.687
R11	.592 (14.75)	.037		
R12	.532 (14.08)	.038		
Strategic Decision-Making			.803	.672
D11	.563 (13.13)	.043		
D12	.639 (14.36)	.045		
Comm Knowledge Management			.850	.740
C11	.630 (15.79)	.040		
C12	.670 (14.94)	.045		

Note. [a] Figures in parentheses are t values. Based on one-tailed t test: t values>.165, p<.05; t values>2.33, p<.01. Almost all constructs exhibited high level of composite reliability (>.70) and variance extracted measure (>.50) except for the construct of self insight (CR=.576; AVE=.404).

Table 3. Correlation matrix and standard deviation for 14 composite indicators in the Primary Group ($n = 222$)

	S11	S12	V11	V12	T11	T12	E11	E12	R11	R12	D11	D12	C11	C12
S11	1.000													
S12	0.402	1.000												
V11	0.456	0.543	1.000											
V12	0.496	0.422	0.578	1.000										
T11	0.393	0.530	0.524	0.467	1.000									
T12	0.563	0.389	0.480	0.558	0.635	1.000								
E11	0.405	0.277	0.388	0.328	0.487	0.452	1.000							
E12	0.508	0.345	0.436	0.432	0.506	0.493	0.670	1.000						
R11	0.577	0.422	0.529	0.516	0.520	0.560	0.452	0.538	1.000					
R12	0.438	0.389	0.415	0.463	0.591	0.571	0.433	0.542	0.684	1.000				
D11	0.372	0.436	0.544	0.403	0.450	0.410	0.334	0.348	0.579	0.481	1.000			
D12	0.452	0.492	0.570	0.499	0.501	0.513	0.443	0.499	0.596	0.530	0.668	1.000		
C11	0.471	0.398	0.501	0.482	0.507	0.553	0.409	0.593	0.650	0.666	0.547	0.538	1.000	
C12	0.451	0.370	0.504	0.474	0.542	0.523	0.409	0.537	0.637	0.609	0.569	0.521	0.742	1.000
SD	0.729	0.731	0.678	0.651	0.848	0.678	0.617	0.652	0.649	0.654	0.713	0.755	0.717	0.793

Note. All correlations are significant at .05 level.

Table 4. The SPRF group: Sample correlations, Means (*M*), and Standard Deviations (*SD*); N=162

	S11	S12	V11	V12	T11	T12	E11	E12	R11	R12	D11	D12	C11	C12
S11	1.000													
S12	0.571	1.000												
V11	0.419	0.497	1.000											
V12	0.561	0.543	0.596	1.000										
T11	0.492	0.594	0.498	0.635	1.000									
T12	0.477	0.482	0.536	0.578	0.601	1.000								
E11	0.576	0.405	0.424	0.445	0.412	0.472	1.000							
E12	0.578	0.503	0.474	0.507	0.489	0.575	0.731	1.000						
R11	0.507	0.437	0.594	0.627	0.479	0.646	0.470	0.568	1.000					
R12	0.540	0.557	0.638	0.681	0.596	0.647	0.465	0.604	0.761	1.000				
D11	0.356	0.440	0.512	0.431	0.423	0.457	0.375	0.452	0.647	0.580	1.000			
D12	0.580	0.578	0.585	0.568	0.582	0.596	0.436	0.551	0.605	0.660	0.657	1.000		
C11	0.592	0.577	0.575	0.559	0.571	0.571	0.505	0.617	0.666	0.710	0.599	0.629	1.000	
C12	0.502	0.578	0.482	0.583	0.543	0.489	0.449	0.560	0.628	0.667	0.569	0.620	0.787	1.000
M	6.457	6.093	6.366	6.228	6.071	6.240	6.671	6.455	6.373	6.216	6.488	6.320	6.289	6.098
SD	0.633	0.769	0.617	0.676	0.857	0.628	0.500	0.601	0.635	0.613	0.627	0.715	0.592	0.839

Note. All correlations are significant at .05 level.

Table 6. Factor loadings at the first and second levels for the higher-order measurement model (*n* = 222)

	First-order factor loadings (standardized solution)					
Composites	SI/SV	TC	EO	RB	DM	CK
S11	.674	-	-	-	-	-
S12	.631	-	-	-	-	-
V11	.759	-	-	-	-	-
V12	.725	-	-	-	-	-
T11	-	.790	-	-	-	-
T12	-	.804	-	-	-	-
E11	-	-	.745	-	-	-
E12	-	-	.899	-	-	-
R11	-	-	-	.849	-	-
R12	-	-	-	.806	-	-
D11	-	-	-	-	.781	-
D12	-	-	-	-	.856	-
C11	-	-	-	-	-	.875
C12	-	-	-	-	-	.848
	Second-order factor solution in the Gamma matrix (standardized)					
	Excellent Leadership in Public Relations					
SI/SV	.899					
TC	.897					
EO	.766					
RB	.951					
DM	.850					
CM	.897					

Figure 1: A multilevel measurement model of public relations leadership (conceptual model)
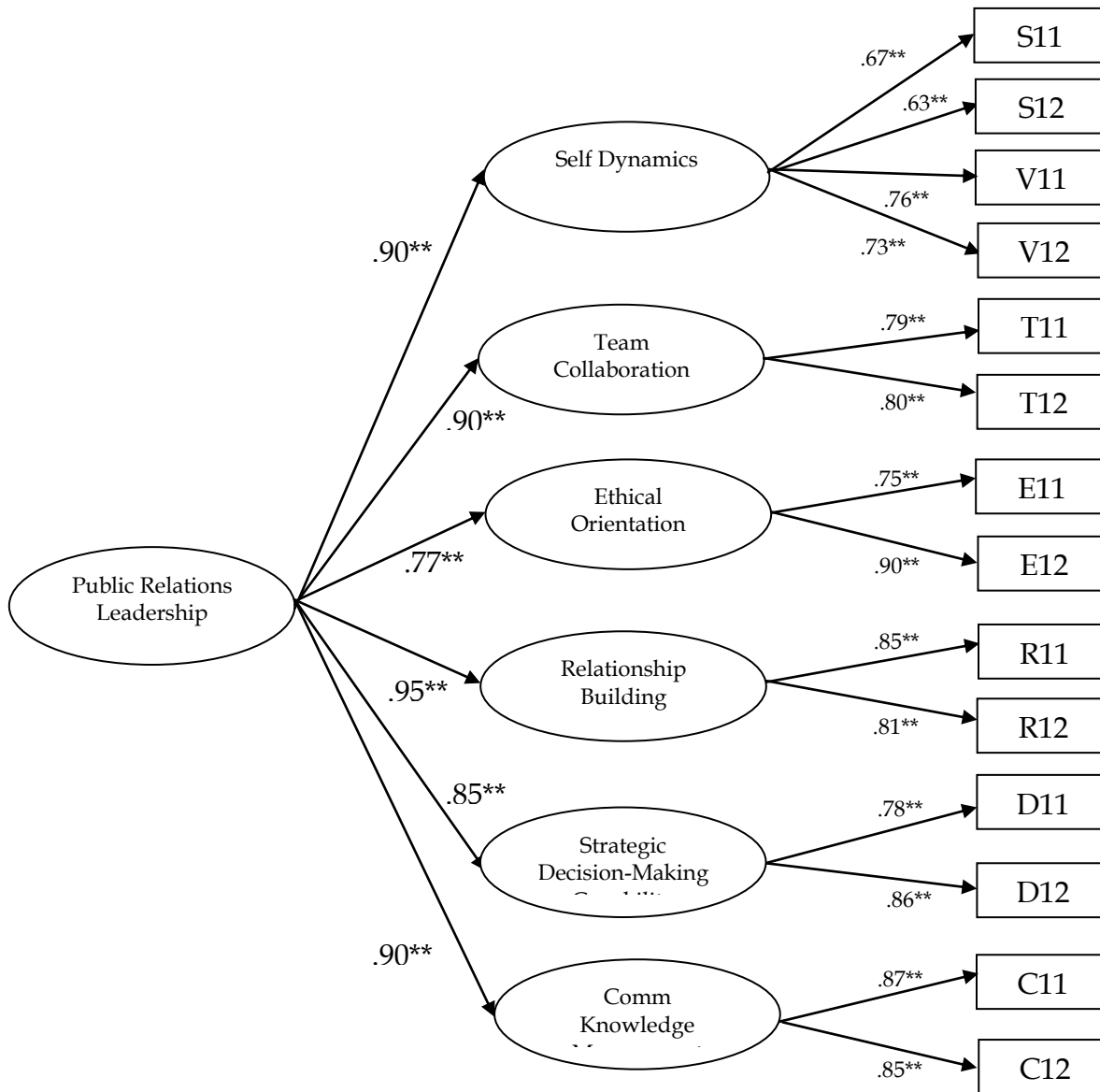
Figure 2. The second-order measurement model of public relations leadership established by using the primary group (*n* = 222). χ^2 (71) = 156.26, *p* < .01, NFI = .969, NNFI = .978, CFI = .983, SRMR = .043, RMSEA = .074 with 90 percent confidence interval for [.06; .09]. *p < .01

An Attempt on Quantitative Profiling of PR Practitioners in Japanese Companies Applicability of "Revealed Preference" Approach

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Abstract

Public relations function has increasingly caught attention of top management of Japanese companies, especially after some incidents showing drastic differences in resulted situation from skillful conduct (or, unskillful conduct) of communication in both national and international markets. Any corporate activity is conducted by those who are assigned to that particular task. And, allocation of scares human resources indicates top managements' intention. We consider possible applicability of "revealed preference" approach to PR research. Utilizing the database of PR practitioners constructed for this research shows some of the characteristics of those who are responsible of PR activities in Japanese companies which reflect management intention and decision concerning communication activity.

Introduction

Japanese companies have been under the pressure of managerial environment changes for some time. From the perspective of PR research, the focal points are changes in management structure and communication activity. Change in strategic and operational management thinking will induce change in PR/corporate communication structure. At the same time, communication activity may help to formulate common understandings among top management necessity to innovate or renovate management structure.

Among top management of Japanese companies, it is now a common understanding that communication matters. In fact, they have witnessed some incidents showing drastic differences in resulted situation from skillful conduct (or, unskillful conduct) of communication in both national and international markets. However, priority placed on communication activity among top management issues varies widely among companies. And more so if we look into the day-to-day corporate activity. Often time, remarks by top managements are not reflected in actual corporate behavior. Saying is not necessarily equivalent to doing.

When we look into the communication activity of Japanese companies in changing environment, we base our analysis on two notions related to organizational decision making and behavior. Organizational recognition of necessity of particular function within the organization is revealed by establishment of dedicated section or units. The intention of top management is reflected in the decision of human resource allocation within the organization. Therefore, by observing organizational structure and human resource allocation, we are able to speculate on management intention. This approach is effective in PR research because, unlike the case of establishing new SBU or major investment project, decision on communication section is not the main contents of disclosure statement.

The internal structure of an organization exhibits managerial intention and decision on how best the functional structure for conducting business activities be composed. The decision concerning communication function by the management is the result of multi-level decision making such as;
Decision to set up dedicated PR units
Decision on assignment of PR manager
Decision to assign executive officer in charge of PR
Decision on staffing of dedicated PR unit

When we consider that any corporate activity is the activity of people in charge of or assigned to that particular task. And, scope and depth of activities depends on people's knowledge and experience that are accumulated through their career. Therefore, human resource allocation reflects top management intention.

Theoretical consideration: revealed preference theory revisited

An attempt to interpret management's intention through observation of organizational structure and human resource allocation is based on the concept of revealed preference theory. The revealed preference theory of consumer behavior was originally conceptualized by Paul A. Samuelson in his 1938 paper. In essence, the revealed preference theory states that it is possible to reconstruct consumer's utility function or demand function by examining what is selected or actually consumed at certain price level, or revealed preference. The significance of this theory is that it shows unobservable can be reached through the examination of a set of observables.

Utility function of a consumer is hidden deep inside one's mind. Yet, it is considered to be a foundation of economic behavior when a consumer faces any choice. Utility function itself is not observable. However, revealed preference theory assures that basic characteristics of one's utility function can be identified by observing actual consumption pattern provided that selected bundles satisfy certain condition.

The management's true intention and reasoning behind decision concerning communication activity are often time hidden behind the closed door of the board room. Unlike the decision concerning major investment project, decision concerning communication activity is not the subject of disclosure. All we can observe is the result of the decision making process. If we are to grasp management's true intention, we confront conceptually equivalent situation of studying consumer choice. Therefore, we argue that we need to consider possibility of taking revealed preference approach.

This paper presents the result of the first step of our attempt to demonstrate applicability of revealed preference approach to PR research. Our research goal is to establish an approach to examine the intention of individual company's communication effort by observing result of decision-making process by the management, which is revealed in organizational change and human resource allocation. And, by accumulating what is observable, we intend to look into the communication function of Japanese companies in changing environment.

As the first step, we constructed a database of PR practitioners within Japanese companies to grasp an overall picture of communication activity of Japanese companies with focus on human resource allocation. We focus on the following questions.

- How do PR-related organizations structured in Japanese companies?
- Are there any notable features observable in recent organizational change related to PR in Japanese companies?
- What are the characteristics of PR practitioners in Japanese companies?
- What are the career paths of PR practitioners?

With these analyses, we are able to acquire the overall picture of communication function of Japanese companies which will serve as a base of comparative study of individual company.

Database of PR practitioners

The database of PR practitioners is constructed covering over 2,000 Chief Communication Officers and general managers of PR departments in Japanese listed companies. For the comparison purpose, database of general manager of personnel department is also constructed. The data are collected from various publicly available sources, namely;

- Annual Directory of Corporate Officers and Managers, published annually by Diamond Co. Ltd.

- Daily coverage of personnel move announcement, Japan Industrial Daily (Nikkei Sangyo Shinbun).

- PR managers appointment news on "Keizai Koho", monthly bulletin published by Japan Institute for Social and Economic Affairs (Keizi Koho Senta-).

Currently, we have accumulated data for 2001 and 2009-2010. This database also includes CSR and IR managers. So far, we are covering about 800 listed companies.

Preliminary analysis

Japanese companies are said to be very homogeneous in term of human resource. Most of the staffs are recruited at their initial entrance to the job market when they finish higher education. Mid-career job change is still miner case in Japan. Therefore, life-long employment and on-the-job training are still major practice among Japanese companies, especially larger, listed companies. Typical career path of a white color staff at larger Japanese companies is limited within a company he/she joined when he/she entered the job market. As his/her career develops, he/she climb up the organizational ladder with increasingly heavier responsibility. In Japanese companies, the majority of executive officers and members of the board are appointed within the company organization. So, 30+year veteran is not rare in Japanese companies and majority of executive officers spend their entire career at the company they initially joined.

With above general observation concerning Japanese human resource practice, we focus on two types of PR practitioners. One is the executive officers in charge of PR, and other is general manager of PR department.Scope of responsibility of executive officer in charge of PR varies widely: some officers in Japanese companies concentrate on PR and communication activities, while majority of them have multiple responsibility and PR is but just one of the varied responsibility.General Manager of PR department is responsible of day-to-day operation of PR activity. However, often time, they are de-facto Chief Communication Officers.

Status of the officer-in-charge and the head of department

Status of officers and managers indicates how a company weighs the importance of particular task within its organizational structure. In 2010, our data shows that 74% of the officers in charge of PR are the member of the board. This indicates that majority of Japanese listed companies have at least one member in the board with PR and communication

responsibility. And officers in charge of PR have direct access to on-going discussion on top management issues. This, in turn, indicates certain recognition of importance of communication activity by top management at Japanese listed companies.

Status of Officers in charge of PR, 2010

Status	no	ratio
Treated as Officer	3	0.7%
Managing Officer	53	12.2%
Senior Managing Officer	6	1.4%
Executive Managing Officer	42	9.7%
Senior Executive Managing Officer	6	1.4%
Executive Vice President	2	0.5%
President	0	0.0%
Executive officers	109	25.1%
Director	161	37.0%
Executive Managing Director	65	14.9%
Senior Executive Managing Director	30	6.9%
Representative Director	31	7.1%
Director and Executive Vice President	31	7.1%
Director and President	5	1.1%
Directors	323	74.3%
Total	435	100.0%

Status of PR Dept. managers, 2010

Status of managers	no	ratio
GM level	527	72.3%
Treated as Officer	16	2.2%
Managing Officer	107	14.7%
Senior Managing Officer	4	0.5%
Executive Managing Officer	18	2.5%
Senior Executive Managing Officer	1	0.1%
Executive Vice President	0	0.0%
President	0	0.0%
Executive officers	130	17.8%
Director	38	5.2%
Executive Managing Director	13	1.8%
Senior Executive Managing Director	4	0.5%
Representative Director	1	0.1%
Director and Executive Vice President	0	0.0%
Director and President	0	0.0%
Directors	56	7.7%
Total	729	100.0%

We need to compare PR with other corporate functions in order to clarify how companies place relative importance among different functions. Compared to that of personnel managers, status of PR managers are heavily concentrated on general manager status (manager of department level organization within a company). For Personnel managers, 27.5% are executive officers and 33.3% are members of the board. Whereas, for PR managers, 17.8% are executive officers and only 7.7% are members of the board. This comparison suggests that the personnel department is considered to be more important than PR department, in the viewpoint of the distance to the management decision making process. Assigning an executive officer or a member of the board to the position of the personnel department manager indicates that the company has recognized the need of close contact between top management and Personnel Managers who are responsible to day-to-day operation. Compared to the personnel department, this simple observation suggests that PR department is relatively further away from the board of directors or top management decision making process in Japanese companies.

Status of Personnel Dept. Managers, 2010

Status of managers	no	ratio
GM level	274	38.2%
Treated as Officer	7	1.0%
Managing Officer	175	24.4%
Senior Managing Officer	6	0.8%
Executive Managing Officer	16	2.2%
Senior Executive Managing Officer	0	0.0%
Executive Vice President	0	0.0%
President	0	0.0%
Executive officers	197	27.5%
Director	188	26.2%
Executive Managing Director	40	5.6%
Senior Executive Managing Director	9	1.3%
Representative Director	1	0.1%
Director and Executive Vice President	1	0.1%
Director and President	0	0.0%
Directors	239	33.3%
Total	717	100.0%

Status of PR Dept. managers, 2010

Status of managers	no	ratio
GM level	527	72.3%
Treated as Officer	16	2.2%
Managing Officer	107	14.7%
Senior Managing Officer	4	0.5%
Executive Managing Officer	18	2.5%
Senior Executive Managing Officer	1	0.1%
Executive Vice President	0	0.0%
President	0	0.0%
Executive officers	130	17.8%
Director	38	5.2%
Executive Managing Director	13	1.8%
Senior Executive Managing Director	4	0.5%
Representative Director	1	0.1%
Director and Executive Vice President	0	0.0%
Director and President	0	0.0%
Directors	56	7.7%
Total	729	100.0%

Although relative importance of PR is below that of personnel, there is an indication that importance of PR department has risen between 2001 and 2010. In 2001, 19% of the observed managers of PR department were executive officers or board members. However, in 2010, this ratio has increased to 28%. During 10-year period, Japanese companies have begun to recognize the necessity of placing PR function closer to the top management.

Commencement age of career, general managers of PR departments

Our data shows that, in 2010, average age of officers in charge of PR is 58.97 years old with standard deviation of 4.75. For general managers of PR department, average age is 55.43 years old with standard deviation of 6.04. In both cases, we observe that most of them are in their 50s.

Overwhelming 78.2% of general managers of PR departments in 2001 started their careers at age 18 to 25, upon graduating high schools, colleges or universities. In 2010, this ratio declined to 62.7%. Although the ratio has dropped significantly, majority of PR managers in 2010 started their careers at companies they now serve as general managers of PR department. As we discussed earlier, standard recruiting and HRD practices of majority of Japanese companies depend on group employment of new graduates at April every year. And mid-career job change is still rare case.

This result indicates that company-specific experience accumulated within the company is highly valued by Japanese listed companies. This is no exception to the position of general manager of PR department.

Commencement age of career at present company: General Managers of PR Dept. 2001 (n=238)
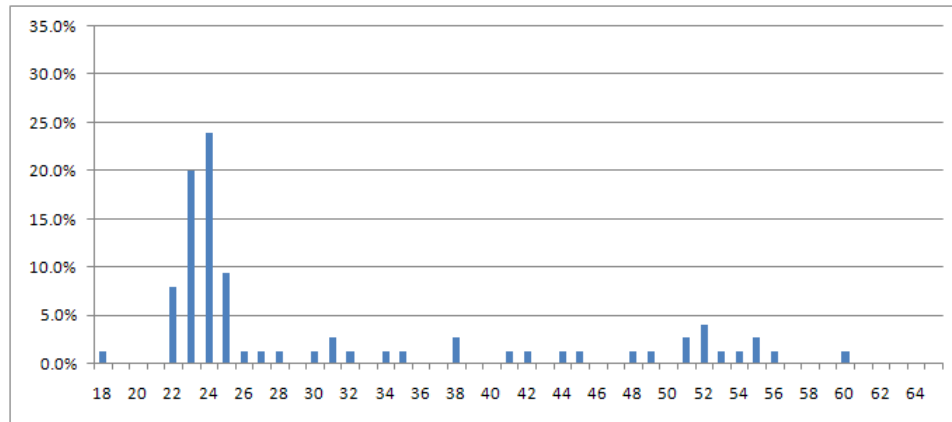
Age 18～25 78.2%

Commencement age of career at present company: General Managers of PR Dept. 2010 (n=75)
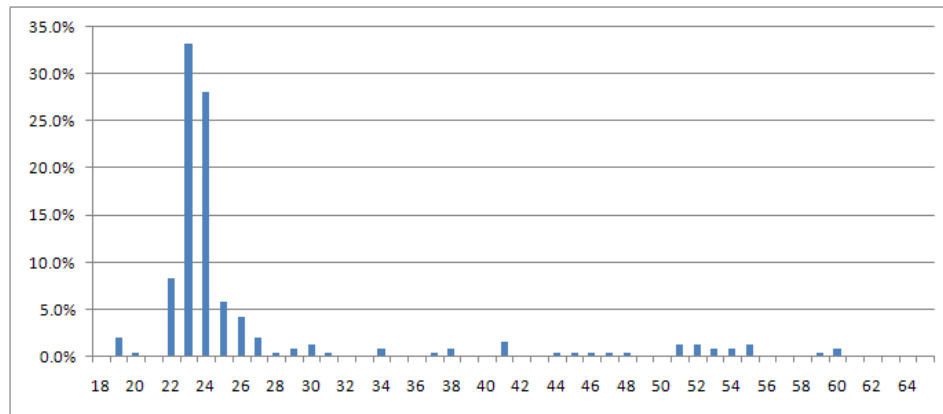
Age 18～25 62.7%

Job rotation

Most of Japanese business persons accumulate business experience and knowledge through job rotation and on-the-job-training within the company they initially joined upon graduating college or university. For some, there are opportunities to accumulate enough knowledge and experience to be a specialist in some area of activities. For others, rotational move within the company continues to the later stage of their career.

Our database includes some 350 cases of personnel move in and out of PR manager position between January 2009 and September 2010. Based on this data, 40.3% of incoming PR managers come from business unit position, while 37.3% of outgoing PR managers assume positions in business units. This suggests that, in many Japanese companies, PR manager's position is not reserved for PR specialist. This leads to a tentative conclusion that Japanese companies recognize the need of broad knowledge and human network within the company as the requirement of PR/communication manager.

Next job assignment of leaving PR managers

	Next job assignment	no	ratio	
Headquarter	PR, CSR, IR	18	12.7%	
	Secretary, President's office	4	2.8%	
	Planning, New business development	12	8.5%	
	General affairs, Administration, System	31	21.8%	
	Intellectual property, Legal	5	3.5%	
	Finance, Accounting	7	4.9%	
	Personnel, HRD	11	7.7%	
	Auditor, Advisor	1	0.7%	62.7%
Business Unit	Head of branch office	17	12.0%	
	Business unit	17	12.0%	
	R&D, Procurement	1	0.7%	
	Sales, Marketing	18	12.7%	37.3%
		142		

Previous job assignment of arriving PR managers

	Previous job	no	ratio	
Headquarter	PR, CSR, IR	64	29.6%	
	Sexretary, President's office	11	5.1%	
	Plannning, New business development	15	6.9%	
	General affairs, Administration, System	23	10.6%	
	Intelectual property, Legal	4	1.9%	
	Finance, Accounting	7	3.2%	
	Personnel, HRD	5	2.3%	
	Auditor, Advisor	0	0.0%	59.7%
Business Unit	Head of branch office	13	6.0%	
	Business unit	38	17.6%	
	R&D, Procurement	6	2.8%	
	Sales, Marketing	30	13.9%	40.3%
		216		

Next steps

 Even casual tabulation of our database shows some of the characteristics of PR/communication function of Japanese companies. This preliminary result indicates that

our approach may lead to one of the way to understand intention and reasoning by top management concerning PR/communication function and activity.
 In order to refine our approach, we need to consider followings,

- Time-series analysis of our database: In this paper, we have compared 2001 and 2010. During this period, there was major change in legal framework of governance structure in the company law. In order to separate the effect of this change in legal framework, we need to add data for 1991, 1995, and 2005.

- Cross-section analysis of our database: There may be some industry-specific tendency in PR/communication activity. We need to understand any peculiarity when we look into the individual company's activity.

- Expand our analysis to link organizational and human resource aspect to activity indicator: Organizational change and human resource allocation are the result of top management decision. If we venture to evaluate the outcome of the top management decision, we need to explore ways to link pattern of human resource allocation to outcome indicators.

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Multicultural Environments and Their Challenges to Crisis Communication

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Abstract

Grounded theory analysis was applied to qualitative interviews with 25 communication professionals concerning cultural influences on crisis. This approach yielded several findings. First, PR practitioners had difficulties in defining multiculturalism, often equating cultural diversity with communicating with Latinos. Second, interviewees saw cultural differences as just one aspect of diversity, emphasizing that age, religion, and education differences also affect corporate discourse. Third, although professionals considered culture a key element of crisis management, they did not feel prepared to handle the challenges of a multicultural crisis, nor did they report that they used culturally adjusted crisis strategies often. By integrating cultural competence and crisis management frameworks, this study provides suggestions to prepare communication students and practitioners to new demands of the profession.

According to labor predictions, the workforce of this century is characterized by increased numbers of women, minorities, intergenerational workers, and different lifestyles (Langdon, McMenamin, & Krolik, 2002). As Wakefield (2001) stated, a global market composed of a multiethnic audience is currently a reality to the vast majority of companies. Enterprises face a need to work and communicate competently with expanding heterogeneity of internal and external audiences, including differences in gender, age, race, religion, ethnicity, and cultural background (Barker & Gower, 2010).

Mirroring society's interconnectedness, many organizations have become similar to flexible webs, where connections among organizational actors, such as employees, customers, suppliers just to name a few, transcend geographical and political boundaries (Castells, 2000a). Diversity has become part of companies' social fabric and can be understood as the potential behavioral differences among group members in relation to other groups (Roberson, 2006). Individuals and organizations create and share social, historical, and cultural values through their communication practices (Sha, 2006). As a result, public relations theory needs to take into account the influence of diverse identities on public relations strategies (Banks, 2000).

As Grunig and Grunig (2003) postulated, public relations practices aim to build relationships with key audiences in order to shape corporations' missions and strategies in accordance with audiences' preferences. However, often key audiences are culturally diverse and interpret corporate responses (Taylor & Kent, 1999; Zaharna, 2000) and crisis events differently (Eisenberg & Riley, 2000).

Several examples illustrate the ways in which crises in our global society and economy have multinational and multicultural effects. The recent U.S. subprime mortgage crisis provides an example of the interconnectedness between corporations around the world and the consequences for society. Since mid-2007, banks and their stakeholders all over the world have felt the impact of what was supposedly a U.S. crisis (Associated Press Wire, 2007). National damages—understood here as economic, reputational, and emotional losses—have been massive. Thousands of people have lost their houses and jobs. Financial institutions have lost billions of dollars, pushing the U.S. to face a frightening recession. However, the subprime crisis has much broader consequences. Indeed, it represents a macro-crisis that has put at risk the financial system worldwide (Palm Beach Post, 2008).

When single corporations face crises, these troubling events can also encompass multicultural perceptions and multinational consequences, as crises affecting Merck's VIOXX and Mattel's toys showed. In fact, lead poisoning caused by Mattel's toy cars led to the discovery of very different perceptions about toys' safety among Chinese manufacturers. According to Emily Cao, a sales representative for a major Chinese producer of stuffed playthings, before Mattel's recall European companies had requested a substitution of vinyl or plastic noses, which may contain toxic chemicals, for embroidered noses on stuffed toys. According to Cao, for the Chinese producers the European request was an exaggeration of minimal risks. The request was ignored. After Mattel's recall, safety issues are being taken much more seriously by Chinese toy producers (Johnson, 2007).

Crises like these are created, described, and resolved through communication (Hearit & Courtright, 2004). Communicative actions, influenced by cultural perceptions and values, help to create reality through the meanings ascribed to situations (Eisenberg & Riley, 2000) as well as

form the basis to interpret critical moments (Stohl, 2000). Crises, indeed, are interpretative events. They are interruptions of the narrative of normality, where individuals involved seek to make sense of a new reality, evaluating and reinterpreting it according to their own social, historical, and cultural values (Heath, 2004; Heath & Millar, 2004).

Crisis communication scholarship has investigated to a certain extent the ways in which diverse audiences perceive and respond to crises. However, crisis communication scholars have not examined yet whether cultural influences are considered relevant by communication professionals during crises. This project aims to close this gap, examining how producers of communication strategies—communications professionals—deal with cultural variability when designing of crisis strategies and whether culturally sensitive communication strategies are consistently applied.

Crises and Communication Strategies

Crises represent serious threats to the most fundamental goals of an organization and its stakeholders. These events are unexpected and sometimes unpredictable. No matter what the size of an organization, a crisis interrupts normal business and damages corporate reputation; it can imperil future growth, profitability, and even the company's survival (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003). Crises jeopardize the interests of employees, managers, suppliers, stockholders, victims, and community members. Sometimes lives are at stake. As a result, crisis episodes affect individuals' sense of reality, security, and normality. Problems happen at companies every day, but one single crisis may be enough to significantly damage or even destroy an organization (Coombs, 1999; Fearn-Banks, 2002; Hearit & Courtright, 2004; Heath & Millar, 2004; Lerbinger, 1997).

Crisis communication strategies have a twofold role. First, these actions aim to control damages, inform audiences of immediate risks and procedures to be followed and report corrective actions (Fearn-Banks, 2002). Second, crisis communication strategies play a symbolic role, aiming to construct a positive account of the events and the organizational actions (Coombs, 1998), but also subject to different interpretations (Heath & Millar, 2004). For example, more than two decades after the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska, on March 24, 1989, the company still battles against economic and reputational losses. Exxon's communication strategies work to foster a pro-environmental persona, attributing the cause of the incident to a myriad of factors (Heath, 2004). However, the company's actions contradict the pro-environmental façade. Exxon spent twenty years in a legal battle to avoid paying $470 million in interest on more than $507.5 million in punitive damages following the 11 million gallon spill of crude in Prince William Sound. It was not until June 30, 2009 that Exxon decided not to appeal further and announced that it would soon make a payment on the interest accrued during its years of resistance (Pemberton, 2009).

Despite the occurrence of a concrete event, crises are highly influenced by the communicative actions taken to define, describe, and solve them (Hearit & Courtright, 2004). Perceptions of events can be equally, if not more, important than the actual event (Ni, 2009). Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge that crisis episodes are subject to different interpretations that sometimes illustrate competing points of view (Heath & Millar, 2004). In effect, crises and responses to these critical episodes are small narratives, representing individual interpretations of

what has happened. Generally these interpretations do not follow a linear and organized process (Tyler, 2005), but are subjective and greatly influenced by culture (Eisenberg & Riley, 2000).

Culture Diversity and Corporate Messages in a Networked Environment

The current state of society, characterized by high dependence on technologies, virtual forms of interaction, and vast possibilities for cultural exchange (Castells, 2000b), makes even more important an in-depth understanding of crisis communication strategies as symbolic actions, subject to a myriad of interpretations (Heath & Millar, 2004). Cultural diversity is the main feature of an interconnected society and market (Curtin & Gaither, 2007; Van Dijk, 1999). As a result, organizations have to adapt the ways in which they behave and communicate by taking into account that the entire world is listening and expects to be addressed immediately and effectively when a crisis hits (Bush, 2009; Stohl, 2000).

As Hofstede (1984) proposed, culture is "the collective programming of the mind" (p. 21) that guides individuals' interactions with each other and with organizations. Culture is composed of the system of meanings that specific groups adopt to interpret and act upon reality (Banks, 2000). Individuals' reactions to corporation and their messages are strongly influenced by their beliefs, values, and culture. When human beings interact, they do so based on a deeply interconnected web of cultural values and traditions (Stohl, 2000).

Lack of cultural sensitivity will likely hinder organizations' chances to identify risk factors and to minimize the probability of a potential crisis. Along the same lines, lack of cultural sensitivity may prevent organizations from developing effective corporate messages. In effect, prior scholarship has identified cultural misunderstandings as one factor that makes already-acute crises worse (Lee, 2004). Moreover, cultural characteristics may affect the importance regarded to crisis prevention and planning. For example, Liu, Chang and Zhao (2009) showed that Chinese executives do not equate crisis management with prevention and planning. Problematic business behaviors are tolerated so as to maintain a harmonious environment.

Similarly, examining South Korean crisis communication practices, Kim, Cha and Kim (2008) pointed out that collectivist values affect perceptions of what constitutes a problematic situation and an adequate crisis response. Unconditional loyalty to corporations, the importance of interpersonal relationships, and internal harmony guide crisis communication strategies in South Korea. They emphasized that respecting the South Korean crisis communication style is a necessary condition for successful crisis recovery.

Other scholars have concentrated their research on the ways diverse audiences perceive and interpret corporations and their communication strategies during acute crises. For example, Lee (2004), investigating Hong Kong consumers' evaluation of organizational crises, suggested that attributions of responsibility are influenced by cultural values, affecting what type of crisis strategies should be applied. He pointed out that a no-comment response is equated with wisdom in the Chinese culture, and is therefore a well-accepted crisis strategy in Hong Kong, whereas in Western cultures, silence at a critical moment is interpreted as lack of control and uncertainty by a corporation, and is not an effective strategy (Coombs, 1999). Xu (2006) analyzed three multinational organizations in China that have faced recent corporate crises and found similar results to Lee's; that is, a no-comment response is well accepted by the Chinese audience, while apologies are understood as merely ritualistic behavior.

Exploring different aspects of Asian cultures, other scholars have investigated the consequences of personal connections and collectivist values in communication strategies. For example, Sriramesh (2002) showed that public relations practices in Asia often are limited to maintaining good relationships with the government. Hung (2004) argued that the relational orientation of Chinese culture greatly affects organizations' communication practices. Guanxi, the Chinese word for personal network, has to be the basis for public relations and crisis tactics, according to Hung. Similarly, analyzing how collectivist values shape crisis communication strategies in Taiwan, Huang, Lin, and Su (2005) stated that relationship maintenance and cultivation are the main purposes of communication in the Chinese culture. As a result, these researchers identified new categories of crisis responses grounded on strategic ambiguity that can put a crisis to rest. Termed "diversion," this new type of crisis response represents the necessity to maintain a harmonious relationship even if a problem cannot be solved. Meng (2010) also showed that victim-oriented strategies, in which an organization emphasizes its relationship with consumers as the most valuable asset, are key for effective crisis management in China.

Cultural influences on corporate strategies are not limited to differences between countries. Cultural diversity is an increasingly important characteristic of audiences within the U.S. as well (Becker, 2005; Sha, 2006). For example, Marimoto and La Ferle (2008) examined the influence of culture on Asian Americans' perception of source credibility. The authors argued that ad models who share the same ethnicity with the study's participants were considered more credible and were able to influence, to a greater degree, participants' willingness to buy the product advertised. Although their study focused mainly on advertisements, it is possible to trace a parallel with organizations' spokespersons during a crisis. In fact, as Liu et al (2009) postulated, the perceived similarity and sense of responsibility of corporate leaders play a key role on their levels of credibility and effectiveness. Alvarez and Helms (2001) also emphasized that racial and cultural identities function as filters that individuals use to interact with society and organizations.

All these studies focused primarily on the way cultural background influences perceptions of crises and corporate communication strategies. Multicultural elements permeate each aspect of a crisis. In fact, culture should be seen as the nexus of public relations practices and globalized markets (Sriramesh & Duhé, 2009). However, there are still much to be investigated regarding cultural influences in crisis events and communication strategies. This project aims to expand the crisis communication scholarship, applying the filtering function of culture to assess communication professionals' ability to manage crises in diverse environments. Therefore, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ1: How do communication professionals themselves define multiculturalism and its role in crisis communication?

RQ2: To what extent do communication professionals perceive cultural elements as important aspects of crisis episodes?

RQ3: According to communication professionals, what are the most relevant cultural elements to be addressed when designing crisis communication strategies?

RQ4: How often, according to communication professionals, do corporations culturally adjust crisis communication strategies?

A call for a New Perspective

As Freitag (2002) pointed out, in a globalized society, virtually all communication practices are multinational and multicultural. The vast majority of audiences is multicultural regardless of their specific geographical location. Even companies operating within U.S. boundaries will most likely address multicultural audiences.

To explore the role of multiculturalism in crises, this project adopts a perspective largely used in other research fields, such as psychology, education, and nursing, based on the theories of Sue (1991, 2001), who argued that multicultural settings and encounters are too rich and complex to be divided into sets of discrete traits. He proposed that to efficiently work in a globalized society professionals need to (a) be aware of their own beliefs and attitudes towards several cultures, including their own, (b) be open to novel knowledge, actively looking for accurate information about other social and cultural perspectives, and (c) be committed to respect diversity and act against prejudice. This perspective defines cultural competence as the ability to effectively interact and communicate with other people in a pluralistic society, considering and respecting gender, class, religious, racial, ethnic, cultural, and sexual differences (Sue, 1991, 2001). Cultural competence involves negotiating cultural meanings, understanding differences, and, if necessary, altering behaviors and procedures (Sue, 2001).

This theoretical approach takes into account the formative function of culture, emphasizing that cultural norms, beliefs, and expectations shape individuals' understanding of reality, patterns of interaction, and perceptions of communication messages (Sue 2001). This theory is used in this project as a framework for suggestions to develop effective crisis communication management.

Methodology

Interviews are a particularly appropriate method to investigate people's perceptions, beliefs, and opinions on specific issues (Pontin, 2000). Through qualitative interviews, researchers are able to better understand how individuals experience facts and can reconstruct situations based on participants' accounts of the event (Hung, 2004). In addition, through qualitative interviews, researchers have a chance to apprehend both latent and manifest content, thereby acquiring rich data and an in-depth understanding of people's behavior and experiences (Pontin, 2000; Sommer & Sommer, 1991).

Data collection procedures

Qualitative interviews were conducted with 25 communication professionals to discover their understanding of, and opinions about, the role of cultural influences on crisis communication strategies. The sample was drawn from communication professionals currently employed in a wide array of industries in the Charlotte area. Charlotte is the biggest city in North Carolina, with a population of approximately 700,000 in 2008 (Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, n.d.). The area houses the headquarters and branches of a wide array of national and multinational companies and industries, in which professionals from all over the U.S. and the globe work. As Hung (2004) pointed out, for qualitative interviews, the size of sample is not as important as proper selection of participants. A purposive sample, where individuals identified by the researcher as well-versed in the topic examined, was recruited (Babbie, 2004; Singleton & Straits, 2005).

Using the strategy of snowball sampling, additional participants were found through the interviewees' suggestions. Interviewees agreed to participate anonymously; hence they are identified in this report by position title and type of industry. Nineteen interviews were conducted face-to-face at participants' offices, 5 were conducted over the telephone, and 1 interview was conducted via e-mail, each lasting about 30 minutes.

Aiming to obtain in-depth information from the participants, this study relied on semi-structured interviews. This type of interview allows some degree of structure necessary to make possible a comparison between participants' responses, but it also allows the researcher some freedom and flexibility to change the questions' order and wording, and to explore complementary topics (Singleton & Straits, 2005; Sommer & Sommer, 1991)[20].

As an incentive, participants were told that the project results would be shared with them and their companies, and that 100 trees would be planted in recognition of all participants' contributions to the project, via the Green Belt Movement (www.greenbeltmovement.org). Pilot interviews were conducted with 4 professionals in order to identify confusing or unnecessary questions.

Interview transcripts

This project used qualitative textual analysis to examine the interview transcripts. Qualitative interviews generate large amounts of rich data. To better understand the information provided by interviewees, researchers look for major themes and concepts that can be the object of future cross-case comparisons (Byrne, 2001).

In order to identify these themes, this project adopted Glaser and Strauss' (1967) principles of grounded theory. This approach was chosen for its openness and flexibility, important features for the type of exploratory analysis undertaken here, whereby data is not seen as monolithic, as "a window on reality" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 524), but rather as opening the possibility to understand reality through multiple meanings. Therefore, the interview transcripts were open coded. At this initial stage, the researcher looked for patterns in the data, identifying similarities in the data. From this process core categories emerged, representing concepts and its properties and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In the second stage of coding—the axial coding phase, according to ground theory principles—links between categories were identified (McCann & Clark, 2003). The last step sought to understand the conditions, properties and dimensions, and consequences of each core category, identifying subcategories. These subcategories represent the conditions that give rise to each core category, the context in which it is embedded, and the consequences of the specific opinions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Findings

Most of the interviewees were female (64%); most have been working in the communication field for 15 or more years (76%). The types of industry and size of companies represented by these professionals varied considerably. Table 1 describes demographic characteristics in detail.

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[20] The invitation to participate in the project as well as the interview protocol and consent agreement are available from the author.

Insert table 1 about here

Following Glaser and Strauss' (1967) principles of grounded theory, the transcripts were open coded with the aim of identifying patterns in the data suitable for object of future cross-case comparisons. As a result of this process, four core categories were identified, and then potential links between categories were sought (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The first one represented participants' understanding (or lack thereof) of multiculturalism and diversity. It was named accordingly: *diversity and its various elements*, The second core category represented the importance ascribed by practitioners to culture during crisis and was accordingly named *cultural diversity and crisis strategies – corporate asset or overemphasized concept?* The third core category was named *proper planning, channels, and tactics* and identified the key elements taken into account when professionals design communication strategies to multicultural audiences. Finally, the fourth category identified how often practitioners culturally adjust corporate communication strategies and was named: *addressing diversity*.

Diversity and its various elements

The first core category that emerged from the transcripts characterized communication professionals' understanding of multiculturalism, the ways in which interviewees equated cultural diversity with diversity in general terms, and the role of culture during crises, as perceived by practitioners. This category addressed RQ1: How do communication professionals themselves define multiculturalism and its role in crisis?

Participants had difficulties in defining multiculturalism. Their responses in general reflected their concerns when communicating to one specific group, such as designing communication messages to Latino populations. Participants agreed that cultural expectations have a role in shaping internal and external audiences' attitudes toward organizations and crises. Yet 12 out of the 25 professionals interviewed equate cultural diversity with communicating with Hispanics. For example, the senior vice president of corporate communication for a financial institution mentioned that their "marketing and public relations departments have a team focusing on culturally diverse segments. This team works exclusively with Hispanics" (02/26/09).

In addition, participants acknowledged that multiculturalism is part of a more complex phenomenon, which is diversity in general. Interviewees emphasized that cultural elements are just one piece of the diversity puzzle. Generation gaps, educational gaps, differences in lifestyle, and disability issues are some other factors they reported as having an influence on corporate discourse.

For example, the assistant director of public relations of a governmental agency recalled a situation that arose during a natural disaster when the region hosted several hundred refugees. A community organization representing citizens with hearing difficulties formally complained that during numerous press conferences held by the agency there was nobody translating the speeches into sign language. The participant said: "I have to admit that this complaint got me completely off guard. In the heat of the crisis, we thought about translations, about respecting gender and religious differences. But we didn't think about hearing impaired citizens" (02/27/2009). This example showed the way in which cultural diversity and the necessity of translations was combined with the need to address other elements of diversity, such gender, religion, and

disability issues. Among the total group of 25, five participants indicated that cultural influences are just one of the factors that practitioners might consider when analyzing diversity issues in general.

Moreover, practitioners pointed out that differences in educational level have an effect on how communication strategies are perceived and the ways in which these strategies should be designed. The vice president for marketing and community relations for a higher education institution described this effect. She said:

> I managed three different organizations in one. First, our office communicates often with faculty, an audience highly educated and well-versed in most types of technologies. Second, we have an administrative staff composed of approximately 200 employees. This group is also well-educated and versed in technologies, however messages to this group can be more succinct. Faculty, on the other hand, demand detailed explanations of everything. Finally, we have our maintenance staff. This audience doesn't feel very comfortable with e-mail messages and the most efficient way to reach them is through their immediate bosses. This group has a great respect for hierarchy. (02/16/2009)

The interviewee emphasized that different educational levels create specific in-group subcultures that are more relevant than employees' cultural background. According to the participant, the subculture of each group dictates to a greater degree the type of communication strategies and messages that are effective.

The same argument holds for audiences with significant generational gaps. Three participants called attention to the fact that baby boomers and members of Generation X communicate using different channels. As the outreach coordinator of a governmental agency mentioned, "no matter how much effort we put on our website to make it resourceful, some elderly customers will not look for information online. We still need to send letters communicating changes in our services" (01/23/2009).

In summary, this first core category from the interview transcripts represents the numerous factors pointed out by participants as having an influence on organizational discourse and crisis strategies. Responding to RQ1, which asked how communication professionals themselves define multiculturalism and its role in crisis, it is important to highlight that many interviewees had difficulties in defining multiculturalism, equating multiculturalism with communicating with Latinos. Whereas they recognized a role for cultural influences in crisis events and strategies, many professional also pointed out that other elements affect corporate discourse, such as gender, religious, and disability issues, as well as generational and educational gaps.

Cultural diversity and crisis strategies – corporate asset or overemphasized concept?

The second core category identified in the transcripts represented the importance ascribed by communication practitioners to cultural diversity during crises. This category addressed RQ2: To what extent do communication professionals perceive cultural elements as important aspects of crisis episodes?

A large group of interviewees—17 of the total 25—not only affirmed that cultural diversity is an important element of crises, but they also saw cultural diversity as an important asset of their corporations. The internal communications manager for a major manufacturer of

electronic equipment stated:

> The human brain is like a parachute; it works better when is open. In our company, we strive to address diversity in our daily routines. For example, all managers have to go through a diversity training program. Our level of diversity awareness and our capacity to promote diversity initiatives are aspects evaluated annually in our company. We have a diversity calendar, where each month portrays curiosities about a country in which we have operations. Diversity is and has been an asset in our company for a long time. (12/11/2008)

For this participant and many others, diversity was discussed mainly as cultural differences. These interviewees emphasized the role played by the audiences' cultural upbringing during crises, pointing out that respecting cultural diversity in our global society is a valuable corporate asset.

For these professionals, having a diverse communication team was considered a corporate requirement to thrive in a global market. Many interviewees highlighted that decision-makers have to become more diverse in order to better understand the necessity and importance of respecting different cultural expectations. As the assistant director of public relations of a governmental agency stated:

> One of the best ways to address diversity is to bring diversity to the decision-making table. Having a culturally diverse communication team is certainly an asset that increases your company's chances to see the world through multiple lenses and to better understand how different audiences will interpret your messages. (02/27/2009)

As this example showed, a substantial number of participants (17) regarded culture as an important element affecting crisis events and strategies, as well as corporate discourse as whole.

Conversely, some interviewees questioned the need for addressing cultural diversity at all. Five out of the 25 participants affirmed that new technologies affect communication practices to a greater degree than multiculturalism. The CEO of a non-profit organization strongly advocated that the changes brought by new technologies "have had a much more dramatic impact in communication practices than issues of diversity" (02/18/2009). Similarly, the president's assistant for community relations and marketing services at a higher education institution stated that "generational differences in our audience greatly influence your communication tactics and which media should be used. New channels such Twitter and YouTube are changing the PR landscape forever" (02/10/2009).

Three PR consultants working for small and mid-size businesses mentioned that often organizations merely pay lip service to diversity. The costs involved in producing different messages and using different communication channels were cited as one of the biggest barriers to small companies' initiatives to address cultural differences. These participants also mentioned that very tight deadlines and small communication teams are other reasons why small businesses in general do not address cultural diversity in their communication strategies.

In sum, a substantial number of participants—17 of them—considered cultural elements an important aspect of crises, regarding their ability to address cultural diversity as a key corporate asset; considerably fewer (8) described culture influences on crises as an overemphasized concept, pointing out that new technologies exert a greater influence in

communication strategies, as well as that many corporations simply pay lip service to this concept.

A relevant intervening factor shaped participants' opinions on the relevance of culture during crises. The importance given to cultural elements during crises was directly related to professionals' definition of crisis. For participants who focused mainly on financial losses, cultural expectations had a merely tangential role during crises. In contrast, practitioners who emphasized the relevance of reputational damage and its long-term consequences were considerably more worried about addressing cultural expectations in their responses to troubling events. For example, a diversity specialist and PR consultant stated: "A crisis can be any threat that harms an organization and its relationship with its publics. It doesn't have to be catastrophic. It has to be only significant enough to disturb constituencies' perceptions of your company" (12/10/2008). Along the same lines, another practitioner noted that:

> The most important attribute of a crisis is the exogenous factors impacting the event. You can control your costs, inventory, and quality of products. But you cannot control individuals' perceptions of events. Reporting not impressive profits can be interpreted as a sign of honesty by consumers and shareholders. On the other hand, a small incident in a plant can taint your reputation globally. (12/11/2008)

As these examples show, a majority of participants (17 out of 25) regarded reputational losses and controlling audiences' perceptions of corporations during crises as the most challenging elements of these events. In fact, seven participants reported that reputational losses are by far the most important consequences of a crisis event. According to these practitioners, if corporate reputation is not damaged, the chances of a full and quick recovery are greater. On the other hand, if one company's reputation is severely tarnished, lack of confidence can threaten the company's survival.

A case reported by the marketing communications manager of a utilities company exemplifies the effect of reputational damage. Many years ago, the company cut the power of an elderly citizen. Although this is a standard procedure and many notices were sent to this customer before any action was taken, the consequences of such action were serious and unforeseen. It was winter; the elderly citizen suffered from dementia and due to lack of power this person died from hypothermia. As soon as the company learned about the incident the procedures to cut power were stopped and revised. The company also provided aid to the family of the deceased customer. But none of these actions could reverse the major reputational damage. The incident got national media attention; stockholders sold the company's stocks; the company's customer service was inundated by thousands of complaints, calling its staff "killers"; and employees' morale sank. As the interviewee said: "We used to follow the procedures adopted by most utilities companies in the country. It was a very unfortunate incident. The reputational damage to our company surpassed by far any financial losses" (01/ 22/2009).

As five interviewees pointed out, on some occasions organizations create their own crises, putting audiences' confidence and companies' reputation in jeopardy. The public relations general manager of a security technology company noted that "miscommunication can be the greatest and worse source of problems. A crisis of confidence can destroy a product, a brand, and an entire organization" (12/02/2008). Another practitioner who works in the healthcare industry

corroborated that point of view:

> Taking actions to correct the misdeed is only as important as reconstructing perceptions. You have to tell the truth to your audiences, so they will trust you in the future. You have to understand their expectations. Individuals forgive mistakes, but they don't forgive lies. (12/11/2008)

In contrast with this emphasis on reputation, eight interviewees emphasized that crises mainly jeopardize companies' profits. Disruption in operations, cost of recalls, and liability are all very concrete and common consequences of a crisis (Sellnow & Ulmer, 2004). As many practitioners affirmed, "Crises have financial consequences that are overwhelming, and this is the first aspect to be dealt with during these situations" (vice president of corporate communication for a major manufacturer of electronic equipment, 01/21/2009). For eight participants, regardless of the type of event, one of the main effects of a crisis is its financial consequences. The opinion of a communication manager in the financial industry epitomizes this position. She said:

> Crises are unexpected events that need immediate response to mitigate their negative consequences. While it can be a natural disaster, a disgruntled customer or employee, or something related to our buildings, crises bring significant financial losses. And because of this, such events have to be handled immediately. It is paramount to stop further financial losses. (02/06/2009)

In sum, the second core category represents interviewees' ascribed importance to culture during crises. It addresses RQ2—the extent to which communication professionals perceive culture as an important element of crisis communication. Practitioners' responses gave mixed messages. For most interviewees—17 out of 25—cultural diversity is a key corporate asset and a relevant aspect of crises. For a few others (5), new technologies exert a greater influence on corporate discourse as a whole, including during crises. A small minority of interviewees (3) pointed out that many organizations simply pay lip service to cultural diversity. Professionals' own definitions of crises appeared to shape the relevance accorded to cultural influences. Practitioners who concentrated on the financial losses brought by a crisis played down audiences' perceptions of the events and the role of cultural influences. Interviewees who were concerned about reputational damage brought by crises argued that audiences' perceptions are an important component of a quick corporate recovery. For these participants, cultural differences were considered an important aspect of crisis events.

Proper planning, channels, and tactics

The third core category that emerged from the transcripts identified the main elements pinpointed by communication professionals when designing communication strategies to multicultural audiences. Proper planning, use of alternative channels and tactics, and the importance of hidden meanings in translations were some of the key elements. This category addressed RQ3: According to communication professionals, what are the most relevant cultural elements to be addressed when designing crisis communication strategies?

Participants' responses once more indicated practitioners' mixed feelings toward cultural diversity. Whereas the interviewees were able to single out specific elements that must be addressed when communicating with culturally diverse audiences, they described these elements as challenges only when multicultural audiences are involved in crises. Such evidence suggests, not a profound appreciation of cultural diversity as a corporate asset, but only an understanding

that multicultural audiences are part of the current global environment and thus need to be taken into account. As a PR consultant stated:

> Crises affecting diverse communities bring many challenges and many lessons. First, be aware of language barriers. Second, think outside the box. Alternative channels may need to be used. Never forget that cultural experiences vary immensely within one specific community. And finally, take a proactive educational approach. For example, specific groups of individuals might have never experienced an ice or snow storm. Be proactive and teach them how to protect themselves from winter extreme conditions. (01/26/2008)

As this quotation suggests, when discussing the challenges or key elements specific to multicultural crises, 22 out of 25 professionals interviewed highlighted the crucial role of proper planning. The senior vice president of corporate communication for a financial institution affirmed that as part of a crisis analysis, practitioners have to ask themselves if the event has a high impact on a diverse community: "If yes, you will have to address diversity. And, to have better chances to succeed, you do have to learn about the intricacies of the community before the crisis hits" (02/26/09). Along the same lines, a public relations specialist at a crisis management consulting firm pointed out that: "Nowadays, strategic planning is key in our profession. Even audiences within the U.S. have a different cultural heritage and, therefore, different cultural expectations. You need to learn about these differences before a crisis hits you" (02/25/2009).

As a key element within proper planning, participants mentioned translation and its potential problems. The majority of the participants (18) mentioned some situation where corporate messages were lost in translation. The interviews also showed that global communication involves issues more complicated than simply translation. For example, the marketing communications manager of a utilities company reported many problems with Spanish-speaking customers who could not understand why they should call a service named "Power On" in English and translated to meaning "power on" in Spanish to report power outages. As the practitioner mentioned, "the message was completely lost in translation" (01/22/2009). While the translation was accurate, the service's catchy name in English was simply awkward in Spanish.

Expanding their views on challenges created by translation, participants also pointed out that spokespersons play a key role during crises, and differences in language and communication style can hinder their function in these situations. As a diversity specialist and PR consultant emphasized, during crises a spokesperson who is able to relate to the specific community affected is central to effective crisis management. He said: "People with different cultural backgrounds may have different communication styles and this has to be respected. An effective spokesperson is the one capable of wearing the same cultural eyeglasses that the community affected by a crisis event wears" (12/10/2009). As five professionals indicated, sometimes a company's CEO might not be trained or able to address cultural nuances. In connection with this point, a senior partner at a public relations agency mentioned a case that his company was hired to manage: A disgruntled employee shot and killed several coworkers. The person was arrested immediately, but families of the victims decided to sue the company, which commonly happens in cases of workplace violence. The manager of the plant where this tragedy occurred was from Eastern Europe. The interviewee stated:

> More than language barriers, the mainly communication problem that we had to

manage was differences in communication styles. The manager was able to speak English and was genuinely feeling the pain of the families' victims. But this person was not able to show any emotions, which was misinterpreted by the families. This difference in communication styles caused further problems to the company. Many hours of training were necessary to prepare this successful and efficient yet extremely rational executive for the role of spokesperson. (12/08/2008)

In addition to culturally attuned spokespersons, another key element identified by a majority of interviewees (15) was the use of alternative communication channels and strategies that respond to particular cultures. For example, a PR consultant stated: "More than translating information, it is necessary to understand how particular groups prefer to receive information" (02/11/2009). In this connection, another participant emphasized the importance of reaching community leaders when communicating with minorities. Specifically, the vice president of corporate communication for a utilities company described the example of an ice storm that left the region without power for a couple of days. After the first night without power, several members of Latino communities experienced carbon monoxide poisoning from improvised indoor heating devices. The professional commented:

> We realized that these members of our community had no experience with extreme weather. PSAs [public service announcements] about this issue were on TV channels that they most likely didn't watch. We had to approach community leaders to swiftly communicate to Latinos the hazardous effects of bringing gas or charcoal grills inside. (12/09/2008)

Openness to using alternative channels seemed as important to the interviewees as openness to adopting different message tactics. For example, the president's assistant for community relations and marketing services for a higher education institution emphasized "the necessity to adapt communication tactics in response to audiences' preferences. In some cases, being part of a town meeting or giving a lecture at a neighborhood association will be much more efficient than going on the evening news" (02/10/2008).

Another interviewee highlighted the importance of respecting cultural habits not only when choosing proper communication tactics, but also when implementing them. As the participant stated:

> In some Latino communities dinner time is almost a sacred time that it is meant to be spent with family. If you set a neighbors' meeting around this time with the help of a community leader, most likely the attendance will be minimal. You got the tactics right, but the implementation was faulty. (Director of public relations and corporate communications of a governmental agency, 02/20/2009)

In summary, this core category responded to RQ3, which asked what the most relevant cultural elements to be addressed when designing crisis communication strategies are. Twenty-two practitioners mentioned that proper planning is essential to allow corporations and communication teams to learn about different cultural expectations before a crisis hits. They also emphasized the potential for trouble inherent to translation, indicating the necessity to take into account underlying meanings and communication styles. Moreover, participants indicated that alternative communication channels and tactics adequate to cultural expectations and habits are necessary and important. Nonetheless, most of the interviewees (19) described these elements as

additional challenges brought by multicultural crises, showing participants' understanding of a diverse operating environment, but not necessarily a full appreciation of the complexity or value of multiculturalism.

Addressing diversity

The fourth core category that emerged from the transcripts showed that corporations seldom culturally adjust their crisis communication strategies. This category addressed RQ4: How often, according to communication professionals, do corporations culturally adjust crisis communication strategies?

As with the two prior core categories, participants' responses showed a contradiction. Interviewees unanimously agreed that audiences are more and more diverse. They also described communication strategies as a tool for relationship building, emphasizing the importance of knowing the target audiences and understanding their expectations, including their cultural expectations. Yet nearly all of the interviewees (23) recognized that their organizations could do far better in addressing multiculturalism than they now do. As the vice president of corporate communication for a utilities company said:

> We are fully aware that our community has significantly become more diverse. Not only the Latino population has considerably increased, but we are also seeing a big influx of Asian immigrants. We have been working hard to address all these changes. Yet probably only 25% of our communication campaigns have specifically addressed cultural diversity. (12/9/2008)

Whereas participants agreed that their organizations do not culturally adjust communication strategies often enough, the same respondents emphasized that cultural habits influence the ways in which audiences relate to a company and respond to its communication strategies. Typically, the vice president of corporate communication for a financial institution said:

> It is very important to address the values of your audiences to successfully communicate and build a relationship with them. This is valid to all situations, not only crises. Individuals' upbringing and cultural habits will influence how they relate to your company. (02/27/2009)

As these quotations indicate, with respect to RQ4—how often corporations culturally adjust crisis communication strategies—the response is not often enough, despite the relevance professionals attributed to audiences' cultural expectations.

Discussion and Implications

The interconnectedness of a globalized society is a key element for crisis communication management. Indeed, new technologies have the potential to make any local event an international crisis in minutes (Martinelli & Briggs, 1998; Taylor, 2000). According to the rhetorical approach to crisis communication adopted in this project, crises are created and resolved through communication (Hearit & Courtright, 2004), and communicative strategies are influenced by cultural perceptions and values that help individuals to create reality through the meanings ascribed to situations (Eisenberg & Riley, 2000). Cultural values modify individuals' ways of thinking, judging situations, and communicating (Banks, 2000; Hall, 1976). In a global

business environment, cultural understanding is an essential tool for successful communication and relationship building between organizations and strategic audiences. Thus, understanding cultural influences on crisis communication is an increasingly important topic.

Responding the research questions proposed, interviewees reported having mixed feelings toward cultural diversity. Viewed as a whole, all four core categories emerging from the interviews showed a lack of consensus about the meaning and role of multicultural influences in crises. Participants had difficulties defining multiculturalism, yet acknowledged that cultural expectations affect audiences' perceptions of corporations and crises. They also emphasized that gender, religion, and disability issues, as well as generational and educational gaps, are some other relevant factors influencing corporate discourse. The importance ascribed by practitioners to culture during crises varied significantly. For some, addressing cultural diversity is a valuable corporate asset; for others, the relevance of culture in communication strategies is overemphasized. The definition of crisis that each participant subscribed to directly affected how important cultural diversity was perceived to be. For some professionals, financial losses are the central element of crises; for those, cultural diversity has a tangential role. For many others, reputational losses are the most relevant aspect of critical events; this group considered cultural expectations to be very significant. Practitioners pointed out that proper planning, language and translation, and adequate use of alternative communication channels and tactics are key elements to be addressed during crises. Such conclusions showed that professionals are attuned to the demands of a global environment, but not necessarily fully appreciative of multiculturalism as a complex phenomenon. Lastly, participants recognized that they are not addressing cultural diversity often enough. Even though the majority of the participants described cultural influences in crises as an important element, they seldom addressed this element, indicating that practitioners themselves and/or their teams may not be fully equipped to manage crises involving multicultural aspects.

Implications

These results have several implications for public relations students and practitioners. As Banks (2000) argued, public relations strategies are intended to connect organizations with their key audiences, "taking full account of the normal human variations in the systems of meaning by which groups understand and enact their everyday lives" (p. 20). Using the theory of cultural competence as a framework (Sue, 1991, 2001) is possible to offer suggestions for the development of the field. As Sue postulated, culture competent individuals are able to identify cultural expectations, understand differences, and when necessary adapt behaviors.

Most of interviewees were able to identify different cultural expectations; however to become in synch with the demands of a global market communications professionals needs to go beyond seeing cultural diversity as a challenge. Fully understanding cultural differences and having the necessary skills to adapt communication messages accordingly is a requirement in our society nowadays. Considering how quickly crises unfold, previous training in cultural competence, proper planning, and an extensive understanding of audiences' cultural expectations are the grounds for effective crisis management procedures. Practitioners can benefit from training initiatives promoting cultural competence. Similarly, studies investigating the ways in which the elements of cultural competence may lead to effective crisis preparation can provide a foundation for comprehensive crisis management scholarship.

There are educational implications from these results as well. Public relations instructors can explore the pedagogical potential of cultural competence elements in crisis communication theory. According to the results of this project, communication professionals considered culture to be a significant influence in crisis management. Unfortunately, these same practitioners graduated from college to become professionals who do not consider themselves well prepared to handle multicultural crises. Instructors therefore need to develop lectures, in-class exercises, group projects, and other activities where students can increase their openness to learn about diverse worldviews as well as practice their skills at handling multicultural situations. Such initiatives will help to create a public relations curriculum attuned with the demands of the profession and of society.

Limitations and Future Research

The limitations of this study must be acknowledged. Care was taken to construct a clear and unbiased interview protocol; however, potential misunderstandings might have happened. Most of the interviewees were located in an urban area in the Southeastern United States. Even though they worked for a wide array of national and multinational companies and industries, interviewees' opinions might portray specific characteristics of this area of the country. Because of the difficulties of random sampling, a snowball sampling procedure was adopted, which might have limited the scope of the findings, because the participants might all have shared experiences and views on crises and communication strategies. Furthermore, interviews with a larger number of subjects might have yielded different trends. Therefore, it is necessary to exercise caution in generalizing the interviews' findings. In addition, the scholarly operational definition of multiculturalism adopted in the project, restricted to solely cultural differences, was somewhat at odds with the definition of PR practitioners. In practice, the interviewers indicated that their discussions of cultural differences are intertwined with other diversity issues, such as gender, disability, religion, and education and generational gaps. Moreover, as Babbie (2004) and Sommer and Sommer (1991) pointed out, the interviewer's presence might have affected participants' responses, yielding socially desirable answers.

Finally, this study opens several possibilities for further research. First, interviews with a greater number of public relations professionals working across the United States is necessary to identify if practitioners in other areas of the country will share the same views regarding multiculturalism and crises. As a next step, interviews with public relations professionals working in different countries can also extend knowledge in the role played by culture during crises. Whereas the current economy is characterized by marked interconnection among corporations, countries, and audiences, the state of public relations practices in different societies may point to less emphasizes on audiences' cultural expectations.

Moreover, studies examining specific types of industry may show that the relevance ascribed to cultural influences in crisis management varies from industry to industry due to tight in-group cultures. For example, employees and audiences of high-tech companies may all share an in-group culture, characterized by devotion to innovation. Such a trait may influence audiences' responses to crises to a greater extent than individuals' cultural backgrounds. The same argument may hold true for specific corporations with strong organizational cultures. For example, employees and customers of companies that produce environmentally conscious sports products, such as Patagonia Sportswear, may share similar lifestyles and values that constitute

the company's culture. Passion for sports and for the environment guide the company's actions, development of new products, and communication strategies. Further research needs to examine if strong organizational cultures based on shared lifestyles and values supersede the influence of cultural backgrounds and expectations.

As a final suggestion, quantitative assessments of the relevance attributed by communication professionals to cultural influences during crises can also further the understanding of the topic, providing reliable measurements as well as potential for generalization.

Conclusion

Despite its limitations and the number of questions to be answered by future research, this project extends knowledge in public relations and crisis communication scholarship. Although the world is growing more and more interconnected, there is not compelling literature suggesting that people are growing more alike. This study demonstrates that cultural diversity has a significant effect on crisis communication management. Future communication scholarship may achieve a more precise understanding of the ways in which culture and cultural competence influence crises and communication strategies. These findings may also assist in preparing communication students to function effectively in a global environment. Thus, by integrating a cultural competence framework and crisis communication scholarship, public relations scholars can foster better practices in the field, attuned to the demands of society.

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Beyond Sentiment Analysis, Can we Automate Trust Measurement?

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Abstract
In recent years, content analysis has been increasingly automated, especially around sentiment analysis. While the accuracy of such automation is open to debate, we suggest that sentiment is only one element of what matters to an organization. Other aspects of relationships, such as trust, commitment and satisfaction are also regularly conveyed in social media. Our research determines whether these elements can accurately be measured using text mining and natural language processing.

Introduction

With the ubiquity of social media today, the notion of using social media as a way to "listen to" and gauge public opinion has captured the interest of marketers. At the moment, the hot button is "sentiment" measurement, which is the notion that you can teach a computer what positive and negative tone is by pre-coding it with key words. So the computer searches for brand proximity to words like "suck" and "hate" as a proxy for negative sentiment. However, sentiment analysis has been shown to be notoriously inaccurate, unreliable and therefore not terribly useful. With the addition of human coding to improve the model, most sentiment analysis tools can achieve 75% accuracy at best. We postulate that marketers are chasing after the wrong emotion. Rather than attempt to gauge sentiment, it would be far more useful to understand how customers, prospects, employees and other constituents feel about their relationship with your brand.

KDPaine & Partners decided to try to use the core concepts of the Grunig Relationship model to define an algorithm that would rate how stakeholders feel about an organization based on their conversations in social media. KDPaine & Partners defined a list of key words, phrases and concepts that would be tracked individually and as a cluster, around each of Grunig' s six components of relationship: Control mutuality, Trust, Commitment, Satisfaction, Exchange and Communal (Grunig, 2002).

The Process

KDPaine & Partners selected three institutions which we thought would be good candidates for this experiment, Harvard, Stanford University and MIT. Using KDPaine & Partners standard feed sources including Boardreader® and Google News®, we collected all mentions of the three brands during a one-month period (February 2011.) To ensure comparability, we had to eliminate any coverage of sports since Stanford was headed for the NCAA championships and MIT is not known for its athletic acumen.

We then used the concepts articulated in the 1999 IPR Guideline for Measuring Relationships[21] to develop taxonomy of words and concepts that were translated into detailed coding instructions. KDPaine & Partners human coders were trained and tested on these instructions. Once a reliability level of 88% was achieved, coders then content analyzed 2,000 items for these concepts. The idea was to then take the terms and concepts that showed up to teach the computer to identify relationship components. We would then use an algorithm to then score the conversations on a scale of 1 to 5, so that each institution would receive a score on each element of the relationship. While the human coding was taking place, a computer-based taxonomy was being created and tested on the concepts defined in the coding instructions.

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PART 1: Human Coding
- ➢ Create coding instructions based on Grunig Relationship Theory
- ➢ Collect Items
- ➢ Train Human Coder on Relationship Concepts
- ➢ Human Identification/Coding for Relationship Concepts

PART 2: Machine Coding
- ➢ Classifier and Relationship Modeling
  - ▪ Frequency
  - ▪ Importance
  - ▪ Positional
  - ▪ Directed Positional
- ➢ Create Taxonomy Based on:
  - ▪ Concepts
  - ▪ Coding Instructions
  - ▪ Manual Results
  - ▪ Key Words
    - • Keeps Promises
    - • Devoted
    - • Loyal-Associated with Entity
    - • Reverse
      - ▪ Indifference
      - ▪ Meaningless
      - ▪ Disregard
- ➢ Machine Coding

What Really Happened and Lessons Learnt

During the human coding phase KDPaine & Partners learned a tremendous amount about using content analysis to measure relationships.

Lesson #1: Passion must be present to analyze it

The first discovery we made was that when you remove sports from any study of the university environment, most of the emotion and passion goes with it. What was left was a great number of discussions about scientific and academic research, very few of which actually contained any sentiment at all. Of the 2,000 total items, only 265 (13%) actually contained any of the relationship concepts we were trying to study.

Lesson #2: You Need Twitter and Facebook to analyze sentiment

No matter what liberals and conservatives may say, the vast majority of traditional media is neutral or balanced – i.e. doesn't contain much opinion at all. It also doesn't reflect what people are directly saying, just what a reporter or an editor has allowed in the piece. So you really need to exclude traditional media from any relationship study. You can count the

comments in the online version of these stories, but you also should know that only a small percentage of these are actually seen by an even smaller percentage of the audience.

In reality, if you want to analyze sentiment, you need to be analyze Twitter and Facebook, and that's the rub. Getting full content from either of those sources is not easy. Most services only get about 15% of the total Twitter fire hose, and even services that have a full fire-hose license only get about 85%. Facebook poses an even greater challenge since most content providers only provide what is publically available, which again is small percentage of the universe. Personal blogs are another good source of sentiment, and we included them, but also excluded content farms and fake sites that were obviously robotically created.

Lesson #3: Trust and Communal Relationships were the easiest concepts to detect.

Communal Relationships which, for the purposes of the coder training we defined as "each party sees mutual benefit in the relationship succeeding" were frequently reflected in conversations about the community and socially responsible events in which the organizations engaged. These community events and good deeds were easily identified as promoting a positive communal relationship. 44% of all items contained some expression of communal relationship. Trust was another concept that was frequently and relatively easily identified. Human coders identified trust in 30% of the items studied. (See

Table 1).

Table 1: University Data-Human Coding

Concepts	Harvard	MIT	Stanford	Grand Total	
Commitment		4	4	8	3%
Communal Relationships	24	57	35	116	44%
Control Mutuality	6	13	2	21	8%
Exchange Relationships	1	4	3	8	3%
Satisfaction	8	19	6	33	12%
Trust	23	44	12	79	30%
Grand Total	62	141	62	265	100%

Given the relatively low level of sentiment detected and the challenges we had in training humans to code for relationship concepts, our expectations weren't very high for automated coding. Nonetheless we used what we learned from human coding to create a taxonomy based on the concepts and key words we had discovered. While it was interesting to discover that the accuracy level for automated positive sentiment analysis or these concepts was significantly better than the level for detecting negative sentiment, overall the machine-coded data was unusable. There was simply not sufficient data to analyze with any degree of accuracy. Further, we learned that the linguistic modeling tools we were using require a valid/invalid construct rather than the scale model that we were using. We went back to the drawing board.

Round 2: A Controversial Multi-National in the News

We then decided to analyze an entirely different set of data. We again used standard news feeds from Boardreader and Google News and pulled in 12,000 social media items about a highly controversial organization that had been frequently in the news. Again.

This time the results were much more interesting. Of the 12,000, we still found that more than half (47%) contained some expression of a relationship concept. (See Table 2)

Table 2: University Data-Machine Coding

Concepts	Grand Total	
Commitment	295	4%
Communal Relationships	858	13%
Control Mutuality	285	4%
Exchange Relationships	199	3%
Satisfaction	365	5%
Trust	1,151	17%
None	3,625	53%

Lesson #4: some concepts are easier than others to identify and score

Once again Communal and Trust were found most frequently, with 17% of mentions conveying trust and 13% suggesting a communal relationship. However, we found that Satisfaction and Trust were most accurately identified, and learned that some of the other Grunig concepts are virtually impossible to track such as Control Mutuality and Exchange relationship.

Taking it to another level, we learned that it's relatively easy to describe a set of terms to define trust to a human, but teaching a computer takes a lot more time. So for example, a human knows the difference between "I fell in *love WITH* Stanford at first sight" and "I fell *in love AT* Stanford at first sight." However, it requires a fairly sophisticated algorithm to teach a computer the difference. Pulling trust out of a posting gets even more complicated. So if someone posts to Facebook that they " fell *in love AT Stanford* and felt *very comfortable* openly expressing my feelings for my gay lover" that clearly expresses trust in the Stanford campus environment but teaching a computer that the feelings are for the campus and not the lover takes a whole other level of complexity.

Lesson #5: It takes a lot longer than you think

The only restriction on getting a computer to do this accurately is time and money. Teaching a computer a complex concept takes time. Given enough resources and time you would eventually get it right. In reality, for the most situations, humans are faster and more accurate. A well-trained human can accurately code about 250 items a day (more if all you are analyzing is Twitter.) It takes a good programmer at least two weeks to get a taxonomy up and running. The economic equation isn't hard to calculate.

Conclusions
- ➢ Linguistic tools sets can be used to pull concepts from data
- ➢ Requires high quantity of valid data

- ➢ Requires high quantity of emotional content data – i.e. something that people are passionate about
- ➢ Requires lengthy iteration process
- ➢ If you use a statistical model, taxonomy can't be generalized. Will only be specific to the organization studied.

What Is Next

Clearly this is an important first step – perhaps just a baby step – in the direction of using content analysis to determine relationship health. We feel pretty confident that given the right parameters – sufficient, emotional content – human coders can accurately glean the concepts of Trust, Communal Relationships and Satisfaction from social media conversations. As we conduct more such analyses, we will continue to define more words and concepts that will help refine the process and improve accuracy still further.

In terms of getting a computer to be as accurate, we clearly have a long way to go. Further complicating the process is the difficulty in creating a generalized taxonomy. Good taxonomies must be specific to the organization studied. So to get any generalized taxonomy you will need to model which words or phrases are more important. In order to get there you need a greater quantity of human coded relationship data to build a statistical model that would validate relationship constructs in social media.

References

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Table 1.

Demographic Characteristics of Interviewees

Number of interviews conducted	25			
Gender				
Female 16		Male 9		
Types of companies				
For-profit	Non-profit	Governmental Agencies	PR Agencies and Consulting	
14	1	4	6	
Size of workforce				
0 to 100 employees	101 to 500	501 to 1,000	1,001 to 10, 000	20, 000 to 50, 000	More than 200, 000
6	2	3	3	8	3
Tenure as communication professionals				
Less than 10 years	10 to 14 years	15 to 19 years	20 to 24 years	25 or more years
1	5	6	7	6

The Use of Human Voice as a Relationship Building Strategy on Social Networking Sites

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Abstract
This study sought to examine how a human voice of an organization in online communication affects organization-public relationships and its publics' favorable behavioral intentions to engage in word-of-mouth (WOM) and dialogic communications. The results revealed that conversational human voice was perceived to be higher for organization social networking pages with a human presence than for those with an organizational presence. Providing a human presence on social media appeared to promote favorable organization-public relationships and positive WOM communication. However, dialogic communication intentions did not significantly differ between organizations incorporating a human presence versus an organizational presence into their social networking pages. The proposed, dynamic role of human presence versus organizational presence adds a new perceptive as to how organizations can take more advantage of interpersonal aspects of social media.

Introduction

The advent of social media, often referred to as Web 2.0, has advanced the landscape of interactive communication and the potential for sharing information through online networks. More importantly for public relations, this technology allows organizations to interact with their publics in a more interpersonal way and presents unique opportunities for organizations to better engage their publics in dialogue and foster relationships with them (Sweetser, 2010; Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). The value of social media as a useful tool for relationship building is supported by a recent report indicating that most users of social networking sites want companies to be actively involved in social media and to communicate with them via social media channels (Cone Inc., 2008).

With the recent growth in popularity of social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter, organizations have increasingly turned their focus to incorporating social media elements into their communication planning in an effort to build better organization-public relationships (eMarketer, 2010). Although increasing attention has been given to the strategic use of social media in relationship management, the characteristics of this type of online communication via social networking platforms have not yet been fully explored. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to achieve a better understanding of variables pertaining to social media that may affect the growth and maintenance of relationships.

Conversational human voice in a computer-mediated context is considered to be a key factor in improving relationships (Kelleher, 2009; Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Yang & Lim, 2009). Based on the social presence theory and the relationship management theory, this study assumes that a human presence versus an organization presence on organizational social networking pages positively affects perceptions of a conversational human voice online and thus results in quality relationships with an organization and subsequent favorable behavioral intentions, such as word-of-mouth and dialogic communication intentions.

Of the more popular social media tools, Twitter has become the fastest-growing member community site (Nielsen Wire, 2010). This social networking tool fosters information sharing and instant interactions among individual users and organizations, allowing them to post real-time messages, or "tweets," each of which is no longer than 140 characters. Twitter also has been used most frequently by *Fortune* 500 companies to communicate with their publics, followed by Facebook and YouTube (Burson-Marsteller, 2010). For this reason, the format of Twitter pages was used in this study to manipulate a human presence and organizational presence in online communication. This study provides theoretical and practical implications for online public relations as it offers the first look as to how the use of a conversational human voice versus an organizational presence in social networking sites affects the public's responses to an organization.

Literature Review

Relationship Management and Online Communication

As public relations has shifted from a technical to a management function, an understanding of how to manage relationships with publics has been an important topic in public relations in recent decades (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ki & Hon, 2007a; Ledingham, 2003). From a relational perspective, public relations is defined as "the management function that establishes

and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics on whom its success or failure depends" (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994, p. 6). Thus, public relations can contribute to enhancing mutual understanding and benefits between organizations and their publics through the management of organization-public relationships (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). Corresponding to the growing importance of relationship management, much scholarly work has been devoted to examining relationships in terms of their definition and components (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Kim, 2001; Ledingham, 2003), antecedents of well-developed relationships (Grunig & Huang, 2000), and the linkages between such relationships and positive outcomes (Bruning, 2002; Coombs & Holladay, 2001; Ki & Hon, 2007a; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000).

Research on online public relations has taken a large role in this relationship management research stream, followed by the emergence of the Internet as the prominent means of communication (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Kent & Taylor, 1998; Sweetser, 2010). The technology of the Web enables organizations to disseminate information to and communicate with their publics. In order to build and develop relationships with publics through the Web, organizations need to create dialogic communication, which refers to a particular type of relational interaction (Kent & Taylor, 1998). As the primary principle of dialogic communication, a dialogic loop allows the public to inquire about organizations, but it also provides the organizations with the opportunity to respond to questions, concerns, and problems (Kent & Taylor, 1998). When there are repeated interactions through a dialogic loop over time between the parties, relationship building can take place (Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001). Thus, organizations should focus on motivating key publics to constantly revisit their web pages and have continuing interactions with them if they want to develop long-term, satisfying organization-public relationships (Park & Reber, 2008).

Based on the notion that constant interactions and dialogue are cornerstones on which any satisfying relationship is built (Taylor et al., 2001), social media, which are online communication platforms that encourage interactions among users, provide a more fertile ground for the growth and maintenance of relationships. Social media tools, especially social networking sites such as Twitter, enable organizations to share information and have instant interaction with individual users and diverse kinds of interest groups. In fact, public relations practitioners working at *Fortune* 500 and *Fortune* 1000 companies reported that they use social media tools most frequently for relationship building (Sweetser, Avery, Lariscy, & Howes, 2009).

Dialogic communication via social media can be equated to interpersonal interactions in how they share several relationship commonalities, such as the need for constant interactions, openness, and transparency (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Sweetser, 2010). The interactive and participatory aspects of social media make online communication more public-centered and requires organizations to take a more strategic approach to relationship cultivation based on the varied needs and expectations of the public (Waters et al., 2009).

Social Presence Theory and Conversational Human Voice
When it comes to relationship building on social networking sites that rely more on real interactions and viral attention, it becomes more important for an organization to incorporate a human tone of voice in its social networking page rather than a corporate tone of voice. The use of human presence can also generate perceptions of openness and transparency, which are

considered key variables in promoting satisfying relationships (Rawlins, 2009). Supporting this notion, previous studies on organizational blogs have shown that a human voice of an organization can play an important role in developing organization-public relationships online (Kelleher, 2009; Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Yang & Lim, 2009). Furthermore, conversational human voice in organizational communication may increase positive attitudes toward an organization and intentions to engage in WOM communications, while reducing negative emotions about the organization (Yang, Kang, & Johnson, 2010).

This study posits that human presence on an organization's social media page, as opposed to an organizational presence, positively affects perceptions of conversational human voice, relational outcomes, dialogic communication intentions, and positive WOM intentions. These positive effects of human presence are largely driven by social presence theory. First proposed by Short, Williams, and Christie (1976), social presence theory postulates that a critical aspect of a communication channel pertains to the degree to which the counterparty is perceived as being real in a mediated communication environment. Initially, the theory was developed to explain the degree of "being there" experience among audio and closed-circuit television encounters, but is now popularly examined to explain the effects for computer-mediated communications (Tu, 2002).

According to Short et al. (1976), each media channel differs in the amount of acoustic, visual, and physical contact it allows between two communication parties. Since people are social beings, they strive to increase the sense of social presence in order to gain satisfying and productive access to others and share the thoughts, emotions, and presence of real and virtual humans (Bioca, Harms, & Burgoon, 2003; Fischer, 1988). Thus, the degree of a medium's social presence is determined by its degree of media richness (the amount of information it allows to be transmitted in a given time interval to reduce ambiguity and uncertainty) and interactivity. The more interactive and vivid the medium is, the more the social presence it has (Coyle & Thorson, 2001; Daugherty, Li, & Biocca, 2008; Li, Daugherty, & Biocca, 2002).

It is important to identify methods for achieving high social presence because it results in many positive effects: (a) high social presence produces a larger social influence of the communication partners towards each other's behavior, (b) high social presence generates better memory and positive attitudes towards the communication experience, and (c) the level of social presence increases satisfaction towards the communication experience (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Steur, 1995). While early research in social presence postulates that social presence is extremely low compared to face-to-face communication due to its lack of visual and other nonverbal cues in computer-mediated communication (CMC) environments (Walther, 1992), recent developments in various CMC channels, such as social networking sites (e.g., Facebook and Twitter), have advanced features that may allow users to experience greater social presence.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) suggest that social presence can be influenced by the intimacy (interpersonal vs. mediated) and immediacy (asynchronous vs. synchronous) of the medium. For example, mediated communication (e.g., telephone conversation) generates lower social presence than does interpersonal communication (e.g., face-to-face discussion), while synchronous communication (e.g., live chat) generates higher social presence than does asynchronous communication (e.g., e-mail). McMillan and Hwang (2005) suggest that a high sense of social presence can be achieved by increasing interactivity through utilizing two-way

communication, having more tools to handle content (i.e., increasing user control), and providing quicker and easier message processing. The idea of social presence in social media channels is integrally related to the concept of conversational human voice in online communication.

Conversational human voice illustrates "an engaging and natural style of organizational communication as perceived by an organization's publics based on interactions between individuals in the organization and individuals in publics" (Kelleher, 2009, p. 177). Kelleher and Miller (2006) found that perceived conversational human voice was greater on an organization's blog page, including personal journal materials (i.e., human presence), than on its traditional web page. From the social presence perspective, greater perceptions of social presence, implying human contact, may emerge in communication with actual human beings rather than in interactions devoid of a human voice (Gefen & Straub, 2004). Thus, providing a human presence versus an organizational presence on social media may yield greater perceptions of conversational human voice.

Because the foundation of human presence in social media is achieved by making the communication counterparty highly visible and the conversation real-time, it is natural to expect that providing a human presence within social media will have a positive effect on perceptions of conversational human voice. Based on this line of reasoning, H1 posited the following:

> **H1**: Participants' perceptions of the organization's conversational human voice will be greater when its social networking page has a human presence rather than an organizational presence.

Making the user of a communication medium aware that there is counterparty allows users to stay in touch, lets them share experiences, and creates opportunities for future synchronous communication (Bioca & Harms, 2002). Moreover, human presence also conjures a cognitive state in which "individuals feel more or less directly 'present' in the interaction and in the process by which relationships are being created" (Palmer, 1995, p. 284). Thus, social presence theory is an important concept for predicting the positive effects of human voice on perceived relationships and behavioral intentions for dialogic communication intentions and WOM.

Organization-Public Relationships

A relationship in public relations is defined as "the state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political, and/or cultural well-being of the other entity" (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998, p. 62). Evaluations of relationship dimensions can demonstrate the state of ongoing relationships and further predict publics' perceptions and intended behaviors (Ledingham, 2003). Of various relationship scales developed by scholars (e.g., Bruning & Galloway, 2003; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Kim, 2001), Hon and Grunig's (1999) have been widely used and tested to measure organization-public relationships. Their original measurement of relationships includes six relationship indicators: trust, control mutuality, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship, and communal relationship. However, only the first four indicators are considered to reflect the state of ongoing relationships because exchange and communal relationships represent types of relationships rather than underlying dimensions (Hung, 2005).

As a critical concept in discussing relationships, trust refers to "one party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 3). Trust also represents a belief that another party in a relationship will fulfill one's future needs

(Anderson & Weitz, 1989). According to Blau (1964), relationships are largely built upon trust, and parties in a relationship can determine the legitimacy of the power each party has through an evaluation of mutual trust. From a perspective of relationship marketing, trust requires confidence in an exchange party's reliability and integrity (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In line with this notion, Hon and Grunig (1999) propose three underlying dimensions of trust: integrity, dependability, and competence. Integrity refers to the belief in an organization's fairness. Dependability is the belief that an organization will comply with its promises, while competence is the belief in an organization's ability to keep its promises (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Another relationship dimension is control mutuality, which refers to "the degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 3). The sense of control mutuality between parties in a relationship can be determined in the decision making process by assessing "the extent to which the opinion of each party is reflected in the final decision" (Ki & Hon, 2007b, p. 421). In other words, control mutuality depends on power differences in the social context, which are caused by limited resources and desire to obtain those resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). When such an imbalance of power shifts excessively toward organizations, they may abuse the power over their publics solely for their own benefit. Thus, a certain level of control mutuality should be achieved to maintain good organization-public relationships.

Satisfaction is defined as the degree of positive feelings that one has about another (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Satisfaction increases as one's expectations in a relationship are met by the other party's behaviors (Hecht, 1978). A measurement of satisfaction can be attained by calculating the difference between the expectations in a relationship and what is indeed achieved (Ki & Hon, 2007b). If parties in a relationship meet each other's expectations and provide sufficient benefits to each other, both parties feel satisfied with the relationship (Roloff, 1981). Consequently, they can develop and maintain a favorable relationship.

Commitment refers to the degree to which both parties invest their resources in maintaining a relationship (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Morgan and Hunt (1994) consider commitment as an effort to foster continuous and long-term relationships with consumers in the context of marketing. As the degree of commitment to a partner in a relationship increases, the desire to end the relationship decreases (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). In this respect, commitment is a vital factor that helps to encourage and strengthen relationships between an organization and its publics.

Previous research on organizational blogs suggests that these key relational outcomes (i.e., trust, control mutuality, satisfaction, and commitment) may be influenced by conversational human voice in a computer-mediated context (Kelleher & Miller, 2006). From a social presence perspective, Gefen and Straub (2004) argue that relational trust is built through ongoing interactions with a high social presence, driven by the perception that there is actual human contact in the communication context. In Sweetser and Metzgar (2007)'s study, the use of conversational human voice, as well as responsiveness, appeared to be the core factors in improving relationships in a crisis through an organizational blog. Therefore, H2 predicted the following:

H2: Participants will perceive more favorable relationships with the organization when its social networking page has a human presence rather than an organizational presence.

Dialogic Communication and WOM Intentions

Previous studies incorporating the relationship management perspective have shown that perceptions of favorable organization-public relationships increase positive attitudes and behavioral intentions toward an organization among key publics (Coombs & Holladay, 2001; Hong & Yang, 2009; Ki & Hon, 2007a). Subsequently, supportive behaviors (e.g., purchase, investment, positive WOM, donations) enable organizations to achieve maximum effectiveness, which ensures organizational excellence (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). Perloff (2003) notes that behavioral intentions are "the intention to perform a particular behavior, a plan to put behavior into effect" (p. 92) and serve as a strong predictor of actual behaviors. Thus, measuring publics' intentions to perform supportive behaviors is significant to relationship management. This study focuses on dialogic communication and WOM intentions, assumed to be potential positive consequences of strategic online communication.

Dialogic communication is defined as "any negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions" (Kent & Taylor, 1998, p. 325). Constant interactions and dialogue are fundamental to relationship building (Taylor et al., 2001). Conversely, perceptions of good relationships may lead publics to engage in dialogic communication (Broom et al., 1997). Organizations need to understand and meet their publics' needs and expectations to maintain long-term relationships (Ledingham, 2003). Recommendations and suggestions from publics through dialogue may help organizations to understand and accommodate their publics' needs.

Social networking sites offer a viable avenue for facilitating dialogic communication between organizations and their publics (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010). Since social networking has its essence in interpersonal interactions (Gefen & Straub, 2004), organizations can seek to continue dialogue with their publics by facilitating interpersonal communication between their public relations practitioners and key publics on social networking sites. In this respect, organizational social media pages should let visitors know that "it is no longer some faceless public relations department or corporate entity communicating with the publics but an actual person" (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010, p. 339). Following this logic, it can be posited that if an organization's social networking page conveys a sense of actual human contact occurring, visitors to the page are more likely to express their thoughts and opinions about the organization and its products and services. Thus, H3 predicted the following:

H3: Participants will have stronger intentions to engage in dialogic communication with the organization when its social networking page has a human presence rather than an organizational presence.

Word-of-mouth communication is considered a key factor in sharing publics' attitudes and behaviors toward an organization (Brown & Reingen, 1987). In the field of marketing, WOM refers to "informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services and/or their sellers" (Westbrook, 1987, p. 261). More specifically, positive WOM is defined as "making others aware that one does business with a company or store, making positive recommendations to others about a company, extolling a company's quality orientation, and so on" (Brown, Barry, Dacin, & Gunst, 2005, p. 125). Noting that positive WOM is one of the significant outcomes of satisfaction, Luo and Homburg (2007) argue that WOM, as free advertising, contributes to the efficiency of future promotion and advertising investments for organizations. The rapidly growing popularity and adoption of social media have made WOM communication easier and more powerful due to its excellent ability to

deliver information to many people in a short amount of time without having to deal with face-to-face human pressure (Phelps, Lewis, Mobilio, Perry, & Raman, 2004).

Many scholars in marketing and public relations have found that WOM intentions and actual WOM behaviors are positively correlated with favorable relationships (de Matos & Rossi, 2008; Harrison-Walker, 2001; Hong & Yang, 2009; Luo & Homburg, 2007). For example, Hong and Yang (2009) showed that relational satisfaction, as well as organizational reputation, was positively associated with positive WOM intentions. Through a meta-analysis of WOM literature, de Matos and Rossi (2008) found that commitment, trust, and satisfaction significantly affected WOM communication. Of these three relational constructs, commitment appeared to be the most important predictor of WOM activity. These findings suggest that improving perceptions of relationships with an organization increases the public's likelihood of giving favorable opinions or recommendations about the organization to others.

The current research assumes that an organization's use of a human voice (versus an organizational voice) in online communication with its publics leads to more favorable organization-public relationships (Kelleher & Miller, 2006). Considering the link between such relationships and WOM intentions, this study also posits that there is likely to be a spillover effect from perceptions of relationships onto intentions for organization-favoring behaviors (e.g., WOM). Therefore, H4 predicted the following:

> **H4**: Participants will have stronger intentions to engage in positive WOM communication for the organization when its social networking page has a human presence rather than an organizational presence.

Methods

This study used a 2 (presence: human vs. organization) × 2 (organization type: nonprofit vs. for profit) within-subjects design. As an important independent variable, the human/organizational presence was operationally defined based on whether or not an organization's social networking page includes a list of individuals in charge of the page and takes a personal approach, such as using individuals' names when responding to the public's comments. Organization type was operationally defined by choosing two companies from the *Fortune* 500 list (*Continental Airlines* and *Southwest Airlines*) and two nonprofit organizations (*Teach for America* and *Junior Achievement*) from the 2010 Top 100 Nonprofit (NPO) list.

Participants

Students were recruited from undergraduate communication courses at a large Midwestern university. Participants were randomly assigned to the experimental condition and given extra course credit as an incentive to participate. The total sample size was 40 students, and a larger percentage of participants was female (77.5%, n = 31) than male (22.5%, n = 9). Participants ranged in age from 20 to 22, with an average age of 20.55. The majority of participants were Caucasian (87.5%, n = 35), with 5% (n = 2) Asian, 2.5% (n = 1) African American, and 5% (n = 2) in other racial categories.

Stimuli and Manipulation Check

Prior to the main experiment, a pretest was conducted to control bias or previous reputation from a pool of ten randomly selected for-profit organizations from the Fortune 500 list and ten randomly selected nonprofit organizations from the top 100 nonprofit organizations list

published by *The Nonprofit Times*. From the pretest results, two for-profit organizations (*Continental Airlines* and *Southwest Airlines*) and two nonprofit organizations (*Teach for America* and *Junior Achievement*) with neutral reputations and low familiarity were selected to control bias or previous reputation. The selected companies were similar in reputation ($M_{Continental\ Airlines} = 4.14$, $M_{Southwest\ Airlines} = 4.78$; $M_{Teach\ for\ America} = 3.89$, $M_{Junior\ Achievement} = 5.39$), low in familiarity, and all had existing, official Twitter pages. In an effort to control participants' previous knowledge about the sampled corporations, their familiarity with each of the companies was measured and used as a control variable in data analysis. As a communication channel through which an organization interacts with its publics, an existing Twitter page of each of the organizations was edited to include an official logo, a brief description of the organization, and microblogging comments from both the organization's public relations representative and its publics. Both versions of each stimulus were identical in content and visual layout, differing only in their type of presence (human presence vs. organizational presence).

More specifically, in both human presence and organizational presence conditions, the Twitter page contained microblogging comments from the organization's public relations representative about recent organizational events, such as promotions or updates in services and products. Additionally, there were comments on the Twitter page written by viewers (a mix of negative, positive, and neutral), with the public relations representative responding directly back to the comments. In the human presence condition, the identity of the public relations representative was explicitly visible through two approaches: (1) a 2-dimensional animated facial figure of the public relations representative responsible for managing the Twitter page was embedded in the left hand side of the Twitter page, and (2) the name of the public relations representative (e.g., Lauren, Brian) was written underneath the animated facial figure. Because the purpose of this research was to examine the effect of human presence and organizational presence on the organization-public relational management outcome, responses were only posted by a company's representative, as the literature suggested that it is the actions taken by internal members of the organization that impact the outcomes of relationship management efforts.

While current empirical research normally includes a manipulation check to assess whether participants realized the intended manipulations, O'Keefe (2003) raises the critical point that when message variations are defined in terms of intrinsic features, it is unnecessary to conduct manipulation checks. The present study has two independent variables, presence type and organization type. Whether an organization is classified as a for-profit or nonprofit is not dependent upon participants' evaluations of the organization; it is an intrinsic feature. Similarly, a social media channel's (e.g., Twitter page) use of human presence or organizational presence is an intrinsic feature of the design and naming elements of the communication platform. Thus, in this study, a measured manipulation check was omitted.

Procedure

The experiment took place in a campus computer laboratory. Participants entered the laboratory, were greeted by the researchers, and were provided with an informed consent form along with a participation receipt. Once they read and signed the consent form, participants were guided to a computer terminal and informed that they would be looking at social media channels from four different organizations and answering questions regarding their feelings and evaluations toward the organizations.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. In each condition, the four stimuli were counterbalanced across participants. In each condition, participants viewed four different social media channels. Since this study used a counterbalanced design to control for stimulus order effects, the four different stimuli were arranged in 24 random orders in each condition.

When the experiment began, participants' familiarity of each of the sampled corporations was measured before testing any conditions in order to make adjustments on possible individual differences for hypothesis testing. Then, the participants were instructed to view the snapshot of an organization's official Twitter page and pay attention to its design layout and the microblogging comments. After viewing the Twitter page, participants responded to questions measuring conversational human voice, relational outcomes, dialogic communication intentions, and word-of-mouth intentions. They were asked to repeat the same procedure of viewing the social media channel and answering the questions for each of the remaining three times. At the end of the questionnaire, demographic items regarding gender, age, and race were asked. Upon completing the questionnaire, each subject was thanked, debriefed, and dismissed. The experiment lasted for approximately 30 minutes.

Measures

Familiarity. As a control variable, familiarity with each of the sampled organizations was measured via three 7-point semantic differential items adopted from Simonin and Ruth (1998): (a) not at all familiar/extremely familiar, (b) definitely do not recognize/definitely recognize, and (c) definitely have not heard of it before/definitely have heard of it before ($\alpha = .67$).

Conversational human voice. Eleven items developed by Kelleher and Miller (2006) were used to assess participants' perceptions of conversational human voice on the organization's social networking page. These three items were as follows: "This organization invites people to conversation," "This organization is open to dialogue," and "This organization tries to communicate in a human voice" ($\alpha = .870$). These items used a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Organization-public relationships. Relational outcomes were measured in terms of trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction. To measure these constructs, Hon and Grunig's (1999) relationship scale was used. Trust was measured using six items, such as "This organization treats people like me fairly and justly" and "This organization can be relied on to keep its promises" ($\alpha = .918$). Control mutuality was assessed with four items, such as "This organization believes the opinions of people like me are legitimate" and "This organization really listens to what people like me have to say" ($\alpha = .779$). Commitment was measured by four items, including "I can see that this organization wants to maintain a relationship with people like me" and "There is a long-lasting bond between this organization and people like me" ($\alpha = .823$). The four items assessing satisfaction included "I am happy with this organization" and "Both this organization and people like me benefit from the relationship" ($\alpha = .879$). All of these items were rated on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Dialogic communication intention. Six 7-point scale items taken from Bettencourt (1997) were used to assess participants' intentions to engage in dialogic communication with each of the organizations. These items included the following: "I let this organization know of ways that

they can better serve my needs," "I make constructive suggestions to this organization on how to improve its service," and "If this organization gives me good service, I let them know it" (α = .948).

Word-of-mouth communication intention. WOM communication intentions were measured by four items on a 7-point scale adopted from Brown et al. (2005). Participants were asked to rate their agreement with statements such as "I would encourage friends to use services from this organization" and "I would encourage family members or relatives to use services from this organization" (α = .863).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Before testing the hypotheses, participants' preexisting conditions were analyzed with respect to prior familiarity towards the sampled organizations. Of the two for-profit organizations, participants were more familiar with Continental Airlines (*M* = 6.54, *SD* = 0.68) than with Southwest Airlines (*M* = 5.51, *SD* = 1.52). The difference was meaningfully different across the two for-profit organizations (*t*(39) = -4.231, p < .001). For nonprofit organizations, participants were more familiar with Teach for America (*M* = 5.55, *SD* = 1.68) than with Junior Achievement (*M* = 2.94, *SD* = 2.38). The difference was also meaningfully different across the two nonprofit organizations (*t*(39) = 5.714, p < .001).

Hypothesis Tests

Hypothesis 1 predicted that participants' perceptions of an organization's conversational human voice would be higher when its social networking page has a human presence compared to an organizational presence. To test this hypothesis, a 2 (presence: human vs. organization) × 2 (organization: nonprofit vs. for-profit) repeated measures ANOVA was conducted. The results indicate that the main effect of presence type was significant (Wilks Λ = .880, *F*(1, 39) = 5.303, *p* < .05, η_p^2 = .120). As predicted, participants reported greater perceptions of organizations' conversational human voice in the human presence condition (*M* = 5.11, *SE* = .12) than in the organizational presence condition (*M* = 4.69, *SE* = .14). The main effect of organizational type was also significant on perceptions of conversational human voice (Wilks Λ = .748, *F*(1, 39) = 13.165, *p* < .01, η_p^2 = .252). Participants reported greater perceptions of organizations' conversational human voice in the for-profit organizations (*M* = 5.18, *SE* = .11) than in the nonprofit organizations (*M* = 4.63, *SE* = .13). Additionally, the two-way interaction between presence type and organization type was not significant (Wilks Λ = .973, *F*(1, 39) = 1.079, *p* = .305). Thus, H1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that participants would perceive more favorable relationships with an organization when its social networking page has a human presence rather than when it has an organizational presence. The effect of human presence on relational outcomes was tested using a doubly multivariate repeated measures MANOVA. This doubly multivariate design is commonly used when a set of dependent variables are measured at two or more different times and may provide some protection against the inflation of Type I errors caused by conducting multiple repeated measures ANOVAs independently (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2006; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Regarding relational outcomes, our experimental design included the four

dimensions of relationship as dependent variables and two within-subjects factors (presence type and organization type) with two levels. The results of the doubly multivariate repeated measures MANOVA indicated that the main effect of human presence was significant on the relational outcomes (Wilks $\Lambda = .734$, $F(4, 36) = 3.263$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .266$). The results of the subsequent univariate analyses also showed that the main effect of human presence was significant for trust ($F(1, 39) = 8.022$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .171$) and commitment ($F(1, 39) = 5.052$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .115$), but not for control mutuality ($F(1, 39) = .836$, $p = .366$, $\eta_p^2 = .021$). Satisfaction reached statistical significance at the .10 significance level ($F(1, 39) = 60.746$, $p = .084$, $\eta_p^2 = .075$). These results suggest that the use of human presence was more likely to foster trust ($M = 5.54$), control mutuality ($M = 4.91$), commitment ($M = 4.95$), and satisfaction ($M = 5.31$) among the participants than was organizational presence ($M = 5.08$ for trust, $M = 4.76$ for control mutuality, $M = 4.53$ for commitment, and $M = 4.97$ for satisfaction). Therefore, H2 was supported.

In contrast, the main effect of the type of organization did not have a statistically significant difference on the relational outcomes (Wilks $\Lambda = .825$, $F(4, 36) = 3.263$, $p = .130$). Both for-profit organizations ($M = 5.36$ for trust, $M = 4.79$ for control mutuality, $M = 4.97$ for commitment, and $M = 5.14$ for satisfaction) and nonprofit organizations ($M = 5.27$ for trust, $M = 4.88$ for control mutuality, $M = 4.61$ for commitment, and $M = 5.13$ for satisfaction) conjured similar evaluations of relational outcomes. As with H1, the two-way interaction between presence type and organization type was not significant for the relational outcomes (Wilks $\Lambda = .905$, $F(4, 36) = .942$, $p = .451$).

Hypothesis 3 predicted that participants would have stronger intentions to engage in dialogic communication intentions with an organization when its social networking page has a human presence rather than when it has an organizational presence. To test this hypothesis, a 2×2 repeated measures ANOVA was conducted. The results indicate that the main effects of both presence type (Wilks $\Lambda = .981$, $F(1, 39) = .767$, $p = .387$) and organization type (Wilks $\Lambda = .998$, $F(1, 39) = .093$, $p = .762$) were not statistically significant. The two-way interaction between presence type and organization type was also not statistically significant (Wilks $\Lambda = .994$, $F(1, 39) = .230$, $p = .634$). Participants reported similar intentions to participate in dialogic communication for both the human presence condition ($M = 4.81$, $SE = .22$) and the organizational human presence condition ($M = 4.65$, $SE = .19$). Additionally, participants reported similar intentions to participate in dialogic communication in the for-profit organizations ($M = 4.75$, $SE = .19$) and the nonprofit organizations ($M = 4.70$, $SE = .21$). Thus, H3 was not supported.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that participants would have stronger intentions to engage in positive word-of-mouth communication for the organization when its social networking page has a human presence rather than an organizational presence. A 2×2 repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to test this hypothesis, and the results indicate that while the main effect of presence type (Wilks $\Lambda = .876$, $F(1, 39) = .5.539$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .124$) was significant, organization type (Wilks $\Lambda = .997$, $F(1, 39) = .119$, $p = .732$) was not statistically significant for WOM intentions. The two-way interaction between presence type and organization type was also not statistically significant (Wilks $\Lambda = 1.000$, $F(1, 39) = .003$, $p = .958$). Participants reported higher WOM intentions in the human presence condition ($M = 5.28$, $SE = .16$) compared to the organizational human presence condition ($M = 4.84$, $SE = .16$). Meanwhile, participants reported

similar intentions to participate in WOM the for-profit organizations ($M = 5.09$, $SE = .16$) and the nonprofit organizations ($M = 5.03$, $SE = .17$). Thus, H4 was supported.

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of the dependent variables (i.e., perceived conversational human voice, four relational outcomes, dialogic communication intention, and WOM intentions) for each of the experimental conditions.

Insert Table 1 about here

Discussion

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have emerged as powerful and cost-effective tools for organizations to communicate with their publics on an ongoing basis and to build relationships through those constant interactions. Given the potential of social networking sites as relationship-building tools, it is necessary to examine possible key factors in online communication that contribute to the growth and maintenance of organization-public relationships through social media (Waters et al., 2009). Corresponding to this need, this study sought to examine whether a human voice of an organization in online communication positively affects such relationships. Another aim was to test if this positive effect results in favorable behavioral intentions to engage in WOM and dialogic communications.

Consistent with our expectation, conversational human voice was perceived to be greater for organization social networking pages with a human presence than for those with an organizational presence. This result is consistent with Kelleher and Miller's (2006) study, which suggests that providing a human presence within social media is an important quality when an organization interacts with their publics online. Thus, communicating in a human voice, as opposed to an organization voice, can be a viable and effective tactic for dialogic communication by "conveying some sense of human attributes existing behind an organizational façade" (Kelleher & Miller, 2006, p. 409). Accordingly, if public relations practitioners want publics to perceive more of a conversational human voice from their organizations' social networking pages, they may try to identify who they are, respond to publics' questions or concerns with their names, and use avatars representing themselves online.

Another interesting finding is that the for-profit organizations' pages were more likely to be perceived as using a conversational human voice than were the nonprofit organizations' pages. Although the focus of this study was not on how the type of organization affects perceptions of conversational human voice, this finding is noteworthy because it suggests another fruitful avenue for research on online communication strategies and tactics appropriate for the type of organization. For-profits and nonprofits may be viewed differently in the minds of publics, and thus, the stereotypes of the organizations that they hold may be reflected in their evaluations of organizational social media pages. In fact, Aaker, Vohs, and Mogilner (2010) found that for-profits are considered to be high in competence, whereas nonprofits are viewed to be high in warmth. Although a perception of nonprofits as highly warm is positive, warmth alone may hardly induce other positive responses to organizations without support of competence (Grandey, Fisk, Mattila, Jansen, & Sideman, 2005). These findings imply that nonprofit organizations may need to boost their credibility and competence in order to be evaluated more positively with respect to their public relations efforts with social media.

Alternatively, the effect of the type of organization on perceived conversational human voice can be explained by the organizations' familiarity scores. The corporations (i.e., for-profit organizations) used in this study were perceived to be more familiar than were the nonprofit organizations ($M_{\text{profits}} = 6.03$ vs. $M_{\text{nonprofits}} = 4.25$). Since dialogic communication via social media is similar to interpersonal interactions (Sweetser, 2010), it is possible that greater familiarity with organizations leads to more positive evaluations in terms of their use of the conversational human voice.

The findings of this study point to the value of using a human voice as an important factor in communicating and developing good relationships with publics. Participants' perceptions of relationships with an organization were significantly more favorable when its social networking page had a human presence rather than an organizational presence. Particularly, with the exception of control mutuality, the other three relational outcomes—trust, commitment, and satisfaction—appeared to be positively affected by the use of the human voice in social media. Through communicating with publics via social media, organizations try to foster long-term, satisfying organization-public relationships (Sweetser et al., 2009). More importantly, however, such communication efforts should be transparent in order to foster relationship growth indeed (Rawlins, 2009; Waters et al., 2009). Berman et al. (2007) consider the provision of practitioners in change of organizational social media pages, which was manipulated as a human presence in this study, to be one of the core elements representing organizational full disclosure in online communication activities. Therefore, it is plausible to speculate that the use of human voice may create perceptions of transparency, as well as feelings of interacting with a person rather than an organization (i.e., conversational human voice), which in turn contribute to cultivating quality relationships between an organization and its publics. More work is needed to get a better understanding of the role of human voice versus organizational voice in dialogic communication in relation to transparency and relationship growth.

This study also attempted to examine if the use of human voice in social media increases intentions to engage in dialogic and WOM communications. The data indicate that dialogic communication intentions did not significantly differ between organizations incorporating a human presence versus an organizational presence into their social networking pages, whereas behavioral intentions for WOM were positively affected by the demonstration of a human presence. The unexpected result for dialogic communication intentions may be due to the type of social networking site (i.e., Twitter) used as the stimuli in this study. Participants may have thought that 140 characters are not enough to express their concerns or give suggestions to an organization. These thoughts may reduce desire to provide feedback to and engage in dialogue with an organization. However, it is worth noting that providing a human presence on social media may promote positive WOM communication and thereby attract viral attention. Positive WOM communication can serve as free advertising and thus reduce promotion and advertising costs for organizations (Luo & Homburg, 2007). Moreover, the development of online communication tools has made WOM easier and more influential due to their speed of spreading information and their ability to reach many people simultaneously (Phelps et al., 2004). Especially on Twitter, people share information through a process called "retweeting," and the spread of information can be squarely accelerated by its "following-follower" mechanism.

The overall findings of this study suggest that communicating in a human voice adds a sense of personal and sociable human contact in the medium (Short et al., 1976). They lend some

support to the possibility that perceived conversational human voice may promote trust, satisfaction, and commitment in relationships between an organization and its publics, which in turn results in favorable behavioral intentions toward an organization (de Matos & Rossi, 2008). The dynamic role of human presence versus organizational presence proposed in this study adds a new perceptive as to how organizations can take more advantage of interpersonal aspects of social media. Therefore, this study provides a fundamental building block for constructing a body of knowledge that can help practitioners and scholars better understand how social media can be used for relationship management. The findings may also help develop the principles that guide practitioners in the optimization of dialogic opportunities in the new media environment.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite its important findings and implications, this study had limitations. First, sampling of participants may limit the interpretations of the findings of this study. Although college students compose a large part of the population using social media, the sampled students may not be representative of key publics with whom the sampled organizations deal. The selection of organizations for stimuli posed another limitation to this study. Despite having selected from various categories of organizations based on the pretest scores of familiarity, the sampled corporations and nonprofit organizations are relatively well-known. Perceptions that participants held about the organizations prior to exposure to the stimuli may have affected relational outcomes and behavioral intentions. Thus, future studies should consider using hypothetically-created organizations or companies with different standings in business and selecting samples from various groups.

With all test variables being within-subjects factors, this study reduced confounding effects caused by individual differences. However, participants' perceptions and uses of social media may vary and may serve as influential factors in evaluating an organizational web page and recognizing a human presence versus an organizational presence. Therefore, more research should be done to investigate potential individual factors (e.g., media usage, adoption level, and view on social media) that may moderate the relationships proposed in the current study. To improve the external validity of the findings, further research should replicate this study's findings by manipulating different social media platforms resembling Facebook and YouTube. Finally, while the present study did not measure the participants' evaluations of whether the social media channel they viewed had human presence or organizational presence (i.e., manipulation check) due to the intrinsic nature of the independent variable, future research can benefit from measuring the psychological state of perceived human presence or perceived organizational presence and conducting future analysis as assessments of potential mediating states.

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Appendix

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations for Outcome Variables

Dependent Variables	Independent Variables			
	Human Presence		Organizational Presence	
	For-profit	Nonprofit	For-profit	Nonprofit
Perceived human voice	5.46	4.76	4.90	4.49
	(0.820)	(1.074)	(1.260)	(1.038)
Trust	5.61	5.48	5.11	5.05
	(0.997)	(1.137)	(1.314)	(1.133)
Control mutuality	4.90	4.91	4.68	4.84
	(0.955)	(0.854)	(1.196)	(1.128)
Commitment	5.14	4.76	4.59	4.46
	(1.172)	(1.237)	(1.520)	(1.506)
Satisfaction	5.28	5.34	5.01	4.93
	(1.207)	(1.091)	(1.364)	(1.434)
Dialogic communication intention	4.88	4.74	4.63	4.67
	(1.410)	(1.688)	(1.459)	(1.410)
WOM intention	5.31	5.24	4.86	4.81
	(1.313)	(1.408)	(1.533)	(1.354)

Note. Numbers in parentheses represent standard deviations.

The "Buzz and Chatter Model" of the Interplay of Traditional and New Media Covering a Crisis Event

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Abstract

The "Buzz and Chatter Model" is a way to conceptualize the interplay between the traditional, new and social media in both covering and enlarging the discussion of a crisis event and its accompanying political and social impacts. Organizations—and their responsible government regulatory agencies—always face a number of challenges communicating in the heat of a crisis situation. The new half-second news cycle of Web 2.0 and the new "socialized media" add even more complications for the crisis managers as these newer forums and platforms allow a much larger and more diverse number of individuals to join in discussions, "investigative" research— even analysis—of the unfolding crisis. While traditional media and investigative and depth journalism still play the major role in covering the crisis, the new media and social media accelerate and supplement that coverage with more personal views—including Facebook groups and YouTube tributes—of what is at stake as the crisis plays out. Using the August 2007 Crandall Canyon mind disaster in Utah's coal country as an extended case study, this paper presents and describes the "Buzz and Chatter Model" and applies it to the expanding on-line and traditional coverage of the crisis event.

As reports of a 3.9 seismic event and a mine collapse trapping six miners since the early morning hours of Monday, August 6, 2007 began to circulate, news crews were on their way to Huntington, Utah. Due to the remoteness of the Crandall Canyon mine in east central Utah's Emery County, it took the satellite trucks a day to arrive. The first major news conference on Tuesday would be unlike any press briefing the assembled reporters had ever covered.

The first 20 minutes of the rambling 90-minute press conference introduced the journalists—the nation and the world—to Robert E. (Bob) Murray, the mine's co-owner and the man who would become the "face" of the disaster. The summarizing first paragraphs of the various news stories tried to recreate the scene at the site of the Crandall Canyon mine on August 7, 2007. *USA Today* went for a straightforward summary: "For more than 90 minutes Tuesday, mine co-owner Robert Murray took on climate scientists, earthquake experts, union activists, and the media as he sought to explain Monday's cave-in and what he was doing to rescue the six trapped men." (O'Driscoll, August 8, 2007)

The local *Salt Lake Tribune* story covering the press briefing, with the headline "The meltdown: Mine owner's emotional briefing fuels criticism" and with the sub-headline: "Mine owner ignores demand he turn over rescue updates to feds" began with the first paragraph: "Robert Murray scoured the skies for helicopters above Crandall Canyon, refusing to continue his disjointed rambling Tuesday morning media briefing until the county sheriff chased them off." The second paragraph reads: "It was a public relations meltdown that prompted the chairman of the U.S. House labor committee to demand that federal officials take the helm of all future briefings on the cave-in that trapped six men in the Crandall Canyon coal mine." The story summarizes the first 20 minutes of the briefing: "Murray defended the coal industry, attacked the press and railed against what he called a fool-hardy crusade against global warming that jeopardizes his industry and the American economy." (Gehrke & Beebe, August 8, 2007)

Ultimately, even the most seasoned journalists failed to capture what went on in the media briefing, because, as one blogger put it, Bob Murray's performance produced "a press conference that words cannot describe." In true new media fashion, the blogger's next sentence: "A video of his statements is available at Webloggin." (Wolf, Aug 8, 2007) This reaction to the media briefing—you have to see it to believe it—caused one public relations specialist to note in his blog "Murray broke so many rules of crisis communication he had news anchors questioning on-air what they had just witnessed"—which was exactly the response of the CNN team—and most likely their entire viewing audience that day as the 90 minute conference wrapped up. (Harmon, August 21, 2007)

For the first ten days of the disaster at Crandall Canyon mine, the nation tuned-in to follow Bob Murray's press briefings on the desperate efforts to claw through the rubble of the collapsed mine to free the six trapped miners—Kerry Allred, Don Erickson, Luis Hernandez, Juan Carlos Payan, Brandon Phillips, and Manuel Sanchez. With highly-trained rescue teams, family members and entire communities in Utah's coal country holding fast to hope beyond hope, the rescue attempt was fraught with setbacks and delays as continued seismic events—called "bounces" or more technically "outbursts"—would force rescuers to retreat and often destroyed any progress they had made in advancing to the area where the miners should be. The frustrated underground rescue took a final fatal turn the evening of August 16 when another powerful outburst shot coal at a group of rescuers, killing three—Dale Black, Brandon Kimber and MSHA

inspector Gary Jensen—and injuring six more. The underground rescue, now deemed too risky, was called off. With the underground operation suspended, the tactic of drilling boreholes into the mine in an effort to locate the six trapped men continued for another two weeks until the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) officially called off the rescue August 31.

Why were nine lives lost in the depths of the Crandall Canyon mine? The sad truth of the preventable deaths, arrived at by several official inquiries, is best summarized by the first paragraph of *The Salt Lake Tribune*'s story reporting the findings of the MSHA investigation: "The Crandall Canyon coal mine was so poorly engineered that it was primed for collapse, but federal regulators failed repeatedly to catch the flaws and approved a plan that was 'destined to fail.'" (Gherke & Gorrell, August 25, 2008) While there are many supporting claims and details behind that final assessment, the story of what lead up to and then played out in the frantic race against time to pull six trapped men out of the rubble in a collapsed mine can also be reduced to a troubling tale of what can happen when a mining company with an aggressive corporate culture bullies a weakened federal regulatory agency—and in the view of the Senate report—gets away with it.

This paper presents a way to conceptualize how the traditional and new media amplify discussions about an unfolding crisis event with the "Buzz and Chatter Model." This model is based on the new realities of the half-second news cycle of Web 2.0 and the "socialized media" and their interactions with the conventions of the traditional media. While the model focuses on the interplay of the cyber-based media forums and the traditional media, it also highlights the challenges of the accelerated dynamics of crisis communication in this new multi-mediated environment. Using the August 2007 Crandall Canyon mine disaster as a case study, the paper will be organized in this manner: First, present and explain how the "Buzz and Chatter Model" captures the interplay of traditional, new and "socialized media" coverage and discussions as a crisis event plays out; Second, apply the "Buzz and Chatter Model" to the unfolding coverage of the Crandall Canyon mine disaster; Third, use the findings of the series of post-crisis hearings and investigations to glean insights into how Murray Energy and its primary regulator, MSHA, failed to head warning signs of problems in the pre-crisis stage and then made very serious mistakes in handling the ensuing crisis event; and Finally, conclude with observations about the importance of a strong journalistic function—especially when investigative pieces and on-going coverage of corporate and government actions in crisis events serve vital roles in the larger democratic process of holding parties accountable for failures to follow the laws that protect workers, their families, and their communities from the consequences when those laws are broken.

The Buzz & Chatter Model

New Media

Electronic-based "Information" Resources, Records, Archives,
Search Engines, Media Archives, Government Records

Specialized Media, Blogs, Forums,
Advocacy Sites, Micro blogs, Social Networking Sites,
Content-Sharing Sites

Official Organizational websites,
Commercial, Government
Non-Profit, Education

Crisis Event

Initial Reports

Follow-ups, Sidebars, Graphics, Explanatory Features
Human Interest Features, Investigative Reports
Depth Reports, Editorials, Commentary
Editorial Cartoons, Opinion/Op-Ed

Legal Proceedings, Investigations,
Hearings, Trials, Lawsuits

Traditional Media

"Buzz and Chatter"—the Interplay of Traditional and New Media Covering a Crisis

The "Buzz and Chatter" Model (Paystrup & Bair, 2008) focuses on the interplay of new media and traditional media in covering—and critiquing—an unfolding crisis event. The model helps conceptualize how the interchange between traditional media and new media amplifies the coverage of the crisis event by engaging large numbers of individuals in actively communicating about the event by sharing information, perceptions, beliefs, and opinions as they access traditional news reports, online media coverage, specialized media sites, organizational Web sites, advocacy groups, popular blogs, archived news stories and government records. Adding to the mix, social networking and content-sharing sites like Facebook and YouTube provide creative outlets for collective expressions of hope and solidarity—or mourning and grief—as the crisis plays out. The model is based on the notion of time radiating out from the moment of the initial triggering crisis event. Organized horizontally, the bottom half of the model displays the types of journalistic pieces long associated with the traditional news media. The top half represents formats common to the cyber-based new media. The triggering crisis event itself is at the center and shaped to look like an explosion at the time it occurs. Initially, most crisis scenes are chaotic: information is fragmentary at best when the first reports break. The second ripple or ring in the model represents the developing coverage and follow-up stories and sidebar features that provide more details and explanations as the dust begins to settle around the crisis event. As the crisis continues, investigative or depth-reporting looks into the backgrounds of the organizations involved and starts the search for possible causes of the crisis. How the various parties involved act in the situation becomes the fodder for news analyses, editorials, commentaries, op-ed pieces and editorial cartoons. Depending on the type of crisis event, legal proceedings—investigations, hearings, trials and lawsuits—used to determine responsibility and assign blame become major news stories themselves, as represented in the third or outer ring or ripple in the model.

On the new media side of the model, the ripple closest to the crisis event represents the "official" organizational Web sites. Savvy organizations have a "dark" Web site ready to be activated specifically for a crisis situation. The second ripple of Web sites is the cyber equivalent of a corner café—a place to stop by and chat with friends. Now called "social media," these sites represent specialty media, the so-called "blogosphere," advocacy organizations and their blogs and forums, trade and professional associations and their electronic forms of membership publications, blogs or forums, list-serves and bulletin boards. Further linked through micro-blogs, social networking sites, and content-sharing sites, social media use the Internet to facilitate conversations. (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009). Since specialty media, membership organizations, advocacy groups and special interest lobbies gather the like-minded, some of the most interesting and informed discussions of crisis events occur in these forums. The third ripple or outer-level on the new media side of the model represents the fairly permanent electronic catalogue of information sources—search engines, databases, media archives, government records—that make vast amounts of information available with a few keystrokes or a mouse-click. The ability to access past archived media stories—and now new media postings—and the volumes of public records and government agency reports make the work of both professional and "citizen" journalists much easier.

When a crisis event occurs—like the Crandall Canyon Mine disaster—information and opinion from the traditional media and the new media are constantly racing past each other as bloggers link and cross-post the newest piece from a traditional media source to their new media forums and traditional journalists monitor activity on advocacy site blogs for new insider insights. "Citizen journalists" now "tweet" or post photos to Flickr. The micro-blog Twitter played a vital role in covering a breaking crisis situation for both the traditional media and new media in the Fort Hood shootings in November 2009. (Kanalley, November 6, 2009) The power of blogs, micro-blogs, content-sharing sites, and social networking sites lies in how these new forms of communication shift the old mainstream media's control of information away from the media and toward the audience as the users now create and share content—with or without connections to mainstream media information or content.

The rise of new media and social media in the landscape of Web 2.0 compounds the communication management issues faced by an organization in crisis—especially when the former 24-hour news cycle of the older traditional news media is replaced by the accelerated half-second news cycle ushered in by the click of the computer mouse. The new model of user-generated content that fuels the social media has flipped traditional media and the practice of "traditional" public relations on their heads. With social media and Web 2.0, the entire media landscape has been altered, "placing the power of influence in the hands of regular people with expertise, opinions, and the drive and passion to share those opinions. The people-powered content evolution augments instead of replaces traditional media and expert influence." (Solis & Breakenridge, p. 1).

One public relations specialist recently reviewed how mining companies fare when faced with a crisis—especially now in the new environment of Web 2.0. Calling the Sago mine disaster of January 2006 the first major disaster of Web 2.0 and it's half-second news cycle, he notes that—aside from the unfortunate mix-up in communication that lead up to the false news that the 13 trapped miners had been found alive that lead to three hours of early-morning jubilation before the sobering truth of the real news—the men were dead—crushed the families with grief—the company handled the crisis communication well (Lordan, 2007). As a result of what happened to the Sago families—with the final devastating news arriving after three hours of false euphoria caused by miscommunication—one of the major provisions of the MINER Act passed later in 2006 would be that MSHA, not the mining company, acts as the "primary communicator" with both the news media and the families. As the Crandall Canyon disaster unfolded, MSHA's failure to assertively act as the primary communicator—as mandated by the 2006 MINER Act—would become one of the major criticisms that would follow agency head Richard Stickler throughout the actual crisis event, through the congressional hearings and other investigative procedures, and into the final record provided by the findings of the various reports from congressional committees, the inspector general, and the independent review team.

Comparing the essential elements of the crisis situation in the Sago disaster to the Crandall Canyon disaster yields three importance differences. First, duration: the time from the initial explosion until the lone survivor and the bodies of the dead were recovered from the mine at Sago—three days. At Crandall Canyon, the rescue/recovery effort was active from August 6 until August 31—well over three weeks. Second, the provisions of the 2006 MINER Act specifically designating MSHA as the primary communicator at Crandall Canyon became law. And third—and perhaps most important—the mine co-owner Bob Murray's unique take-charge

approach to overall crisis management, media and family meeting briefings in particular, was unique to any previous mining crisis. In fact, one of the major themes of the congressional hearings, investigative reports, and the family lawsuits would be how Bob Murray—and a passive MSHA—mishandled the media and family briefings.

Bottom line, the collected wisdom of the volumes and volumes of research on organizational crisis communication can be boiled down into a simple three-part adage: Tell the truth; Tell it all; Tell it fast. Following the three-part adage is even more important now in the new media and social media environment since just about anyone—not just professional journalists—have easy access to a vast array of government records, archives of past media stories—and now interviews or other video snippets posted on content-sharing Web sites like YouTube. With Web 2.0, just about anything can be verified with a little searching by bloggers as they sit in front of their home computers, still wearing their pajamas and fuzzy-slippers. If an organization in crisis fails to tell the truth—or does not tell it all—or does not tell it fast enough, the organization's lies will soon be refuted—and the organization or its spokesperson will be reviled and ridiculed for the lies and half-truths. The truth of these adages apply to Bob Murray's claims that there was no retreat mining at Crandall Canyon and that an earthquake—an act of God—had caused the collapse, not the mining activity: These assertions would soon be disproved by a multitude of both professional and lay or citizen journalists with a computer and the desire to join in the investigation and the discussion.

The blogosphere fires up with the questions—Who is this Bob Murray? Did you see this?
For the first few days—especially on TV and as the key term for search engines inquiries and the topic of countless blog posts—Bob Murray was the story. Within hours of the 90 minute press conference on August 7, citizen journalists-type bloggers were posting and cross-posting search engine results highlighting Murray's extensive political contributions to key industry-friendly Republicans in Congress and perhaps the most widely cited anecdote that would circulate and re-circulate—his threats to have MSHA inspectors' jobs since "Mitch McConnell calls me one of the five finest men in America, and the last time I checked, he is sleeping with your boss." [Labor Secretary Elaine Chao and Senator McConnell are married; MSHA is housed in the Department of Labor.] The other major threads of the posts and cross posts—Murray's outspoken fights against global warming legislation, labor unions and safety regulations.
 As August 8 dawned, Bob Murray's belligerently bellowed claims that his company was not retreat mining—a technique also called "pillaring"—had been completely refuted in both traditional and new media stories and forums. Editorial cartoons in newspapers included *The New York Times* Jeff Danzinger with the heading; "Murray Mining Owner Explains Why He Would Never Use the 'Retreat Method.'" The drawing shows Bob Murray—with "PROFIT" superimposed in white on his sweater vest—holding up the roof of the collapsed mine while saying, "RETREAT, HELL!"—in the background, two hands reach out of the rubble. (August 8,2007)
Other editorial cartoonists reacted to Murray's 90 minute media briefing. The *Salt Lake Tribune*'s Pat Bagley summarized the first 20 minutes of the press conference by standing him before cameras and microphones—"Bob Murray" superimposed on his sweater vest—saying: "At this crisis time of life or death, I'd like to express my personal views about OSHA, unions, the news media, seismologists, and, oh yeah… the global warming hoax." *The Phoenix Sun*'s

Steve Benson gave his cartoon the heading "The Other Mine Disaster." The sketch superimposes "Bob Murray" on the sweater vest of a yelling Murray with an exaggeratedly enormous open mouth: inside the mouth—huge chunks of fallen coal. In most crisis events, the political implications emerge in the later blame-placing and sense-making phase of the situation. This crisis was politicized by Murray himself in the first 20 minutes of the August 7 media briefing— as satirized in the Bagley cartoon—as he went on a political rant before even mentioning anything about the rescue effort.

The political volleys from the blogosphere came from labor-lobby affiliated bloggers like Tula Connell at Firedoglake.com, who hosted a number of lively sessions of active postings and cross-posting with titles like the August 8: "Coal Mine Disaster: An Act of God, But NEVER an Act of Greedy Corporations." Connell writes: "Murray embodies the failed ideology of Bush & Co., one which operates as follows: Reject government solutions to problems like workplace safety and health that private corporations refuse to address." Then more pointed referring to Murray's media briefing: "When disaster happens, throw around baseless attacks. And never, ever, take the blame." From the far-left, the post, "A Tragic Consequence of Government-Industry Collusion" on the World Socialist Web Site identified Murray as "a major donor to the Republican Party who is well connected to the Bush administration and Republican congressional leadership. At an extraordinary press conference held at the mine site, Murray gave vent to the despotic outlook prevalent among mine owners."

The more Murray dominated the media briefings—now considered episodes of what several bloggers began referring to as Bob Murray's "bizarre" TV Talk Show—the more attention fell on Murray's business practices, political connections, and personal back-story. As one *New York Times* journalist-blogger summarized: "Outside the coal mining industry or Republican political circles, not many people would have had much reason to know who Bob Murray was before this week." The blog post continues noting that "Mr. Murray has become the lightening rod for a storm of blogospheric vitriol. All manner of people seem to hate the guy, what he does and what he stands for, and want to tell the world while he is still under the klieg lights." The blog post about the posts on other blogs and forums then observes: "Mr. Murray is the nationally known face of the drama—a face that a remarkable number of people seem to want to spit on." The post continues citing specifics: "Post titles like these almost tell the story by themselves: 'Bob Murray—Mine Swine'; 'Robert Murray: Sociopath'; 'The Worst Man in Utah.'" (Lyons, August 10, 20007)

In the first days of the crisis, a sort of parallel universe seemed to form in the traditional and new media coverage. On one side, TV Bob—the earnest "faux folksy" showman with the inspiring rags to riches story who became a nightly feature on Anderson Cooper's "360" show. On the other side in the parallel universe, Blogoshpere Bob—described by a blogger from Murray's own hometown as "a spotlight-hogging, blame-shifting, anti-union, anti-regulator, anti-environmentalist Throwback Mine Owner, who despite all his bluster can't get his six people out of the hole he put them in." (Callahan's Cleveland Diary, August 8, 2007) Much of the heavy online traffic in the first few days was cyber rubber-necking: incredulous reactions to seeing Murray on television or posts about his political connections. As the week progressed, the type of serious investigative journalism being done by the *Salt Lake Tribune* became the primary focus of shared cross-posts and discussions—especially when Robert Gehrke broke a story based on memos from the mine's engineering consultants, Agapito Associates, discussing the two

major bounces in March and how the plans would be changed after the bounces. (Gehrke, August 12, 2007). The Agapito Associates memo would become the first major piece of the larger puzzle of the underpinnings of the tragedy.

One excellent example of what the "Buzz and Chatter" model attempts to capture is found in one blogger's post. First, the writer unknowingly reflects this parallel universe of "TV Bob" versus "Blogosphere Bob" while discussing Murray's response to being asked about the *Tribune* story breaking the Agapito Associates' memo: "You've probably seen the voluble Wilfred Brimley look-alike Bob Murray… gabbing nonstop in an I-really-care emotional way… Giving the impression that he is doing everything that can be done to save the trapped miners. Some people seem to buy his act." Second, he references posts and cross-posts as he cites a *New York Times* report of *The Salt Lake Tribune*'s investigative story of serious problems in March that Murray's company failed to report to MSHA—i.e., the Agapito memo. The blogger then refers back to CNN coverage of a media briefing where Murray is questioned about the Agapito memo and he denies knowing anything about March bounces in the mine: "And yet the reporters at the conference, almost to a man, tip-toe around this…and the coverage leaves us with an image of a deeply troubled, *caring* fuddy-duddy paternalistic guy who'd do anything for his beloved employees. Disgusting!" He concludes his post saying he can't believe "the way the media continues to fall for the pathetic Wilfred Brimley act and fails to treat this Dickensian creep as the heartless greedy buffoon he is and to hold him and the bought-and-paid for safety mine regulators accountable for the tragedy of the trapped miners" (Rosenbaum, August 13, 2007).

The on-going coverage of the first week of Bob Murray's press briefings and antics had many glued to their televisions. As one public relations specialist analyzing coal mining crisis communication summarized Crandall Canyon: "For the media, it was true drama—hope, despair, bravery, reversals, and a larger than life figure in the form of Murray himself. One could not script better television" (McIvor, 2009). In fact, according to the PEJ News Coverage Index for August 5-10, 2007, the "Utah Mine Collapse" dominated network television coverage with close to 16 percent and cable television coverage with 27 percent of the news hole. The index tallied online activity a near tie with "Events in Iraq" first and "Utah Mine" second at around 14 percent. Averaging in newspapers and radio for the week's overall coverage, the 2008 Campaign garnered nearly 16 percent of the total news hole with the "Utah Mine Collapse" coming in second with 13 percent. The Crandall Canyon mine disaster was also a major news story in Latin America. Three of the six trapped miners were Mexican nationals with family in Mexico.

Crandall Canyon's collapse provided the news media with a crash-course in deep coal mining in the West. Newspapers and broadcast media and their affiliated Web sites relied extensively on a series of info-graphics to help tell a rather difficult technical story in the first days of the disaster. Helping readers and viewers visualize the layers of sedimentary sandstone and the seams of coal, the info-graphics helped explain the pressures in the mine and illustrated how mine ribs burst, causing the outbursts and bounces. Extensive coverage in the first days of the disaster followed the predictable pattern of explanatory news features and human interest stories focusing increasingly on the emotional dimensions of mining tragedies and the agonizing wait for good news.

In the first few days, a number of feature stories focused on the question—Who is Bob Murray? Unlike many of the postings and cross-postings on the internet, the traditional media pieces are bound by journalistic conventions. *The Washington Post* ran a profile titled "Collapse is latest fight for coal's best friend." The story begins: "As he keeps watch outside the Utah coal mine where six of his employees have been trapped since Monday, Robert E. Murray angrily fends off suggestions that it was his company's mining technique, and not an earthquake, that caused the collapse 1,500 feet below ground. Murray's confrontational stand outside Crandall Canyon mine is just one more battle in a war he has been waging in defense of an industry he believes is unjustly vilified." More specifically, "In the past year, Murray has emerged as one of coal's most ardent defenders against charges that it is driving global warming, arguing on Capitol Hill and in interviews that restricting coal would decimate the U.S. economy." (MacGillis, August 9, 2007)

Another feature that ran widely the same day, and often titled "Utah mine disaster yields frenetic frontman," begins: "He's a bulldog in a 5-foot-11-inch frame, bellowing about earthquakes, global warming, helicopter noise and traffic on national TV as six of his miners remain trapped underground. Bob Murray, though, prefers another description for himself: underdog." Continuing, "What he has become this week is the very public and complex face of the nation's latest mine disaster. …the main spokesman in front of the cameras, holding nothing back as he takes on scientists, the media and federal regulators in a way that leads some to wonder why he isn't expending more of his considerable energy on trying to reach the miners" (August 9, 2007)

A profile in *The Los Angeles Times* begins with a simple lead sentence: "He likes to be called 'Honest Bob." The second paragraph adds: "He's described as unflinching in his opinions and is best known in his native Ohio as a passionate advocate of coal mining—so passionate that he sometimes comes across as angry." (Tizon, August 8, 2007).

If there is a pre-existing narrative for discussing mining disasters, writes one public relations specialist, it follows this pattern: "unscrupulous mine owners, with the collusion of uncaring government agencies, operate unsafe mines in the reckless pursuit of profit; miners pay the price with their lives." In addition to the narrative, most mining disasters fall into a communication cycle of either: "(a) disaster, rescue, inquiry or (b) disaster, recovery, inquiry, or a blend of the two" (Rosetta Public Relations, p. 5). In the rescue phase of the cycle, the "irrational ability all of us have to hope"—even tempered with the knowledge of the history of mining tragedies— finds many praying for a miracle like the Quecreek miners pulled to safety after being trapped for three days. By the end of the first week, the timeless narrative pattern was emerging in the Crandall Canyon coverage. After a series of setbacks and delays, there was little good news on the rescue front and the time element itself was becoming the story. Prayer vigils buoyed the spirit of those still holding out for a miracle.

Week Two—Shifting the Focus to Federal Regulators and Bush Administration Policies

While Bob Murray made himself the center of the story, increasing attention was turning to Murray's seeming polar opposite: MSHA chief Richard Stickler, who was usually seen standing off to the side—silent—as Murray thundered on in front of the cameras. An editorial writer at *The Deseret News* would later refer to Stickler as Murray's "unintentional straight man" and compared the two men: "Every night, we tuned in hoping beyond hope that the six trapped miners had been rescued. But we also wanted to see what the bombastic Murray might say next

and to hear Stickler's 'just-the-facts-ma'am' report." The contrast continued: "Not since Oscar Madison and Felix Unger in 'The Odd Couple' have we seen two men so different in their approach." (Cortez, October 16, 2007).

As the crisis entered its second week, traditional media, online media, blogs, professional and trade association forums questioned Richard Stickler's apparently missing-in-action response to a situation that by law put him—not Bob Murray—in charge of the rescue and the media and family briefings. The search engines that quickly delivered a bounty of bad news about Bob Murray's reputation gave easy results on the MSHA chief who, as Arianna Huffington put it, was "another 'heck of a job' Bush special, a coal industry insider who couldn't even win the approval of a GOP-controlled Senate." (August 17, 2007). Detailed descriptions of Stickler's failed nomination and subsequent "recess appointment" did not help boost confidence in the relatively unknown head of an obscure regulatory agency. More and more bloggers and political commentators began examining the issue of "agency capture"—the chronic problem of the so-called "revolving door" between federal regulatory personnel and their ties to the industries they regulate.

The First Collective Critique Begins to Emerge—"heck of a job, Brownie—err, Stickie"

With little progress in the rescue as the second week of the crisis unfolded, MSHA's failure to fully take charge of the operation became the major issue as traditional and new media begin pressing for more investigative pieces on agency capture and Richard Stickler's industry ties. The first wave of a collective critique of the situation found more bloggers equating Stickler with "Brownie"—the reference to former Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) head Michael Brown and the everlasting anecdote of President George W. Bush—in the middle of the Hurricane Katrina debacle—telling the failed agency head: "You're doing a heck of a job, Brownie."

A crisis event adds one more element to the traditional list of news values—concreteness. Often the dynamics of the actors and the events in the crisis produce ways to discuss larger political or social issues or problems. FEMA's failure to respond in a timely and appropriate manner to 2005's Hurricane Katrina made the agency the national political scapegoat and the agency's head—Michael Brown—came to represent the larger problems of the Bush Administration's approach to governing. The wide-ranging political critique of the Bush Administration became focused in what has now become a popular catch-phrase: "You're doing a heck of a job, Brownie."

One of the first applications of "heck of a job, Brownie" to a federal agency's reputation can be found in editorial cartoons about the Sago mine disaster in January 2006. The explosion that rocked the Sago coal mine in West Virginia—killing 12 miners—followed Hurricane Katrina by just a few months. Using this easily applied political critique to agencies involved in a crisis event, editorial cartoonist Pat Oliphant shows the trapped miners as one says, "Now we sit tight and wait for Mr. Bush to come rescue us." From the left lower corner Oliphant's little Punk the Penguin—a truth-telling jester—volunteers: "He'll probably send Brownie." (January 6, 2006) Jeff Danzinger's *New York Times* cartoon hangs a banner reading "DON'T WORRY. THIS MINE INSPECTED BY BUSH ADMINISTRATION CRONIES and FLUNKIES " across the entrance of a mine. (January 6, 2006). *The Salt Lake Tribune's* Pat Bagley Sago mine disaster cartoon establishes the office pictured as the "Bush Adm. Dept. of Mine Safety" with a

man wearing dark glasses on the phone—white cane propped against the desk and seeing-eye dog nearby. The caption has the blind man saying, "I'll look into it." On the wall behind him—a picture of President Bush with the autographed inscription "Heck uva Job!"

Typical of the coverage in the second week of the Crandall Canyon crisis was a segment aired on *Countdown with Keith Olbermann* on "Day Ten." The central point of the piece was the rise in mine fatalities under the Bush Administration, Richard Stickler's failed nomination—even with a Republican Senate—and subsequent recess appointment as background to questioning Stickler's competency and the role of agency capture in the Bush Administration's philosophy of reduced regulation. Popular on the internet was an animated cartoon from Headzup.com where Bush's Press Secretary, Dana Perino, is subjected to fast-fire questions about both Murray and Stickler and the crisis situation. The Perino figure finally responds: "This just in. The President thinks Mr. Stickler is doing 'a heck of a job.'"

Sticking the "Brownie" label on Richard Stickler and also using the metaphor of foxes tending the hen-house or chicken coop appeared in several blog postings. In the August 17 post, "Did Another 'Brownie' KILL Three Utah Mine Rescue Workers?" Rob Kall writes that Stickler "should go leave the henhouse and go back to his fox hole, and maybe dig it a bit deeper, so there's room for him AND Brownie there, among the growing cadre of Bush Disaster experts—people who take disasters and make them worse." He continues: "Meanwhile, if the lamestream major media were doing their job, they would not mention the mine disaster without mentioning the fact that Bush appointed Stickler circumventing the will of both parties in congress…"

A posting on the "citizen journalism" EPluribus Media Community web site titled "Crandall Canyon, The King of the Mountain, The Fox in the Coop" is representative of the how bloggers were reviewing Bob Murray's political connections and actions during the crisis while making connections to how those Murray's PAC contribution might play into the larger question of agency capture at MSHA. "Which brings us to the second recognizable figure from the coverage of these horrible events, Richard Stickler…" failure to take charge of the efforts became "a delay that reminded some of 'Brownie' at Katrina."   After reviewing Stickler's failed nomination and Bush giving him a recess appointment, the post continues: "The Fox was now in charge of another regulatory agency. The federal government's power to regulate the activities of business is among the most sacred duties of our citizenry." After detailing the important ways safety regulation works: "In this area, as in so many others, this administration has not dropped the ball, they have thrown it to the opposing team." (Higgins, August 22, 2007)

As part of the larger critique of agency capture, Arianna Huffington's August 23 post "The Deeper Danger of Crandall Canyon" takes on the Bush Administration's approach to safety enforcement: "More and more frequently, federal agencies are being used to reward political donors. Industry hacks are given key government positions not because they are the best people to protect the public interest but because they are ready, willing and able to protect the very industries they are meant to supervise, industries they have often just left." Huffington's analysis continues: "Exhibit A is President Bush's 'mine safety czar' Richard Stickler…acting more like a lap dog than a watchdog, stood by and allowed Murray to dictate the agenda, even though the law specifically states that MSHA, not mine operators like Murray" is in charge and the liaison for the media and the public. Huffington ends the piece with the metaphor: with "industry foxes

guarding the henhouse, the role of the media in covering workplace disaster like the one in Utah becomes all the more important."

Web 2.0: Take a Seat in the New Media Cyber Café and Chat with Folks Like You

In the "Buzz and Chatter" of the interplay between traditional media and new media coverage of a crisis event, the new media forums offer the platforms most conducive to offering a critical examination of the situation. The blogs, online media, specialty media, advocacy group networks, trade and professional association list serves, bulletin boards, wikis, etc., are not saddled with the kinds of conventions and constraints that go along with mainstream or traditional American journalism's idealized "objectivity." Alternate media are deliberately set against the traditional media's fare. We choose the new media and specialty media for a deliberate point of view. We expect opinionated, sometimes irreverent—or even edgy—commentary.

Leading the new media's critiquing charge against the traditional media's infatuation with Bob Murray—Arianna Huffington in the post "Why are the *New York Times* and so much of the Traditional media neglecting a vital part of the Utah mine collapse story." Huffington writes of the TV coverage: "Cue the swelling music and start the casting session. Your mind reflexively begins to wonder who would play Murray in the Crandall Canyon TV movie. Wilfred Brimley? Robert Duvall? Paul Newman?" She continues: "Of course Murray's role in all this is much darker than that of the compassionate boss given to delivering script-ready lines like 'Conditions are the most difficult I have seen in my 50 years of mining' and 'There are many reasons to have hope still." She reminds: "He is a politically-connected Big Energy player whose …19 mines…have incurred millions of dollars in fines for safety violations over the last 18 months. Probably won't see that in a TV movie." Huffington cites Jon Stewart's observation that people like Murray understand how to divert the media's attention: "show them a shiny object over here, which distracts them from investigating the real story over there. And the hopeful, coal-covered, and always camera-ready Murray has been very shiny indeed. Especially when his face is blackened from a recent PR stint down the mine." Huffington continues writing that the majority of the media "coverage of the tragedy has tilted towards the shiny objects causing them to neglect the issues that might help prevent yet another story about the desperate attempt to rescue yet another group of trapped miners." Bottom line: the coverage has been so poor that the traditional media could have "spared the expense of sending reporters to Huntington [Crandall Canyon] and just republished the reports from *The Salt Lake Tribune* and AP." (August 14, 2007)

While Huffington's criticisms are intended for her Web site audience, other new media forums allow journalists to chat with journalists about how the media are covering the story. Some of the problem with the inability to understand and pursue what Huffington tries to identify as the "vital part" of the story, is that most of the reporters sent to the scene have little experience with, or knowledge of, the mining industry, Ken Ward, Jr. points out in his post, "Why is it OK for the coal mining industry to break the law," to the blog at journalism's Nieman Watchdog Web site. Ward writes: "Despite having covered last year's three major coal-mining disasters, most of the national media still seem a little confused about the basics of coal mining. It's that confusion that led to the initial reporting—and to some continuing to allow Bob Murray to mislead the public…" (August 10, 2007)

Another writer who spent 40 years covering the coal industry and served on the Sago investigative team, Tom Bethell, posts and was cross-posted in several forums. In his piece "Mr. Murray's Misstatements," he writes, "Day after day, in the guise of holding 'news' briefings, Mr. Murray has hosted his own bizarre talk show for the assembled media…demonstrating why he doesn't deserve to be trusted with the facts, let alone the lives of thousands of people who depend on him for their livelihoods." Bethell notes that the duped media "floated soft pieces about the mine owner's personal rags-to-riches saga…rather than doing some digging to see whether Mr. Murray's self-serving briefings might be obscuring the real story." (August 15, 2007)

Some of the most insightful discussions in Web 2.0's figurative Cyber Café could be overheard through the forums for professionals in the safety-related fields like Confined Space and The Pump Handle, which uses the tag "A water cooler for the public health crowd."   A frequent poster starting August 7 was a former MSHA employee—Celeste Monforton—who had been on the Sago investigative team. From her first posting titled "Lessons from Sago at Crandall Canyon, or Not?" she expressed concerns that the new provisions of the 2006 MINER Act were not being implemented—that Bob Murray, not MSHA, was acting as the "primary communicator" with the media and the families. Her posting grew increasing more impassioned as MSHA made mistake after mistake handling the crisis. Monforton's August 30 post, "No Joke: MSHA Spokesman Parrots Bob Murray" sparked a lively discussion on the forum.   As did her August 31 post, "Still Irked at MSHA's Response to Families."

In a reflective post after the second collapse took the lives of three rescuers, Celeste Monforton returns to what was perhaps the most outrageous act Murray committed in the minds of mining-industry insiders—the media tour of the mine. Monforton quotes heavily from *Mine Safety and Health News* editor Ellen Smith's editorial about the August 8 tour—"High Negligence and Reckless Disregard at Crandall Mountain"—and cites Smith's prescient question at that time: if another seismic event had happened during the tour, would it have been worth more human lives to get pictures Stickler had said were worth "a million dollars" or "a thousand words"?   Monforton then writes: "Underground mines can be dangerous. Underground mines under a 103(k) order for a rescue mode are ***especially dangerous***. . . .It is a tenuous situation with conditions changing by the minute. It is not a place for TV crews, reporters, or others who are not mining professionals and designated essential personnel for the emergency response. Period." (August 18, 2007)

Responding to Monforton's Pump Handle post about the danger of a rescue and the Murray media tour, veteran journalist Tom Bethell related the story of covering Kentucky's 1976 Scotia mine disaster—the last disaster where federal regulators were killed along with miners. Bethell writes: "a particularly obnoxious network TV reporter, wearing his trademark 6-foot-long scarf, approached Bob Barrett—director of MESA, MSHA's predecessor—and asked if he could take a camera crew inside the portal to film that night's talking-head report." Bethell continues: "Barrett, a good guy saddled with a compound tragedy (two explosions, 26 dead including three federal inspectors), gave him an evil thousand-yard-stare, paused for about five seconds, and said, very quietly, 'You must be out of your f---ing mind.' That's what Richard Stickler should have said to Gary Tuchman of CNN and to any other would-be disaster-voyeurs, overruling Bob Murray if necessary, and it should be the fixed policy of whoever succeeds

Stickler." Monforton responded to Bethell's anecdote with a simple note: "Here's to Mr. Bob Barrett! I wish I had known the man." (August 18, 2007).

Second fatal collapse—rescuers killed/ injured—Crandall Canyon is "spot" news again

The desperate struggle by rescue workers to clear a path to the miners underground was interrupted repeatedly by instability and seismic activity in the mine. The secondary effort aimed at locating the trapped miners—drilling boreholes more than 1,500 feet down into the mine—was often hampered by heavy rain and the time-consuming task of bulldozing temporary roads to get the heavy drilling rigs situated on the mountain. After days of frantic underground efforts, rescuers had advanced only some 826 feet. On the eleventh day of the frustrated rescue attempts—August 16—a seismic jolt registering 1.6 shot a powerful volley of coal and debris onto nine rescuers—killing three and sending six more to area hospitals. Among the nine rescuers—two MSHA inspectors, one killed and the other seriously injured. In the words of Utah's governor, the tragedy became a catastrophe—and Crandall Canyon was once again the hot "spot" or breaking news story with televised images of medical helicopters lifting off into the night sky and the flashing lights of ambulances illuminating the scene.

The deaths of the rescuers and the subsequent suspension of the underground rescue efforts made it hard for those still hoping for a miracle. "Mining disasters are visceral. Few situations convey the 'doom factor' of a crisis as vividly as men trapped underground in darkness waiting for rescue or death," writes one public relations specialist. "Even when killed suddenly and violently, death in a mine has a special kind of horror." (Rosetta Public Relations, p. 6)

The morning after the deadly collapse, in a post titled "It shouldn't have taken the deaths of three rescuers to get the media to focus on mine safety," Arianna Huffington scolds the news media for failing their watchdog duties. She begins the piece noting with the second collapse, "a dramatic shift in the TV coverage of the story. All at once, faux folksy mining boss Bob Murray, who had been everywhere was nowhere to be found…" She asks: "Why did it take a tragic second collapse before the Murray and Stickler PR Show was finally replaced by actual journalism?" She writes: "Here's a question for the media: Since when do the owners of mines—especially owners who have been fined millions of dollars for numerous safety violations—set the news agenda?" She posits: "What if, instead of giving endless airtime to Bob Murray, they had brought on some of the experts we saw last night…?" She continues: "What if they had gotten Stickler on record on this, and had him definitely say whether Murray was lying when he repeatedly denied the dangerous technique [retreat mining] was being used in the Crandall Canyon Mine?" (August 17, 2007)

Total media coverage of the second fatal week of the disaster, as analyzed by the PEJ News Coverage Index, kept Crandall Canyon as the top story on cable TV with 16 percent of the news hole. It was the second major story on network TV news with eight percent, fourth online with seven percent, sixth in radio time at three percent. In overall coverage, Crandall Canyon news was the fourth story of the week with seven percent of the news hole. The title of the week's content analysis: "No Story Dominates a Varied Week for News."(August 12-17, 2007). One public relations specialist analyzing the disaster noted that, as is often common in mid-August, the week followed a "slow" news cycle—until the fatal second collapse the evening of August 16. With little else vying for attention on network or cable TV, he compares the non-stop coverage of the fatal news from Crandall Canyon to a previous slow August night—the O.J. Simpson white Bronco chase (McIvor, 2009).

With the fatal second collapse, a number of elements changed dramatically. First, Bob Murray disappeared for several days. Vice President Robert Moore became Murray Energy's representative at the media briefings. With Murray out of the spotlight, MSHA finally became the primary communicator. Faced with little hope of a rescue—or even a recovery operation— the media camp began to disband and the coverage became more local than a top-of-the-news-hole national or international item. In the Utah media, coverage of memorial services and funerals mixed with the more tediously technical media briefings conducted by MSHA to discuss progress on drilling more boreholes in hopes of locating the lost miners. Bob Murray reemerged to explain that he had been under a doctor's care for extreme fatigue and emotional stress. He never regained the media spotlight he had the first ten days of the crisis.

The deaths of the rescuers and the end of an active underground rescue ushered in a period of reflection among commentators and analysts spinning out editorials, op-ed pieces, and blog posts. *The New York Times* editorial "Unsafe Mining," called "into question MSHA's very decision to allow mining to proceed in this aging mine, where the last remaining coal was being stripped from pillars holding up millions of pounds of mountain above" at "particularly perilous …depths of about 2,000 feet." (August 23, 2007)

With the underground rescue halted, an avalanche of pieces criticizing MSHA's handling of the crisis began to appear. One story carried widely in newspapers and news aggregator sites—Associated Press writer Jennifer Talhelm's piece usually headlined "Handling of mine disaster questioned"—focused on MSHA's failure to "take public control of the scene." (August 18, 2007) Amid the news coverage and blog posts questioning why the risky underground rescue was even allowed given the steady seismic activity at the mine, the issue of what would happen at the site loomed large. While the attempt to drill boreholes to locate the trapped miners continued, on August 19 Murray Energy's new spokesman, Vice President Rob Moore, began telling reporters that it was most likely the six trapped miners would never be found.

More hard-hitting investigative reporting uncovers the background leading to the tragedy
Murray's pronouncements that he would never going back into the "evil mountain" and that the chances of recovering the bodies were "virtually, totally unlikely," jockeyed for attention with more examples of excellent investigative journalism as *The Salt Lake Tribune*'s Robert Geherke broke another major story when he gained access to the string of MSHA documents that proved Murray lied repeatedly during the crisis when he claimed the company had not changed any of the original mining plans and that there was no retreat mining at Crandall Canyon. With the headline "Facts refute mine boss," a subhead "Documents show plan changes," and a smaller subhead "Contrary to Murray's assertions, company made adjustments, possibly boosting risks," Geherke once again placed major pieces of the puzzle of what happened to lead up to the tragedy into place. (August 22, 2007)

On the other side of the August 22 front page, the *Tribune*'s Washington Bureau Chief, Thomas Burr, focused on MSHA's Richard Stickler. Under the headline "MSHA chief under fire on Capitol Hill," and the subhead "Trailing criticism from past tragedies, he is blamed for putting production before safety," the lead begins: "Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., now the chairwoman of the Senate subcommittee on workplace safety, called Richard Stickler's ascension last year to lead the federal agency overseeing mine safety a 'cruel slap in the face' to

miners and their families." The several paragraph lead continues: "Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., said Stickler wasn't the 'right man for the job.' Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., warned that Stickler was a bad choice. 'He has shown over and over again that safety is not his priority,' Kennedy said." While profiles of Stickler ran in the early days of the crisis, Burr's depth report adds perspective to the events that played out under Stickler's watch. The next day's news would report the announcements of the first round of congressional hearings on the tragedy from Sen. Kennedy and Rep. Miller to begin September 5. Both committees listed Stickler and Murray as their prime first witnesses.

Another prime piece of depth reporting by the Associated Press writers Cara Buckley and Dan Frosch ran widely on August 23. Often titled "Mine Safety Leader Loses Some Respect for Actions in Utah," the article's lead begins: "It was a telling moment one day last week in what had become a regular sideshow at the foot of a mountain here, where six coal miners were swallowed whole. The mine's blustering and domineering co-owner, Robert E. Murray, was holding forth in front of a bank of microphones, predicting when the trapped miners would be found, a forecast that has not come true." The focus of the story: "The man charged with running the government's rescue effort, Richard E. Stickler, the head of the federal mining agency, who had been standing off to the side, shook his head and walked away." The key "nut" paragraph: "Mr. Murray and Mr. Stickler, 63, have provided two very different public faces of the Crandall Canyon Mine disaster. But though Mr. Murray's erratic public appearances have made him a favorite target of critics, Mr. Stickler's performance has also dismayed some of his supporters and his detractors, thrown into question his future at the Mine Safety and Health Administration, and drawn fresh criticism onto the agency as a whole."

As the crisis events played out, and the *Salt Lake Tribune's* investigative reports stacked up, the paper's editorial cartoonist, Pat Bagley, penned the ultimate statement or "critique" of the "situation" at Crandall Canyon. The cartoon Bagley produced for the August 23 editorial page crystallizes what the investigations conducted by Congress and the Inspector General would conclude. In a way, the cartoon alone could stand as the "executive summary" for the reports. The cartoon features a well-dressed gentleman—"Mine Operators"—superimposed on his chest, seated with a small dog—name-tag "MSHA"—on his lap, the little lapdog devotedly licking the man's large jowl. Propped next to them, a big open bag of "W Corporate Kibble" with George W. Bush's likeness on the dog food's label. The small figures of three miners stand below and to the side as the operator says: "Gentlemen, <giggle> Of Course I Take Your <tee hee> Safety Concerns Seriously."

By the third week—with little action at the mine after the active rescue was suspended—the Crandall Canyon disaster began to slip from the national news hole. In the PEJ News Coverage Index for August 19-24, Crandall Canyon ranked tenth on both cable TV and radio with two percent and one percent of the news hole. "Utah Mine Accident" was sixth on network TV with four percent and seventh online with four percent. In newsprint, Crandall Canyon was not a top-ten story, but combining all five media sectors, ranked ninth overall with three percent of the news hole. (PEJ, August 19-25, 2007) The somber task of burying the dead and coming to grips with the fate of the six men still lost became primarily local stories.

Writing in his blog at *The Baltimore Sun* as the recovery effort entered its final days, Andrew Ratner critiqued how the media—traditional and new—handled covering the crisis. Ratner begins his piece: "Among the places cyberspace can't reach: into a coal mine. The real-

life drama near Huntington, Utah, where six miners are trapped underground and presumed dead, and where three of their fellow miners died in a rescue attempt, has been all but immune from the blogging and new media that often blanket modern tragedies." He notes: "The parameters of the story lend themselves to what the new media typically do best—following news in hard-to-reach places in real time around the clock. But the chronicle of the accident that began early Aug. 6 seems as riven with uncertainty as the reports of epic mine disasters of the past." He contrasts how the new technologies that otherwise make new media and social media channels of wider coverage—like cell-phone videos—are limited in a mine disasters. "The modern miracle of wireless communication is meaningless within sedimentary rock." Ratner continues that without access from participants or "citizen journalists": "The bulk of blog post with news about the rescue operation have come from traditional media such as *The Salt Lake Tribune* and CNN. Individual blog posters have often focused on political issues far from the rescue scene." Summarizing the bulk of the blog posts, Ratner writes: "While bloggers couldn't add much to the reporting of the rescue effort, they were effective in exploring the regulatory and technological issues confronting mine operations in Utah and elsewhere. The belligerent history of mine operator Robert E. Murray, described as flamboyant and camera-hogging, was a frequent topic." (August 26, 2007)

Curiously, there is no PEJ index of news coverage for the last week of August. As far as the coverage of the Crandall Canyon disaster goes, a fitting analysis of the news in the last days might be the final paragraph of Ratner's blog post: "Whatever the limitations of new media in old mines, the ending of this coal field tragedy is likely to mimic dozens that have preceded it, as in this recounting in *The Wheeling News-Register* of the April, 28, 1924, explosion that killed 119 in Benwood, W. Va.: "By Wednesday, May 7, the burials were under way and the story had dropped off the front pages of the newspapers." (August 26, 2007)

While newsprint fades, tributes to the miners continue on YouTube and Facebook. While the social networking and content-sharing sites are most actively used during the crisis phase, most of the videos remain and a growing catalog of tribute videos and performances of songs written to commemorate the tragedy mingle on YouTube with tribute videos and songs marking the Sago and Upper Big Branch tragedies. Just recently—three and a half years after the August 2007 disaster—two new songs written about the Crandall Canyon tragedy—"Crosscut 139" and "Three-Mile Hole"—joined the growing body of some 10 songs written to honor the men lost at Crandall Canyon posted on the content-sharing site. In a way, a site like YouTube might also belong in the third ripple or circle of the "Buzz and Chatter Model" where the permanent records and archives, searchable databases, etc. reside. Bob Murray is still there, in YouTube Technicolor, ranting on and on and on under "Angry CEO."

The post-crisis assessment begins with hearings, investigations and fact-finding reports

As represented in the outer or third ring of the "Buzz and Chatter Model," the often time-consuming, post-crisis sense-making period of formal hearings and investigations usually plays out for several months—often for nearly a year, as was the case for the final investigative reports of the Crandall Canyon mine disaster. While the initial hearings and the testimony of family members before Congress may capture some national media attention during this period, the hearings and investigations are primarily covered by the local—in this case Salt Lake City-based—media and the cyber-based special interest media like the United Mine Workers and

AFL-CIO newsletters and services or Web sites like *The Huffington Post*. Ken Ward, Jr., also covered the post-crisis period in his Coal Tattoo blog—relying on reports from *The Salt Lake Tribune*. Unlike the period of 24-hour coverage during the crisis event, the events during the post-crisis period—hearings, lawsuits, investigative report releases—are sporadic and often just a regular part of the daily stream of news coverage. Of the Salt Lake City-based media, *The Salt Lake Tribune* did the most thorough job of covering the post-crisis events and reporting on and analyzing the subsequent formal investigative reports.

Hindsight, and the perspective it provides, is one of the primary products of the series of investigative reports released after a mining disaster. Looking back at how the larger back-story of the Crandall Canyon disaster is first suggested by a series of investigative reports from *The Salt Lake Tribune*, with the fuller details revealed through the official governmental investigations that would roll out within a year of the collapse, Crandall Canyon was the classic example of a "smoldering crisis." While Bob Murray spent the first hours of the crisis crying "earthquake, earthquake," "natural disaster," or "act of God," there was no "sudden crisis." While a sudden crisis—like an earthquake or other natural disaster—is unpredictable, a smoldering crisis gets ready to flame-out or explode when "a problem exists within the organization, may even be known to employees and managers of the organization" but the organization does not deal with the problem properly. Once the problem "escapes the organization,"—usually as some type of "triggering" crisis event—and comes under the scrutiny of the news media, law enforcement, regulatory agencies, and the public—"crisis" ensues. Most crises are smoldering, not sudden. (Millar, 2004, p. 27) The two March bounces and the significant bounce on August 3 provided Murray Energy with warnings that—as one seismologist at the University of Utah put it—the mountain was "collapsing in slow motion." (NPR, August 17, 2008) The fatal bounces August 6 and August 16 should not have been unexpected surprises to the operators of the Crandall Canyon mine.

While the smoldering crisis scenario was true for Murray Energy and its subsidiaries, the same is also true of operations at MSHA—as revealed in the glaring lights for the Crandall Canyon inquiries. MSHA's specific actions in relation to the approval and oversight of the mining plans at Crandall Canyon, the various investigations showed, were in the words of the Inspector General "negligent." When it comes to examining the larger smoldering crisis situation at MSHA, the independent review headed by Joe Pavlovich and Ernest Teaster does a remarkable job of laying bare the systemic problems at MSHA. While the Inspector General report focused on failures to follow policy and procedures and then documentation errors at the national, regional and local levels, the independent review diagnoses why the MSHA personnel appeared lax or negligent by pointing to the larger organizational constraints operating in the system. Primarily, the Pavlovich and Teaster review found, MSHA's ability to perform its core mission of protecting miners had been weakened by two major factors: years of budget cuts and the significant loss of vital personnel, and the Bush Administration's philosophical shift away from regulatory enforcement to promoting industry-friendly "compliance assistance programs."

The various formal investigative reports also provide snapshots of the communication—or rather the serial miscommunication—of the major actors in the disaster in what have been identified as the three basic phases of crisis communication—pre-crisis, crisis event, and post-crisis (Coombs, 2007). Much of the investigative focus dealt with the pre-crisis phase as Murray Energy and its engineering firm, Agapito Associates, dealt with the March bounces and how they

would change the mining plans. The bulk of the U.S. Attorney's investigation of whether or not criminal charges should be filed in the case rests on the details and sequence of events involving who knew what, when they knew it, and what did they do—or not do—with that knowledge. On the other hand, much of the analysis of the period leading up to the collapse also showed MSHA had significant systemic problems that kept the agency from identifying problems at the mine at a number of levels and at several critical points in the timeline of the ensuing tragedy. These failures culminated with MSHA's June 15, 2007 approval of the plan for retreat mining in the South Barrier at Crandall Canyon.

When the investigating bodies analyzed the actions of the major actors—Murray Energy and MSHA—in the active crisis event phase, both came under the greatest criticism for flagrantly violating the new provisions of the 2006 MINER Act that placed MSHA—not the mine operator—as the primary communicator with media and family and the decision-maker leading the rescue efforts. MSHA's failure to take control of the scene of a rescue—often described as "ill-conceived" and "haphazard"—and then deferring to Murray, not correcting Murray's obvious misstatements, and allowing Murray to take members of the news media into the mine during an active rescue—became stinging rebukes of the agency's failed role in the day-to-day operations of the rescue attempt.

The post-crisis communication phase—where assessing what went wrong and what can be learned to prevent similar crises or accidents in the future—was filled with parties interested in playing a part in the retrospective sense-making of the hearings and investigations of what lead up to the tragic loss of nine lives at Crandall Canyon. But, the most intriguing part of the post-crisis analysis was the absence of an active Murray Energy presence. Spotlight-hogging Bob Murray hid behind a veil of silence—speaking only as a corporate entity through statements issued by attorneys. Invited and then subpoenaed to testify to Senate and House committees, he invoked his Fifth Amendment rights and refused to testify. While all of the investigative bodies reported that Murray Energy responded to their requests for documents, all of the executives and officers associated with Murray Energy enterprises and Agapito Associates refused to testify on the matter.

MSHA's Richard Stickler, on the other hand, had a number of very public roles to fulfill—as chief investigator of the tragedy and also as a subject of the numerous other investigations. He fought the legal battles with other stakeholders who wanted access to the information in the MSHA panel's investigations—asserting that MSHA's proceedings took precedent. In turn, Stickler was grilled by Congress—repeatedly. Reappointed by President Bush in another "recess" setting in January 2008, Stickler remained the public face of MSHA as each of the earlier reports—all highly critical of MSHA—came out. Finally, on July 24, 2008, it was Stickler who met with the families of the men lost at Crandall Canyon in a five-hour briefing before the release of the culminating document—the MSHA accident investigation report. After July 24, Stickler embarked on a media tour to discuss the findings of the reports and the efforts MSHA was making to correct problems at the agency.

Final observations on the impacts of tragedies and the continuing need for "watchdogs"

Utah's Crandall Canyon mine disaster followed West Virginia's Sago mine disaster by about 18 months. About two and a half years after Crandall Canyon, an explosion at West Virginia's Upper Big Branch mine claimed the lives of 29 miners. As rescuers waited for the

methane gas to reach a level where they could go back into the mine to recover the bodies at the Upper Big Branch mine, *The New Republic's* E. J. Dionne, Jr. observed: "There is a dispiriting and, yes, heartbreaking sameness about how we respond to mining disasters. . . An entire community stands in solidarity with the families of the victims and hopes that some miners still trapped may yet be rescued. We celebrate the stoic sturdiness of mine workers who pursue their craft with pride, bravery and full knowledge of the risks it entails." With the disaster over: "Then we get to the questions about what might have been done to avert the disaster. What was the role of the company that ran the mine? What are the responsibilities of lawmakers and government regulators whose job it is to devise and enforce rules to protect those who, as an old union song put it, dig the coal so the world can run?" (April 9, 2010)

At the end of the piece, Dionne points how important safety regulations are—and how ironic it is that workers bear the burdens: "Only after disasters such as this one do we remember that regulations exist for a reason and that their enforcement can, literally, be a matter of life and death. We will eventually learn what went wrong at Upper Big Branch and whether the safety violations were part of the problem? But then what do we do?" Noting "a pattern here to which we should pay heed, and it involves power," the piece continues, "Too often, regulations are discussed in the abstract as a 'burden' on companies that expend substantial sums to resist them." The piece ends with the author citing sociologist Kai Erikson's reflection "that we live in 'a world in which the most vulnerable of people end up taking the brunt of disasters resulting from both natural processes and from human activities.' Perhaps the world will always be this way. But can't we bend it toward justice, at least a little bit?" (Dionne, April 9, 2010)

In "Mining the Coal Beat: Keeping Watch Over an 'Outlaw' Industry," *Charleston Gazette* reporter and Coal Tattoo blogger Ken Ward, Jr. used a grant from the Neiman Foundation to study news media coverage of the coal industry. He addresses the Crandall Canyon coverage at the end of his review, chiding the TV media for allowing Murray his "repeated rants…without questioning his words" and praising the *Salt Lake Tribune*'s investigative team of Robert Gehrke and Michael Gorrell for their "heroic job of uncovering the various missteps of Murray Energy and by MSHA officials charged with policing the company." Ward concludes his study with a thought-provoking observation that serves as a final summarizing question for this analysis of the interplay of traditional media and new media in covering a crisis like Crandall Canyon. Ward writes:

> What does my experience with the coal mining story tell us about journalism and, in particular, watchdog reporting? These days as blogging, sending Tweets, and connecting with one another through social media seems to be replacing the roles that newspapers used to play, journalism seems to be losing its capacity to perform this core function. While my job of doing watchdog reporting about the coal industry is a lot easier because of digital records and the new technologies that help me dig for information, my concern is whether these tools will be used in the public interest. Will there be journalists with the skills and resources needed to keep an eye on powerful interests? Mortgage lenders, investment banks, hedge funds, and government officials who regulate them come to mind as topics that are ripe for inspection but regrettably didn't receive enough of it. For people too busy getting kids off to school, paying the mortgage, and taking care of grandparents to be able to monitor such entities themselves,

there must be some way that this essential task that we've called journalism can continue to play this vital role (Ward, 2009, p. 3).

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Public Relations Practitioners'Chracteristics As Factors Affecting Organizational Blog Content

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Abstract

Normative theory has asserted that public relations is essentially about the formation and maintenance of relationships between an organization and its publics. Ethically, the profession has been positively associated with a contribution to informed decision making in democratic society. Additional research has been mostly descriptive with regard to how characteristics of public relations practitioners and the settings of organizations where they work, as well as the different models of public relations practice, are in keeping with the normative and ethical ideals for the profession. Critical theory, meanwhile, has presented public relations negatively for its potential to manipulate or deceive. Much of this research has looked at the effects public relations has on the public.

This paper is an attempt to move research about public relations from descriptive to predictive. Specifically, it is an attempt to associate independent variables related to public relations practitioners with public relations content as dependent variables. A contribution of this study is the typology of public relations content as being relational or promotional.

Combined methods included an online survey (to identify independent variables) of public relations professionals solicited through social media platforms and a content analysis of their organizational Web logs (blogs). Blogs were selected as the content of focus because the nature of blogs allows for a range of tone and format for more variance in terms of relational vs. promotional content.

The sample was small, largely due to the relatively slow adoption of blogs for organizational use by public relations practitioners. This made it difficult to achieve statistical significance in analyses of regression. However, an examination of mean differences produced some interesting results. Specifically, more relational content appears to be associated with PR practitioners having more years of experience and years with a current employer, and acting in a managerial capacity. These findings were consistent with the hypotheses in the study. Other variables were not found to affect content in a meaningful way, which may be explained by the small sample, but is also consistent with other research that shows public relations professionals have positive attitudes about blogs and social media but are as yet slow to use them for public communication and relationship building.

Introduction

Generally speaking, views of the public relations profession are mixed. From a critical perspective, public relations is often equated with "propaganda." In this view, often cultivated by the news and entertainment media, public relations is given a pejorative connotation that implies deliberate and deceitful manipulation of the truth and, in turn, of public opinion (Callison, 2004; Ewan, 1996; Jo, 2003; Miller, 1999; Shaw & White, 2004; Sparks, 1993; Spicer, 1993; Stacks *et al.*, 1999; Stauber & Rampton, 1995; C. White & Lambert, 2006). Meanwhile, normative scholars and many public relations practitioners have advocated that public relations benefits democratic society by helping to enable informed decision making by individuals and groups (Boynton, 2006; Cheney & Dionisopolous, 1989; Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Cutlip *et al.*, 2000; Fitzpatrick, 1996b, 2006; J. E. Grunig, 2001, 1992a; J. E. Grunig & Grunig, 1992; J. E. Grunig *et al.*, 2006; Hutton, 1999; Kruckeberg, 2000; PRSA, 2009). It is interesting to note that both the critical and normative views of public relations have a conceptual basis in democratic theory—particularly the notions of free expression, public debate and deliberation, and civil discourse.

What becomes interesting then is to more closely examine public relations as one form of media information in the crowded democratic public sphere and to focus on the conditions under which public relations has a deleterious effect or positive contribution to society. While scholars have done this in the past, the focus has mostly been on the effects of public relations information—as mass media content—on the public. But a study of the antecedent influences on public relations materials as media content has been mostly overlooked.

This study proposes and tests a set of hypotheses addressing how factors related to individual public relations practitioners affect the degree to which public relations communication disseminated to the public is self-interested (promotional) as opposed to dialogic (relational). Essentially, promotional content is more often one-way, seeking only to benefit the organization. Relational communication is closer to the normative ideals for the profession and is characterized as two-way, listening to and responding to the needs of publics as well as seeking to achieve the needs only of the organization.

Literature Review

Variables Affecting Public Relations Content

Previous research has identified a variety of variables that affect PR practitioners and their practice. Some are at the individual level, or relating to public relations practitioners. Other variables are at the organizational level. Still others are forces from outside the organization. While not all previous studies related these variables specifically to content or public relations output, such an association is implied. Deliberately measuring the association of these variables to PR content is the focus of this study.

PR practitioner education. Not all people practicing public relations have had the same amount or type of education in public relations. The education of a public relations practitioner has several dimensions, including self-study, workshops and seminars at professional associations, and professional accreditation (APR) (Plowman, 1998). Recently, a college degree with a public relations major has been emphasized as a fundamental education for public relations professionals. A commission of public relations educators and practitioners determined that to distinguish a quality public relations education an undergraduate program should include

"ethics and transparency, new technology, integration of communication messages and tools, interdisciplinary problem-solving, diversity, global perspectives and research and results measurement" ("The 2006 report of the commission on public relations education", 2006). Not all public relations practitioners have a formal degree in the field, are members of a professional PR association, or have accreditation in public relations. It would be interesting to explore whether an educational background makes a difference in the nature of the content public relations professionals disseminate.

PR practitioner experience. Professional experience has traditionally been understood as the number of years a practitioner has worked in public relations (O'Neil, 2003). However, it is also possible to consider the quality or type of experience, in terms of specific PR tasks performed or the types of strategic vs. merely tactical expertise gained (Toth et al., 1998). The ethics of a practitioner is another dimension of experience. Research has shown that practitioners with more than five years of experience identified a set of ethical values consistent with those proscribed by the Public Relations Society of America's Code of Ethics—advocacy, honesty, expertise, independence, loyalty, and fairness—and that trustworthiness and respect were additional PR ethical values expressed (Boynton, 2006). PR practitioners with higher levels of professionalism (measured on a 20-item scale that included appreciation for the PRSA Code of Ethics and years of experience in PR as well as in current role) were found to have higher levels of CSR than practitioners with lower levels of professionalism (Kim & Reber, 2009). The PRSA Code of Ethics also lists six "provisions" or principles to guide practitioners' practice: free flow of information, disclosure of information, avoid conflict of interest, safeguarding confidences, fair competition, and enhance the profession. Others point out that the ethical nature of public relations communication should be dialogic (Pearson, 1989). A practitioner's ethics has also been related to their role as a social policy-maker in an organization (Kruckeberg, 2000). While practitioners' experience and ethics varies, such differences have not yet been associated with differing forms of PR content.

PR practitioner role enactment. Role enactment refers to the way a PR practitioner actually performs his or her job. The public relations literature consistently describes two primary public relations roles: manager and technician (J. E. Grunig & Grunig, 1992). The roles were determined by surveys of practitioners and subsequent factor analysis to arrive at these definitions: a manager primarily makes decisions and works with the management of an organization; a technician primarily writes and produces communication tactics (Dozier, 1992). Practitioners often perform tasks associated with both roles, but perceive their role as *predominantly* one or the other. In other words, manager and technician roles are different but not mutually exclusive (Dozier & Broom, 1995). The enacted role may not necessarily be consistent with the practitioner's perceived role, given other organizational factors (Moss & Green, 2001; Toth et al., 1998). Role enactment can also be understood through enactment theory, which posits that people enact the scenes they know and expect to be rewarding (Heath, 1994).

Types of Public Relations Content.

Discussions of public relations content often begin with intentionality. Most agree that persuasion is implicit, if not always explicit, in public relations content (Pfau & Wan, 2006).

However, the intentions behind public relations don't completely describe the form of its resulting message content.

Kelleher (Kelleher, 2001) noted the specific type of public relations role determined a preference for written or oral communication differed for managers and technicians. However, he focused on communication among coworkers and clients, not with external publics. Also, he called for future research to go beyond media choices to look at specific content of resulting communications.

Several studies have looked at particular communication tactics or strategies, which comes closer to content. A study of annual reports, a common example of a public relations tactic, considered not only the intended purpose and relevant audience of annual reports, but the nature of the language used in them (Simlowitz & Pearson, 1989). This content-specific consideration of annual reports resulted in a three-part typology of annual report content: traditional, characterized by language with determined and predictable effects; enlightened, in which the language mirrors reality; and interpretive, in which language constructs reality.

Another typology of public relations content emerged from a study of public relations strategies: informative, facilitative, persuasive, and cooperative/problem-solving (Werder, 2005). While this typology is associated with public relations strategies, the proposed operationalization of them involved consideration of the resulting message content and are instructive in forming a content typology in their place.

Proposed models or philosophies about public relations practice are also instructive when considering PR content. The earliest set of such models characterized public relations in four ways: press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical (J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). These models of public relations were seen as a linear and historical evolution of the field, but they also are different forms of practice organizations adopt today. Originally conceived of as discrete, the four models have subsequently been described as falling on a continuum contingent on how much public relations activities are intended to serve the organization's or publics' interest (Cancel *et al.*, 1997).

Hutton expanded on this when he proposed "managing strategic relationships" as a definition of public relations along with three dimensions—interest, initiative, image—to explain the different orientations of public relations: to what extent the public relations function is focused on its own versus public interest; the extent that public relations takes initiative as opposed to being reactive; and to what extent the organization's public relations is focused on image as opposed to reality (Hutton, 1999).

Another study looked at the communication process and distinguished between personal and interpersonal communications as a new paradigm for studying public relations. A proposed continuum depicts "pure personal communication" as closed and intended to dominate, whereas the other end of the continuum features "pure interpersonal communication," which is open, dynamic, and intended to find mutual definitions of meaning (Toth, 2000).

A model (Broom *et al.*, 1997) viewing public relations as organization-public relationships (OPRs) considered antecedents, status, and consequences of relationships with publics. Relevant to this study, the status of organization-public relationships was evaluated by patterns of communication engagement, which relates to content. Thus, the public relations models and dimensions of practice could more accurately be seen as antecedent to specific forms of content. This paper therefore proposes a new typology of public relations content:

- *Promotional—a form of PR content concerned with advancing the interests of the organization.* This relates to the concepts of self-interest, image, asymmetry and interpretive in the dimensions of PR and content types described above.
- *Relational—a form of PR content concerned with mutual relationship building between an organization and multiple publics*. This form of content is the most ideal and is associated with the facilitative and cooperative strategies, the symmetrical model, and the interpersonal communication process in the literature.

The forms of PR content in this typology are not mutually exclusive. Organizations may produce differing amounts of each type of content over time, although one form will predominate. Promotional content may be considered more typical "typical" given the public perception of public relations. Relational content represents the ideal and preferred form of public relations content according to literature mentioned above. The question is what causes organizations to communicate more relational or promotional content. The best context to notice the difference is in organizational Web logs, or blogs.

Blogs as Public Relations Content of Interest

The World Wide Web had a significant effect on the practice of public relations before Web logs (blogs) emerged as a communication tool. To understand the role of blogs in public relations, it is important to consider the Internet generally before discussing blogs in particular.

*The Internet and public relations.*Only a decade ago most PR practitioners had a limited view of the potential of Web sites for public relations work. PR professionals interviewed suggested that a Web site represented an organization's competitiveness and enhanced its image, and gave an added sense of professionalism to practitioners (Hill & White, 2000). In the same study, it was evident that Web site maintenance was a "second tier" task handled by technicians, not PR managers. More recently, however, a broader range of applications of the Internet to PR purposes has been recognized. In an analysis of Internet trends transforming public relations, Christ (Christ, 2005) points out that technology enables PR professionals to engage stakeholders with more customized messages, involving multi-media components, and to and reach them more efficiently with Really Simple Syndication (RSS) and search engine optimization (SEO.

The literature shows that both corporations and nonprofit organizations began using the Internet for public relations purposes in the late 1990s. However, studies have shown that public relations professionals use the Web for research, promotion and evaluation but not relationship building (Esrock & Leichty, 1998) (Esrock & Leichty, 1999) (Esrock & Leichty, 2000) (Porter & Sallot, 2003). Only recently have corporations been making greater efforts to build relationships with publics and demonstrate dialogic communication online (Park & Reber, 2008). Studies of the use of the Internet by nonprofit organizations have also shown a slow adaptation of relationship-building features (Taylor *et al.*, 2001) (Kang & Norton, 2004) (Waters, 2007).

Relationships and PR. The criteria that public relations communication online should seek to build relationships is consistent with public relations literature about relationships generally. Long before the Internet was a common communication tool, Ferguson (Ferguson, 1984) called for relationships to be the theoretical focus of public relations. Ledingham argued for relationship management as the essence and general theory of public relations (Ledingham, 2003). Bruning *et. al.* (2008) argue that OPRs must be personalized and that practitioners should avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to relationship building. Kent and Taylor (2002) proposed five

tenets of an organization's dialogic orientation include: *mutuality*, an acknowledgement that an organization and its publics are tied to each other; *propinquity*, characterized by the organization consulting publics and the publics providing input; *empathy*, an atmosphere of support and trust; *risk*, the organization's willingness to interact with publics on their own terms; and *commitment*, seen as the organization's genuine effort at conversation with and understanding of its publics. Similarly, Hon and Grunig (Hon & Grunig, 1999) derived six measures of organization-public relationships: *control mutuality* (the degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence the other, with a preference for stable and equal control); *trust* (the belief that an organization is fair and dependable); *satisfaction* (positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced); *commitment* (each party feels the relationship is worth continuing); *exchange relationship* (one party gives benefits to the other only because they have received benefits or are expected to); *communal relationship* (both parties provide benefits to the other out of general concern for the others' well being). Ki and Hon (Eyun-Jung Ki & Hon, 2009) adapted these measures of two-way communication into measures of an organization's relationship cultivation strategies: *access* (the degree of effort that an organization puts into providing communication channels or media outlets that assist its strategic publics in reaching it); *positivity* (the degree to which members of publics benefit from the organization's efforts to make the relationship more enjoyable); *openness/disclosure* (an organization's efforts to provide information about the nature of the organization and what it is doing); *sharing of tasks* (an organization's efforts to share in working on projects or solving problems of mutual interest between the organization and its publics); *networking* (an organization's efforts to build networks or coalitions with the same groups that their publics do); *assurances* (any efforts by an organization to assure its strategic publics that they and their concerns are attended to) (p7-9).

Dialogue and conversational voice have been stressed as the most important and effective means of relationship building online. An oft-cited article by Kent and Taylor (Kent & Taylor, 1998) provides five theory-based principles for creating dialogic relationships with publics on the Internet. The principles include: having a *dialogic loop*, or allowing publics to query organizations and the organization responds to specific queries; *usefulness of information*, or content of value to all publics based on their interests and concerns and not just the organization's; *generating return visits*, by the use of regularly updated content; *intuitive and easy interface*, or clear design without distracting "bells and whistles"; *conservation of visitors*, or keeping them engaged with various pages on the organization's own site and not offering too many links to external sites.

Social media, blogs and public relations content. "Social media" has been difficult to define. It has been characterized as online content that involves more participation by the public and includes user-generated content (Tredinnick, 2006). Breakenridge characterizes social media as an evolution of the Internet "from thousands of separate Web sites into thousands of communities" (Breakenridge, 2008) (p14). She adds more plainly that it is anything that uses the Internet to facilitate conversations between people, consistent with the two-way approach favored in public relations. Speaking more broadly, Li and Bernoff view social media as part of a larger trend they call the "groundswell," "in which people use technology to get what they need from each other instead of from companies" (Li & Bernoff, 2008)(p. x). Similarly, social media has been described as a societal change in how people communicate: "the democratization of content and the understanding of the role people play in the process of not only reading and

disseminating information, but also how they share and create content for others to participate. It is the shift from a broadcast mechanism to a many-to-many model, rooted in a conversational format between authors and people" (Solis, 2007).

Most commonly, social media is associated with specific forms of media or technological tools that enable user-participation and user-generated content. Breakenridge (2008) says social media encompasses all the media in which people collaborate. Other authors specify that these tools include Web logs (blogs); wikis, sites that allow posting and editing by anyone, not just the host; podcasting, audio and video; Second Life, virtual communities in which users have 'avatars' to represent themselves; social bookmarking sites, places where uses save online content and can see what others have saved and judge the most popular content, such as Delicious.com or Stumbledupon.com; message boards; social networking sites, such as Facebook or MySpace; Twitter, a microblogging site in which posts are 140 characters or less; and other tools people use to disseminate and share information (Gillin, 2007; Jaffe, 2007; Li & Bernoff, 2008; Russell, 2007; Scoble & Israel, 2006; Solis, 2007).

Of the social media tools, blogs are the oldest and increasingly in use by corporations, nonprofits and political candidates and agencies. Blogs have been defined as personal Web sites with content consisting of "posts" including both facts and opinion and displayed in reverse chronological order (Holtz & Demopoulos, 2006; Scoble & Israel, 2006). There were nearly 122 million blogs in existence as of October 24, 2009 (BlogPulse, 2009). One consumer survey reported that 25% of American consumers read blogs at least once a month (Bernoff & Li, 2008). Corporate blogs are relatively new. They have been traced to 2004, when Sun and Microsoft were reported to be the first to allow blogging under the company name (Breakenridge, 2008). The use of corporate blogs has been growing as well. A survey of 297 communication professionals with heavy usage of social media showed that 78% used blogs while online video and social networks were the next most popular forms of social media used, at 56% and 49% respectively (SNCR, 2008). Technorati, a Web site that tracks blogs and conducts annual reports on the "blogosphere," reported in 2009 that the majority of corporate bloggers (people who write blogs on behalf of a corporation) spend 1-5 hours per week blogging and update the blog between once a day and once a week (Technorati, 2009). Another 2009 study showed that public relations and communications professionals are spending more time at work with blogs and other social media: 11% spend 26-50% of their time with blogs and social media, 30% spend 11-25% of their time with blogs and social media (Wright & Hinson, 2009).

There are various types of blogs. A wide-ranging assortment of blogs have been identified, including individual citizen blogs, news organization blogs, advertising, CEO commentary, employee blogs, customer-service, business/professional issue commentary, internal information sharing, knowledge management applications, marketing, and organizational promotion (Dearstyne, 2005) (p 41). Others have tried to refine the varied list of blog types into categories. Kent (Kent, 2008) refers to traditional blogs, or personal opinion blogs of individuals, and news blogs, which include posts from news sources and readers comment on the posts. Another categorization is personal blogs, containing a person's personal convictions, topic or industry blogs, focused on trends and information about a particular subject area or industry, publication-based blogs, which are an outlet of traditional news media, and corporate blogs, which include insights and commentary from a single company (Smudde, 2005). Several authors note that company blogs could be a single "voice" of the company in one blog, or it could contain posts

from many employees in a "blog roll" or aggregation of posts on one site. Additionally, an executive blog is a corporate blog written by a CEO or another member of a company's senior management (Gillin, 2007; Scoble & Israel, 2006). Others prefer the term organizational blogs because it represents blogs from many types of organizations, not just corporations. Organizational blogs have been defined by their characteristic, namely a combination of personal reflection and professional communication, as well as meeting three criteria: 1) maintained by people who post in an official or semi-official capacity at an organization, 2) endorsed explicitly or implicitly by that organization, and 3) posted by a person perceived by publics to be clearly affiliated with that organization (Kelleher, 2008). Trammel (Trammel, 2006) has pointed out that political or campaign blogs have emerged in recent years as another specific type of blog.

The literature shows that public relations professionals are using blogs in corporate, nonprofit, and political settings. Gillin points out that PR people have flocked to social media because it plays to their strengths as relationship managers (Gillin, 2007). But PR professionals are not using blogs in the same way, to the same degree, or for the same purpose consistently. Attitudes about blogs as a useful tool for their work are generally positive among PR professionals. PR professionals mostly agree that blogs and social media have changed the way their organization communicates, enhanced the practice of public relations, and offer a low-cost way to develop relationships (Wright & Hinson, 2009). Similarly, PR professionals see the enhancement of relationships with key audiences as the most important measure of the effectiveness of blogs and social media (SNCR, 2008). However, while attitudes PR professionals express towards blogs and social media are consistent, their actual practice with the new technology is more varied and not always consonant with attitudes (Porter *et. al.* 2007).

Four variables that influence relational trust in blog-mediated public relations have been identified (Yang & Lim, 2009): salience of narrative structure, the dialogic self of the blogger, blogger credibility, and interactivity. Kelleher and Miller (2006) list five characteristics of blogs that enable them to have a conversational voice: 1) frequent updating of content, 2) posts arranged in reverse chronological order, 3) posts with material in a personal journal style, 4) the ability of readers to add comments, 5) the inclusion of hyperlinks. In addition to these basic characteristics, Kelleher and Miller stress that bloggers can achieve a human voice if they demonstrate being open to dialog, welcome conversational communication, and provide prompt feedback. A tone of the writing can also be a factor, such as a demonstrated sense of humor, admitting mistakes, treating others as human, and providing links to competitors as opposed to always promoting oneself. Blogs are also distinct from traditional Web sites and therefore more dialogic or conversational because of their ease of interface and conservation of visitors (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007). Extraversion and self-disclosure traits have been found to translate well to blogs to support relationships (Stefanone & Jang, 2007). They suggest that computer-mediated communication (CMC), at least in the form of blogs, rather than promoting isolation, can enhance existing relationships. Jaffe (2007) advises that good conversation on a blog should be natural, honest, open, balanced, organic, and viral.

The literature also supports the fact that there is a distinction between conversational and promotional content on organizational blogs. The consensus of advice (Gillin, 2007) is that blogs should strive for the former, conversational, with the goal of relationship building being primary over traditional and self-interested goals of advocating a position or achieving sales. Gillin emphasizes that blogs should not be hijacked by marketers as a vehicle for commerce. Alluding

to encroachment, he advises that blogs should be the work of public relations professionals who should focus on relationship building. Others confirm that social media—including blogs--is different than marketing in that there is a loss of controlled messages and organizations must join and participate in the ongoing public conversation as opposed to trying to manage it (Li & Bernoff, 2008). Scoble and Israel (Scoble & Israel, 2006) frame it concisely, noting that there are two schools of public relations evident in the blogosphere: "command and control" and "listen and participate" (p. 100).

*A focus on blogs as public relations content.*Those two schools of public relations relate directly to the two forms of public relations content to be the focus of this study. A "command and control" mindset would lead to promotional content, focused on an organization's self-interest. A posture of listening and participating would more likely lead to public relations content that is relational, or intent on building and maintaining mutual relationships. While the literature reviewed covers many aspects of social media, blogs, the proscribed use of them by public relations professionals, and the varied adaptation of public relations professionals to the Internet and blogs, there is a gap in the literature in showing what causes public relations people to use blogs for relationship building as opposed to another form of promotion. That will be the contribution of this paper.

While the results of this study may not be generalizable to public relations tactics or content beyond blogs, the focus is not entirely on blog content. Rather, this study seeks to associate variables that determine whether public relations content is relational versus promotional. Blogs are used as the content to analyze because of their unique characteristics—conversational voice, dialogic, interactive—that allows for more variation in content from one organization to the next. That in turn will lead to more meaningful results in associating the variables at the practitioner and organizational level with specific types of content.

Hypotheses

Drawing from the literature, this study proposes a set of hypotheses to test. The hypotheses treat the degree of relational vs. promotional content as the dependent variable and all other variables as independent. The hypotheses are organized according to the variables as explained in the literature review. "PR practitioner" in each hypothesis relates to the survey respondent. "PR content" refers to organizational blog content in particular since that will be the source material for content analysis as representative of organizational content overall.

Practitioner Education.

H1a: Public relations practitioners with a college degree in public relations will be associated with higher relational PR content than public relations practitioners without a degree in public relations.

H1b: Public relations practitioners who are accredited in public relations (APR) will be associated with higher relational PR content than practitioners who are not accredited.

The individuals who practice public relations represent a wide variety of backgrounds. It is not a requirement to have a degree or accreditation in public relations to practice. Therefore, practitioners without a formal education or accreditation in the field are left to "define" public relations based on personal impressions or assumptions. Public relations majors or programs of study in colleges and universities, by comparison, present public relations from the aspirational perspective and normative theories mentioned earlier that public relations is essentially about

relationship building. Those who are accredited had to pass an APR exam that stresses the relational view of public relations. It used to be a requirement of PRSA that a practitioner had to achieve five years of experience prior to taking the exam, but that requirement was removed. Therefore, experience and having APR are not necessarily correlated. It follows that those with a college education and/or accreditation in public relations would be more likely to perform their jobs in a way that leads to content that is relational in nature.

Practitioner Experience.
H2a: The more years of experience a practitioner has in public relations, the more the content they produce for their organization will be relational.
H2b: The more years a PR practitioner has worked with their current organization, the more the content they produce for their organization will be relational.

As a practitioner works in the field of public relations, it is likely they will develop more skills and also deepen their knowledge of the profession, whether they had an education in the field previously or not. Professionals talk to peer professionals and attend professional conferences, raising the potential that the longer they are in the field the more likely they are to understand the relational perspective of the field.

As for years with the same organization, H2b relates to the idea of leadership and power mentioned previously. More years with an organization may increase a practitioner's authority and autonomy, thus meaning they have greater control over the final word on public relations content. If this is the case, it is plausible that organizational PR content would be more relational than promotional.

Practitioner Role Enactment.
H3a: The more a PR practitioner enacts a manager role, the more the organization's PR content will be relational.
H3b: The more a PR practitioner enacts a technician role, the more the organization's PR content will be promotional.

Role enactment is not categorical. PR practitioners enact management roles to varying degrees, working in a "manager" role at times and "technician" role on other occasions. The more often a PR professional enacts a manager role, the more likely he or she will make strategic and philosophical decisions about PR content in terms of what and how to express messages to publics. PR technicians, by comparison, would have responsibility and authority for writing and designing communication tactics, with less control over actually what to say on behalf of the organization. The work of a technician is more likely to be vetted and altered by someone else in the organization. If content is controlled by a person with a public relations mindset, it is more likely to be consistent with the PR ideal of relationships, whereas a technician taking orders from someone without a PR perspective may be influenced to produce content more promotional in nature.

Method

All of the independent variables—related to PR practitioners and organizational factors—were measured with an online SurveyMonkey.com survey of PR practitioners, screening for in-house PR professionals in organizations that have an organizational blog (see appeal email and

survey questionnaire in Appendix A). The dependent variables—types of PR content (promotional or relational)—were measured by content analysis of the practitioners' organizational blog content, based on the URL (web address) provided by the practitioners in the survey. (See protocol and code sheet in Appendix B).

Sampling of Public Relations Practitioners to Survey

Respondents were solicited via "discussions" posted to the LinkedIn and Facebook group forums, as well as via Twitter using "#PR" hashtags to reach PR professionals in online social media environments. An additional effort to boost response involved soliciting the members of two Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) chapters in a Midwestern state. The total number of responses to the survey was 126. However, a large number of respondents did not indicate an address for "their organization's primary blog" or they noted they did not have one. Additionally, the final data set was checked to ensure that there was only one respondent from any given organization. In two cases where two PR practitioners from the same organization had responded, the second instance was removed from the data set. As a result the final number of responses useful to this study was 53.

In addition to the reasons noted above for the low response, another major explanation for a small sample is the fact that many organizations do not have organizational blogs. Since this study was begun, several studies have been published indicating that the adoption of organizational blogs has been slow for both corporations and nonprofit organizations. A recent study of the Fortune 500 and Interbrand Top 100 companies showed that only 59 had corporate blogs in 2008, up only slightly from 31 in 2006 (Cho & Huh, 2010). Meanwhile, a survey of 409 nonprofit public relations practitioners revealed that only 48% "used" blogs—which could mean reading and commenting on other blogs and not necessarily writing a blog as a PR tool for the nonprofit organization where they work. These same nonprofit public relations professionals were more likely to use social networks (54%) and video sharing (48%) than blogs (Curtis *et al.*, 2010). Adoption of other forms of social media more rapidly than blogs is evident among corporations as well. A review of social media by Burson-Marsteller (2010) shows that while 65% of the *Fortune* "Global 100 Companies" have started Twitter accounts, 54% have Facebook "Fan Pages", and 50% have YouTube channels, only 33% have corporate blogs.

It is impossible to determine a response rate since the actual number of practitioners solicited who are in-house and have organizational blogs is not known. But given the slow adoption of organizational blogs mentioned above, and the fact that previous studies have not attempted to combine a survey of practitioners with content analysis of their blogs, it can be argued that a sample of 53 is appropriate for this study.

Sampling of Blogs for Content Analysis

Survey respondents were asked to provide the address (URL) for their organization's "primary" blog. As mentioned in the literature, some organizations have more than one blog or person blogging, but often these are aggregated into a "blog roll" on a single site. The study unit was the primary organizational blog because this study's focus is on the nature of the *organization's* voice in its public content.

Blog content is organized in reverse chronological order and provides an accessible source for content analysis. The timeframe of the study was one quarter (three months). Since the

analysis was done in early 2010, blog posts from the last quarter of 2009 (October-December) were analyzed. For each organization, the last post from each month (the first one appearing) was downloaded and printed for content analysis. In cases where the frequency of posts was too low to have one from each month of the fourth quarter, the three last posts of that year were used. Each organization or "case" had three posts for analysis.

Operationalization of Variables

Measures for the independent variables related to PR practitioner and organizational factors come from survey questions from previous research, with some adapted or newly constructed for this study. Public relations practitioners' education was measured by asking categorical questions about whether or not a practitioner has a college degree in public relations and whether or not a PR practitioner has APR accreditation (Plowman, 1998). Additionally, the survey asked if the respondent was active in the professional organization PRSA, since many practitioners may have neither accreditation nor a degree in PR but have learned about the field from the professional association. A practitioner's experience has traditionally been measured as a demographic variable of years of experience in public relations (O'Neil, 2003). Additionally, this survey asked for the number of years of experience in PR at the current employer since that may also have a bearing on the PR role they enact in the organization. Another question sought whether the respondent was the top PR person in the organization, mid-level or entry-level, since that could have a bearing on the organization's resulting blog content as well.

The remaining questions used a seven-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1= "never" to 7 = "always," providing interval level measurement of these variables. The most common scale in the literature for measuring public relations practitioners' actual role on the manager/technician typology was developed by Dozier and Broom (1995). Questions are specific to a practitioner's actual behavior as a manager (e.g. "I operate as a catalyst in management's decision making") or technician (e.g. "I produce brochures, pamphlets and other publications") and not just their job title or perceived role. Questions for this study are adopted from the scale used by Dozier and Broom to address the primary activities of respondents that relate to management decision-making and strategy versus production of communication tactics.

While previous questions were directly associated with the hypotheses, additional questions were asked to explore if other variables may exist that affect the nature of blog content. Respondents were be asked if they have final say over blog content (vs. a superior approving it), and if the blog represents one voice of the organization or the voices of several individuals within the organization.

In addition to these questions, the actual content of organizational blogs was analyzed directly—in order to not rely only on self-reports of respondents in the survey. As stated previously, an organization's public relations content is not entirely promotional or relational—an organization could have degrees of both in different blog posts or within a single post. The question was in what proportion do organizations use these forms of PR content.

Coders—two experienced communication professionals with master's degrees who serve as adjunct instructors, in addition to the researcher—determined if each sentence in downloaded blog posts was "relational" or "promotional." The number of total sentences in a post, as well as the number that are relational or promotional, were coded and counted. After coding was complete, the researcher calculated the percentage of relational as well as promotional sentences

for each case. The percentage of content that is relational is the dependent variable in hypotheses that mention relational content; similarly, the percentage of promotional content is the dependent variable when testing hypotheses that predict promotional content.

PR content that is promotional was identified by the presence of non-neutral language, appeals to values and emotions, and calls for action that are in the organization's interest (Werder, 2005), or whether the content addresses an "image versus substance" (Hutton, 1999), or whether the language "constructs reality and expresses subjective experience" (Simlowitz & Pearson, 1989). Since relational PR content is concerned with mutual relationship building between an organization and multiple publics, measures will be associated with how Werder (2005) operationalized her "facilitative" and "cooperative problem solving" public relations strategies. In other words, content analysis will code for the presence of 'we' inclusive language and messages addressing recipient publics' original concerns. Another measure comes from Toth's (2000) "individual influence model" in the way she describes pure interpersonal influence as having open and dynamic communications that seeks to find mutual definitions and understanding. Also, from the numerous sources on public relations online and in blogs in particular, content that has the characteristic of an announcement or proclamation was considered promotional, whereas content that is conversational and dialogic was considered relational.

A test of inter-coder reliability for the content analysis was conducted using Krippendorff's alpha testing for agreement on the total number of sentences per case (three posts per case), the number of relational sentences, and the number of promotional sentences. Not less than 50 cases or 10 percent of the sample is considered appropriate for reliability tests (Lombard *et al.*, 2008). Since the study yielded 53 cases, 10 (19%) were used for the inter-coder reliability test.

The total number of sentences for each case (three posts combined) ranged from 16 to 173. Krippendorff's alpha for total sentences was .9987; for number of promotional sentences was .9320, and for number of relational sentences was .9648. All values are above the .8 generally regarded as minimal needed for reliability alpha of .742. Both values are just below the .8 generally regarded as minimal needed for reliability (Krippendorff, 2004).

Analysis

The percent relational or percent promotional organizational blog content for each organization was used as the dependent variable for each hypothesis in the study, depending on whether the hypothesis in question mentions relational or promotional content. All other variables were independent as indicated in each hypothesis and were analyzed using multiple regression. Because the resulting sample was small, independent sample t-tests were also conducted to compare mean differences of the percentage of relational content for independent variables.

Practitioner education and accreditation as well as active PRSA membership were coded with dummy variables to convert them from nominal to interval for regressions.

Results

Description of Data

Although the sample of 53 was small, there was considerable variety among the individuals who responded to the survey and to the nature of their blogs that was examined. The data can be

described in terms of descriptive statistics as well as some qualitative observations about the blogs.

*Descriptive statistics.*There was a broad variety of respondents in terms of their individual characteristics (summarized in Table 1). Respondents were 60% female and 40% male. There were 32 businesses represented (60%), 20 nonprofit organizations (38%), and one governmental organization (2%). Respondents also varied with regard to their position within their respective organizations. There were 20% who identified themselves as "entry-level," 40% who were "mid-level" and 40% "top-level." Years of experience in public relations ranged from 1-40 with a mean of 10. Years with current employer ranged from 1-23 with a mean of 5. There was also a variety in terms of the amount of time respondents enacted the "manager" and "technician" roles, with means of 5.3 and 4.8 respectively.

There were 11 (21%) who had a degree in public relations, while 42 (79%) did not. Of the 42 who did not have a degree in public relations, 23% had a degree in journalism, 19% in communications, 4% in marketing or business, and 4% in political science. The remaining 28% indicated "other" degrees, which included Art (2), Education (1), English (8), General Studies (4), International Relations (1), Philosophy (2), Psychology/Sociology (4), Science (1), and Pre-law (1). Ten of the respondents (19%) were accredited in public relations (APR) and 43 (81%) were not. The majority (55%) were active in the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) while 45% were not.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics: PR Practitioners

	N	*M*	sd
Position[1]	52	2.21	.750
Years experience	53	12	10
Years w/ employer	53	4	5
Technician[2]	53	5.3	1.6
Manager[2]	53	4.8	1.6

Notes:
[1] *Coded 1 = entry level, 2 = mid-level, 3 = top*
[2] *Coded 1 = never, 7 = always*

*Description of blog content.*Blogs were chosen as the content to examine in this study because of the likelihood that it would vary more than other types of public relations content. That proved to be true of the 53 organizational blogs in the sample. They can be described both quantitatively (see Table 2) and qualitatively.

As for the variables of interest to the hypotheses in the study, there was a wide range. The total number of blog sentences for each case—which was a sum of the three posts included for each case—ranged from 16-173, with a mean of 57.9. The percentages of relational content ranged from 0-.72 (one outlier of .81 was moved to within that range), for a mean of .283. Meanwhile, promotional content ranged from 0-.9 with a mean of .354.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics: Blog Content

	N	*M*	**sd**
Total sentences	53	57.9	32.1
% relational	53	.283	.217
% promotional	53	.354	.239

The blogs in the sample can also be described qualitatively. In terms of authorship, there was an even mix of blogs with and without bylines, i.e. no indication of who the author was. It was obvious in several cases that someone other than the PR person wrote the blog, for example a doctor writing a hospital's blog or the CEO writing the corporate blog. They may or may not have been writing with counsel from the public relations person. Based on responses in the survey, 72% said their blogs were authored by more than one person and had multiple "voices."

Interactivity of the blogs also varied greatly in terms of comments and hyperlinks. These were not variables associated with the hypotheses in the study but were considered as part of the coding protocol to determine if blog content was "relational" or "promotional." The majority of the blogs (83%) allowed and invited comments from readers. Only 17% of the cases examined had negative comments present. This could mean either the negative comments were moderated and deleted, or there were few negative comments in the sample of posts selected for this study. In 21% of the cases there was evidence that the organization responded to comments left on the blog from readers. The number of links in the set of three blog posts studied for each organization ranged from 0-27, with a mean of 6.2 and 22 percent of the organizations having no links in their blog. Links were just as often to external content (i.e. other web sites) as to related content on the blog or the host organization's primary web site.

Finally, the nature of the blogs' content varied considerably. Some organizations clearly used the blog as a platform to post news releases or what appeared to be brochure copy. Others were written in the style of an essay or a persuasive opinion-editorial or position paper. The voice of the blog varied from objective, third-person to the more personal first-person. Some were entirely focused on sharing information about the organization itself. Others focused beyond themselves to discuss issues in their industry (e.g. computing technology, law) or to conduct interviews or "Q&A" format articles with people who did not work for the organization but were experts or otherwise interesting relative to the organization's business or cause.

Analysis

Factors associated with individual public relations practitioners.

The hypotheses predicted that there would be higher relational content of blogs at organizations where the PR practitioner had a degree in public relations, had earned the APR accreditation, had more years in public relations and with their current employer, and was more likely to enact a manager role. The regression to test these hypotheses was not statistically significant, so the hypotheses are not supported (See Table 3).

However, R^2 values were above .10 for the regression on both % promotional and % relational content. The variable years of experience in public relations was the most interesting in the regression on percent promotional content. It contributed most of the variance explained,

with a part correlation of .106. Since the original Pearson correlation ($r(51) = -.257, p < .05$) was negative, this indicates that more years of practitioner experience in PR is associated with less promotional content.

Table 3
Summary of Regressions
(R^2 higher than .10 in bold)

Dependent Variable	Equation	R^2
PR Practitioner[1]		
% promotional	$F(6,46) = 1.249, p > .05$	**.140**
% relational	$F(6,46) = .932, p > .05$	**.108**

Notes:
[1] *Independent variables: PR degree, APR, years experience in PR, years experience with employer, manager role, technician role*

Meanwhile, the variable years of experience with employer was the most interesting in the regression on percent relational content. It had a significant positive Pearson correlation ($r(51) = .286, p < .05$) and the highest part correlation (.038) of the variables in the model. While weak, it gives some support that more years with an employer is associated with more relational content.

Independent samples t-tests to compare mean % relational content on the independent variables associated with individual practitioners were not statistically significant. However, an examination of the means shows that respondents with a degree in public relations had a slightly higher mean percentage of relational content (34%) than those without (26%). The same was true for accreditation. The mean percent relational content for those with APR was 32% compared with 27% for those without. Those who indicated they "always" enact a manager role had nearly twice the percent relational content mean (30%) than those who said "never" (17%) (answer category "2" was used since only 1 answered "1"). While not statistically significant, these mean comparisons (summarized in Table 4) are consistent with Hypotheses 1-3.

Table 4
% Relational Content Mean Comparison of Key Individual Variables

	N	*M*	sd
Degree in PR			
No	42	.2676	.2036
Yes	11	.3400	.2661
APR			
No	43	.2733	.2135
Yes	10	.3230	.2400
Manager role			
2 *(near never)*	4	.1675	.0613
7 *(always)*	15	.2967	.2356

Discussion

This study has been an attempt to identify what causes public relations content, specifically in blogs, to be either relational or promotional in nature. Potential causes explored were related to individual public relations practitioners. The study had limitations that prevent solid conclusions and generalizing results, but findings are useful for preliminary consideration and guiding future research.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by the small sample size, 53. This in turn makes it difficult to reach statistical significance in analyses of variance conducted to test hypotheses.

Also, observations of blogs revealed that it is not always the PR person who writes the blog for a given organization. A survey question did reveal that half of respondents said they or the top PR person always had "final say" on what is published on their organization's blog, and most others responded in categories close to "always." But interpretation of content analysis of blogs is limited if some organizations publish blogs authored by and without the counsel of the PR practitioner, or if the practitioner does not alter what is written by bloggers. In other words, in such cases, independent variables about the practitioner and their perception of the organizational structure, environment and PR models would be irrelevant.

In spite of these limitations, the study does offer new concepts and preliminary findings to further research in this area.

Contributions of the Study

A primary contribution of this study is a new typology of public relations content as "relational" or "promotional." While previous research has focused on strategies to achieve and methods to measure relationships, few if any have addressed the content output of public relations practitioners in terms of relationship orientation as opposed to simply promotional appeals. This study is a step in that direction.

The method to study this typology with quantitative content analysis of blog content is another contribution of this study. Earlier research in the public relations discipline has addressed blog content, but it is usually normative assertions about what the ideal blog content should be or descriptive of the presence of certain obvious features in blogs, such as links and comments. This study went deeper into the sentence level analysis of blog content to assess relationship or promotional orientation of messages.

This study also went beyond content analysis of blogs for descriptive purposes. By combining survey and content analysis methods, an effort was made to associate causes of relational or promotional content. These causes were broadly considered, coming from the literature and including factors associated with individual public relations practitioners, organizational structure, the external environment, and the models of public relations practice. In other words, this study has been a first effort to move from descriptive to predictive research about public relations content, using blogs as the focus.

While not statistically significant or generalizable, the findings are interesting and instructive given the exploratory nature of this research. These key findings that are consistent with the hypotheses can be summarized as follows:

- A PR professional having more years of experience in PR is associated with less promotional content;

- A PR professional having more years with a specific employer (organization) is associated with more relational content;
- A PR professional who enacts a manager role is associated with more relational content;
- Being a top-level (vs entry-level) PR practitioner is associated with more relational content;

While the key findings summarized above are consistent with the assertions in the hypotheses, it should be noted that this study also uncovered some preliminary indications that contradict expectations. For example, having a degree in public relations or being accredited in PR (APR) appeared to make only a slight difference in relational content. Also, the organizational factors including having an autonomous PR department, a direct reporting relationship to the CEO, and being part of the dominant coalition made little difference in the nature of blog content. Perhaps most surprising, a preference for symmetrical communication seemed to have no effect on increased percentage of relational content.

In summary, some of the preliminary findings above indicate that certain variables associated with PR practitioners and the role and form of public relations in organizations may have a causal effect on the nature of blog content. But at the same time, it appears that not much has changed since 2008, when Kent concluded in a critical essay of blogging and public relations that while there is agreement about the professional potential for blogs their use as a professional tool in public relations is currently limited (Kent, 2008).

Future Research

This study can be instructive to future research with regard to sampling, method, and the content of interest.

First, with regard to sampling, this study may have been premature in the sense that not many organizations or PR practitioners are using organizational blogs, or using them to their full potential. Future research may benefit from further growth in the adoption of organizational blogs and increased sophistication in their use as a relationship management tool by public relations professionals. At such a time that this study could be replicated with a larger sample, tests of significance would be more appropriate and possibly successful, which would lead to results that could be generalized.

Another possibility for future research would be to refine the coding protocol or simplify coding. Examples might be quantifying the number of links from blogs to the organization's own content or to external resources, as an indication of relational or promotional content. Similarly, content analysis could take a larger number of posts for each case and focus on the positive or negative nature of comments and the presence and nature of responses from the organization. Since these variables had an interesting mean difference in this study, more complete analysis of them could yield interesting results.

Content other than blogs is another possibility for the study. As recent studies have noted, social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook are being adopted for organizational use at a faster rate than blogs (Burson-Marsteller, 2010; Cho & Huh, 2010; Curtis et al., 2010). A content analysis of this content with an adapted protocol for the different platforms might draw a larger sample and yield more significant results.

It is also possible that a qualitative method, such as interviews with a small sample of PR people who write organizational blogs, could be useful to gain more insights into the relationships between the independent variables identified for this study and the nature of public

relations content. In such a study, additional questions could be asked about the purpose behind specific blog posts to understand the strategy and the relational/promotional orientation of practitioners. Interviews could also illuminate the realities of organizational and environmental restraints on public relations professionals who desire to write in a relational way but are prevented from doing so by organizational factors. Another advantage of the qualitative approach might be the identification of additional variables not addressed in this study.

Whether identified through qualitative research or other means, adding additional variables to the regression equations appears necessary. Low R^2 values in the regressions in this study indicates that important theoretical concepts and variables have been left out of the model. For example, personal writing style of the PR practitioner or other blogger could be a factor. Additionally, comfort with technology and understanding social media conventions, i.e. dialogic and conversational styles, could vary greatly among practitioners. There may also be other variables related to the organizational setting. For example, the size of an organization may affect its communication style, with smaller organizations being more inclined to conversational communication and larger ones more prone to formal tone. The nature of the organization in terms of its focus, i.e. whether a product or service company, could be a variable affecting its public content. Similarly, organizational scope, in terms of local or national, may be a factor. Also, the place of PR in the organizational hierarchy, degree to which PR staff are part of the dominant coalition, and factors related to the external environment could be explored.

Other researchers may have additional ideas of their own that are stimulated by the method and results of this investigation. Any future inquiry would be a useful step to continue the purpose of this study—to move from descriptive to predictive research about public relations content.

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How Today's Digital Landscape Redefines the Notion of Control in Public Relations

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Abstract

In this research study, we examine journalist Dan Savage's creation of the "It Gets Better Project" in September 2010. Through the lens of the It Gets Better Project, we argue that PR practitioners are transforming from message creators to message curators and from brand managers to brand community managers with increasing frequency.

Control has been a key construct in the field of public relations for decades. Predicated on the assumption that there are certain activities both within and beyond one's control, PR practitioners surrender control over messaging in exchange for a greater level of trust (e.g., filtering a press release through a journalist's published story, a news broadcast, or more recently, blogs, online forums, and tweets). While practitioners often have to trade message control for unpaid mass media coverage, the proliferation of new media channels, such as YouTube, has forced practitioners to reevaluate prior notions of control in two juxtaposing ways. On the one hand, organizational messaging control is greater in that practitioners can reach out to their publics directly through Facebook and Twitter without having to rely upon others to disseminate their messages. On the other hand, practitioners are often finding that they have to further relinquish messaging control, as publics create, alter, and disseminate messages of their own volition.

Social media challenge power structures tied to the dissemination of mass messages. With increasing access to digital media technologies, more publics are able to craft and distribute their own messages, and organizations shift to incorporate people into brand development from the outset. As publics continue to create their own messaging and select the outlets in which to distribute it, the relationships that publics ascribe to an organization are modified; often times the organization must contend with no longer being the focal point of the messaging while being relegated to the periphery, or worse: becoming the focal point of negative messaging. Nonetheless, practitioners do have a new kind of control over defining the spaces in which this uncontrolled messaging takes place and over identifying opportunities to engage publics.

The locus of control is continually shifting. With that shift comes a multitude of important questions, most pertinently: How does an increasing lack of message control in the digital era change PR practice, and what are the implications for PR theory?

In this research study, we examine journalist Dan Savage's creation of the "It Gets Better Project" in September 2010, an outreach effort aimed at reaching at-risk lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth in response to recent youth suicides. The It Gets Better Project is Savage's call for user-submitted video testimony from adult LGBT individuals explaining that the tormented life of a gay youth eventually "gets better" after grade school. Savage manages the growing collection of videos as an online suicide prevention resource for closeted and out-and-bullied LGBT youth. Through the lens of the It Gets Better Project we argue that, in the digital era, PR practitioners are transforming from message creators to message *curators*, with an increased importance on brand community management that cannot be viewed as separate from an organization's marketing function.

Practitioners must think of themselves as managers and actors in a space in which they have increasingly diminishing control, where joining the conversation and responding to what publics say about an organization replaces the use of social media as a tool in which to merely manage publics. Rather than reflecting a two-way symmetrical relationship, the power continues to shift in favor of publics. This shift calls for a reexamination and an expansion of J. Grunig's Four Models of Public Relations into what we argue is a fifth model: the Participant-Curator Model. To understand the need for a fifth model, we begin by explicating the notion of control in public relations.

Public Relations and Control

Control is at the heart of public relations theory and practice, embedded even in the language of the discipline as practitioners attempt to "crystallize" public opinion, "manage" relationships, "disseminate" information, and "maintain command" in a crisis. Bivins' (2011) widely read undergraduate PR writing textbook divides the tactical dimension of PR practice into two broad categories: "uncontrolled information" and "controlled information." The former refers to messages that are filtered—"laundered" even—through another party, usually the media, but this "loss in control is usually more than balanced by the overall gain in credibility" of a news organization reporting on the client or issue (Bivins, 2011, p. 5). In contrast, controlled information is that which PR practitioners have "total control as to editorial content, style, placement, and timing," such as brochures, advertisements, and PSAs (Bivins, 2011, p. 5). Bivins, echoing the sentiment of Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2006), distinguishes these two categories of information as a way to illustrate the balance of control and surrender in which practitioners consciously engage. Even with uncontrolled information, such as press releases sent to news organizations, the assumption is that PR practitioners have a measure of control over the client or brand to begin with, and that the outside force of the media has an impact on the integrity of the message in the filtering process. Losing control presupposes having control in the first place.

The locus of control also underpins the distinction between "stakeholders" and "publics," two terms often problematically conflated in the PR literature. Quoting J. Grunig and Repper (1992), Rawlins (2006) distinguishes the two terms:

James Grunig has differentiated the terms "stakeholder" and "public" in the following way: organizations choose stakeholders by their marketing strategies, recruiting, and investment plans, but "publics arise on their own and choose the organization for attention." (p. 2)

Following this logic, PR strategy aimed at stakeholders assumes more control of the audience of a message, an inside-out organizational stance. In contrast, an organization with an outside-in stance adopts a PR strategy of listening to and giving audiences more control over their relationship with the organization. This stakeholder-public distinction is again an issue of language, but the importance of language and metaphors to structure and orient a whole system of concepts, including social life, law, and professional communications practice, cannot be understated (Drucker & Gumpert, 1995; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Moving beyond the level of language, the concept of control in PR can be examined as a function of distance between an organization and its public. J. Grunig's four models of PR seem to progress from the press agentry model (model 1) to the two-way symmetric model (model 4) in a way that closes the distance between an organization and its publics, shifting the PR practitioner into the role of mediator between the two parties in iterative, negotiated communication. A substantial body of literature has also attempted to temper this black-and-white distinction between an organization, its publics, and the amount of control a PR practitioner has over the flow of information. For instance, Dougall (2006) complicates this neat distinction by advocating a conflict continuum to understand publics' subjective experiences and their relationship with organizations over time. Seltzer (2006) also suggests a coorientational approach for analyzing organization-public relationships. A drift away from the uncontrolled-

controlled dichotomy is a step toward an ideal form of public relations according to J. Grunig. But this evolution still assumes distinct boundaries between an organization and its information and the publics who receive the information, no matter how small the "distance" between the two parties. These theoretical extensions seem to *advocate* J. Grunig's fourth model of PR, the two-way symmetrical model, as the normative ideal, rather than to *advance* it into new territory.

In the domain of crisis communication, there has been even more attention paid to this organization-public boundary, presumably because crises are essentially unpredictable external stimuli and crisis PR practitioners are more often thinking from the outside-in. Yet crisis communication literature emphasizes the features of J. Grunig's third and fourth models of PR, placing the focus on the intelligence function of an organization in the wake of a crisis. Furthermore, the crisis literature often views external stimuli (including the content generated by publics online) as a threat, as very much separate from the organization and undesirable. For Comfort (2007), control is one of the "four Cs of emergency management," along with cognition, communication, and coordination. Often paired as "command and control" in crisis situations,

> Control in disaster operations cannot be achieved through hierarchical measures alone. Rather, it develops through a process of rapid assessment of risk, integration of information from multiple sources, the capacity to formulate strategic plans of action, identification and correction of error, and a continual monitoring and feedback process among key actors. (p. 192)

Maintaining command and control in a crisis, then, is about excellent execution of J. Grunig's two-way asymmetric model, to act in very controlled ways in light of new information streaming in. The current understanding of crisis communication is thus an assumption that organizations should keep their ears open to what publics need in order to achieve and maintain firm control over a situation.

New media technologies challenge much of what we know about PR theory and practice, since these technologies fundamentally change the ways publics interact with organizations, particularly the speed with which that interaction happens. New media technologies, such as the Internet, enable a great deal of temporal flexibility. That is, the Internet can facilitate real-time communication (e.g., chat, instant messaging, tweets), rapid message exchange (e.g., e-mail), or indefinite asynchronous communication (e.g., bulletin board systems and blogs, where users can read and leave messages for one another across long stretches of time). New media technologies also have an enormous reach, as messages on the Internet are globally accessible to those with connectivity. Furthermore, these technologies allow users to remain anonymous as they participate in information exchange online, throwing accountability and authenticity into question and giving rise to phenomena such as "flaming" (Lange, 2006). As Bucher (2002) expertly summarizes, the

> high degree of disembeddedness makes Internet communication highly risky, because disembedding always means loss of control: control over sources and their reliability, control over selection, control over verification. (para. 24)

However, the most significant change in terms of control and PR in the new media era concerns the ability for users to quickly and easily produce and distribute content to a global audience. In today's "Web 2.0" era of the Internet, we have seen an upsurge in user-generated content. Organizations are shifting their online presence from static Web pages to dynamic

interfaces; integrating with social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Four Square; and encouraging users to create all kinds of content on behalf of, or in response to, the organization's brand.

Many more organizations understand the importance of new media than actually embrace it effectively (Lariscy et al., 2009). And, unfortunately, the PR literature, which has struggled to thoroughly address social media, has largely seen this kind of online user interaction as either a potential threat to an organization or as a phenomenon to be managed. González-Herrero and Smith (2008) assume that the Internet brings new kinds of threats to an organization, and they encourage PR practitioners to be vocal online quickly in order to maintain control of a crisis. Focusing on the evolution of content about corporate scandals on Wikipedia over time, DiStaso and Messner (2010) correctly observe that "Wikipedia is an example of the fact that companies cannot always control what others say and publish about them" (p. 20). However, their implicit recommendation to PR practitioners is that familiarity and engagement with social media enables an organization to maintain control of its image in the face of "forced transparency" online. An alternative viewpoint expressed in the PR literature is that it is a beast to be tamed, and good management of technologies will allow organizations to capitalize on publics in quite asymmetrical ways. Gustavsen and Tilley (2003) recommend corporate Web sites become more interactive to encourage publics to engage with the company and have positive feelings about the organization. They emphasize "user control" as one of six important dimensions of Web site interactivity, drawing upon Dholakia et al.'s definition of user control as "the extent to which an individual can choose the timing, content, and sequence of a communication" (Dholakia, Zhao, Dholakia & Fortin, 2000, cited in Gustavsen & Tilley, 2003, p. 6). Ahn's (2009) additional findings on the specific concept of user control support Gustavsen and Tilley's (2003) claims. Both attitudes about new media—as threat to be preempted or as tool to be managed for organizational gain—encourage PR practitioners to hold on tightly to control.

The reality of the new media landscape, however, is that organizations are not in control, and PR practitioners need to move beyond the control-surrender dynamic in order to get the most out of their publics. Practitioners need to co-create the organization itself alongside its publics. Dating back to at least 2000 is a growing number of successful organizations whose very existence is dependent on the ideas and creative energies of online communities who invest value in the brand by solving problems, designing products, and building communal resources. These organizations, some which do not even engage in anything resembling traditional advertising or PR, have been described variously as examples of stigmergic collaboration (Elliott, 2006), organized networks (Rossiter, 2006), crowdsourcing (Brabham, 2008), commons-based peer production (Benkler, 2002), online grassroots organizing (Wittig & Schmitz, 1996), and other phenomena. These many new organizational forms deemphasize the notion of control in favor of cultivation, mutual collaboration, and bottom-up creation and demand new PR theory and practice based on a new metaphor relating to control: curation. We argue for this shift through an examination of one contemporary case of collective resource building, the It Gets Better Project.

The It Gets Better Project

On July 9, 2010, 15-year-old Justin Aaberg hanged himself in his Andover, Minnesota, bedroom (Crary, 2010). Two months later on September 9, 2010, 15-year-old Billy Lucas followed Aaberg's lead: he also took his own life by hanging himself in his grandmother's

Greensburg, Indiana, barn (Brooks, 2010). Aaberg self-identified as gay, while Lucas did not, yet both boys were bullied and harassed by their peers on the basis of their actual and perceived sexual orientation.

Prompted by news of Aaberg and Lucas' suicides and a reader's comment to his story, relationship and sex columnist Dan Savage created a YouTube video channel called the It Gets Better Project on September 15, 2010, that would serve as a direct line of communication with at-risk LGBT youth. Stating that he "wished he could have talked to the kid [Lucas] for five minutes to tell him it gets better" (Parker-Pope, 2010), Savage's channel aims to serve as a collection of videos targeting troubled LGBT youth with messages that life improves after the middle and high school years (Advocate.com Editors, 2010). Savage realized that in the age of consumer-generated content, he could reach troubled LGBT youth directly through social media, allowing him to bypass the traditional forums in which to reach grade schoolers (i.e., by speaking at schools in which he would need permission from potentially socially conservative and, in some instances, homophobic school administrators).

Six days later on September 21, 2010, Savage and husband Terry Miller posted the channel's first video: an eight-and-a-half-minute look into Savage and Miller's lives. Both men discussed their struggles as gay youth, revealing stories of their own bullying and harassment.[22] The main focus of the video, however, was not the pain that they had endured, but rather how life had drastically improved once both men left their grade school years behind and were able to find joy in love, career, and family. In his weekly column, "Savage Love," Savage placed a rallying call for LGBT adults –"singles and couples, with kids or without, established in careers or just starting out, urban and rural, of all races and religious backgrounds"– to create videos of their own to help show LGBT youth that life does in fact get better once you leave adolescence behind (Savage, 2010a).

Within 24 hours of posting the first video, the It Gets Better Project's YouTube channel had been populated with dozens of videos, and Savage's inbox registered more than 3,000 e-mails (Parker-Pope, 2010); within one week's time, the channel had received more than 1,000 videos, exceeding the channel's capacity and rendering it necessary to create a separate Web site altogether (Advocate.com Editors, 2010; Savage, 2010b). In a few weeks' time, the It Gets Better Project became part of the non-profit Iola Foundation, a registered 501(c)3 organization. Today, itgetsbetter.org boasts more than 5,000 videos from multiple countries, and video viewership has extended beyond 15 million total hits. While thousands of LGBT adults heeded Savage's initial call for videos, including both average folk and celebrities, videos have also been created by LGBT youth as well as heterosexual allies, including President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, and Representative Nancy Pelosi ("About," n.d.). In addition to the videos, several Broadway performers lent their voices to the creation of a song for the project, and media advocacy group Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) created "Spirit Day" on Wednesday, October 20, 2010. GLAAD's Spirit Day asked social media users to give their pictures and avatars a purple hue in remembrance of those whose had taken their lives because of bullying (Mongillo, 2010).

As videos continue to populate the It Gets Better Project's Web site and both the traditional and new media increase coverage of the "movement" (Butler, 2010), attention is

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[22] The video can be seen here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IcVyvg2Qlo

drawn to the problem of school bullying pertaining to both actual and perceived sexual orientation. Many videos direct viewers to resources that can provide help to those in need, such as suicide prevention organization The Trevor Project and the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), both of whom are benefactors of all revenue generated by the It Gets Better Project ("About," n.d.). Proceeds include personal donations offered directly to Savage, a t-shirt fundraising drive that raised more than $56,000 in 10 days' time ("About," n.d.), and the upcoming March 2011 *It Gets Better* book release featuring a sampling of essays (Bosman, 2010).

We analyzed the It Gets Better Project case at a key point in the project's early growth. With the aid of screen-capture software, we logged all of the videos on the It Gets Better Project YouTube channel at 11:15 a.m. EDT on October 15, 2010, less than a month after the project's launch. This log included 811 videos at a total run time of more than 67 hours, with a total number of views at 846,683. The average video ran just under 5 minutes long, and the overwhelming majority of videos featured single individuals speaking into a camera in typical video blog, or "vlog," fashion (Christian, 2009). True to Savage's mission, the channel included videos representing the full spectrum of LGBT experience across many categories of gender, sexuality, nationality, race, ethnicity, age, religion, and (dis)ability.

While Savage cannot control what people say in their videos and states on the It Gets Better Project Web site's "About" page that "…every video changes a life. It doesn't matter who makes it," he has mentioned that not all videos initially received were posted on the Web site; rather, he admittedly selects which videos are added to the collection (Advocate.com Editors, 2010; Parker-Pope, 2010). He also expressed concern that some participants have created videos that singularly focus on bullying, as they reductively state that it gets better without showing or telling viewers how life improves or what was done to improve it. Ironically, Savage's concerns echoed criticism that he has received for the project overall, in that the videos themselves do not solve the problems of bullying, to which he concurs. Nevertheless, he defends the project by arguing that the videos are a step in the right direction in the interim when public opinion and subsequent policy change can be extremely slow-moving to change (Hartlaub, 2010). While Savage exhibits a level of control as the It Gets Better Project's gatekeeper, his ultimate role is that of message curator and brand community manager.

The It Gets Better Project is a timely development from which much can be learned, particularly concerning the locus of control in public relations messaging. And while the It Gets Better Project provides just one example, it is symptomatic of a general control shift in the new media era where publics are largely message creators and disseminators rather than mere respondents. J. Grunig stated in a brief interview at the October 17, 2010, Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) international conference:

> I think the future of public relations are in social media. Social media or digital media put control of communication behavior in the hands of publics. They have access to whatever sources of information they want. And practitioners, therefore, have to engage more in dialogue and more symmetrical communication because publics will get information someplace else otherwise. (Grunig, 2010)

But where do message curation and brand community management fit into the four models of public relations, as discussed in Grunig's Excellence Theory? Is the It Gets Better Project simply an example of a two-way symmetrical model of public relations? To address these questions and

argue that the It Gets Better Project moves beyond J. Grunig's models entirely, we review his Excellence Theory in the following section.

Excellence Theory

J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) defined public relations as "the management of communication between an organization and its publics" (p. 6). One year later, J. Grunig and colleagues were awarded a $400,000 grant from the International Association of Business Communicators and embarked upon a decade long research study with the intent of understanding why and how the public relations function brings value to an organization. Through an extensive multidisciplinary literature review, spanning across communication, public relations, management, organizational, social and cognitive psychology, organizational sociology, women's studies, political science, decision making, and cultural studies; a survey of 327 American, Canadian, and British organizations; and in-depth interviews with 25 organizations, J. Grunig, L. Grunig, and Dozier put forth a general theory of public relations known as Excellence Theory in a series of three books and numerous articles.

Excellence Theory was an attempt to merge and synthesize current public relations theory with empirical data from a large number of international organizations. Rather than serve as a one-size-fits-all theory of the discipline, as previous theories had attempted, J. Grunig et al. offered Excellence Theory as a general theory for the evaluation of public relations departments illustrating functional value to organizational managers. Additionally, the theory served as a teaching tool for new public relations students and seasoned practitioners (J. Grunig et al., 2006).

Using factor analysis of the extensive survey data set, Excellence Theory is comprised of eight factors including: 1) top management's value of communication; 2) the contribution to strategic organizational functions; 3) the performance of a management role; 4) the model of public relations; 5) the communication department's potential to practice the ideal type of excellent public relations; 6) activist pressure; 7) organizational culture, structure, and other employee-related variables; and, lastly, 8) embodying diversity. The central premise of Excellence Theory is that the practice of public relations has value to an organization because, through that strategic management function, the organization is able to foster long-term relationships with its publics (Bowen, 2005).

Of particular interest for this analysis is the fourth factor previously listed, the models of public relations. As first outlined by J. Grunig (1976) in a historical analysis of the public relations function, four models of public relations had been practiced over time. Originally labeled the synchronic and diachronic models, J. Grunig would later change the names to two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical, respectively, as they are referred to today. The first two models, press agentry and public information, focus on one-way communication from an organization to its publics. Press agentry is the practice of getting publicity in any way possible, whereas public information involves the organizational release of positive information to its publics. Two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical models of public relations marked a dramatic shifting from one-way communication. The two-way asymmetrical model involves dialogue between an organization and its publics but the power largely remains in the hands of the organization, who engages in research for the purpose of learning how to best persuade and ultimately control its publics. Contrastingly, the two-way symmetrical model places both the organization and its publics on an even playing field. As in the two-way asymmetrical model, the

organization conducts research on its publics but not for the sake of persuasion; rather, in the two-way symmetrical model, the organization seeks to bring about changes to both itself and its publics when beneficial to all parties. With the ultimate goal of dialogic equality between both the organization and its publics, it is acknowledged that power and control will naturally shift throughout the duration of the relationships. Accordingly, organizations themselves may move between one model and the next depending upon the situation at hand (L. Grunig, J. Grunig & Dozier, 1992).

L. Grunig et al. (1992) note that since they were first articulated, dating back to J. Grunig (1976, 1984) and J. Grunig and Hunt's (1984) earlier works, the four models of public relations have been the most frequently contested portion of the Excellence Theory. As the authors note, researchers often reduce the Excellence Theory to the fourth model of public relations, the two-way symmetrical model. Explaining that organizations engaging in two-way symmetry do in fact exist, as empirical data had shown from extensive quantitative and qualitative research, L. Grunig et al. (1992) acknowledge that two-way symmetry is also a normative model.

More recently, J. Grunig and L. Grunig (2010) provided insight into Excellence Theory's relevance to public relations in 2010, stating that theory is indeed open to modification as on-going research challenges previous findings. J. Grunig, repeating a comment he had made at a 2009 presentation in Norway, stated, "I don't think the theory and principles are really established yet because I see many examples of practice that haven't followed the actual principles" (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 2010, p. 8). On the topic of social media and its impact on messaging control in public relations, J. Grunig declared that organizations were never in complete control, and although social media presents a new channel in which publics and organizations can communicate, the organizational public relations objective should never be one of control:

It's not so much a matter of controlling information going to publics but participating in their conversations that are taking place around the organizations and in organizations and about organizations. (p. 10)

As J. Grunig (2010) stated, and the trade press has frequently echoed, social media has and will undoubtedly contribute heavily to the future of public relations. But rather than providing an avenue for two-way symmetry between organizations and publics, we argue that another model is emerging. Reminiscent of the two-way asymmetrical model, in which the organization retained most of the communication control while strategically surrendering some control, a two-way asymmetrical model placing *publics* in control has surfaced, as evidenced by the It Gets Better Project. We argue that this two-way asymmetrical model where control rests in the hands of publics represents a fifth model of PR germane to the new media era: the Participant-Curator Model.

The Participant-Curator Model

If we consider the non-profit It Gets Better Project as the organization in the equation, and if we look to its publics as 1) at-risk LGBT youth and family members, 2) financial beneficiaries The Trevor Project and GLSEN, and 3) content creators (LGBT and heterosexual allied adults; LGBT and heterosexual allied youth), then it becomes clear that the publics are indeed responsible for the existence of the It Gets Better brand. In this organization-public relationship, Savage functions as a *curator* rather than a traditional PR practitioner, steering the energies of

the content creators in strategic ways rather than controlling them altogether. Given his celebrity, Savage's initial video alone would have garnered some media attention beyond that which was his own creation, but the power of the organization rests with video producers, which we refer to as *participants*. If the two-way symmetrical model of PR places the practitioner figuratively between the organization and its publics as a kind of meaning mediator, then the Participant-Curator Model locates the PR practitioner-as-curator in a co-creative liminal space alongside the organization and publics. That is, previous models of PR focus on the notion of control because these models are concerned with the PR practitioner's management of messages and publics as a way to preserve and benefit the discrete construct of the organization. In contrast, our Participant-Curator Model redefines the notion of control because it concerns the iterative construction of the organization-in-progress, dependent on an ongoing negotiation of messages and meaning created by publics and strategically curated by a PR practitioner.

We choose the term "curator" for its resonance with the profession of museum exhibitions and museum management. We make an important distinction between curation and two related concepts, gatekeeping and archiving. Gatekeeping (White, 1950) is the act by which journalists select news for inclusion in a newspaper or news program. Though true journalistic objectivity is inherently impossible in light of journalists' inescapable bias and subjectivity, journalists nonetheless strive for objectivity in the gatekeeping process, following normative news values including relevance and timeliness (Golding & Elliott, 2000). Gatekeeping is thus a process of filtering based on "objective" criteria, where the need for a gatekeeper herself should be theoretically nonexistent. On the other hand, we view archiving as the act of collection and preservation that is maximally inclusive. That is, archives strive to be as complete as possible and archivists exclude information that is not at all relevant to the topic.

In the context of a museum or art exhibit, though, a curator takes on a more active and strategic role than a gatekeeper or archivist. Curators working to, for instance, develop an exhibit about Native American culture for a human history museum select the artifacts, artistic works, political documents, etc. from a large corpus of items in a Native American culture archive. The curator makes strategic and creative decisions to include and exclude some items and to present cultural items in a way that educates a public and/or invokes emotional response or political action. The same is true of a curator of an art exhibit. The best of Andy Warhol's art, according to the curator, is purposefully hung in a gallery space for publics to contemplate and react to, however they see fit. Curation is a subjective process of exclusion and inclusion of information into a whole body. Thus it is also a strategic and political practice[23] involving the management of information.

Our argument is that this act of curation is precisely what takes place at the It Gets Better Project and at a number of other organizations where online communities drive the entire organization through their participation. Dan Savage curates the video content he receives from LGBT adults and straight allies into the project. Through his curation, participants make the

[23] The works of Susan Sontag, Brian Ott, Eric Aoki, Michael Ames, Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, Marouf Hasian, and many others in the areas of critical museum studies, public memory, and critical rhetoric closely examine the inherent political power of monuments and museum curators. This body of work is also frequently sharply critical of colonial attitudes in the historical development of museums.

organization and other publics—LGBT youth, The Trevor Project, and GLSEN—benefit. The content-creators hold the majority of the control over the It Gets Better brand, while Savage channels some of this energy toward the other benefitting publics. Interestingly, The Trevor Project and GLSEN, while mentioned in several videos and benefitting from the exposure and revenue of the It Gets Better Project ("About," n.d.), have no control over or responsibility for the videos that are included on the site. These organizations exist in an unusual relationship with the project, and, for them, Savage does hold a measure of control in his role as curator.

Implications

The Participant-Curator Model has a number of implications for public relations theory, practice, and pedagogy. As argued in the overview of the It Gets Better Project, current PR theory, much of which was proposed decades before the digital era, does not account for the monumental shifts occurring within the practice today. It can be stated that publics have long been viewed as crucial to long-term organizational sustainability by some, yet the frequency with which publics are engaged in the brand-building process and the dynamic in which they contribute to relationship management is changing. To more accurately describe and predict, present PR theory must reexamine stringent definitions of what constitutes a PR practitioner, previous conceptualizations of organizations, and perhaps most importantly, ideology stating that the organization shares equal control over the organization-public relationship.

In reality, PR practitioners need to abandon the idea that they have any real sense of control in the new media landscape. Publics hold much of the power over a brand, and practitioners must respect this power. This lack of control does not mean that practitioners should see their publics as threats to be managed, and it does not mean that practitioners should close the "distance" between an organization and its publics by bringing publics in more intimate and rapid contact with the brand. What it does mean is that PR practitioners need to see publics at the very core of the organization, as the very creative energy that drives the brand. Content creators online are not threats to a brand; they *are* the brand. And PR practitioners curate what the crowd produces in an ongoing (re)creation of the organization itself. The organization is virtual, the practitioner is a traffic controller, and publics are the real lifeblood of the brand. Practitioners need not just let go of control. Rather, they need to abandon the concept of control entirely.

The Participant-Curator Model's implications for pedagogy are even more apparent. We have only just begun to include new media tools in our teaching of PR undergraduates. And we desperately need to move beyond teaching the tools of PR in the new media era to teaching that relationships, objectives, and strategies still matter (Li & Bernoff, 2008). Pedagogical challenges arise in that while we must teach students how to function in today's public relations landscape by using Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Four Square, and other tools in a professional capacity, we must do so knowing that the tools themselves will change at a pace far greater than the very textbooks we use in our courses. It is time to begin teaching that PR practitioners will soon spend more of their workday immersed in an online community of content creators, monitoring the pulse of that community as they co-create a brand alongside its publics and in unison with an organization's marketing team, than they will spend engaged in activities that have previously been conceptualized as traditional PR practice.

Future Research and Limitations

Through incorporating literature from other disciplines, we have taken small steps to argue that current PR theory could indeed benefit from looking outside of public relations alone as researchers grapple with explaining the impact of social media on the organization-public relationship. Future research on social media, therefore, should approach model building and theory testing in an interdisciplinary manner, continually drawing upon information science, communication, and organizational behavior literature as a starting point, particularly that which focuses on organizations that exist and were created entirely online. In doing so, current theory will be challenged; in some instances, studies will verify and/or merely extend current theoretical frameworks, as does ours, and in others, new models will be necessary altogether. We encourage PR researchers to follow J. Grunig's lead as was done in the early stages of Excellence Theory development. In the digital era, we should begin by reexamining the literature, across disciplines, in an effort to strengthen our current knowledge of public relations.

Unquestionably, our study has limitations. Because we limited our analysis to just one organization, the It Gets Better Project, our model could erroneously be viewed as narrowly focused on one exemplar. Furthermore, because the It Gets Better Project is ongoing, our analysis was limited to just one portion of the organization's lifecycle. However, through future research, additional organizations should be analyzed and included in the study to strengthen our argument. We encourage researchers to join us in this task.

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Strategic Communication Planning: A Multiple Case Study from Iraq and Kuwait

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to develop and analyze strategic communication for Multi-National Forces Iraq, a United Nations military force of 40 countries that comprised Multi-Iraq during the period of 2007 and 2008. This study is an extension of a study done for the U.S. Army War College in 2007 that developed a viable qualitative measurement tool to assess the relationships with the media for U.S. Army public affairs.

The purpose of this study was to develop and analyze strategic communication for Multi-National Forces-Iraq, a United Nations military force of 40 countries during the period of 2007 and 2008. Strategic Communication is an emerging and important joint military concept in recent years. This study is an extension of a study done for the U.S. Army War College in 2007 that developed a viable qualitative measurement tool to assess the relationships with the media for U.S. Army public affairs.

Essentially this study was an ethnographic, participant observation and direct observation research project in strategic communication resulting from the investigator's service from 2007 to 2008 with Multi-National Forces-Iraq in Strategic Effects, the Communications Division; for Detainee Operations as the Chief of Public Affairs for all detainee operations in Iraq; with the Army Central Command in Kuwait – with purview over 27 countries of the Middle East and Northern Africa; and as a senior instructor for the Defense Information School, Ft. Meade, Maryland. Four separate strategic communication plans were developed and partially implemented by strategic communication and public affairs staff for these commands. These staffs included personnel specifically from Iraq, Morocco, Egypt, Australia, England, and joint forces personnel from the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines. Development and implementation of these plans relied on current theory related to strategic communication and planning in the military as well as strategic communication and planning, and leadership and negotiation in the relevant civilian academic fields. Such theory included the four models of communication by Grunig and Hunt (1984), and evaluation (civilian and military) of the relationship strategies of trust and transparency, satisfaction and commitment (Hon & J.E. Grunig, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000; & Rawlins, 2007) to the appropriate elements of a strategic communication plan (Wilson & Ogden, 2008).

In conjunction with the above strategic communication plans, other concepts developed were execution matrices better known as communication confirmation tables in the public relations field; how survey and focus group research was used in Iraq; operational as opposed to strategic communication plans and their end state assessment or outcome-based measurement; the use of public affairs counterinsurgency audiences or publics; command themes, messages and talking points as contrasted to primary and secondary messages; and finally, some of the interplay among strategic communication, public affairs, information operations, and psychological operations.

The paper is a study to investigate the evolving field of strategic communication planning in the field of public relations as it applies to the U.S. military in Iraq and Kuwait and Afghanistan during the period of 2007-2008. Strategic communication is defined in the *commercial* or private sector for academia by Hallahan et al. 2007 as "the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission" p. 3. The terms commercial or private sector are used here because there is a difference between how strategic communication is defined for the private sector and the military or public sector. In a 16 March 2010 report to the U.S. Congress from President Obama, it stated, " …different uses of the term 'strategic communication' have led to significant confusion…. By 'strategic communication(s)' we refer to: (a) the synchronization of words and deeds and how they will be perceived by selected audiences, as well as (b) programs and activities deliberately aimed at communicating and engaging with intended audiences including those implemented by public affairs, public

diplomacy, and information operations professionals." This definition was created, in part, as a response to the February, 2010 release of the Department of Defense's (DoD) Quadrennial Defense Review Report that called for strengthening key support capabilities for strategic communication:

As part of the U.S. government's integrated civilian-military efforts to interact effectively with a variety of audiences and stakeholders, DoD will continue to improve key capabilities that support strategic communication…. Effective strategic communication also requires the orchestration of multiple lines of operation. Chief among these are policy implementation, force employment, information operations, public affairs, civil affairs, and public diplomacy and engagement…. The President's forthcoming report to Congress on U.S. government strategic communication will outline a common vision of interagency collaboration in this area and define the Administration's position on this issue (p. 26).

As can be seen from this recent statement on strategic communication, both the rest of the Federal Government and DoD views information operations, public affairs (relations), and public diplomacy differently and considers them all part of strategic communication (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2006). Information operations includes information technology, cyber-warfare, and psychological operations. It could be compared to the two-way asymmetrical communication of J.E. Grunig and Hunt (1984). Public affairs is more the traditional public relations in the civilian world and could be compared to the public information and two-way symmetrical models of J.E. Grunig and Hunt. Public diplomacy also envelops those latter two models but is concerned primarily with the DoD/State Department confluence.

This paper will attempt to integrate private and public sector definitions of strategic communications into a narrower, process model to help determine if strategic communication plans created by the military are accomplishing the objectives or affecting the key stakeholders or publics it wants to reach.

Literature Review

Strategic Communication and Planning

Searching for more private sector definitions of strategic communication led to Argenti, Howell and Beck in 2005 where they define it "as communication aligned with the company's overall strategy, to enhance its strategic positioning." In 2006 Botan wrote about strategic communication and the differences among the terms grand strategy, strategy and tactics. He defined strategic communication as planned communication campaigns that begin and end with publics (meaning research on those publics). He differentiated grand strategy as strategy minus the tactics and involving policy, alliances, values and goals, while strategy is more the planning, maneuvering of ideas, argument and persuasion. He defined the tactical level as the operational doing and actual practice. He also said that every tactical communication is judged on its content and the relationship surrounding that communication, because the relationship of the parties involved in the communication is the basis for belief in that communication.

The term *strategic* in a military sense is usually referring to the highest levels of command and to large, overall military campaigns. The term *operational* is a specific military action to accomplish a specific objective as in taking city or piece of ground. The term *tactic* is usually used in reference to the specific actions of the smaller units in accomplishing the operational objective. Thus strategic communication is confusing for the military as cited earlier because it

differentiates strategic communication and public affairs at the operational or key publics level. Public affairs normally address civilian publics in the United States. Its mission is to educate and inform much like the public information model of J. E. Grunig and Hunt (1984). But, strategic communication also includes information operations and psychological operations whose publics are opposition forces. Their mission is to change behavior of opposition forces. Whereas in the traditional public relations sense in the academic or civilian world, communications planning or strategic communication is considered acting at all three of the military levels of strategic communication. Ideally, it would occur at the highest or leadership levels of an organization and be carried out at the lowest or tactical levels. It educates and informs publics but the most effective public relations changes behavior. Strategic communication sets measureable communication objectives and considers the long-term effects on key publics or strategic stakeholders while constantly scanning the organizational environment for issues that might affect the organization (J. E. Grunig & White, 1992).

In the seminal article on strategic communication in the inaugural issue of the International Journal of Strategic Communication, 2007, Hallahan et. al. covered the origins of strategic communication from a number of fields. Strategic communication as defined by them fits more under changing behavior and psychological operations in the military. They addressed the term *strategic* as well as citing its origins as coming from warfare, meaning the art of war. Those authors also focus on the term *communication* and the process of communication that is the key ingredient for this study. The authors define communication "as the constitutive activity of management" (p. 27). Under the article's section on management they write of the focus on rational decision-making using the SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) as part of the process of goal setting, strategy formulation and implementation, and evaluation (Porter, 1985). They later cite Mintzberg (1990) about environmental scanning of stakeholders, issues management and the integration of the communication functions. In 1994 Mintzberg defined strategy as a plan for a future course of action and broadened that definition to include strategy as a pattern and consistency in behavior over time. This consistency is usually a combination of deliberate and emergent strategies. Deliberate strategies are realized or fulfilled while emergent strategies are realized but not expressly intended. These emergent strategies include the influence of stakeholders incorporating the concept of relationships from Botan, 2006; Hallahan et. al., 2007; Hon & J.E. Grunig, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000).

Steyn (2007) agreed with LTG Petraeus and accorded a higher role to strategic communication and does not equate communication management to strategic communication. In fact, she says that public relations assists an organization to adapt to its stakeholder environment serving both the organization and the public interest. By acting socially responsible and building mutually beneficial relationships on which it depends to meet its objectives, an organization gains trust and builds a good reputation with its stakeholders. Steyn described several functions of strategic communication but operationaled public relations strategy as *deliberate*, combining several elements of planning. This is a process that among other elements, emphasizes drawing a stakeholder map, thinking through the consequences of organizational goals on those stakeholders, and addressing those consequences by deciding what should be communicated (themes) and what should be achieved by this communication (setting deliberate objectives).

Leadership and Negotiation

Another military leader, Admiral James G. Stavridis, spoke about strategic communication in the following terms:

> Effective communication requires leaders of an organization to take an early and persistent role in deciding how ideas and decisions are shaped and delivered. Certainly in the national security context, a leader can improve the effects of operational and policy planning by ensuring communications implications of that planning are considered as early as possible in the process. If planning is done in that fashion, then it is likely that the communications associated with it will indeed be strategic in its effects (Stavridis, 2007, p. 4).

This quote adds further to the planning and leadership aspects of strategic communication as well as negotiating how these ideas are shaped and delivered. Argenti (2005) and Plowman, 1995 and 1998 as well as many others in the field of public relations have argued for public relations having a seat at the management decision table so that these ideas discussed above have a better chance to make it into final strategic communication plans. As far as negotiating these types of ideas Putnam (1994, 2004, 2009, & 2010) argued for transformation of the process of communication so that situations are seen in different ways, meaning for the purposes of this study, that strategic communication needs to resolve the real problems so that there is not just conflict *solution* but conflict *resolution* so the problem is permanently resolved. Indeed, when J. E. Grunig defined symmetrical public relations further (research-based public relations that results in change by both the organization and its public) he said it meant "the use of bargaining, negotiating and strategies of conflict resolution to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes, and behaviors of both the organization and its publics" (1989, p. 29).

This study then would claim that strategic planning, leadership, and negotiation play strong roles in creating strategic plans, and that operationally, the management process of communication (Hallahan et. al., 2007) leads to strategic communication plans including action plans, goals, objectives, stakeholders or key publics, communication tactics, and measurable outcomes or evaluation. Many textbooks in the public relations field have versions of such plans (Austin & Pinkleton, 2001, Broom & Dozier, 1990; R.D. Smith, 2005; Wilcox & Cameron, 2009; Wilson & Ogden, 2008).

Strategic communication in the private sector conveys deliberate messages through the most suitable media to designated stakeholders at the appropriate time to achieve the desired long-term effect. It is process creation to bring three factors in balance; the message, the communication channels and the key publics (Beckstette, 2008). In order to do this it looks at the stakeholders who have consequences for the organization or environmental scanning; it considers the goals of the organization and its long term effects. (J. Grunig and White, 1992; Wilson & Ogden (2008). It will use a Wilson and Ogden (2008) strategic communication plan for basic structure and an operational definition of strategic communication developed by Plowman (2006) for the 96th Regional Readiness Command (USAR) while serving as the public affairs officer for that command. That definition of strategic communication is "the management of communications between an organization and its key stakeholders on a long-term basis to meet measurable objectives in a realistic timeframe."

This definition for this paper is purposeful, more bounded and operational, meaning evaluation is built-in to get at meaningful consequences or results.   In both academic and

military definitions, note the similarities of terms, as in stakeholders or target audiences. The investigator includes the term, *long-term* (Wilson & Ogden, 2008) because it helps guarantee that stakeholders will remain loyal in a mutually beneficial relationship. From the negotiation literature that is principled negotiation or a win/win (Fisher, Ury & Patton, 1994) and the symmetrical definition of public relations (J. E.Grunig, 1989).   The investigator's definition also assumes that the model strategic communication plan includes themes, messages and tactics or communication products. It also includes objectives that are measurable so they can be evaluated in a certain timeframe.

Method

Strategic communication planning will be discussed first and then case studies. Here is the model below that was developed from the above literature review.

Figure 1
Matrix Model for a Strategic Communication Campaign

Publics/ Research	Goal	Measurable Objective	Communication or Message	Communication Tactics	Metric or Evaluation of Objective

In a typical communications campaign, research includes a benchmark of stakeholder perceptions for the relationship of both parties must be established to be able to measure change in that relationship at a later point in time. Along with a stakeholder benchmark, a goal should be set to achieve for a future change. To operational or make measurable the goal, measurable objectives must be set that are realistic to achieve with certain stakeholders and also within a reasonable amount of time in a strategic communication campaign. After that the self-interests of both the organization and its stakeholder should be determined so that they might be combined in short communication messages. These would include primary messages made up of the self-interests and then secondary messages that would include facts, quotes and other substantiating information to support the primary message. These are often called talking points. Specific communication products or tactics can then be determined to reach these publics through various communication channels. Finally, metric or evaluation criteria that restate the benchmark objectives can be measured as a post-test to assess the amount of change after the specified time-period of the original objectives. Those benchmark objectives can then be used to re-assess the amount of change that has occurred in the relationship over the time of the campaign. A chart like Figure 1 would be created for each stakeholder. A 1-10 scale could be used for many of these cells with 10 being high, to measure the degree there is for example; mutual influence attached to stakeholder expectations or communication tactics. This proposed strategic communications plan model above acts as the research question. Does the military in the case of the four strategic communication plans examined comply with the exemplar of the good plan? The method will critique that compliance. Also evaluated will be the leadership and negotiation factors involved in creating those plans.

This method is a combination of multiple-case studies (Yin, 2009) and ethnographic methods relying substantially on participant observation and direct observation. The investigator

was a public affairs officer in the U.S. Army serving for a year in the military commands from which the case studies were drawn.

Case Studies

     In 1989, Fortner and Christians described case studies as "a favorite qualitative tool" because they allow in-depth probing of a single phenomenon or situation. In 2009, Yin defined a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). Multiple case designs are almost always advisable (Yin).

     When collecting evidence in case studies, it typically comes from six sources, and four of those will be used in this study -- *documents* (meeting notes, strategic communication plans, minutes, internal documents, news clippings that help corroborate evidence from other, primary sources); *archival records* (diaries, organizational charts, PowerPoint presentations; *direct observation* (site visit to observe environmental conditions and relevant behaviors); *participant observation* (observer becomes active member of the organization when researcher wants to perceive reality as an *insider*, but subject to biases of involvement) Yin, 2009.

     One strength of case studies arises out of a necessity to understand complex social phenomena. Stake (1994) said that case studies actually were not a methodological choice but a choice of the object to be studied, the natural setting to be explored. This case study is explanatory, explicating what happened in the four cases and how it applies to strategic communication, leadership and negotiation. It is the preferred method when *how* or *why* questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is to explain a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 2009).

     Another strength of case studies is its use of triangulation. Triangulation in the case study sense is a process of multiple perceptions gathered from the multiple sources of data and a comparison of them to clarify meaning (Flick, 1992). Bias in this study was controlled for by triangulation. Triangulation of theory occurred in the literature review. Triangulation of patterns and themes occurred using constant comparative analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) among the four sources of data.

     A strength and a weakness of case studies is generalizability. Case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. Cases do not represent a scientific random sample where any of a given population are likely to be chosen. The goal is to expand and generalize theories (*analytic generalization*) rather than generalize frequencies (*statistical generalization*) (Yin, 2009).

     Sources of data. There were three organizations within the military for four strategic communication plans. One was an army command with forward and rear headquarters in Kuwait and Atlanta, Georgia. Two were under the Communications Division of Strategic Effects for Multi-National Forces-Iraq, and the third had charge of detainee operations in Iraq.

Results

    The patterns and themes for this study were presumed to follow Figure 1, the model of strategic communication developed for this study and leadership and negotiation. Differences will be noted in the discussion.

Kuwait

The first strategic communications plan was developed in Kuwait. A new commander was assigned just before Christmas. Most of the strategic effects/information operations cell was at the rear headquarters in Georgia. The commander wanted to get his tenure under way as soon as possible so came to Kuwait while most of the information operations personnel were on leave for Christmas. Although in the public affairs section, the investigator was asked to begin an outline of a strategic communication plan since that was part of his civilian expertise. The commanding general even came out to the briefing floor to make that request of this officer. The officer then worked with the information operations cell there in Kuwait to develop the rudiments of a plan.

Four officers were interviewed from public affairs, information operations and strategic effects. The commander's initial guidance was used as well as current lines of operation meaning supporting functions at the base of operations connecting to the force and its objectives, mission, desired effects of the command, and the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan. The core problem was defined as: Strategic stakeholders do not recognize the command as a war fighting headquarters when that may be its next mission. The goal derived from that problem was that: Strategic stakeholders begin to recognize the command as a war fighting headquarters. The measurable objectives for the strategic communication plan within a six month timeframe were to finish the transformation of the command and rebalance its capabilities for war fighting status, and to improve its reputation to conduct joint and combined full spectrum operations by 30% within that time frame. The strategic key stakeholders were: leaders of the command, soldiers of the command, Central Command leadership (the unit's higher headquarters), joint staff, meaning the Navy, Marines and Air Force, other commands (meaning Iraq-based units) liaison officers, the Secretary of the Army, and the Chief of Staff of the Army.

The slogan accompanying strategic communication themes was: "…Always First in the Warfight! The themes or messages for the transformation and rebalance objective were: We have transformed and are more than capable to be deployed anywhere in the world as a joint task force; and, we have the right elements forward, with control of the right support units to deploy from either the main headquarters in the United States or forward from Kuwait. The message for the improved reputation objective was: We have the capability of conducting operations intelligence; maneuver, fires and effects; operational protection, sustainment, command and control and modular.

For evaluation, the desired end state or outcome was that the command improved its image of its capability to operate a war fighting headquarters; transformed, rebalanced and prepared for future operations. Tools to measure that evaluation were to conduct interviews with selected members from the strategic key stakeholders to gauge the rate of change of their perceptions over the time period of the campaign; conduct a comparative analysis with and across those stakeholders to see if perceptions had changed; and to work with the inspector general to conduct an internal command climate survey to determine the above as well.

This officer transferred to Iraq before these plans were completed. Although, when the strategic effects division sent more officers to Kuwait after the Christmas holidays, the officer was thanked and the strategic effects cell started to develop its own version of the strategic communications plan.

Based on the initial plan however, comparing it to the model developed for this study, research was conducted to develop the plan but no research was done to expand on the publics

named as key stakeholders. Goals and measurable objectives with messages were developed along with a metric to measure the end state or objectives. Tactics were not developed since this was a preliminary plan. Of course, this plan should follow the Figure 1 model closely since both were developed by the same investigator.

Strategic Effects -- Iraq

Two plans were developed here, one for the Government of Iraq (GoI) Outreach Office in 2008 by the investigator as directed by the commander of the Communications Division. The other was for the entire Strategic Effects Command. The Communications Division was subordinate to Strategic Effects.   The investigator was primarily a direct observer for that latter plan that was developed in 2007.

Communications Division. The purpose for the GoI plan was for Iraqi and Pan/Arab media engagement and outreach and to measure the overall effectiveness of that outreach to that media. There was a sister section to the GoI Outreach Office that provided research and analysis of localized media through surveys and focus groups of the Iraqi population. Under the *situation* research was conducted on the media relative to Iraqi security forces, economics, and Iraqi/Pan Arab media outlets. Only relevant sections will be excerpted here.

The current situation read:

Reaching populace in Arab Countries and affecting their opinions on the role of Coalition Forces in improving the security, infrastructure, general economic wherewithal, and quality of life in Iraq can be facilitated to a great degree through the Pan/Arab media. According to our cultural advisor and other well informed sources, opinion leaders can be reached through various Pan-Arab media outlets. Those opinion leaders will, in turn, influence the populace. Those opinion leaders are tribal and religious sheiks, academics and intellectuals. Most communication to the sheiks is by word-of-mouth through senior followers who use the media. Academics and intellectuals gain their information more directly from the media, but then all opinion leaders communicate directly to their followers or students.

The related difficulties to reaching these opinion leaders is through the distortion caused by the media channels, either through translations or innate bias (sectarian influences) of particular mediums, distrust of spokesperson with one another and by the populace.

The core problem and the accompanying goal were:

Not effectively engaging Pan-Arab media and related target audiences enough so that the Coalition Forces are perceived to be here to provide stability and assist the Iraqi people to re-build their country.

Desired strategic communication effects:
Goal: Increase Pan/Arab acceptance of our GoI Outreach messages as far as trust and transparency.

Objective 3: Increase relationship factor (e.g. bias factor) with Pan/Arab media by 20% in three months.

Note the use of the term strategic communication effects. As in the previous section, strategic communication is part of strategic effects and that is the umbrella term developed in the U.S. military for public affairs, information operations, psychological operations, civil affairs etc. Also, note the use of the terms trust and transparency. Those were the current terms in use to denote that coalition forces were only in Iraq to promote enough stability and security in the country to be able to withdraw, as can be seen from the recent drawdown of troops in Iraq to 50,000 in 2010 from a high of some 160,000 in 2006-7. Also included here is Objective 3 of four objectives because the plan was attempting to measure the intangible relationship of trust and transparency with the Iraqi/Pan Arab media.

The ensuing key stakeholders or publics were actually called target audiences by the command, more of an advertising term, but included the Iraqi Pan/Arab media. They would normally be considered a communications channel for messages, but in this situation, were considered a primary stakeholder or audience since the campaign was targeted at them.

There were two themes or messages, one being the transparency and trust issue with seven secondary messages or talking points for the first, and for the transparency message -- five other secondary messages.

There was one strategy serving both objectives: "Through a series of engagements with editors and reporters of Pan/Arab media, the Communication Division's commander and other GoI Outreach members as well as GoI representatives will work to convince them of the objectives above."

There were 11 tactics to accomplish the above strategy, and to the investigator's knowledge 10 of those were actually implemented.

An execution matrix or engagement plan was then developed as a checklist of who was responsible to carry out the tactics. That matrix began with the target audience, then a principal or lead person was designated to accomplish the tactic. After that, the tactic was listed and then in the final box a timeline or deadline for execution of the task was listed.

Finally in the plan, evaluation objectives or metrics of assessment were determined for each original objective. For example, the earlier objective listed was: Increase the relationship factor with Iraqi/Pan Arab media by 20% in three months. The sister section for media assessment was to conduct a survey or focus groups with the Iraqi/Pan Arab media to measure any change in media bias. Questions were vetted for trust and transparency between the Outreach Section and the Iraqi/Pan Arab media.

As far as analysis of this plan, there were no differences between the model in Figure 1 and this plan. The plan did, however, add background and a situation analysis as well as an execution matrix.

Strategic Effects. The purpose of this plan was to synchronize efforts of public affairs, information operations, public diplomacy, and engagements in the Joint Campaign Plan in support of the MNF-I commander's intent. It was also to synchronize subordinate public affairs and information operations engagement efforts with MNF-I. It was organized by purpose, then strategic communication themes, objective, plan structure, and

then implementation of the plan. The themes were centered on security, economic development, political governance and service.

The objectives were to: reinforce the legitimacy of the GoI; reinforce the perception of Iraqi Security Forces as the only legitimate military force in Iraq; disrupt illegitimate military forces in Iraq; disrupt non-diplomatic, non-economic influence by other nations in Iraq; and increase the support for the coalition force's mission in Iraq among the American people.

The strategic communication plan was further broken down into public affairs objectives, information operations objectives, and engagement objectives, then into tasks, themes and messages for public affairs, information operations and engagement.

To use or implement the plan it identified five steps: identify the event; identify the targets or stakeholders; identify the tasks; identify the themes and messages; and then develop the synchronized plans for public affairs and information operations.

For example in identifying the targets or enemy stakeholders for the province of Al Anbar Targets, the plan named the Sunnis, Sunni insurgents, Al-Qaeda and Iraqi Shia insurgents, and Pan-Arabia countries. The investigator could not break all the tasks down for security reasons, but the tasks for public affairs were to inform while tasks for information operations were to influence and disrupt. And, then desired end states were listed for the tasks.

Themes and messages were separated out with themes being broader and messages were in support of the themes. These themes were also put in a number of matrices. One matrix was the major strategic communication themes against the final strategic effects or outcomes. Again, the themes were security, economic development, political governance and services. For example the strategic effect of a representative government that promotes national unity was listed against the themes of political governance and services. Strategic communication themes were also put in a matrix with strategic communication objectives. All four themes applied to the objectives of reinforcing the legitimacy of the GoI, disrupting illegitimate military forces in Iraq, and increasing support for the coalition's mission in Iraq among the American people.

The differences between this plan and Figure 1 were more extensive than the first case because it had to separate out public affairs and information operations, providing information vs. changing behavior. Publics were researched. There was no overall goal although objectives were delineated. But the objectives were not measurable, however. On the plus side, the objectives were quite detailed down to the public affairs, information operations and engagement levels. Tasks were listed in conjunction with extensive themes and messages. The themes seem to correspond to primary messages in the private sector, while the messages approximated what are normally considered secondary messages in support of the theme or primary message. Specific tasks were listed that could equate with communication tactics. Three separate subordinate plans were developed in support of the overall strategic communications plan because of the high command level for Iraq and the separation by military doctrine between public affairs and information operations. So, one purpose of this plan was for close coordination between the two. The current complex military operating environment made such plans even more complicated to accomplish the coordination mentioned above, however.

Detainee Operations

The investigator was transferred to this command with three months left in his tour to assist public affairs because of the importance of this command, being the successor to those units that were responsible for the Abu Ghraib detainee abuses. The strategic communication plan had been completed but a new commander took over a week after the investigator's arrival so an evolution of the plan was necessary to comply with the intent of the new commander.

The initial plan was published in early 2008 and revisions began later that year. This plan had an overview and purpose, the purpose being to: "Demonstrate to the citizens of Iraq and the great Muslim Umma (the Islamic community) that we are dedicated to establishing an alliance with moderate Muslims and empowering them to marginalize violent extremists." It also included the key elements of a mission statement and core values and principles to include rule of law, security, care and custody, education, engagement, dignity, cultural relativism, and transparency.

The next section of the plan was on targeting and used the term *key audiences* instead of key publics or target audiences. Those key audiences included the military members of the command; internees and their families, tribal chiefs and Sheiks; the Iraqi people and their leaders; the Middle Eastern Islamic Community; coalition nations, United Nations partners and Non-Governmental Organizations; and communities the military belonged to in the U.S. and U.S. national decision makers.

The next step in the plan included *Target Areas of Influence*, that is "targeting modes to include traditional news media and interpersonal transactions that encouraged supportive behavior. Those were: command leadership, Iraqi news media, Pan Arab or Middle Eastern news media, Arab religious and academic influencers; senior coalition and United Nations and Non-Governmental leaders; and Western news media.

At the end of the plan was a statement that "communication campaigns to address specific key audiences would follow with themes relative to each target to achieve objectives." There also followed two matrices that lined up the operating principles above as communication themes in relation to the key audiences.

Under the next commander, while the investigator was part of the operation, these key audiences were refined to include coalition leadership, GoI, U.S. Congress, General Western, Iraqi, and Pan/Arab peoples, detainees, detainee families, NGOs/UN/International Red Cross, service members and service member families. Multiple *desired effects* were then developed for each of these audiences. For example, for the Government of Iraq (GoI), the desired effects were: Supports and funds selected detainee operations programs, and; assumes administration and control of detainee operations programs.

Several engagement tactics were then listed. For the GoI those were: briefings, facility/program tours; and as target nodes the U.S. Congress, MNF-I leadership, and the Western/Pan Arab/Iraqi media.

Comparing this plan to Figure 1 then, research was conducted on publics, there were no goals but many non-measureable objectives. The term used in the command was *desired effect. Target Areas of Influence* was the term used for influential or intervening publics in private sector literature. Themes were drawn from the extensive operating principles. In fact, the overview, purpose and principles could all be considered part of the

background, the more common term that the public relations field is familiar with. *Engagement Tactics* was the term used for communication tactics, and the term end state was used and developed later to mean evaluation of objectives.

Leadership and Negotiation

Leadership and negotiation issues were evident throughout the development of each of these plans. All the plans were developed by officers at the major and lieutenant colonel levels and then the chain of command was followed in group and individual meetings through the colonels who headed major sections, and then on to the decision-makers, the generals in command. Leadership was appreciative of initiative to develop such plans, although their confluence for public affairs and information operations within strategic communications was being developed at the same time decisions were being made based on the current situation for operations. So, there arose jurisdictional issues as to who was in charge of what, the lack of background in strategic communication or public affairs by many officers, especially up the chain of command for strategic communications, and even personality conflicts arising from the leadership styles of some senior officers. Two of the generals involved exhibited strong authoritarian personalities, leading by fear more than by skill or example. Others were new to their positions or were put in their positions from other specialty fields of the military without any background in communications. In Kuwait, one general considered public affairs as providing information only without any analysis even though public officers often had news information before the intelligence cell that usually analyzed such information. In Iraq, so many personnel had served previous to 2007 that there were a number of untrained officers in place. The personality of one officer was so acerbic that few personnel could work with him. Detainee operations was interesting because the styles of the two commanders were almost polar opposite. One believed in using public affairs to its utmost capacity believing that winning meant winning in the public communications arena and with the media. But, this occurred when problems with detainee operations were at their highest. As internal changes were made to better manage the detainee population the ensuing commander, who avoided the media spotlight was tasked with toning down the public profile of detainee operations by the commanding general in Iraq.

Conclusion

This study attempted to establish a model of strategic communication planning that would cover all sectors of society meaning the private or commercial sector and then the non-profit, governmental or military sectors. That model was refined into Figure 1 based on the literature in strategic communication and strategic planning. The literature on leadership and negotiation was reviewed as well because those issues were strongly observed as affecting the resulting strategic communication plans. The model was generic enough that the four cases fit for the most part within it.

Terminology was the reason for large differences among the plans. Terms were different among the plans and different from private sector terminology. Must of the military terminology is based on terms of art already in use by the military such as *strategic, operational* and *tactical, engagement, end state, and desired effects* among others. But according to the new

counterinsurgency manual, the new operational environment and the increasing operating pace in Iraq and Afghanistan was outstripping existing doctrine so doctrine and current practices was being developed concurrently (Counterinsurgency Manual, 2007).

For the first cell in the model of Figure 1, research was done on key publics in three of the four strategic communication plans. One plan even included the equivalent of intervening publics or influential who could influence the primary publics. In addition, background was covered in two of the plans and situation analysis was covered in one. As part of research one specifically named a core problem but two others referred to this term as the purpose. Two of the plans listed goals and they all listed objectives although in two of them the objectives were not measurable. End states , strategic effects, desired effects and evaluation were all included however, to gauge the result of the campaigns. Themes, messages and tactics were listed in all of the plans. Two of the plans listed secondary messages or talking points in military parlance. Although the term *talking points* are also predominant in many private sector plans, Wilson and Ogden (2008) refer to them as secondary messages. Tasks was the term used in one plan for communication tactics. Several of the plans had versions of what was often called the *execution matrix*. The private sector could learn from this. Wilson and Ogden use what they call a communication confirmation table but it does not designate the point of contact or person responsible for seeing that the tactic is carried out. Most of the military matrices included objectives or desired effects and the end state or evaluation metric of the objectives.

The investigator was surprised and pleased that the Communication Division of MNF-I had a Media Analysis and Assessment Section to conduct primary research both quantitative and qualitative. Previous leadership had the knowledge and negotiating power to institute that enlightened practice.

Negotiating then, in the changing combat environment was a challenge especially when the majority of the negotiation was from subordinate to superior in the military. Despite these challenges in leadership and negotiation, however, it was the investigator's opinion that doctrine and practice in strategic communication was changing incrementally as the operations moved forward. Another facet of strategic communication was also evident – that of institutionalization of the practice across changing personnel in organizations. The military is especially susceptible to the difficulty of sustaining institutionalization of the function because of relatively short periods of residence before transferring to another unit. But, in Iraq and Kuwait tours of duty were even shorter ranging from three months to a year. The investigator, for example, served for six months in Kuwait, three months with the Communications Division, and the final three months with Detainee Operations.

Limitations

This study was limited because of the mandatory location of the investigator by the U.S. Army, but that was a strength as well because he was exposed to strategic communication in multiple situations and locations. It was also limited in the rank of the investigator and access, although good, was limited to his position with the organizational structures. It was also limited in the time periods involved.

Future Research

   This study was obviously a snapshot in time and place that cannot be reproduced. So, future research could focus on cases in the private or public sectors that occur in a more predictable and regular manner. Research also needs to continue in the evolving field of strategic communication in both private and public sectors, and both in the U.S. and internationally. Results of such research could arrive at a common definitions and functions of strategic communication across all of these sectors.

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Exploring Antecedents of Cynicism toward Corporate Social Responsibility

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Abstract

To provide insights for the company to better segment and understand the characteristics of their target publics and to manage CSR programs in a strategic manner, this study examines predictors of cynicism toward CSR. The results show that negative sentiments toward marketing activities, attitudes toward business management in general, and perspectives of the role of business in society predict cynicism toward CSR. Implications of the study are discussed in terms of strategic communication of CSR.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a point of discussion in both academia and practice. In response to growing attention, companies are increasingly making efforts to integrate socially responsible initiatives into all aspects of their business. The fundamental notion of CSR is that corporations have an obligation to invest their resources in the betterment of society (Frederick, 1994). However, because companies have competing motives for engaging in socially responsible practices, ranging from purely moral aspirations to strategic considerations that concern CSR's impact on bottom-line benefits, the public may not perceive a company's engagement in CSR as truly altruistic. Rather CSR practices are perceived as the moral hypocrisy framework, in that companies want to appear moral "while avoiding the cost of actually being moral" (Batson & Thompson, 2001, p. 54).

After the economic recession, the public was more likely to adopt a cynical attitude towards corporate actions, and thereby also re-established the importance of public trust to the success of a company. Cynicism, which is generally defined as a learned attitude toward an object that is subject to change as a result of external factors in the environment, occurs when a person recognizes that seeming unselfishness is disguising selfish intentions (Helm, 2004). A cynical public may question a company's motivations for socially responsible activities and is less likely to engage in supporting the company's chosen cause.

The public's cynicism may be enhanced when companies communicate their socially responsible activities to the public. The challenge for public relations professionals is that they need to communicate their discretionary practices with stakeholders as doing so encourages more people to get behind their respective causes, and most importantly, informs the public of the companies' actions. However, if cynics refuse to support these causes, the lack of support may result in failure or very limited success of both the company and the cause, which then reinforces cynical attitudes and beliefs (Reichers, et al., 1997). While cynicism may be the greatest barrier to the success of CSR practices, little is known about the antecedents of cynicism and its consequences.

The purpose of this study is to examine several constructs of personal traits posited to have a relationship with attitudes toward CSR. More specifically, this study examines how a public's sentiment toward marketing activities, its perceptions toward business management in general, and its ethical perspectives of the role of business in society (i.e., traditional orientation), is related to a general evaluation of an organization's socially responsible practices (i.e., cynicism toward CSR), and thus affects its intention to engage or support to CSR activities.

Public relations professionals face the challenges in that they need to communicate their discretionary practices with stakeholders as doing so encourages more people to get behind their respective causes, and most importantly, informs the public of the companies' actions. Given that the effectiveness of CSR influenced by how cynical the public is, an understanding of the antecedents of cynicism toward is a necessary step to enhance a company's investment in CSR. In addition, identifying personal traits of CSR cynicism will help public relations practitioners not only to better segment and understand the characteristics of their target publics but also to manage CSR programs in a strategic manner. This study may also contribute to public relations literature by strengthening theoretical connections between consumer psychology, organizational behavior, and CSR management.

Literature Review

Defining CSR

The concept of CSR has expanded as Bowen (1953) argued that, when making decisions, a company should be concerned not only with economic gain but also the social consequences of its actions. A company's responsibility was based mainly on its financial performance (Freidman, 1970). However, the notion of corporate social responsibility has extended beyond economic and legal obligations (Freeman, 1984), and businesses are expected to invest their resources in the betterment of society (Carroll, 1979; Frederick, 1994). Wood (1991) defines CSR as a tightly interwoven relationship between business and society rather than distinct entities. Furthermore, Carroll (1998) illustrates the importance of being a good corporate citizen expected to be "profitable, obey the law, engage in ethical behavior, and give back through philanthropy" (p. 1-2).

In reality, however, there is still debate about the main reason for CSR activities since Friedman's well known essay, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits," was published in 1976 (Salazar & Husted, 2008). According to Friedman, CSR can only occur with the goal of maximizing corporate profits and stockholders' wealth distributions. He argues that managers should attempt to be 'civil servants' in terms of caring about corporate financial outcomes rather than about their socially responsible performances (Davis, 1973; Salazar & Husted, 2008). There are still individuals who agree with Friedman's provocative views of CSR, which drive diverse and controversial interpretations of its core concepts.

Defining Cynicism

Grounded in philosophical and literary constructs, cynicism has frequently been discussed in terms of business, politics, journalism, and social work for the last fifty years (Helm, 2004). During last decades, cynicism toward politics or governments has grown with the advent of political events like the Vietnam War, Watergate, and the Regan Era (Cappella, 1997; Goldfarb, 1991; Kanter & Mirvis, 1989). For example, *Time* magazine reported that while 60% of the American population said they believed that the government generally tried to do the right thing in 1964, only 10% said so in 1994 (Cappella, 1997).

Cynicism refers to "a general attitude, whether one takes other people as trustworthy and sincere, or has a pessimistic or hopeless attitude toward particular objects such as institutions, groups, management" (Andersson & Bateman, 1997, p. 450). Similarly, Dean, Brandes and Dharwadker (1998) define cynicism as "both general and specific attitude, characterized by frustration, hopelessness, and disillusionment, as well as contempt toward and distrust of a person, group, ideology, social convention, or institution" (p. 1398).

Some scholars (i.e., Abraham, 2000) treat cynicism as a stable personality trait of negative perception of human behavior and mistrust of others. However, this study adopts the concept from organizational and consumer studies designed to understand cynicism toward business behaviors, and defines cynicism as a learned attitude toward an objective that is subject to change as result of external factors in the environment. In the context of corporate social responsibility, this study defines cynicism as an attitude of distrust, disillusionment, and negative feelings toward an organization's claim of socially responsible behavior.

Cynicism and Corporate Social Responsibility

People do not intentionally become cynical; cynicism is developed through experience (Reichers et al., 1997). Repeated experiences of disillusionment and shared views with other people reinforce cynical attitudes. Kanter and Mirvis (1989) explain the development of cynicism as follows: "unrealistic expectation leads to disappointment, which leads to disillusion, a sense of being let down or of letting oneself down, and more darkly, the sense of being deceived, betrayed or used by others" (p. 3). Along with a sense of manipulation, cynicism occurs when people notice "the pretense of unselfishness to mask selfish goals" (Helm, 2004, p. 325), which best explains why the public can develop a cynical view toward CSR practices.

While CSR is described as a company's commitment to minimizing its harmful effects and maximizing its long-term beneficial impacts on society, it cannot be truly altruistic as long as the company is a for-profit organization. One of the dominant reasons for a company's engagement in corporate social responsibility is to be positioned as a good corporate citizen in the public's mind, which will enable it to build a positive relationship with the public, and enhance one of its most valuable assets—its reputation. There are few companies that prioritize high ethical standards and the creation of social value solely in order to maximize profit, but people have also observed companies using CSR initiatives for marketing purposes.

Predictors of Cynicism toward CSR

Negative sentiment toward marketing activities. News coverage regarding corporate scandals, harsh lay-offs, accounting frauds, and enormous compensation for executives has also affected the public's sentiment of cynicism toward corporate behavior (Basu & Palazzo, 2008; Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). Helm (2006) defined consumer cynicism as a "stable, learned attitude toward the marketplace characterized by the perception that pervasive opportunism among firms exists and that this opportunism creates a harmful consumer marketplace" (Helm, 2006, p. 4).

Another reason for the rapid growth of cynicism is the flood of information the public receives, particularly through commercials (Bond & Kirshenbaum, 1998; Goldman, 1996). America is the second biggest advertising market next to England, and today's consumers have been exposed to twice as many advertising messages as previous generations. Consequently, people are "twice as a cynical about advertising and twice as good at tuning out those nasty messages" (Bond & Kirshenbaum, 1998). Yoon and her colleagues (2006) empirically confirmed that consumers view the sincerity of CSR activities negatively when they learn that the advertisement expenses have exceeded the socially responsible contributions.

Consumer behavior literatures support this sentiment in terms of consumers' skeptical attitude toward advertising claims and marketing related messages (e.g., Durand & Lambert, 1985; Helm, 2006; Koslow, 2000; Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998; Sirdeshmukh, Singh, & Sabol, 2002). The increase in its promotion of them led to the questioning of company's motivations and generated negative perceptions of its practices. Therefore,

> H1: Individual's sentiment toward marketing activities will be related to cynicism toward CSR.
> RQ1: What product quality, price, advertising attributes of marketing sentiment affect its overall relative advantage?

Attitude toward business in general. Attitudes are subject to change when people experience inconsistency on some behaviors or events between the attitude components (Ajzen

& Fishbein, 1977). People do not intentionally become cynical; cynicism is developed through experience (Reichers et al., 1997). Pervasive business scandals and media attention they garnered influence negative feelings toward business environment. Repeated experiences of disillusionment and shared views with other people reinforce cynical attitudes.

There may be few companies that prioritize high ethical standards and the creation of social value solely in order to maximize profit, but people have also observed companies using CSR initiatives for marketing purposes. Because of its generalizability (Andersson & Bateman, 1997), the public does not take socially responsible investments at face value. Instead, the public simply assumes that companies are eventually rewarded for their social investment (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006) or deliberately tries to figure out their underlying motivations, whether they are self-interested or socially-oriented (Bae & Cameron, 2006, Becker-Olsen et al. 2006, Yoon et al., 2006).

For instance, accounting scandals such as those of WorldCom and Enron, and the mismanagement of American automobile manufacturing have created a general atmosphere of mistrust toward business. Most recently, there was a public outcry over Goldman Sachs' average employee compensation packages of $700,000 despite the company's role in the economic crisis (Barr, 2009). Lloyd C. Blankfein, Goldman's Chairman and Chief Executive, had to defend the company's success, and announced its plan of investing $500 million in socially responsible programs that would support small and medium-sized businesses. This not only increased the public's negative attitude toward the business, but also enhanced cynicism toward CSR in general. Past research has found that cynics tend to generalize their beliefs to other objects; that is, when one is cynical about the leader of a certain company, this cynicism is easily applied to the leaders of other companies (Anderson & Bateman, 1997). Therefore,

H2: Individual's general perception toward business will be positively related to cynicism toward CSR.

Ethical orientation about business role in society. As corporations became viewed as not only economic institutions but also social institutions (Bick, 1998), the concept of CSR exceeded economic and legal obligations (Freeman, 1984). Although there has been a call for companies to run their businesses with a sense of social responsibility and concern for public interests, in reality, there is still debate about the main reason for CSR activities since Friedman's well-known essay, "The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits," was published in 1976 (Salazar & Husted, 2008). According to Friedman, companies should be judged mainly by their financial performances and social responsibility meant using free market concepts, therefore, CSR can only occur with the goal of maximizing corporate profits and shareholders' wealth distributions. (Friedman, 1970). He argues that managers should attempt to be 'civil servants' in terms of caring about corporate financial outcomes rather than about their socially responsible performances (Davis, 1973; Salazar & Husted, 2008). There are still individuals who agree with Friedman's provocative views of CSR, which drive diverse and controversial interpretations of its core concepts.

Individual differences on profit companies' responsibility in the society can be explained through ethical position. While a person who is ethically idealistic has been found to "optimistically assume desirable outcomes can be obtained by engaging in moral actions" (Henle et al., 2005, p. 220), relativists are skeptical of following universal moral rules in the decision-making process and prefer to make reasonable judgments based on each unique situation

(Forsyth, 1992). In their study with a sample of business students, Kolodinsky and his colleagues suggest that ethical relativists have unfavorable attitudes toward CSR and consider the primary responsibility of business to be maximizing profits and the value of shareholders, thus echoing Friedman's (1970) notable argument.

In a similar vein, individual with traditional orientation is characterized with little faith in people, and seem suspicious about company's claim on socially responsible practices (Aldag & Jackson, 1984). Traditionalists tend to consider CSR motivated by pure self-interest and opportunism, and even ethically questionable activities could be justified for maximizing shareholders' value. In other words, traditional orientation reflects opinions consistent with Friedman's view, and regards "social responsibility in terms of the efficient production of goods and services and consider profit maximization as primary corporate goal" (Mason & udrack, 1997, p. 141). Therefore, a person who has a realistic view and traditional orientation regards the role of business as profit maximization, and therefore has a more cynical attitude towards CSR investments.

> H3: Individual's ethical orientation (i.e., traditional view) will be positively associated with cynicism toward CSR.

Cynicism toward CSR and public engagement in citizenship behavior. According to Reichers et al.'s (1997) study on cynicism regarding organizational change, people who are cynical about change show a lower level of work-related commitment, satisfaction, and motivation. Compared to non-cynics, cynics are less likely to be willing to support and participate in future change efforts (Reichers et al., 1997). This has important implications for the management of CSR activities in that the support and engagement of stakeholders and the public are crucial to the success of CSR programs (Burke & Logsdon, 1996). Therefore,

> H4: Cynicism toward CSR is positively associated with a person's intention to engage in CSR practices.

Lastly, taking the multidimensionality of cynicism into consideration, among the previously stated predictors, this study attempts to identify salient antecedents that might predict cynicism toward CSR. Accordingly, the following research question is proposed:

> RQ2: Which of cynicism predictors, negative sentiment toward marketing, attitudes toward business in general, and ethical orientation of business role in society, are more salient in predicting cynicism toward CSR?

Method

Sample and Data Collection

A self-administered online survey was used to collect data from the respondents. A convenience sample of undergraduate students at a large public university in the southeastern U. S. was recruited to participate in the study. A pretest (N = 21) was carried out before the main survey to ensure the validity and reliability of constructs and refined question wordings. An email link to the final survey was then sent to all potential respondents in March 2011. A total of 216 subjects participated in the online survey in return for extra credit.

Measures

This study adopted measurements scales developed and verified previous research. Attitudes toward marketing activities, attitudes toward business in general, ethical orientation

toward business role in the society, cynicism toward CSR were assessed to examine the identify antecedents of CSR cynicism.

Attitudes toward marketing activities. Consumer sentiment toward marketing was measured by Gaski and Etzel (1986) scale, which consist of 20 items with four dimensions: product quality, price of products, advertising for products, and retailing and selling. Based on previous literature about marketing and cynicism, current study used product quality, price of products and advertising dimensions with 15 items (Cronbach's Alpha = .80). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of the statements on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Table 1 presents detailed scale.

Attitudes toward general attitudes toward business. General attitudes toward business were measured by Helm (2006) scale, which consist of eight items (Cronbach's Alpha = .89). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of the statements on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Business orientation. In accordance with Mason and Mudrack's (1997) operationalization, "traditional orientation suggests that respondents regard social responsibility in terms of the efficient production of goods and services and consider profit maximization as the primary corporate goal," whereas "respondents who concur with the negative orientation also see social activities as undesirable and as a gimmick" (pp. 141-142). Since these two subscales reflect Friedman's view, this study used these 18 items of traditional and negative orientation questionnaires to assess individual attitudes concerning the appropriate role of business in society (Cronbach's Alpha = .85).

Cynicism toward CSR. Cynicism toward CSR was measured by Stanley, Meyer, and Topolnytsky's (2005) 8-item scale. Initially, they developed and used multi-item measures of change-specific cynicism for organizational change cynicism study. Due to the absence of standardized measurements of cynicism toward CSR, the researchers adopted this scale and modify the wordings. A sample item is "I believe that management's motives for CSR are different from those stated publicly" (see table 1). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of the statements on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Pretest was conducted to validate the constructs. The scale had acceptable reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = .80).

Supportive intention to CSR. Supportive intentions were measured based on the Malhotra & Mukherjee's (2003) scale (Cronbach's Alpha = .86): I would be happy to support CSR programs with a donation or volunteering if I had the opportunity to do so; I am happy to encourage other people to support CSR programs; To help companies that seems socially responsible, I will recommend them to others; I would be willing to pay a higher price for products/services from a company that seems socially responsible over those of other brands; I make a special effort to tell others to use companies that seems socially responsible. These items were measured on seven-point items (1 being "very unlikely" and 7 being "very likely").

Results

Sample Profile

A total of 216 subjects (N=216) participated in the online survey. Of the participants, 64.8% were female and 35.2% were male. All of the subjects in the present study are 18 years

old or older while the majority of participants were between 18 to 25 years old (99%). Furthermore, most of the respondents were White/Caucasian (68%) and Hispanic (16%).

Hypotheses Testing

The first hypothesis posited that negative sentiments toward marketing activities are negatively related to the cynicism toward CSR. A simple regression result showed that the negative sentiment significantly predicted cynicism toward CSR (β = -.29, $p <. 001$), explaining 8.2% of variance [$F(1, 214) = 19.01$, $p < .001$]. Therefore, H1 was supported. To further answer a RQ1, stepwise regressions were performed on three dimensions of consumer's pre-existing sentiment toward marketing activities (product quality, price of products and advertising for products) to explore what specific constructs affect the degree to which public generate cynicism toward CSR. The result shows that negative attitudes toward advertising (β = -.23, $p <. 01$) and product quality (β = -.14, $p < .05$) significantly predict cynicism toward CSR, explaining 10% of the variance [$F(2, 213) = 11.84$, $p <.001$].

Hypothesis 2 posited that individual's attitude toward business management in general is related to cynicism toward CSR. To inspect the relationship, bivariate regression was conducted. A results show that general attitudes toward business management significantly predicted cynicism toward CSR ($\beta = .47$, $p <. 001$), explaining 22% of variance [$F(1, 214) = 60.99$, $p < .001$]. Thus, H2 was supported.

Hypothesis 3 posited that individual's business orientation (i.e., traditional orientation) is positively associated with cynicism toward CSR. A results from simple regression show that traditional orientation ($\beta = .56$, $p <. 001$) significantly predict cynicism toward CSR, explaining 31% of the variance. A statistically significant model emerged [$F(1, 214) = 95.49$, $p < .001$]. Therefore, H3 was supported.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that CSR cynicism is negatively associated with supportive intention to CSR practices. Based on the simple regression, CSR cynicism explains 1% of individual's supportive intention to CSR practices, and the model is not statistically significant [$F(1, 214) = 2.00$, $p > .05$]. Therefore H4 was not supported.

Finally, RQ 2 asked what specific predictors, negative sentiment toward marketing, attitudes toward business in general, ethical orientation of business role in society are more salient in predicting cynicism toward CSR. Stepwise regressions were performed, which provides the most parsimonious model, on three predictors to further explore what specific constructs affect the degree to which public generate cynicism toward CSR. The result shows that all three variables, in order of predicting power, traditional orientation ($\beta = .46$, $p <. 001$), business attitudes ($\beta = .25$, $p <. 001$), and sentiment toward marketing ($\beta = -.19$, $p < .05$) significantly predict cynicism toward CSR, explaining 42% of the variance, and traditional orientation explains A significant model was emerged [$F(3, 212) = 52.18$, $p <.001$]. Table 3 presents regression analysis summary for three variables with mean scores and standard deviation.

Discussion

Cynicism should be a social concern, because cynical publics and employees may lose their faith not only in management, the present government, and companies, but also in humanity and politics in general (Mirvis & Kanter, 1992). Because of its prevalence, cynicism in various

institutional contexts, such as organizational, consumer and political cynicism, and its relationship to general cynicism have been most actively investigated (Anderson & Baeman, 1997; Helm, 2006). However, little research has paid attention to cynicism in the context of CSR. The current study examined predictors of personal traits (i.e., negative sentiment toward marketing activities, perceptions toward business management in general, and ethical perspectives of businesses' role in society) posited to have a relationship with attitudes toward CSR. In addition, to further understand the consequences of cynicism toward CSR, the relationship between CSR cynicism and the public's intention to engage in CSR practices has been examined.

Major findings and Implications

First, the findings show that cynicism toward CSR is negatively associated with individual's pre-existing sentiment toward marketing activities. Individuals with the greater degree of negative sentiment toward marketing activities are more likely to have higher degree of cynicism. Scholars have different perspectives on antecedents of cynicism. Some scholars (e.g., Abraham, 2000) treat cynicism as a stable personality trait of negative perception of human behavior and mistrust of others, while some scholars consider cynicism as a learned attitude, arguing that people do not intentionally become cynical but cynicism is developed through experience (Reichers et al., 1997).

Our results show that cynicism is developed through past experience as consumer, which supports the position maintaining that cynicism is a learned attitude that is subject to change as result of external factors in the environment. That is, people can develop through past consumer experiences, such as satisfaction with product quality and attitudes toward advertising. As Dean, Brandes and Dharwadker (1998) have noted, repeated experiences of disillusionment and dissatisfaction may be reinforcing cynical attitudes toward company behavior. Consistent with previous research, we found that negative sentiment toward advertising strongly predicts cynicism toward CSR.

The study also suggests that the public's attitude toward business management in general is related to cynicism toward CSR. That is, when people have less trust in business activities, it may generate cynicism toward CSR. The relationship between the public's pre-existing attitudes toward business in general and cynicism toward CSR can be explained by attribution theory. Because people prefer consistency to inconsistency (Festinger, 1957) and form attitudes toward "populations" based on a "single case observation" (Hamill, Wilson, & Nisbett, 1980, cited in Anderson & Bateman, 1997), once people develop negative feelings toward business management in general, they may apply that cynicism to the company's other practices. Even though people believe CSR is ultimately beneficial to society, they may devalue it when ulterior motives are detected because suspicion engenders more sophisticated message processing and can negatively influence people's attitudes (Jones & Harries, 1967).

While it is hard to control the public's tendency to link negative experiences and negative perceptions toward business in general, it becomes crucial to communicate CSR in a strategic manner by increasing public trust in company intentions and decrease cynicism. A cynical public may attribute a company's motivations for CSR as arising from self-interest rather than true altruism. As previous research findings that perceived motivation influences CSR effectiveness (e.g., Bae & Cameron, 2006; Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Sen & Bhatacharya, 2001; Szykman et

al., 2004; Yoon et al., 2006), transparency and honesty may be critical for successful CSR communications.

In addition, this study found that public opinion regarding the role of business in society can be a predictor of CSR cynicism. That is, an individual who supports Friedman's view of 'business of business is business, not social activism' has a higher level of cynicism toward CSR. When it comes to judge corporate performance in society, traditionalists seem to prioritize economic responsibility over social benefits. Although such a traditionalist perspective is common, given that the concept of CSR has changed from focusing on economic performance to socially beneficial activities, such traditionalist perspectives may be subject to change.

More specifically, in the past, companies were judged mainly by their financial performances and social responsibility for businesses meant solely economic responsibility (Friedman, 1970), but as corporations became viewed as social institutions, the concept of CSR exceeded its economic and legal obligations and today, companies are expected to run their businesses with a sense of social responsibility and concern for public interests (Bick, 1998; Freeman, 1984). Given such traditional perspectives are changed based on either a person's experience with CSR practices or the transformation of the role of business in society, the value-driven approach of CSR practices is necessary to decrease negative attitudes toward CSR practices.

Lastly, according to Reichers et al.'s (1997) study on cynicism regarding organizational change, people who are cynical about change show a lower level of work-related commitment, satisfaction, and motivation. Compared to non-cynics, cynics are less likely to be willing to support and participate in future change efforts (Reichers et al., 1997). This has important implications for the management of CSR activities in that the support and engagement of stakeholders and the public are crucial to the success of CSR programs (Burke & Logsdon, 1996). However, the current study did not find the relationships between cynicism toward CSR and public perception of company motivations in engaging in CSR practices. In other to further understand the relationships among variables, such as predictors of cynicism investigated this study, more work is necessary to test cynicism toward CSR as a mediating variable on intentions of CSR behavioral engagement.

In summary, the current study suggested that negative sentiments toward marketing activities and business management in general, and perspectives of the role of business in society are predicting variables of cynicism toward CSR. Interestingly, these predictors support a perspective that sees cynicism as a learned attitude rather than stable personality.

Cynicism can be the greatest barrier to successful CSR, because in many cases, public support for a company's discretionary practices of promoting environmental issues, active healthy living, diversity, and workplace issues, for example, is vital to the success of the campaign in terms of its consistency and impact on society as a whole. If cynics refuse to support these causes, the lack of support may result in failure or very limited success (Reichers, et al., 1997). However, if cynicism is a learned attitude based on experience, better business practices and marketing activities may decrease public cynicism toward CSR practices. With strategic communication and sincerity, a company may increase the public's trust in its intentions and decrease cynicism toward CSR activities.

Cynicism can be attenuated thorough the observation of successful changes. Therefore, communication about past successes in CSR activities may increase the public's belief in the

worthiness of a company's investment. Cynicism can be minimized if there is evidence to counter it (Helm, 2004). Therefore, active communication activities regarding the campaign process along with its tangible outcomes is crucial for reducing cynicism toward CSR activities.

Limitations and Future Studies

While this study contributes to the literature and the industry, future research on these topics is also needed to overcome the limitations of the present study. First, the current study only examined some personality predictors that may be related to cynicism toward CSR. Future studies should examine situational factors (e.g., industry category, organizational reputation, salience of promotion, goodness of fit, partnership with nonprofit organizations) that enhance cynical attitudes toward CSR. Particularly, variables such as salience of promotion, goodness of fit, and partnership with nonprofit organizations are somewhat controllable by strategic management of CSR practices. Considering the negative effects of perceived disingenuousness of CSR practices, investigating how these variables may enhance public trust in CSR practices is a necessary step in better understanding public cynicism toward CSR. In addition, the relationship between perceived motivation and cynicism toward CSR should be empirically examined.

While the current study defines cynicism as a learned attitude resulting from external factors in the environment, it might be valuable to test the relationship between general cynicism which is regarded as a stable personality (i.e. cynicism toward human nature, dispositional cynicism), and cynicism toward CSR.

This study did not find the relationship between cynicism toward CSR and intention to support CSR practices, but it was limited to see the relationship between two variables. Future study should use path analysis statistical method to better understand the relationships among cynicism predictors, cynicism toward CSR, and supportive intention. In addition, if cynicism does not explain the negative consequences such as lack of support for CSR practices, other cynicism-like concepts (i.e., distrust, dissatisfaction, and skepticism) need to be further examined to explain its consequences

This study is limited to its samples. Although undergraduates are in the vanguard of many types of potential target audiences in organizational communication, future research should use a wider sample of people to validate and extend the results of this study. Cynicism about CSR can be different depending on participants' demographics. If cynicism is related to past consumer experiences, expanding our study to the general public might yield better results in terms of validity and reliability.

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Table 1. Regression for attributes of negative sentiment of marketing activities that affect cynicism toward CSR

	b	SE b	Beta	Mean	SD
Advertising	-.17	.05	-.23***	3.98	1.0
Product quality	-.15	.07	-.14*	4.36	.74
F (2, 213)	11.84				
R^2	.10				
Adjusted R^2	.09				

*$p < .05$, ***, $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

Table 2. Regression analysis summary for variables predicting cynicism toward CSR

	b	SE b	Beta	Mean	SD
Traditional orientation	.53	.65	.46***	3.96	.75
Business attitudes	.19	.44	.25***	4.37	.99
Marketing sentiment	-.24	.07	-.19**	4.30	.64
F (3, 212)	52.18				
R^2	.43				
Adjusted R^2	.42				

**$p < .01$, ***, $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

PR in the ER: Internal Public Relations in a Hospital Emergency Department

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Abstract
Focusing on a university-affiliated emergency department, this case study investigates the following research questions: (1) What are the current communication channels used in the ED? (2) What are the preferred methods of internal communication? (3) What are the barriers to internal communication practice? (4) Do differences exist in perceptions of internal communication practices among the various types of healthcare providers in the ED? The case study includes interviews with members of the emergency department's dominant coalition and focus groups with emergency room staff, as well as field observations in the ED itself. Findings inform best practices in internal public relations and answer the call for more research on public relations and health communication. Moreover, the current study suggests avenues for extending the relationship management perspective by considering organizational culture as a possible outcome of internal relationships.

Employees are a key stakeholder group for any organization, yet internal public relations (e.g., managing relationships between the dominant coalition and staff) is currently an underdeveloped area in public relations research (McCown, 2007). Public relations efforts in effectively managing communication within an organization are vital to achieve the organization's mission and objectives and to adapt to changing internal and external environments (Kennan & Hazelton, 2006; Ledingham, 2006). Grunig (1992) suggested that excellent public relations practice improves employee morale, increases job satisfaction, and "allows organizations to build long-term relationships of trust and credibility with strategic employee publics" (p. 532).

In an effort to grow scholars' and practitioners' understanding of how internal public relations can foster organizational success, this paper used a case study of internal public relations within one of the nation's busiest hospital emergency departments (ED). Hospital EDs provide a particularly interesting venue for such a study for two reasons: (a) internal communication takes place in an environment where the communicators are under intense pressure, and (b) these organizational structures frequently do not include a formal public relations practitioner, despite having a clear need for internal public relations to guide effective communication planning and implementation.

Despite Wise's (2001) call for increased attention to the potential that public relations holds for health communication, there has been limited analysis of the use of public relations within the health care setting. The majority of health-related public relations research has focused on external communication, namely media coverage of health crises and media relations by hospitals. The existing research on public relations in a hospital setting has provided useful insights, however, such as the potential of intranets within hospitals to facilitate two-way communication between employees (Spurlock & O'Neil, 2009) and the use of two-way symmetrical communication and strategic planning by hospital public relations specialists (Gordon & Kelly, 1999).

Focusing on a university-affiliated emergency department, the case study includes interviews with members of the emergency department's dominant coalition and focus groups with ED staff, as well as on site field observations. Findings inform best practices in internal public relations and answer the call for more research on public relations and health communication. Moreover, this case study extends public relations theory by proposing organizational culture as an outcome of relationship management practices.

Relationship Management

The case study analysis is grounded in the literature on relationship management that has been developed within the field of public relations. The relational perspective has its roots in Ferguson's (1984) proposition that the unit of analysis for public relations research should be the relationship between organizations and their publics. An organization-public relationship (OPR) forms between parties when they:

> …have perceptions and expectations of each other, when one or both parties need resources from the other, when one or both parties perceive mutual threats from an uncertain environment, and when there is either a legal or voluntary necessity to associate (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997, p.95).

While OPRs are usually discussed within the public relations literature in terms of organizations' relationships with their external publics, the perspective is relevant for the consideration of internal publics' relationships with an organization, as well. Certainly, employees and other internal publics have perceptions and expectations of management and require resources from management, and the dominant coalition (i.e., management) similarly has perceptions, expectations, and needs related to internal publics. Indeed, OPRs could comprise any relationships between employee publics working within different organizational units.

Public relations practitioners play an important role in managing these relationships, whether internal or external, through strategic communication efforts. Ledingham (2003) articulated a theory of relationship management that stated "effectively managing organization-public relationships around common interests and shared goals, over time, results in mutual understanding and benefit for interacting organizations and publics" (p. 190). Thus, public relations most effectively contributes to organizational success when OPRs are actively managed and the needs and goals of both the organization and its publics – both external and internal – are considered while planning and implementing public relations efforts.

Grunig and Huang (2000) and Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) outlined similar models of organization-public relationships; in general, the models propose antecedents to relationship formation, strategies for establishing and maintaining relationships, the resulting relationship state, and outcomes of those relationships. Antecedents include situational or structural factors such as time in the relationship, motives, needs, etc. Outcomes of relationships include behaviors (or behavioral intention), attitudes toward the organization, and goal attainment (Grunig & Hon, 2000; Ki & Hon, 2007).

Relationship states can be assessed along various dimensions. Hon and Grunig (1999) identified four dimensions that have received support in the literature: (a) trust, (b) control mutuality, (c) commitment, and (d) satisfaction. *Trust* includes perceptions of integrity (parties *will* follow through on their promises), dependability (parties can be *counted on* to do what they say they will do), and competence (parties are *capable* of doing what they say they will do). *Control mutuality* is the degree to which parties in the relationship agree as to who has the power to exercise influence within the relationship. *Commitment* is the degree to which parties are willing to expend effort to maintain the relationship. *Satisfaction* is the degree to which parties perceive the benefits of staying in the relationship outweigh the cost of maintaining the relationship with the other party (see Hon & Grunig, 1999, for a more extensive discussion of the relationship dimensions and the development of quantitative measurement scales for assessing OPR dimensions).

Relationship cultivation strategies (sometimes referred to as maintenance strategies) include both symmetrical and asymmetrical strategies used by the organization to manage the OPR. Symmetrical strategies (i.e. strategies that seek to balance organizational and public interests) include providing access to organizational decision-making processes, fostering positivity (making the relationship enjoyable for all parties involved) and openness (e.g., practicing transparency and being accountable), providing assurances of legitimacy (i.e., ensuring that parties are aware that their opinions are valued), networking between groups, and sharing tasks that are important to goal achievement for both parties. Asymmetrical strategies (i.e., strategies where one party tries to gain advantage at the expense of the other) have their roots in conflict resolution strategies. These strategies include *distributive strategies*, such as

exerting dominance, expressing anger, finding fault with others, making demands, making threats, etc.; *contending strategies*, where one side tries to persuade the other side to takes its preferred position regardless of whether the position is mutually beneficial; *avoidance strategies,* where one side decides to 'leave' the conflict; *accommodating strategies* in which one side gives up on its position and accepts the other party's position; and *compromising strategies,* in which each side moves away from their original position but neither is satisfied with the outcome (see Grunig & Huang, 2000, and Hon & Grunig, 1999, for a more extensive discussion of the various cultivation strategies).

Research Questions

To address the gap in the literature regarding public relations practices within health care organizations and the internal public relations function, we conducted a case study of a healthcare organization, specifically, a university affiliated emergency department. Four primary research questions guided our investigation:

RQ1: What are the current communication channels used in the emergency department?

RQ2: What are the preferred methods of internal communication?

RQ3: What are the barriers to internal communication practice?

RQ4: Do differences exist in the perceptions of internal communication practices among the various types of healthcare providers in the emergency department?

Case Study Context

The emergency department that provided the setting for our study is located in a hospital system in the northeast United States. The study hospital is the major teaching hospital for a northeastern university's school of medicine. This emergency department (ED) sees 110,000 patients a year and serves a tri-state area. ED visitors account for 55% of the admissions to the main hospital. The ED includes a trauma center, a chest pain unit, a critical care unit, emergency psychiatric and substance abuse services, and social work services. More than 650 employees work in the ED, including approximately 60 attending physicians, 50 resident physicians, 20 mid-levels (physician assistants and nurse practitioners), and 300 nurses. The balance comprises case managers, social workers, maintenance staff, administrative support, and technicians (e.g., radiologists). The nursing staff is unionized.

The ED has a history of struggling with communication issues among its staff and between staff and patients. This problem is driven by several factors, most notably high clinical volume and a stressful work environment, both of which create the potential for medical errors (e.g., prescribing the wrong medication, miscommunication of procedures and orders, etc.). These factors also have a noticeable effect on the atmosphere in the ED. The hospital not only has an internal communication problem, but also an external communication and reputation problem, highlighted by the hospital's Press-Ganey scores. The Press-Ganey is a monthly survey of patients at participating hospitals; the hospital has poor scores relative to other hospitals in the region. These scores are not due to the quality of clinical care, but due to other factors tied to patient satisfaction, such as long wait times (4 ½ hours average) and poor quality communication and interactions with staff. Exacerbating the hospital's reputation problem are two recent 'wrong-sided' procedures that occurred at the hospital and received media attention.

There are no official public relations practitioners within the ED, although the hospital does have a marketing department, a human resources department, a risk management group, an internal research group, and a vice president who is responsible for patient satisfaction and the patient 'experience.' No staff member is officially responsible for internal public relations in the ED; however, two attending physicians who are also faculty members at the university are responsible for communication training. These faculty members are planning to implement a new training program in spring 2011. This training will take place in the hospital's simulation center with integrated teams of physicians and nurses. The program will focus on team communication (e.g., confirming orders, effective 'handoffs' of patients from one team to another, etc.) and is integrated with communication training focused on customer satisfaction (e.g., making sure patients are informed of their plan of care, making sure patients are comfortable, etc.). The goal of the training is to improve communication among staff as well as between staff and patients, all of which is presumed to reduce errors, improve morale among staff, and improve patient satisfaction scores on the Press-Ganey surveys.

Methodology

The current study utilized a case study approach. A case study approach is particularly efficacious for understanding internal relationships, attitudes, and behaviors in an organization (Berg, 1998). The present case study utilized three qualitative methodologies: (a) in-depth interviews, (b) focus groups, and (c) field observations. After obtaining IRB approval from both our university and the organization, participants in the interviews and focus groups were recruited in cooperation with the ED physicians responsible for communication training, who helped the researchers gain access to the organization and liaison with the various internal publics. Participants were recruited using a purposive sampling strategy to ensure that all key internal stakeholders were represented, including administrators, physicians, and nurses.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with members of the ED's dominant coalition over the course of a week in early November 2010, several weeks ahead of the research team visiting the site. Interviews were conducted by phone, audio recorded, and transcribed in full. Interview participants included: (a) the ED medical director responsible for oversight of medical care of patients in the ED and also responsible for implementing policy and procedures in the ED; (b) two interim co-directors of emergency services responsible for management of the nursing staff; (c) a clinical educator responsible for orientation of new nursing staff and continuing education of current nursing staff; and (d) the attending physicians responsible for the planning, implementation, and sustainment of the new communication training program.

Focus groups were conducted on site in late November by the research team. Five focus groups were conducted, each lasting approximately 1 ½ hours. The first focus group included 12 attending physicians; it was held in a faculty office building conference room. The second focus group included 8 mid-levels and residents and was also held in the conference room. The third focus group included 14 day shift nurses; it was held off-site in a restaurant meeting room. The fourth focus group included 12 night shift nurses; it was also held off-site at the same restaurant. The fifth and final focus group included 7 assistant clinical managers (ACMs) who were responsible for supervision of nursing staff in the ED; it was held in a small training room in the main hospital used for continuing education courses. All focus groups were audio recorded and

transcribed. We were not allowed to video record any of the focus groups. One team member was responsible for moderating the groups while the other team members took notes.

Focus group and in-depth interview guides were semi-structured and included questions that addressed the primary research questions for this study, including current and preferred means of communication within the ED, barriers to effective communication, and perceptions of internal communication practices among the various internal publics. Probe questions were used to gather information about specific communication channels (e.g., email) and perceptions (e.g., direct and meta-perspectives of communication practices and internal public relationship states).

During the site visit, the research team also conducted field observations, primarily by shadowing ED staff during a weeknight shift. The field observations included watching a roll call conducted by ACMs, during which they informed nurses coming on the night shift at 11 p.m. of important announcements and policies. The roll call lasted approximately 15 minutes. Following the roll call, the research team observed the shift changes on the floor as outgoing nurses informed incoming nurses of the status of their patients in each of the 'pods' in the ED. The shift change between the departing and arriving attending physicians and residents was also observed. Research team members also took note of the layout of the ED, made notes and video recordings of the signage and other communication opportunities in the ED, and toured the ED waiting room, clinical care rooms, break rooms, and main hospital.

After the site visit all focus group and interviews were transcribed in full. Over 14 hours of audio were transcribed, resulting in more than 125 pages of transcripts. The focus group and interview transcripts were analyzed using the constant comparative technique (Glaser & Strauss, 1967); content was assigned to a set of initial coding categories suggested by the research questions and the research team's site visit, then the categories were refined and several themes were identified. Finally, relationships among the themes emerged and were informed by relevant public relations theory.

Results

Current Communication Channels

RQ1 asked which communication channels were currently being used in the emergency department. To organize the various channels, we used Hallahan's (2002) typology of integrated public relations media, which includes (a) public communication, (b) interactive media, (c) controlled media, (d) event/group communication, and (e) one-on-one communication. All forms of media were used in the ED, with the exception of public communication. The primary communication channels used in the ED include email, staff meetings, and face-to-face interpersonal communication, as well as a computerized patient management system called MEDHOST. Other channels include signage, electronic newsletters, whiteboards, snail mail, text messaging, and telephone.

Email was used frequently by administrators and physicians to receive information about general administrative updates, practice alerts, and news pertaining to the healthcare system, the individual hospitals, and the ED. The ACMs noted that they frequently ensured that nursing staff were aware of the content of important emails and often printed the emails to post in the ED where nurses would see them. There were numerous criticisms of email being used as a communication channel, including receiving too many emails and receiving emails that were not relevant to the ED or the recipient. One administrator noted:

> Just one of the problems we have, depending on where you work, you might be
> on multiple email lists, but the senders often don't identify which institution
> they're representing. So like 'the east elevator is out of service until further
> notice.' They don't even say what hospital.

Participants in all groups noted that they felt "bombarded" by emails, leading them to frequently filter or delete emails from specific sources.

The MEDHOST system was also used extensively to facilitate communication within the ED. The purpose of the system is to track orders related to patients, such as orders for medication or meals. Physicians enter these orders, the system notifies a nurse, and the nurse executes the order. Administrators tended to view the system in a positive light as filling a necessary role in the ED; the medical director, for example, stressed the importance of the system: "We need the information system and I almost look at it like a third partner that we really never accounted for… [it's the] nexus where everybody comes to." Nursing staff, however, tended to feel that the system disrupted interpersonal communication between nurses and doctors. One nurse explained this negative impact:

> It's hit or miss. It's difficult because [MEDHOST] has pulled nursing away from
> the physicians. It's a change of atmosphere. We used to be a very tight, cohesive
> group with the residents and in the ED. It's only going to work if we're all
> working together. The nurses catch a lot of things and you need to have that
> communication with the doctors.

Controlled media included newsletters, whiteboards, and physical mailboxes. Newsletters were typically quarterly and monthly e-newsletters from the university and the president of the hospital. Whiteboards had been installed in the patient rooms to track which physicians and nurses were assigned to the patient; however, several participants noted that the boards were being used inconsistently and were frequently not up to date. Although staff members have physical mailboxes, they do not check them regularly, and mail received via the mailboxes often contained news that was several weeks old.

Group communication was another popular method of communicating within the ED. Forms of group communication included staff meetings, daily rounds, roll call at shift change, and numerous ad hoc meetings among staff. Attending physicians and residents working in the ED typically attended weekly and monthly staff meetings along with their counterparts from the other hospitals in the system. Important information from staff meetings was assumed to make its way down through the ACMs to the nursing staff, with the ACMs serving as information filters. Noted one ACM:

> The VPs meet, they talk to the directors, they tell us, and we disseminate
> information out into the department. We tell the staff what they need to know or
> whatever that happens to be. If we gave them every bit of information that we
> hear it would be a wash of nonsense they really couldn't use.

Nurses typically gathered for roll call at the start of each shift; here ACMs made important announcements regarding policies and procedures. Information is typically repeated throughout the week to ensure that people on different shifts receive critical information. In additional to staff meetings and roll call, a number of ad hoc meetings to discuss various initiatives and implementation of policies take place on a regular basis.

One-on-one communication was also used extensively in the ED, whether mediated via text messaging and phone calls, or face-to-face during shift changes or individual meetings among staff or between staff and patients. The medical director seemed to indicate that he practiced a lot of management by walking around ("I sort of walk through the unit and communicate with them that way") and had frequent individual meetings with superiors, attendees, and patients. He and other administrators also felt that there were brief interactions between the nurses and doctors when necessary to facilitate care, but that they were limited and not to degree that they needed to be or could be. In addition to these formal means of communication, some administrators noted that there was an extensive and "strongly rooted" grapevine in the ED.

Preferred Communication Channels

RQ2 asked which methods of internal communication were preferred by the various internal publics within the ED. Preferred channels included emails, signage, hardcopy newsletters, roll call, team rounds, and face-to-face communication.

Administrators and physicians seemed to prefer email, but wanted more targeted emails that were relevant to their practice. Some administrators seemed to think staff would be receptive to more signage or short, visual communication:

> My opinion is that the things I think would be a lot more powerful would be for example a screensaver that comes up and says did you introduce yourself or did you compliment your colleague today. You know these flashes of information. Signage, you know like billboard type signage where you can read it in like twenty seconds you get an imprint and then you move on. Very short, fast bits of information are what we're looking for. It's a very verbal and visual environment.

However, our field observation noted that the ED is literally blanketed with signage; so much so that it was overwhelming, and any additional messages could potentially be lost in the clutter.

The nursing staff seemed to prefer to receive messages via word of mouth from other nurses or ACMs. They also expressed a desire to revive a hardcopy newsletter similar to one that used to circulate monthly within the ED. Said one nurse:

> We have had a newsletter with positive stuff about staff members; it had new updates that were going around, and I looked forward to a newsletter attached to our paycheck every week. It was too much work for whoever had to do it, for 1,000 people.

Nurses also expressed an interest in conducting team rounds with the physicians, but this had been noted as logistically difficult to implement. In addition to rounds, ACMs seemed to prefer roll call for highlighting important information; however, it should be noted from our field observation of roll call that it seemed to be incredibly inefficient. Nurses arrived at different times during the roll call (due, in part, to shift start times set by the nursing union), those in attendance seemed not to be paying attention, and seemingly important announcements were made once and not repeated. In addition, the break room where roll call was conducted presented a number of distractions, such as the hum of vending machines, a TV, talking among the staff, and staff eating during the announcements.

Barriers to Communication

    RQ3 asked what barriers to internal communication existed within the ED. A lack of time, the physical layout of the ED, organizational policies and procedures, and uncivil behavior among the staff were all significant barriers to effective communication within the ED.

    Time was frequently mentioned as a considerable constraint on effective communication in the ED, due to the frenetic pace, the volume of patients, and an overriding pressure to increase the flow of patients through the ED. Physicians, administrators, and nurses all noted that the hectic pace was such that it didn't leave much time to communicate among themselves or with patients beyond exchanges that were absolutely necessary. Noted one administrator:

> The speed which we are requiring… I guess the efficiency we are looking to put into every interaction. If it's not, it's not a required, it is not a necessary interaction to move something forward to address something we need to address with a patient, it's not utilized… We have a, uh, the communication in place is done because it is felt to be efficient and felt to be absolutely necessary.

The number of patients seen in the ED also limits the amount of time available for communication and has a profound effect on attitudes regarding the need for communication, as illustrated by the comments of attending physicians:

> The door volume is so high. I think that's part of what breeds the feeling to hunker down and just get through it. Don't try to entice me and don't try to reward me or anything because I'm just trying to get through this next shift… I think at [the hospital] frankly, it's a little more of a bunker mentality of being under siege more. The [other hospital] gets busy, the smaller community hospital, but it also decompresses faster. Even when it is bad you still feel like the collaboration and the nursing, the whole staff morale is still better [at the other hospital]. At [this hospital] you often feel like you are under bombardment.

The pace and patient volume is amplified by hospital directives to increase flow through the ED, pressure felt keenly by ACMs and nursing staff. Comments regarding this pressure to increase flow included: "There is a huge, huge amount of pressure on flow, to move your patients," "We're just going faster and faster and faster. Things are eliminated. One of the things that have been eliminated is interaction," and "What keeps [communication between physicians and nurses] from happening more? Patient flow."

    In addition to time, the physical layout of the ED, the hospital, and the university were noted as barriers to communication. The physical size of the hospital and the layout of the pods in the ED created problems for both nurses and physicians trying to locate members of their team in the ED. Offices for the attending physicians – all of whom are also university faculty members – were spread across multiple office buildings outside the ED. The physical barriers within the ED have created a silo effect where staff do not interact with each other and in fact have established territories within the ED. For example, a physician noted how the nurses have laid claim to a break room:

> Residents for whatever reason almost never go to the nursing break room. I've never seen a resident in there. Maybe because they have their own space in that little conference room… Certainly I will frequently run into some attendings in the big nursing break room, but that is definitely the space where all nurses go for

their meal break. My guess is that there are a great number of attending
physicians who never go in that break room.

A number of organizational policies and procedures were also identified as barriers to effective internal communication within the ED, including scheduling issues, unfamiliarity among the staff, a lack of centralized internal communication efforts, conflicting organizational messages, a lack of formal communications training, and the MEDHOST system. Scheduling issues arose because of the difficulty in scheduling the massive number of attending physicians, residents, and nurses to staff a 24-hour ED with day and night shifts; this resulted in a lack of staff working on consistent teams. These inconsistent employee pairings, coupled with high turnover among the nurses and an ongoing rotation of residents, resulted in staff being unfamiliar with each other. This unfamiliarity seemed to be felt most significantly among the nurses. One nurse, in reference to a physician that they worked with regularly in critical care – one of the few places where the teams were stable – stated: "I understand him. I know him. I've seen him when he hasn't slept in 36 hours. I've seen him on good days, bad days. I know him. The new ones [i.e., the new residents]? I don't know them."

The lack of centralized and consistent channels of internal communication was also noted by all groups as a barrier to effective communication in the ED. All groups complained of being overwhelmed with messages – particularly emails – that were misdirected or viewed as irrelevant to them. While physicians received emails from physicians and administrators, and nurses received communication from nursing administrators, no one central communication channel was identified as conveying information of relevance for all publics to the entire ED staff. The hospital website was also described as being disorganized, with critical information such as policy changes difficult to find. As a result, all staff, particularly nurses, complained of receiving conflicting messages that create a great deal of confusion. An administrator noted that there was a lot of "re-interpretation" of messages due to those messages being relayed via word-of-mouth from multiple sources because the staff interfaces with every other department in the hospital. The nurses also complained of inconsistent messaging from administrators in the ED:

There are some communication issues… Just to give you a little clue, even among the ACMs, they can't keep them straight among themselves. So even in the dissemination of information, it can vary from person to person. So the staff is just left with a huge conundrum of what we are or aren't supposed to do a lot of the time.

A lack of formal communication training and public relations expertise also presented a barrier to effective internal communication. An administrator explained how internal communication is not typically incorporated into medical training:

You know, you practice in a certain way, but we are taught to speak to a single patient. As far as you do mass communication versus group versus individual is different you know, different expertise. Those aren't communication patterns that we incorporated in our thinking. A lot of physicians, speaking of physicians, to speak to a patient, we know how to do that very well. But these other aspects that are brought into emergency care are not things that we are facile of… We're working off a model where any one physician will handle the one patient and that's the end. Once you move beyond that one individual physician we start experiencing issues. Safety issues, all kinds of clinical scenarios; not only here to

talk to the patient, but are you there to talk to the next physician to make sure that the patient transfer of care is safe?

Oddly, the medical director, despite being aware of the other communication barriers that existed within the environment of the ED, expressed surprise that this type of one-on-one communication had not taken place spontaneously among the various internal publics:

Interestingly enough, that is something that has been brought up over and over again, of not enough interfacing or interaction. However, what I find curious, is that the staff never sort of organically, never been an organic uprising of this. I've never even seen nodes of physicians and nurses interfacing very regularly for a period of time in certain areas.

Part of the blame for the lack of interaction was placed on the MEDHOST system. Nurses and ACMs were especially quick to claim that attendings and residents in particular misuse the system, some nurses and ACMs even going so far as to accuse the physicians of using MEDHOST as means for avoiding interaction with the nursing staff:

Speaking from what I've seen, I think with MEDHOST we have nursing documentation and the doctors will put an order in, and they won't say anything to the nurses. They'll even put things in like 'get a blanket for the patient; give him a bedpan.' They'll put in orders like 'take the patient's blood pressure.' It's like, 'I'm sitting right here! You could have told me that!' Or they will make changes to the order and not let the nurses know they cancelled something or made a change. Things infuriate the nursing staff and it really does put up barriers with nurses in terms of communication. MEDHOST has taken the place of a lot of face-to-face communication. A lot of times, I'll just laugh and say, 'Hey, this is your nurse over here, Judy. Would you like to meet her?' The physicians are almost like 'Whoa, I have to talk to her?'

A final, and somewhat disturbing, barrier to effective communication is the perceived prevalence of uncivil behavior among the staff – nurses in particular – that includes simple bullying, as well as more serious threats. In one extreme example, a nurse even placed a "curse" on another nurse. Nurses and ACMs noted that the hospital had a history of "lateral violence" and bullying, but that it was difficult to deal with the main offenders due to the influence of the nurses' union. Because the bullies could not be removed, they have exerted an influence on new staff, some of whom model the negative behavior exhibited by disgruntled, senior nurses. In one particularly disheartening example, a nurse who received a "gold star" award in recognition of her outstanding work with patients was harassed so much afterward that the nurse took down her star from where it was displayed in the nurses' break room.

One of ACMs also claimed that the problem was not confined to the nurses, but that a high-ranking administrator was one of the main bullies and that the hospital upper administration was not above coercing the staff through threats:

It was the top down, very much top down. You will do this, you will do that. If you don't like it, you can find another job, was pretty much what we got. If you said anything about it, or questioned it, you were stomped on… Any negative communication you have was construed as a personal problem, or not the hospital's problem. Also there is the mentality that if you brought attention to

yourself in the meeting, if you complained about anything, all of the sudden people were talking to you [i.e., remediation]. Everyone made a point of saying, "Keep your mouth shut; don't bring any attention to yourself."

Gaps in Perceptions

RQ4 asked if differences existed in perceptions of internal communication practices among the various internal publics within the ED. Discussions with and observations of ED employees indicate that dissimilar perceptions of communication practices and organizational culture have influenced relationships between these internal publics.

Nurses tended to perceive that there is a morale problem within the ED and that this results from poor internal communication and a lack of follow-through on the part of the hospital with previous policy initiatives. ACMs perceive communication between staff and patients as "horrible; I've never seen anything like it." Nurses perceive that the residents and attendings do not want to interact with them nor seem to care about nurses as people (e.g., physicians don't know nurses' names or give demeaning orders), or that the physicians truly value nurses as part of the team. They also seemed to think that nurses, especially inexperienced nurses, are uncomfortable around the physicians. Nurses also felt that MEDHOST is being misused. Despite these frustrations, the nurses were excited at the possibility of fostering change in the ED through improving communication with physicians and among themselves. This optimism was tempered with skepticism, as many nurses viewed the coming communication initiative as just another mandate from the hospital administration that will be "the flavor the month." Nurses were also dubious because they claimed that they were the only group held accountable whenever new policies were implemented. They claimed that past efforts failed because there was no accountability for any of the other internal publics, especially physicians.

Physicians, on the other hand, perceived communication with nurses as worthwhile but difficult to implement, due to the existing structural barriers in the ED. As a result, they felt that the quality of communication between physicians and nurses was poor. They felt like they "don't know what's going on with the nurses" and that the nurses in general were very demoralized and unsatisfied with their jobs. The physicians also anticipated that the nursing staff would blame the physicians for not wanting to engage in communication and seemed to be aware that nurses felt excluded in many ways. Administrators also perceived that there was a lack of communication between nurses and physicians. They felt that the collegiality was good, but that there could be more effective communication between groups.

One of the areas where there was a great deal of disagreement between nurses, physicians, and administrators was in regard to the purpose of MEDHOST. The administration seemed to feel that MEDHOST was the indispensible "nexus" of their communication system:

We use [MEDHOST] to communicate even with each other because it's *meant* to do that [emphasis added]. It was built so that I write an order, the nurse, something blinks on another screen, the nurse identifies it and executes the order with the appropriate protocol. Checking with me is redundant; checking with me is unnecessary.

However, the nurses and ACMs did not agree with this sentiment in the least:

[The physicians] wouldn't speak to the nurses. They'd put in an order to give an antibiotic and then they'd be ten feet from them. They'd call me over and say,

'The nurse didn't give that antibiotic. I put it in there twice myself.' I think, *why the hell don't they talk to them*? It's [MEDHOST] an excuse. It's a tool you use. It's an excuse for not being a team. They don't want to get to know the staff. I know that's very blunt, but I almost feel that way.

Perceptions also diverged in regards to how new policies and initiatives would be received by employees. Some physicians felt that nurses resisted new initiatives because it would mean more work for them; however, the nurses' resistance seemed mostly derived from a perception that these new initiatives would either be abandoned by the hospital or the hospital administration would not hold everyone (i.e., physicians and nurses) accountable for compliance with new policies and procedures. The administration also seemed somewhat out of touch with how new policies and initiatives would be received; while they recognized that there would be some early skepticism among both the physicians and the nurses, there was a belief expressed that this would quickly be replaced by "a realization that things are going to change" and that staff would be "pleasantly surprised; ultimately pleasantly surprised; [when they realized] that we [the administration] are very serious about this and not just the flavor of the month."

Cultivation Strategies

Several other themes related to relationship management were also identified in the analysis; these included the use of (or failure to use) a variety of cultivation strategies, indicators of relationship quality, and outcomes of the relationships among physicians, nurses, and hospital administration.

Cultivation strategies relevant to this case included providing access, fostering positivity, providing assurances of legitimacy, networking, sharing of tasks, and distributive and contending strategies. There was little evidence that internal publics – and nurses in particular – had been granted access to the decision-making process; many of the policies and initiatives (e.g., a recent initiative to increase patient flow) were implemented in a very top-down fashion. However, there were some mechanisms in place for facilitating access, such as a nurses' practice council, and the coordinators for the planned communication training program specifically mentioned that they wanted to create an environment where feedback from the nurses "was welcomed and appreciated."

There was some evidence of efforts to utilize positivity as a strategy to cultivate relationships. Physicians mentioned efforts by the administration to make staff aware of organizational achievements; for example:

[The administration] sent out a terrific email a couple of weeks ago. We had some sort of kind of record-breaking number of patients and record-breaking low numbers of patients that left without being seen…. Yeah, it was terrific. It was like a positive instead of 'don't do this.' We need more positive… oh, look at this example of great communication that saved a patient's life… we need more carrots and less stick.

In addition, the nursing administrators had implemented efforts to recognize nurses for outstanding performance; however, these efforts were being undermined in part by a small cohort of bullies on the nursing staff who routinely harassed nurses receiving recognition.

There seemed to be a missed opportunity in terms of physicians providing assurances of legitimacy to nurses; this may explain the perception of nurses that they were not perceived as part of the team when it came to patient clinical care. Although the physicians realized that the

nurses did not feel empowered, the nurses claimed that they hadn't been provided with assurances that they are part of the team, and this in turn might have contributed to the nurses' pervasive feelings of cynicism and dissatisfaction. Physicians who did engage the nurses and make them feel like they are valuable partners in clinical care seemed to be appreciated by the nursing staff, as evidenced by one nurse's comments:

> [The doctor] is wonderful for giving you information, and asking what do you think? Then too if I give something to him he will go, instead of just saying 'no,' or 'I don't think so,' he says 'I don't think so because this,' or 'I think the people might have this and if we do that it might cause this.' Oh, well thanks for telling me that.

Networking strategies were being employed primarily via the use of opinion leaders who acted as *internal* boundary spanners. For example, all groups routinely noted the clinical educator – a former nurse – as being respected by administrators, physicians, and nurses alike; he and a few other employees were identified as key bridge builders that could facilitate internal coalition building. Also, in a very broad sense, sharing of tasks was prevalent, in that all parties seemed to be very committed to the ED's primary mission of working together to care for patients.

However, beyond the limited implementation (or planned implementation) of the aforementioned symmetrical strategies, there seemed to be an overreliance on asymmetrical strategies in the ED, primarily distributive and contending strategies. Many administrators seemed to favor a contending strategy in response to anticipated push-back from internal publics regarding the new communication training, as exemplified by the following comment from the medical director: "We'll have those hard conversations with ourselves and then the understanding that this is going to be part of everyday practice." The staff as a whole seemed to feel that the hospital administration used distributive strategies to implement policy changes. Several ACMs mentioned that many nurses had to be "threatened" to get them to comply with various policies and regulations.

Relationship Dimensions

Many comments provided indicators of the perceived quality of relationships among the various internal publics within the ED. These comments spoke to the four dimensions of relationships identified by Hon and Grunig (1999): trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction.

In regard to trust, some parties were quite explicit in articulating the lack of trust between nurses and physicians or between nurses and administrators. Said one nurse: "We don't trust them [ACMs]; it's like us and them." Physicians also expressed distrust of some of the nurses: "There are a few nurses who I would totally trust the discharge of my patients to… and those I know really well who I totally distrust to do anything, really." Administrators seemed to perceive that the various groups still respected each other, wherein that respect was based on the competence component of trust (i.e., they are skilled in clinical care). However, the lack of trust seemed to be rooted in an absence of the dependability and integrity components of trust. There were several comments from nurses and ACMs regarding the lack of follow-through by administrators and that this lack of follow through was either by choice or due to an inability to overcome internal obstacles. For example, the administration's inability to deal with lateral violence and bullying resulted in low perceptions of trust. One ACM summarized this sentiment:

So you have these other people [nurses] that are hopeful that they'll see something done. Then you send this person [bully] forward like you're going to [fire] this person, and then human resources says, "Well, okay, we're going to fudge a little on this issue if you'll [the union] play with us on this issue." Next thing you know, your credibility has been shot in the butt and all the people that you think you lifted them up a little bit, and they think, "Oh, forget it. I won't get involved anymore."

In regard to control mutuality, many internal publics, particularly nurses, felt that the hospital had a history of not providing staff with an opportunity for input or feedback. Many participants expressed frustration with the numerous top-down directives from administration and with being excluded from the decision-making process. Even staff meetings were perceived as events where dialogue was squashed:

More than presenting us with information about how we're doing, it's more dictated. When we try to respond to some of the negative comments, we're not allowed to. So you're cut down, you're not allowed to communicate. If somebody is getting something negative, you want to be able to respond and find out why it is that way. There are a lot of people, and a lot of personalities that tend to dominate the conversation. Sometimes things can get out of control and they lose track of the whole thing.

Many nurses and ACMs perceived the lack of control mutuality as one of the primary sources of cynicism within the organization:

There is resistance. Some of this is coming out of people wanting to be more in control in the sense of defining what will be. This is a place where people give their heart and souls. They work really hard here. So you want to say well what kind of control do I have? Especially with a chaotic environment. In the ED we have ordered chaos. There are times when you think there is just no order whatsoever. So all the changes that come down the pike, very often there is more resistance for that reason. You just feel like you're losing more and more control.

In regard to commitment, there were some comments made by nurses and administrators that spoke to the staff's and the organization's willingness to invest in maintaining the relationship, particularly in response to the proposed training to improve communication – and relationships - within the ED. A comment from a nurse illustrates how excited the staff was about the potential for improving communication:

I want to make a commitment to try to do this 100% I really want to make a change in the ER, help communication with doctors, management. I want a better working environment. I don't care what everybody else does, I'm going to make a commitment to myself right now. I think if each of us decides in our own hearts what we do after hearing the talk we have to come up with our own decisions. It begins with a person.

Administrators also seemed ready to invest energy in the relationship via involvement in and support for the communication training program; moreover, several administrators acknowledged at the same time that this had not happened in the past and that it was critical for future initiatives. The medical director, for example, stated:

We've never really actually invested in past efforts - time and energy - in that kind of leadership. Sort of champions and good service role models and guide ongoing reinforcement to staff… I can tell you, I can say truly from the physician end, we have every intention of lending those resources. If those resources are not lent as readily by the other leaders in the organization, that could be a roadblock.

Discussion of satisfaction centered primarily on job satisfaction, which appeared quite low among the nursing staff. However, a few comments did speak to the satisfaction that some nurses perceived regarding their complex relationships with the physicians and with the organization as a whole, despite the frustrations with higher administration and the structural barriers within the ED. One nurse spoke to this while relating a story about working with a new physician:

The first time I met him, the first day in the ER, I was on B side, and he said, '[nurse], I'm Dr. [physician]. Come, we're going to do rounds.' This is all about communication. He put his arm around me, and he said, 'Come, we're going to do rounds.' I love where I work. I come to work, and I try to put a smile on my face every day. We hug each other; it's a great place. I want this to work [the communication training program]; I want this for all of us, because I love the people I work with. Ninety nine percent of the people I work with I think are wonderful, I do. We've had kids together, and you know all of that... We've watched the kids grow up, get married, college.

Outcomes of Internal Relationships

Several relationship outcomes were observed, including behaviors and attitudes. Furthermore, there was much discussion about organizational culture that resulted from the patterns of communication and interaction within the ED. The primary behavior that was observed resulting from the current relationship was resistance to complying with organizational directives; a lack of input and control was frequently cited as the source of resistance by the nursing staff. Cynicism and skepticism represent the negative attitudes stemming from poorly managed internal relationships; specifically, a perceived lack of relational trust (i.e., the hospital administration isn't dependable, doesn't follow through on promises, or fails to back up talk with action) and a perceived lack of commitment from the organization (i.e., administration has not allocated resources to maintaining a long-term commitment to staff or patients). There was some perception, however, that this may be changing; a few nurses were able to provide recent examples of how increased access to decision-making had led to increased perceptions of control and more positive attitudes. A comment from one of the nurses exemplified this sentiment:

There were three surveys that were distributed to the staff. They were anonymous and they were online. The responses were overwhelming, and I think hundreds of people responded within a 24 to 72 hour period, so much so that the surveyors notified hospital administration that there was a huge problem in the department and because of that, changes happened immediately. People were called in and let go and it was incredible. But that was like the only time I felt good about communication here and that it actually made a difference.

A comment from another nurse also provides an example of how increased access can foster perceptions of more control and, ultimately, more positive attitudes:

But I have to say that I feel like I've been on a couple of committees now, I feel
that a big change is occurring. I think that for the first time, we were listened to.
Everyone was a team. In the last couple of meetings that I've gone to there with
the new management, I felt like they were really listening to everything.

A final outcome that was identified was that of forming organizational culture. Members
of all internal publics were painfully aware of the culture that had been established within the ED
and how it contrasted with the culture at other hospitals within the system. A nurse articulated
how communication patterns, relationships, and commonly accepted behavior and attitudes
contributed to the formation of culture:

The bottom line is whatever we agree to, those become our tenants. We teach
everybody that and we tell them that is part of the culture and if you don't do this
something is going to happen. We're going to say something to you; we're going
to be accountable for approaching you because we want you to be successful. We
don't have that, well we did in the old days.

The culture within the ED was viewed as fairly negative, described as a "very blaming culture"
and one lacking in trust among the various groups. New hires noted how firmly rooted the
negative culture was, with one new hire noting that they became disillusioned quickly within
their first few months on the job. There was also frequent comparison of the ED's culture with
the culture at other hospitals within the system. A physician compared the prevailing culture at
two of the facilities in the network:

But that's the difference. It's totally different culture. Certainly the nurses [in the
ED] are not going to accept that from the nurses at [the community hospital]. But
if the patient asks you for food at the [the community hospital] and the nurse
overhears, she'll say "I'll get that." If at [the ED] the patient asks for food and the
nurse hears that, she expects you to go get it because the patient asked you. Not
that we're above that, I'm certainly not saying that. I'm just trying to point out it's
a vastly different culture.

In fact, much of the enthusiasm surrounding the planned communication training initiative was
directly related to the hope among the staff that the program would help foster a change in
organizational culture. An ACM spoke to the high hopes for the program:

Part of the issue is that of part of the culture here. Because sustainability… is
about a culture change. That's what it is. We're talking about the way people
think and act and interact. Making change in them and studying the value of that.
There has to be value but they just don't think it's going to happen here.

Discussion

Implications for Public Relations Theory

The findings from the case study support the existing literature on relationship
management. Many of the barriers outlined above acted as structural antecedents that negatively
influenced internal communication norms and relationship formation in the ED. A majority of
the maintenance strategies that were in place and have been used historically in the ED are
asymmetrical in nature; there is room to implement more symmetrical cultivation strategies.
Given this, it is hardly surprising that many of the internal publics perceived poor relationships
among staff and between staff and the organization's dominant coalition. These poorly perceived

relationships resulted in negative behaviors (non-compliance with policies) and negative attitudes (rampant skepticism and cynicism). When more symmetrical strategies were employed or when there was the perception that they would be employed (e.g., the communication initiative), this resulted in more relational trust and satisfaction and ultimately more positive attitudes.

The current study also suggests avenues for extending the relationship management perspective by considering organizational culture as a possible outcome of internal relationships. The collective pattern of behaviors, attitudes, and goals that result from the various interconnected internal relationships within an organization could in fact represent "organizational culture." Participants in focus groups frequently bemoaned the state of the ED's culture and questioned how one goes about changing organizational culture. The answer may lie in changing the nature of the pattern of relationships among publics within an organization. The findings suggest the one way to change these relationships is by identifying antecedent conditions that can be changed (i.e., antecedents that the organization and internal public relations practitioners are not constrained from changing for one reason or another). Such efforts would rely on not only communication strategies, but also action strategies, such as recommendations to change policies and procedures (e.g., adapting scheduling policies to facilitate greater familiarity and team building). This would also involve management embracing cultivation strategies that facilitate access, openness, positivity, and perceived control among the internal publics and between the internal publics and the organization. Advocating for these types of symmetrical strategies would be the responsibility of internal public relations practitioners.

Implications for Public Relations Practice

The case study findings provide several suggestions for practitioners working in health care organizations or responsible for internal public relations. Findings are particularly relevant for organizations that do not have dedicated public relations practitioners responsible for internal public relations. In fact, one of the main lessons from the case study is to stress the importance of internal public relations for managing internal communication between the organization's dominant coalition and internal publics, managing communication among internal publics, and working to cultivate healthy internal relationships. The lack of a centralized, coordinated internal communications effort can result in the spread of misinformation, mixed messages, and rampant confusion within an organization. When more than one source of information exists, messages can potentially be interpreted, reinterpreted, and misinterpreted; furthermore, those various interpretations can run counter to one another. A dedicated internal public relations practitioner can act as the organization's official voice to address internal publics in a cohesive, coordinated fashion; this is a basic rule of external public relations practice that needs to be applied internally as well.

Additionally, this case study highlights the need for organizational management to swiftly deal with disgruntled internal publics, either by seeking to reach some sort of mutual understanding if their concerns are legitimate or by remediating or removing the problem if these individuals are causing harm to the organization by harassing other internal publics. These internal "troublemakers" need to be remediated not only to improve their individual performance or to improve organizational performance, but also because failure to adequately deal with these

individuals and their negative behavior can undermine the overall morale of internal publics and lower internal perceptions of organizational trust if the organization is perceived as being incapable of dealing with these employees. Also, internal publics such as employees (e.g., nurses in the current case study) act as ambassadors for an organization through their communication with external publics. This can cause additional problems for the organization in dealing with external publics if these internal publics do not comport themselves as good representatives of the organization or promote organizational values.

Limitations

The greatest limitation to the study is tied to the case study methodology. The study was conducted within one healthcare organization; replication in additional healthcare settings and possible extension of the study through quantitative research are needed to bolster the generalizability of these findings. Also, the purposive sampling approach may have failed to capture the perspectives of all internal publics. Furthermore, the presence of the research team itself during the site visit may have biased some of the comments expressed by the focus group participants as our involvement may have acted as a signal to some internal publics that the organization was committed to improving communication within the ED. Finally, some focus group participants, particularly the nurses, may have felt reticence about speaking their minds because this was a research project endorsed by hospital administration. Despite these limitations, we feel that this study provides a much-needed glimpse at issues related to internal public relations in a healthcare setting and that it is a first step in extending the relationship management perspective to consider organizational culture as an outcome of internal relationships.

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Building an Agenda; Building a Relationship: Defining Organization-Public Relationships Through the Second-Level Agenda-Building Function of Public Relations

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Abstract
This study seeks to integrate the relational perspective from public relations research and agenda-setting and agenda-building theories from media effects scholarship. The present study utilizes a combination of content analysis and survey to understand the linkages between the public relations, media, and public agendas in regard to (a) framing of the health care reform issue and (b) framing of the organization-public relationship between the two major political parties, the health care lobby, and the public.

Introduction

Numerous studies examine models of organization-public relationships (OPRs) (e.g., Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000; Grunig & Huang, 2000), the role of cultivation strategies in managing these relationships (e.g., Ki & Hon, 2009), and the antecedents and consequences of OPRs (e.g., Ki & Hon, 2007; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998), but none have examined the potential role of media relations and public relations efforts in OPR development from an agenda-setting perspective. This study seeks to integrate the relational perspective from public relations research and agenda-setting and agenda-building theories from media effects scholarship. Specifically, we seek to understand how the agenda-building function of public relations can contribute to framing OPRs in the media.

Agenda-setting theory asserts that media emphasis on certain issues over others will raise the salience of those issues for the public (Kiousis & McCombs, 2004; Lopez-Escobar, Llamas, & McCombs, 1998). Agenda-setting has been extended to the agenda-building process in which the media, organizations, and the public collaborate to shape the media agenda (Lang & Lang, 1983). The salience of attributes of those issues can be influenced by political actors through framing at the second-level of agenda setting. Public relations can be considered in some ways the strategic management of frames via the use of information subsidies, such as news releases (Hallahan, 1999); these information subsidies can have agenda-building and agenda-setting effects at the first- and second-levels (e.g., Kiousis, Mitrook, Wu, & Seltzer, 2006). We proposed that public relations practitioners not only frame issues (e.g., health care reform), but also the attributes of the relationships between organizations and publics, including the dimensions of trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

This exploratory study utilized a content analysis to understand the linkages between the public relations and media agendas in regard to (a) framing of the health care reform issue and (b) framing of the OPR between the two major political parties, the Obama Administration, and the public. The content analysis examines media coverage in *The New York Times* as well as news releases and blog posts provided by the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, and the Obama Administration during the eight-week period prior to our survey. Content was coded for substantive and affective attributes of the organizations, the issue, and the various OPRs. Findings have theoretical implications for both the relational perspective and agenda setting theory and practical implications for public relations professionals by understanding the role of information subsidies in framing OPRs.

Literature Review

Agenda Building and Framing

The campaigns waged for and against Obama's health care reform plan in 2009 by the two major political parties, the burgeoning Tea Party movement, and powerful interest groups and the subsequent monumental passage of the controversial legislation in March 2010 provide a good opportunity to investigate the crucial role of public relations in this unique policy context.

Agenda building and framing seem appropriate theoretical perspectives on delineating the relationships among political parties, interest groups, the media, and public opinion concerning the health care reform plan. Traditional agenda setting theory first explored in the 1968 presidential election by McCombs and Shaw (1972) has enjoyed tremendous growth in the past

four decades, as evidenced by more than 400 academic publications (McCombs, 2004). Many agenda-setting research studies since the McCombs and Shaw's (1972) seminal study have focused on the transfer of issue salience to the public, that is, the emphasis in media coverage translates into perceived importance of issues in the minds of the public.

However, more and more studies have explored the sources, processes, and actions that help shape the media agenda, the broader agenda building processes (Berkowitz & Adams, 1990; Lang & Lang, 1981) following Gandy's (1982) call for scholars "to go beyond agenda setting constructs to determine who sets the media agenda, how and for what purpose it is set, and with what impact on the distribution of power and values in society" (p. 266). In essence, agenda building goes backward and asks where media agendas come from. Scholars defined agenda building as "a collective process in which media, government, and the public influence one another in determining what issues are considered to be important" (Perloff, 1998, p. 230), "the overall process of creating mass media agendas" (Berkowitz & Adams, 1990, p. 723), or as a process of "sources' interactions with gatekeepers, a give-and-take process in which sources seek to get their information published and the press seeks to get that information from independent sources" (Ohl, Pincus, Rimmer, & Harrison, 1995, p. 90) from a public relations point of view. One important source influence on the media agenda is the public relations efforts in the form of information subsidy (Gandy, 1982), which includes all materials created by public relations practitioners to reduce the cost of news production such as news releases, VNRs, news conferences, media interviews, backgrounders, fact sheets, etc. Information subsidy materials are strategically and purposefully produced to gain free publicity and influence media agenda.

More recently, public relations researchers maintain that public relations materials in the form of information subsidies can influence not only the salience of issues but also the attributes and tone of issues and candidate images (e.g., Kiousis et al., 2006). Scholars have differentiated two types of agenda setting: first level and second level. First level agenda setting focuses on the relative salience or perceived importance of issues or objects while the second level agenda setting explores the relative salience of attributes of issues (McCombs, 2005; Ghanem, 1997). McCombs (1997) suggested that in the language of the second level agenda setting, "framing is the selection of a restricted number of thematically related attributes for inclusion on the media agenda when a particular object is discussed" (p. 6). He argues that second-level agenda setting is equivalent to framing. There have been some debates on the similarities and differences between framing and second level agenda setting. For example, Scheufele (2000) argues that framing and agenda setting have distinct theoretical premises with agenda setting being based on accessibility and framing being based on applicability. Weaver, McCombs, & Shaw (2004) and Weaver (2007), on the other hand, maintained that there are many similarities between framing and second level agenda setting, for instance, both are more concerned with how issues or objects are presented in media; both are concerned with the salient aspects or themes of the objects of interest, etc.

The present study uses the second-level agenda setting perspective. There are two types of attributes: substantive and affective (e.g., McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, & Llamas, 2000; Kiousis et al., 2006). In the case of candidate images, McCombs et al. (2000) showed that a substantive image would include depictions of candidate qualifications, personality traits, or past record and that an affective attribute would emphasize the positive, negative, or neutral valence factor for the substantive depictions.

Public relations practitioners are essentially framing specialists who try to establish common frame of references between the organizations/clients and various specialized publics (Hallahan, 1999) via information subsidy materials. Lang and Lang's (1981) four step model of agenda building during the Watergate scandal is still applicable to this study: (a) media highlight some issues or events rather than others; (b) generating an overarching frame of an issue through the use of metaphors and language; (c) linking information subsidy materials to a familiar political symbols in order to legitimize the issue; and (d) calling on political values that required political elites to justify the importance of the issues and its larger implications.

The current study proposes that among the many objects that practitioners attempt to frame (e.g., issues, candidates, organizations, etc.), practitioners may also be inadvertently or intentionally framing the relationship that exists between an organization and the public. Specifically, we examine whether political parties, the Administration, and the news media build an agenda of attributes related to the relationship between these various political actors and the American public.

Organization-Public Relationships
Ferguson (1984) was the first to propose that public relations scholarship could be significantly advanced by focusing on the relationship between an organization and its publics (i.e., the organization-public relationship, or OPR) and making that relationship the primary unit of analysis in public relations research. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) defined an organization-public relationship as "the state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political and/or cultural well-being of the other entity" (p. 62). Ledingham (2006) proposed a theory of relationship management that posits "effectively managing organization-public relationships around common interests and shared goals, over time, results in mutual understanding and benefit for interacting organizations and publics" (p.476).

The relational perspective has evolved over time to include methods for measuring relationships and the development of OPR models. Hon and Grunig (1999) developed a Relationship Management Scale that has been used extensively in the OPR literature to measure perceptions of the relationship quality along four key dimensions. These dimensions include trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality. The *trust* dimension includes perceptions regarding whether the organization is fair and just (integrity), will follow through on promises (dependability), and capable of doing what it says it will do (competence). The *satisfaction* dimension measures perceptions that the relationship is positive and that the benefits of staying in the relationship outweigh the costs. The *commitment* dimension measures the degree to which the relationship is perceived as being worth maintaining, and includes both affective commitment (i.e., emotional investment) and continuance commitment (i.e., stay in the relationship because the cost of leaving is too high). *Control mutuality* refers to perceptions of the distribution and sharing of power within the relationship and the degree of agreement as to who has the right to exert influence in the relationship (Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Several early OPR models were proposed (e.g., Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000; Grunig & Huang, 2000) that identified the basic elements of OPR development; these models were later refined and tested (e.g., Ki & Hon, 2007; Ki & Hon, 2009; Yang, 2007). First, OPR formation is

based on antecedent conditions, such as the preexisting attitudes of the parties in the relationship toward one another or the needs and motives that lead the parties to come into contact with each other. Next, the relationship can be moderated through the use of cultivation strategies (or, maintenance strategies as they are sometime referred). These strategies include a variety of symmetric and asymmetric strategies that are implemented at the tactical level through both interpersonal and mediated communication channels. The resultant OPR state, measured along dimensions of trust, control, commitment, and satisfaction, constitutes the next stage of the model. Finally, OPR state results in various outcomes or consequences for both the organization and its publics, leading to formation of attitudes toward the organization and behaviors that can affect the organization, for example, engaging in supportive behaviors like volunteering or making donations.

A series of recent studies have extended the investigation of OPRs into the political sphere. Zhang and Seltzer (2010) integrated voters' perceptions of their relationship with their political parties into a model of social capital; increasingly favorable perceptions of the OPR led to increased political participation and greater confidence in government. Next, Seltzer and Zhang (2011) incorporated partisanship as an antecedent of OPR formation with political parties (political organization-public relationships, or POPRs) and examined the influence of a variety of political party cultivation strategies (including interpersonal, mediate, and two-way symmetrical strategies) on perceptions of the relationship between voters and their parties. Increased exposure to strategic communication originating from the parties that was perceived as two-way symmetrical in nature resulted in more favorable perceptions of the relationship with the parties. They also examined the outcomes of political OPRs; increased favorable perceptions of OPRs with a political party led voters to hold more positive attitudes toward their party and led to increased supportive behavior. Finally, Seltzer and Zhang (2010) revisited the role of party identification and political ideology in political OPRs and considered how political issues could influence POPR perceptions.

The current study builds on this line of inquiry into political OPRs by examining the role of strategic political communication activities and public relations information subsidies in building an agenda of POPR attributes. In Seltzer and Zhang (2010), while most respondents indicated a high level of attention to media coverage of the health care issue and moderate attention to general political news, they had fairly low levels of exposure to direct interpersonal communication between themselves and the two major parties. We propose that one way that voters develop perceptions of POPRs with parties is via mediated communication and exposure to news coverage of the parties.

Research Questions

Based on the logic of second-level agenda building and second-level agenda setting, we propose that political actors and media may build and set an agenda in which salience of substantive and affective attributes of OPRs may mold perceptions of OPRs for the public, along with the traditional framing of issues that is normally investigated in agenda-setting research. Therefore, we propose the following research questions to guide our exploration of this topic. RQ1: Were substantive and affective OPR attributes present in the public relations materials of political actors and media coverage of the health care reform debate?

RQ2: Did the salience of substantive and affective OPR attributes on the public relations agenda correlate with the salience of substantive and affective OPR attributes on the media agenda?

RQ3: How did political actors and the media frame the health care reform issue?

RQ4: Did the salience of substantive and affective issue attributes on the public relations agenda correlate with salience of substantive and affective issue attributes on the media agenda?

Methodology

To investigate agenda building and agenda setting of OPRs as it relates to the health care issue, content analysis was conducted to examine the public relations and media agendas. The content analysis included media coverage and public relations material from the major political parties and the Obama administration during an eight-week period prior to the public opinion survey, starting Dec. 2, 2009, through Jan. 26, 2010. The *New York Times* was used to represent the media agenda; a Lexis/Nexis search using the keywords "health care reform," health care debate," and "health care bill" returned 320 articles, of which150 were deemed relevant (i.e., actually discussed the health care reform issue). Editorials and letters to the editor were also excluded from the analysis.

The public relations agenda was derived from multiple sources that were available online for the same eight-week period. For the Republican Party, press releases and blog posts available on GOP.org were downloaded. Again, releases and blogs were examined to determine their relevance to the health care issue before including them in the analysis. Ultimately, 134 blog posts and press releases were included from the GOP. Blog posts were also downloaded from the DNC's website (democrats.org); three blog posts relevant to the health care issue during the eight-week period were included in the analysis. For the Obama administration, blog posts from the White House's Health Care Blog were also downloaded for analysis; 37 relevant posts were included in the analysis for the eight-week period. The Obama administration and DNC blog posts were combined to represent the Democratic Party agenda.

Two mass communications graduate students worked with the primary investigators to develop the coding materials. An initial pilot study was conducted to check reliability and train the coders. Once satisfactory training was completed, the coders coded the media and public relations material independently. A 10% randomly selected subsample ($n=33$) of the content was coded by both coders to assess intercoder reliability using Holsti's (1969) formula; reliability for almost all of the variables ranged from .76 to 1.0. Sufficient reliability was not achieved for some variables (Democratic trust and control); these were subsequently dropped from the analysis.

Content was coded for both substantive and affective attributes of the various relationships as well as for framing of the health care reform issue. In all cases, the unit of analysis was the entire article, release or blog post. First, coders examined each unit to determine if any of the OPR dimensions (trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality) were present for the following organization-public relationships: (a) the public's relationship with the Republican Party, (b) the public's relationship with the Democratic Party, and (c) the public's relationship with the Obama administration. Here, "public" was operationalized as any term that refers to the citizenry of the US, including "general public," "voters," "citizens," "the American people," "Americans," etc.

The coders searched for mentions of both substantive and affective attributes; substantive attributes were coded present (1) or absent (0). If a trait was present for a particular OPR, then affective attributes were coded as positive (1), neutral (2), or negative (3). For example, an article or release stating, "the public can't trust the Republicans to keep their promises" would be a reference to the trust dimension of the OPR between the public and the Republican Party, and would be coded 1 for the substantive trust attribute for the Republican OPR and 3 for the affective attribute. The framing of each individual actor (health insurance industry, Republican Party, Democratic Party, and Obama Administration) in each unit was coded as positive (1), neutral (2), or negative (3). If an actor was not mentioned in the article, it was coded as absent (0).

Next, coders examined the framing of the health care reform issue itself. Each unit was coded positive (1), neutral (2), or negative (3) for the overall attitude toward health care reform that was presented in the article or release. Each piece was also examined to determine if it made any claims regarding the public's purported stance on health care: pro-health reform (1), neutral (2), or that the public was against health care reform; the article was coded '0' if there was no claim made regarding the public's stance on the issue. The coders also coded whether the article or release framed the quality of the health care system in the U.S. as poor (1), average (2), or excellent (3); the article was coded '0' if the quality of the system was not mentioned.

Several other framing attributes were also coded. Responsibility for providing health insurance was coded as '1' if the article proposed that the government should provide health insurance for citizens, '2' if individuals and/or employers should provide insurance, '3' if some other entity was identified as bearing responsibility, and '0' if responsibility was not mentioned. The coders also coded how the article or release framed the need for reform of the health care system. The article was coded as '0' if the need for reform was not mentioned, '1' if the article proposed that the system did not require any changes (e.g., keep it the way it is; no changes necessary), '2' if the article claimed that the system requires major changes (e.g., add a public option to existing system; make structural changes), and '3' if the article claimed that the system needed to be completely rebuilt (e.g., government-run universal health care system; change the whole system). Finally, the coders also examined how the article endorsed a particular position on health care reform that was being advocated by one of the political actors. The article was coded as '0' if did not explicitly endorse any of the political actor's position on health care reform, '1' if is supported the position advocated by the health insurance industry, '2' if it supported the Republican Party position, '3' for the Democratic Party, '4' for the Obama administration, '5' if it advocated for a compromise position between one or more of the aforementioned actors, and '6' if it advocated a position supported by some other group.

Descriptive statistics were generated for all variables in the content analysis. Kendall's tau rank order correlations were used to compare the public relations and media in regard to the salience of not only the OPR dimensions, but also the salience of the attributes related to the health care reform issue itself and the various political actors involved in the debate.

Results

Table 1 presents the frequency distributions of the substantive and affective attributes of the political actors' OPR. Table 2 presents the frequency distributions of the substantive and

affective attributes of the health care reform issue. Table 3 presents the rank-order correlations among the party public relations information subsidies and media coverage.

Presence of OPR attributes

In regard to RQ1, results showed that substantive attributes of OPRs were present in both public relations materials and media coverage related to the health care issue. Republican information subsidies made reference to substantive attributes of all the various political actors with the exception of the insurance industry. Republican public relations efforts mentioned their own OPR traits (4%), the Democratic Party (6%) and the Obama Administration (24%). All of the administration and Democratic mentions were negative; all of the Republican mentions were positive. The Obama administration's OPR traits were mentioned in 78% of the Democrat information subsidies. The Democrat subsides also mentioned the insurance industry OPR traits (10%) as well as those of the Republicans (3%) and themselves (3%). All of the administration mentions were positive, while all of the insurance industry and Republican mentions were negative. Meanwhile, media coverage mentioned the OPR traits of the Administration (26%), the Democrats (19%), the insurance industry (12%), and the Republicans (9%). Overall, the majority of OPR mentions across all agendas were made in reference to the Obama Administration; the majority of those OPR mentions were specifically related to the dimensions of trust and control. The media portrayed the insurance industry OPR almost exclusively in negative terms (98% of insurance industry OPR mentions), as well as the Republicans (97% negative) and the Democrats (80% negative). The media were more balanced in regard to mentions of administration OPR (47% negative, 46% positive).

Transfer of salience for OPR attributes

In regard to RQ2, there were no significant correlations among the agendas in regard to OPR substantive attributes. However, there was a significant moderate correlations between Democrat PR efforts and media coverage for OPR affective attributes (τ=.58, p <.05). There was also a significant moderate correlation between all public relations information subsidies and the media for OPR affective attributes (τ=.66, p <.05).

Framing of the health care reform issue

In regard to RQ3, the top issue substantive attributes across all both the public relations agenda and the media agenda focused on focused on expressing a general attitude toward reform (98% of all content) and making claims regarding what the public's stance was when it came to reform (28% of all content). Republican public relations efforts tended to portray health care reform in a negative light (99% of all mentions of health care reform) and claim that the public stance was anti-reform (97% of all mentions of public stance). Predictably, the Democrat public relations efforts painted a different picture, portraying health care reform as positive (100% of all mentions of health care reform) and claiming that the public stance was pro-reform (100% of all public stance mentions). Media coverage affective framing of reform was more balanced with 50% of all mentions of health care reform portraying it in a positive light, 29% of all media mentions presenting a balanced view of the issue (i.e., both positive and negative perspectives), and 21% of the mentions framing the issue negatively. However, media coverage still presented the public stance on the issue as predominately pro-reform (78% of all mentions of public stance).

Transfer of salience of issue attributes

In regard to RQ4, there were significant moderate to strong correlations between Democrat public relations efforts and media coverage for issue substantive attributes ($\tau=.78$, $p <.05$) and for issue affective attributes ($\tau=.44$, $p <.05$). There were no significant correlations between Republican public relations efforts and media coverage for issue substantive or affective attributes. There was no significant correlation between all public relations efforts and the media for issue substantive attributes; however, there was a significant moderate correlation for issue affective attributes ($\tau=.77$, $p <.05$). We also collapsed all substantive (OPR and issue) attributes as well as all affective (OPR and issue) attributes across the agendas. There were significant strong correlations between Democrat public relations efforts and the media ($\tau=.79$, $p <.05$), between Republican public relations efforts and the media ($\tau=.69$, $p <.05$), and between all public relations efforts and the media ($\tau=.77$, $p <.05$) for all substantive attributes. There were also significant moderate correlations between Democratic public relations efforts and the media ($\tau=.48$, $p <.05$) and between all public relations efforts ($\tau=.53$, $p <.05$) for all affective attributes.

Discussion

One of the primary goals of this exploratory study was to determine whether political actors – be they the parties, the administration, or the media – attempt to frame themselves and each other in regard to organization-public relationships. Based on the results, it appears that both substantive and affective traits of OPRs for a variety of political actors are present in the media agenda and the public relations agenda. In the case of the debate over health care reform, both Republicans and Democrats chose to focus on the Obama Administration's OPR affective attributes. Media coverage focused on insurance industry OPR negative affective attributes and was balanced in its portrayal of the administration. As mentioned above, a majority of the affective attribute mentions were related to the OPR control and trust dimensions for all political actors. For the parties, negative trust and control attributes were mentioned in relation to the opposition party. For media coverage, negative trust and control attributes were mentioned in regard to the insurance industry and the Republicans; the media was more balanced in presenting negative and positive OPR attributes in its coverage of the administration and Democrats. When it came to discussion of the health care reform issue itself, there was very little discussion of the concrete, nuts and bolts of the health care system or the health care reform plans that were being offered. Political actors spent most of their time attempting to frame health care reform as "good" or "right" and making claims as to what "the American people want" when it came to reform. There was little to no discussion of the specifics of reform.

We also examined whether there was a transfer of salience of the substantive and affective attributes from the public relations agenda to the media agenda in regard to both OPR traits of political actors involved in the health care reform debate and in regard to attributes of the debate itself. There was some evidence of a reciprocal relationship between Democrat public relations efforts and media coverage of the health care reform issue for OPR affective as well as issue substantive and affective attributes. There was no relationship between Republican public relations efforts and media coverage. In short, it appears that Democrats won the media framing contest (i.e., second-level agenda building); however, it should be noted that our media agenda was drawn from the *New York Times*.

Taken as a whole, there appears to be some potential for further integration of agenda building theory and the relational perspective. OPR attributes, both substantive and affective, were present across all agendas; whether political actors intend to or not, there does appear to be a discussion of organization-public relationships woven into the fabric of strategic political communication and media coverage of political issues. Furthermore, there does appear to be some transfer of salience from one agenda to the other, suggesting that a second-level agenda building effect is present.

The emergence of salience of OPR attributes in public relations materials and media content also has implications for public relations practitioners. First, practitioners should be conscious of how they frame the relationship between their party and the public as well as how they can most strategically frame the relationship between the opposition and the public. Secondly, as relationship management theory suggests, practitioners need to adopt a long-term orientation when thinking of public relations efforts. As practitioners engage in one ideological skirmish after another, they need to be cognizant of how they are framing OPR. As they make short-term tactical decisions to win framing contests, they should never lose sight of the long-term implications those tactical framing decisions have on long-term perceptions of organization-public relationship. In short, they may win the issue battle but lose the OPR war.

This exploratory study has several limitations that need to be addressed in future work. First, there are the limitations and frustrations inherent in any content analysis that attempts to code latent versus manifest content. While coders went through several rounds of training, they still experienced difficulty in coding some OPR traits, resulting in some variables being dropped from the analysis. Also, we only examined a limited body of content, both in regard to public relations information subsidies and in regard to media coverage. Also, the content was limited in terms of time period and by constraining the study to examining coverage of a specific political issue.

These limitations suggest several avenues for future research. First, we are encouraged by the results of this initial study examining the potential of *OPR agenda building*; the authors are already at work on a larger study intended to examine agenda building and agenda setting of political OPRs over a significantly longer period of time and covering a number of political issues. This line of research can also be extended by examining not only OPR dimensions, but also coding for indicators of asymmetrical and symmetrical cultivation strategies used by political actors. Agenda-setting of OPRs could also be examined by surveying voters regarding their perceptions of their relationships with a variety of political actors to see which substantive and affective attributes are most salient.

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Table 1. Frequency distribution of political actor substantive and affective attributes.

Variable	GOP (*n=134*)	DNC (*n=40*)	All PR (*n=174*)	*NYT* (*n=150*)	All Content (*n=324*)
Insurance Industry OPR	0 (.0)	6 (.10)	6 (.02)	43 (.12)	49 (.07)
Positive	0	0	0	1	1
Neutral	0	0	0	0	0
Negative	0	6	6	42	48
Republican Party OPR	5 (.04)	3 (.03)	8 (.03)	29 (.09)	37 (.06)
Positive	5	0	5	1	6
Neutral	0	0	0	0	0
Negative	0	3	3	28	31
Democratic OPR	7 (.06)	1 (.03)	8 (.05)	30 (.19)	38 (.12)
Positive	0	1	1	6	7
Neutral	0	0	0	0	0
Negative	7	0	7	24	31
Administration OPR	58 (.24)	62 (.78)	120 (.36)	76 (.26)	196 (.32)
Positive	0	62	62	35	97
Neutral	0	0	0	5	5
Negative	58	0	58	36	94
Insurance Industry Attitude	0 (.0)	5 (.13)	5 (.03)	16 (.11)	21 (.06)
Positive	0	0	0	0	0
Neutral	0	0	0	1	1
Negative	0	5	5	15	20
Administration Attitude	100 (.75)	11 (.28)	111 (.64)	56 (.38)	167 (.52)
Positive	0	11	11	14	25
Neutral	3	0	3	25	28
Negative	97	0	97	17	114

Note: Frequency counts represent total OPR substantive or affective traits mentions (i.e., trust, commitment, satisfaction, and control). Figures in parentheses represent proportion of content with <u>any</u> OPR substantive attribute mentions.

Table 2. Frequency distribution of health care reform issue substantive and affective attributes.

Variable	Republican PR (*n=134*)	Democrat PR (*n=40*)	All PR (*n=174*)	*NYT* (*n=150*)	All Content (*n=324*)
Health Care Reform Attitude	128 (.96)	40 (1.0)	168 (.97)	149 (.99)	317 (.98)
Positive	0	40	40	75	115
Neutral	1	0	1	43	44
Negative	127	0	127	31	158
Public Stance on Reform	35 (.26)	4 (.10)	39 (.22)	50 (.33)	89 (.28)
Pro-Reform	0	4	4	39	43
Neutral	1	0	1	2	3
Anti-Reform	34	0	34	9	43
Quality of Health Care System	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	9 (.06)	9 (.03)
Poor	0	0	0	8	8
Average	0	0	0	1	1
Excellent	0	0	0	0	0
Responsibility for Insuring	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	2 (.01)	2 (.0)
Government	0	0	0	0	0
Individual/Employer	0	0	0	2	2
Other	4	0	4	4	8
Need for Reform	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	10 (.07)	10 (.04)
Minor reform	0	0	0	6	6
Major reform	0	0	0	4	4
Completely rebuild	0	0	0	0	0
Endorsement of Proposal	4 (.03)	0 (.0)	4 (.02)	7 (.05)	11 (.03)
Insurance industry	0	0	0	0	0
Republicans	3	0	3	0	3
Democrats	0	0	0	0	0
Administration	0	0	0	5	5
Compromise position	1	0	1	2	3

Note: Figures in parentheses represent proportion of content with substantive attribute present.

Table 3. Rank-order correlation of political actor OPR substantive attributes.

New York Times	Democrat PR	Republican PR	All PR Efforts
OPR substantive attributes	.67	.33	.18
OPR affective attributes	.58*	.26	.66*
Issue substantive attributes	.78*	.60	.60
Issue affective attributes	.44*	.21	.46*
All substantive attributes	.79*	.69*	.77*
All affective attributes	.48*	.20	.53*

* $p < .05$

Pushing the Envelope on Media Tools:
Identifying Non-Users, Users, and Media Tribes in Public Relations Practice

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Abstract

As new media tools appear with increasing frequency, public relations practitioners must adapt to new tactics for the execution of public relations strategies, while public relations scholars must reconsider traditional public relations principles and theories. This study reports results from the 2010 Practice Analysis conducted by the Universal Accreditation Board (UAB), which oversees the largest certification program for public relations practitioners in the United States. From March 29 to April 15, an online survey was conducted with 9,950 randomly selected members of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). The response rate was 16.4% (n=1,634).

Framed by theories regarding the adoption of new technologies and media richness, the study examined the use of 16 media tools in public relations today. The media tools studied were organizational website, organizational intranet site, search engine optimization (SEO), online news feeds (e.g., RSS), online bookmarks (e.g., Digg, Delicious), online file sharing sites (e.g., Good Docs, Flickr), organizational blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, LinkedIn, Plaxo, Pulse, traditional news release, traditional press kit, and online news release.

Specifically, four research questions were posed: **RQ1:** Who are the non-users of new and traditional media tools? **RQ2:** To what extent are new and traditional media tools being used in public relations practice? **RQ3:** What practitioners use new and traditional media tools most frequently? **RQ4:** How are various media tools used in concert to achieve public relations outcomes?

To answer these research questions, the authors conducted correlations, cross-tabulations, t-tests, analyses of variance, and factor analysis. Findings indicated differences in the use and non-use of some media tools by gender, age, years of professional experience, APR status, and employment status. The study identified five media tribes: Information-Gatherers, Information-Promoters, Social Networkers, Organizational Outreachers, and Internal Communicators.

For thousands of years, scholars and others have been concerned with the use of "new" communication tools and what becomes of traditional channels when innovative ones are developed. Some authors even posit that Aristotle pondered over the fate of the spoken word as the Greek alphabet and the advent of written documents were being developed. His mentor, Plato, was concerned that writing would be detrimental to the speaking, and Plato preferred the immediacy and interaction of conversations over the unproven promise of writing (Guth & Marsh, 2012). In more recent times, various professionals were concerned over innovations such as the printing press, radio, television, and the Internet. Not only have the communication channels left behind from these "new media" survived, they have typically thrived. Changes will always occur, but each time more media tools have been added, communicators have blended the old methods with the new.

Experts emphasize that it is vital when choosing media channels to target for each appropriate audience. These media tool mixtures should be developed with specific objectives in mind, especially if there are media gatekeepers are involved (Wilcox, Cameron, Reber, & Shin, 2011). This targeting becomes more challenging when dealing in a virtual world that is often more nebulous than the traditional media tools world where contacts were made based generally on more defined groups. Even in the case of the traditional broadcast or print media, practitioners could have a broad idea of audiences most likely consuming information. The pace of public relations now involves much more immediacy and constant contact more than ever.

However, many of the traditional values are still in place even with new tools. Bloggers, just as newspaper reporters before, want truthful information that is timely. Social networkers want to read posted information in their groups that relates specifically to their interests, just as special interest magazines or newsletters have typically been on a narrow line rather than scattered. All consumers of information want relevant information that is authentic and approaches topics from a new angle. The most definite statement is that many of today's new media tools will continue, some will die or be adjusted greatly, and other "new" media will come into play as technology provides more opportunities to communicate constantly and through more avenues (Broom, 2009).

A major shift with the vast majority of the new tools is the focus on engaging audiences and providing constant two-way channels. No longer is simply pushing text-only information out the norm in public relations. Related to blogging and well as related social media, managers should determine how the various tools serve the organization's goals, learn rules (such as informality in most blogs), keep sites updated, and understand any legal issues concerning the tool or method (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman, & Toth, 2007). Informality should, however, not be confused with incorrectness. Students and new practitioners often make the mistake of using little to no punctuation in messages and disregarding any structural or grammar rules while communicating through new media tools.

Not only must practitioners produce different types of messages through these new tools (and know a "tweet from a friend request"), but monitoring must be coordinated constantly to determine what is being discussed through traditional and new media channels. In addition to the all-day and everyday message and medium scrutinizing,

practitioners must also be prepared to provide strategic counsel concerning individual and organizational reputations being impacted. The traditional newspaper clipping services of old have given way to expansive media monitoring evaluating a myriad of tools being used to impact publics. (In fact, most newspapers have shifted much of their traditional print focus to online or digital and are now much richer in nature, often including video.) The additional challenge for practitioners is to decode true messages from those that are not (Seitel, 2011).

Others have concluded that proper media tools will be determined by each individual situation. There are many tools at the disposal or practitioners and each should be considered carefully based on the goals of the organization and backgrounds of intended audiences. Some tools may be preferred more often based on age or gender differences. For example, males have shown a tendency to favor media that include a high-tech element (Dehkordi, Zarei, & Dehkordi, 2007). Often when a new tool or method is first available, many will abandon traditional channels just to use the new tool for novelty's sake. Examples abound of office mates sending multiple e-mails to determine a future compatible meeting date when a simple phone call or face-to-face conversation would have elicited a better result in mere seconds.

Recent research demonstrated no significant differences between social media usage by technicians vs. managers. Perhaps practitioners are simply trying to determine how to adopt these new tools into the practice. However, practitioners who use social media frequently may be more likely to have enhanced feelings of prestige since they simply have labeled "followers" or "friends," no matter if the level of true involvement by these contacts is measured or not. In addition, practitioners who are users of social networking sites may have increased perceived expertise since often media contacts are made through these tools. Practitioners frequenting social networking sites also reported a higher likelihood of feeling empowerment toward advancement within their organizations (Diga & Kelleher, 2009).

Another related study concerning social media usage by nonprofit organizations determined that these tools are very beneficial in this sector. Practitioners are more likely to use these tools if they have a dedicated public relations department or unit and if managers see a direct link between these efforts and reaching organizational goals. As more professionals understand the demonstrated advantages of social media more will adopt for their organizations (Curtis, Edwards, Fraser, Gudelsky, Holmquist, Thornton, & Sweetser, 2009).

Of the "new media," websites are now well established and obviously a workhorse of public relations and the organizations served. Many analyses of website uses have been developed, from simple counting of "hits" to elaborate communication research measures linking time and space measures. The website experience analysis (WEA) maps out the experiences of users to build links between the messages displayed and reader responses (Vorvoreanu, 2006).

One major effect of the proliferation of new (and usually instant) media is that practitioners often have less time to think and respond to requests. A study on e-mail usage by university administrators indicated that the decision-making time frame over recent years has shrunk. In addition, e-mail and other similar methods when used as text-only tools lack the richness of interpersonal or even video and audio communication that include multiple cues. At times administrators and others choose e-mail to send

controversial topics through e-mail, but e-mail should typically be used for non-controversial, routine communication. Another challenging factor is that often organizations have not developed official e-mail or social media policies for employees. The technology is typically developing much faster than the rules that coincide (Forde, Dill, Forde, & Hare, 2002).

Another study concluded that e-mail was at the time being used by virtually all public relations practitioners. Managers and technicians spend approximately the same amount of time using e-mail, but managers tend to deal with much higher traffic. It was proposed that managers may simply forward or copy e-mails more often since many are simply being passed on for others' use. Technicians may have to spend more time researching topics expressed in e-mail than do more experienced managers. He encouraged more research in public relations media choices and the included specific messages (Kelleher, 2001).

Recent research has indicated that special effort needs to be paid by practitioners to production quality of motion media messages since audiences placed a higher level of credibility, no matter the source, on higher quality productions. This factor should be considered for reputation enhancement or maintenance for organizations as it becomes increasing easier for organizations to place video and other formerly complicated products online (Lee, Park, Lee, & Cameron, 2010).

According to other scholars, even the sender-receiver relationship of public relations to journalism is now often reversed with journalists submitting many story ideas to public relations managers through venues such as Help-A-Reporter Out (HARO) and Twitter. These two-way and open tools have adjusted the relationship where public relations practitioners were typically dependent on journalists to run stories, but now journalists are seeking public relations input early in the story-development process (Waters, Tindall, & Morton, 2010).

To be leaders of change or innovation in an organization, public relations practitioners must understand what steps typically take place in their acceptance of new tools and the related processes of potential targeted publics. Public relations practitioners should be leaders in determining appropriate applications of new technologies. For example, Coppola (2006) emphasized that technical communicators should lead organizations through technological and related innovations. Strategic communication is a key to working effectively in the global business setting and with markets that change constantly.

Thus, it stands to reason that practitioners maintaining or building credibility for themselves and their organizations would increase impact by communicating through an assortment of contemporary channels. Kelleher (2009) found that the most effective communication for organizations may be with a wide range of corporate representatives through a variety of interactive methods rich in context. He studied a large consumer-tech-industry company and the experiences of people who had used blogs to communicate with the company. In this study, those using blogs felt it was an effective two-way method of communication.

Reputation management, one element of a comprehensive public relations program, is now greatly affected by the Internet and related online aspects as well as traditional media. Since social media, search engines, and related online actions now help shape an individual's reputation, perceptions of organizations may be influenced as well. A recent

study indicated that young adults are typically the most active in shaping their own online reputations (Madden & Smith, 2010).

Often, senior practitioners need technical knowledge to be effective communicators. One study found that technical work continues to be performed by top-level public relations executives. The authors explained that perhaps this need to retain technical responsibilities could be explained by the need of these practitioners to communicate sensitive information. Another necessity could be the result of continuing downsizing by various organizations and that senior executives have fewer assistants (DeSanto, Moss, & Newman, 2007). In addition, as a supervisor it may often be more efficient to simply enact the communication channel individually instead of editing an assistant's work.

New practitioners should be prepared to use various types of new or social media. In a recent study focusing on blogs, Duke (2009) found that practitioners do recommend that new graduates entering the field should be prepared to manage blogs for their organizations. This channel of communication allows institutions to target specific groups for messages and to provide interactive conversations with targeted publics.

In a recent study, over 70% of respondents agreed with the following statement: "By 2020, innovative forms of online cooperation will result in significantly more efficient and responsive government, business, non-profits, and other mainstream institutions" (Anderson & Rainie, 2010, p. 2). These technology experts from many established institutions seem to indicate that for organizations to be perceived as leaders they must engage in various forms of online communication. However, different organizations will adopt these changes at different rates, with businesses most likely leading the way.

Using blogs and other types of new media tools also requires practitioners to gauge ethical practices within these new realms. In 2006, Wal-Mart was criticized for a blog (Wal-Marting Across America) created by its public relations firm that, to many, appeared to be written independently by a couple traveling across the country in an RV while staying in Wal-Mart parking lots elaborating on positive employee relations by Wal-Mart. In reality, the RV and other related expenses were funded by Wal-Mart in reaction to negative relationships with union-supported groups (Craig, 2007).

In a related study, Pingjun (2009) found that adoption of mobile Internet services by general consumers was linked to prior computer skills, career mobility, and knowledge of mobile Internet uses. In addition, those consumers with intentions to adopt innovations were influenced positively to use mobile Internet.

In another study, doctors were surveyed to determine their use of e-detailing, which includes Internet usage, video conferencing, and interactive video. Factors that had a significant influence on physicians adopting e-detailing included perceived advantage, peer influence, their attitudes, medical specialty areas, and years in practice (Alkhateeb & Doucette, 2009). Use of the Internet by those in healthcare institutions may also enable public relations practitioners to apply a new paradigm to this specialized field. In one sense, using the Internet has allowed organizations to better communicate in a two-way fashion with various publics, updating from the previous mode of making sure positive information was flowing to the media and other groups. In addition, in the case of an emergency the Internet allows medical facilities to develop consistent messages much more quickly than through traditional channels (Berkowitz, 2007).

All of these new tools or channels must continually be proven valuable or they will become obsolete and abandoned. Research must be conducted by practitioners and academicians to determine which tools should be used for specific messages.

Books are now available to teach practitioners how to use a variety of social media tools to reach appropriate audiences. This second edition volume includes relevant communication theories, explanations of social media terms, ethical considerations, and advice on strategies and tactics (Phillips & Young, 2009).

In a recent study of curriculum, educators were surveyed concerning inclusion of theory into their public relations or integrated marketing communication programs. Results indicated that almost 75% of these programs do require the study of theory in some form. Most taught theory as part of numerous courses, but some schools had a separate required research course. However, views of the importance of research understanding often vary between academicians and practitioners (Latchaw, Allen, & Ogden, 2009). Practitioners, who as students became familiar with various communication, mass media, and related theories, should be expected to understand innovations of concepts and ideas and to embrace exploring new methods of communicating. Class projects or specific classes should be developed by universities that address new media tools specifically and demonstrate their integration into the entire public relations campaign.

In short, all types of organizations need professionals willing to learn new technology to lead their institutions into the future. The leaders have to be able to use new media appropriately and not simply employ new methods because of any novelty. Public relations practitioners as lead communicators for organizations should serve as a major determinant of which new media are employed for various purposes.

Specific Types of New Media

As the number of new media opportunities available to public relations practitioners continues to increase, the possibilities for helping one's company or organization join the digital communication world are practically endless. Traffikd.com, a social media and internet marketing blog, lists more than 450 social media sites currently available. Regardless of the content type, social media can provide the appropriate platform for meeting the needs of most any organization (2010).

A mixture of a social networking service and a micro-blogging service, Twitter users can post and access personal updates as well as news clips. This service is free and allows users to include on 140 characters in a single "tweet" (Sangani, 2009). One of the newer platforms for bloggers is Tumblr, founded by David Karp. This short-form blog platform has a much higher retention rate than better-known Twitter, 85% compared to 60%. Tumblr users can post text, photos, videos, chats, music or links to their personal "Tumblelog." An analogy from the Tumblr Web site indicates: "If blogs are journals, tumblelogs are scrapbooks" (Meltzer, 2010).

One might assume that most organizational leaders are being counseled concerning the benefits of social media. However, according to Sharon Barclay, editor at UberCEO.com who conducted a study on CEOs and social networking, most Fortune top-100 CEOs are "markedly absent" from the social media community. Barclay (2009) went on to indicate that these individuals are "missing a great opportunity to connect with customers and raise their company's profile." (p. 10).

Individuals and organizations can maintain contact databases online through social media. Online address book sharing sites such as Plaxo have expanded to provide additional services such as Pulse which allows users to track activity across multiple social networks (Karpiniski, 2007). Companies and organizations also can manage multiple documents online with multiple users through document sharing sites including Google Docs and Huddle (Spanbauer, 2007). Additionally, video sharing has become more and more popular over the past several years. YouTube, for example provides its 34 million users free access to songs and videos by major recording artists as well as original material uploaded from users. Although the biggest video-sharing site on the internet, YouTube is not the only game in town. Microsoft's Soapbox, along with Google, Yahoo and MySpace are "aspiring YouTube killers" according to Newsweek magazine (Stone & Croal, 2006).

The social media mentioned above are only a small sampling of the various media available to public relations practitioners. Hundreds of social media opportunities are available, many of them free of charge, and practitioners would do well to identify those new media that best fit the public relations strategy of the particular company or organization.

Despite the trendiness and popularity of new media tools, public relations practitioners may not have given up on using traditional media tools as well. Thus, this paper posed four research questions:

RQ1: Who are the non-users of new and traditional media tools?

RQ2: To what extent are new and traditional media tools being used in public relations practice?

RQ3: What practitioners use new and traditional media tools most frequently?

RQ4: How are various media tools used in concert to achieve public relations outcomes?

Method

This manuscript reports results from the 2010 Practice Analysis conducted by the Universal Accreditation Board, which oversees the largest certification program for public relations practitioners in the United States. From March 29 to April 15, an online survey was conducted with 9,950 randomly selected members of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), including active practitioners, retired practitioners, and educators. The response rate was 16.4% (n=1,634).

Instrumentation

In addition to various demographic questions, the 2010 Practice Analysis asked respondents the extent to which they used various media tools to complete public relations activities in the last week. Responses were coded on a Likert-type scale, with 1=none, 2=a little, 3=some, and 4=a great deal. During survey administration, the list of 16 media tools was set to appear randomly for each respondent, so as to minimize the possible effects of item non-response and patterned answer selection. The media tools studied were organizational website, organizational intranet site, search engine optimization (SEO), online news feeds (e.g., RSS), online bookmarks (e.g., Digg, Delicious), online file sharing sites (e.g., Good Docs, Flickr), organizational blogs,

Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, LinkedIn, Plaxo, Pulse, traditional press release, traditional press kit, and online news release.

Statistical Analysis

To answer RQ1, original responses of "none" were recoded as "non-users," and original responses of "a little," "some," and "a great deal" were recoded as "users." The non-user categories were subsequently cross-tabulated against demographic variables, with the exception of age and experience, for which independent samples t-tests were used. To answer the remaining RQs, original responses of "none" were recoded as "system missing" and dropped from analysis; the remaining answer options were recoded such that 1=a little, 2=some, and 3=a great deal. To answer RQ2, mean scores on individual media tools were calculated to represent the average frequency of use of each media tool in the last week. To answer RQ3, mean scores were compared across demographic variables using independent samples t-tests, bivariate correlations, and analyses of variance. To answer RQ4, factor analysis was conducted to explore how various media tools grouped together. Significance levels for all tests were set at .05.

Findings and Discussion

This study found that traditional media tools are holding their own against new media tools. Also, the study revealed differences in the use and non-use of some media tools by gender, age, years of professional experience, APR status, and employment status. Finally, the study found five media tribes: Information-Gatherers, Information-Promoters, Social Networkers, Organizational Outreachers, and Internal Communicators.

Non-Users of Media Tools

The first research question asked what practitioners did not use the new and traditional media tools under study. Results varied across specific media tools by gender, APR status, age, and experience.

Gender. With respect to gender, non-users of online news feeds were significantly more likely to be female than male, with 36.9% of women (n=364) being non-users, compared to 30.7% of men (n=115) (chi-square=4.65; df=1; $p<.05$). This was the only media tool on which a statistically significant difference by gender was found.

APR Status. With regard to Accreditation status, statistically significant differences between APRs and non-APRs were found for four media tools: Twitter, LinkedIn, traditional press release, and traditional press kit. Specifically, 33.9% of APRs (n=166) did not use Twitter, compared to only 28.0% of non-APRs (n=243) (chi-square=5.21; df=1; $p<.05$). In contrast, 29.4% of APRs (n=144) did not use LinkedIn, compared to 34.8% of non-APRs (n=300) (chi-square=4.00; df=1; $p<.05$). In short, with regard to these two new media tools, APRs were more likely to be non-users of Twitter, whereas non-APRs were more likely to be non-users of LinkedIn.

With regard to more traditional media tools, APRs were more likely than were non-APRs to be non-users. Specifically, 22.6% of APRs (n=110) did not use traditional press releases in the last week, compared to only 17.0% of non-APRs (n=148) (chi-square=6.30; df=1; $p<.05$). Similarly, 61.7% of APRs (n=301) did not use traditional press kits, compared to only 51.8% of non-APRs (n=450) (chi-square=12.23; df=1;

$p<.001$). What these results tell us is that APRs, compared to non-APRs, are more likely to have abandoned traditional media tools.

Age & Experience. Age and experience both yielded statistically significant differences in the use of some media tools. Facebook and Twitter non-users were significantly older and more experienced than users. \ LinkedIn and Plaxo non-users were significantly younger and less experienced than users. Specifically, the mean age of Facebook non-users was 45 years (SD=12 years; n=302), whereas the average age of Facebook users was 43 years (SD=12 years; n=1025) (t=3.47; df=1325; $p<.01$). Facebook non-users averaged 18 years of experience (SD=11 years; n=312), compared to only 16 years of experience (SD=10 years; n=1049) for Facebook users (t=2.32; df=1359; $p<.05$). The results for Twitter were even more striking, with non-users' mean age being 46 years (SD=12 years; n=396) and users' mean age being 42 years (SD=11 years; n=929) (t=6.54; df=1323; $p<.001$). Non-users of Twitter averaged 19 years of experience (SD=11 years; n=409), compared to 15 years of experience for users (SD=10 years; n=950) (t=5.37; df=1357; $p<.001$).

In contrast to the results for Facebook and Twitter, LinkedIn non-users were younger and less experienced than were users. Specifically, LinkedIn non-users averaged 42 years of age (SD=12 years, n=434), whereas users averaged 44 years of age (SD=12 years; n=884) (t=-3.11; df=1316; $p<.01$). Non-users had, on average, 15 years of work experience (SD=11 years; n=444), compared to the 17 years of experience averaged by LinkedIn users (SD=10 years; n=908) (t=-2.90; df=1350; $p<.001$). Results were similar for Plaxo, whose non-users' average age was 43 (SD=12 years; n=1188), compared to its users' average age of 47 years (SD=11; n=125) (t=-4.20; df=1311; $p<.001$). Plaxo non-users averaged 16 years of work experience (SD=10 years; n=1220), whereas users averaged 21 years' experience (SD=10 years; n=126) (t=-5.15; df=1344; $p<.001$). These results indicate clearly that the non-use of new media tools is by no means uniform across age and experience levels; results vary by specific media tools.

Besides the findings reported above, one additional media tool yielded statistically significant differences in non-use by age, and two additional media tools yielded differences in non-use by years of experience. Specifically, non-users of organizational intranet sites had a mean age of 42 years (SD=12 years; n=460), which was younger than the mean age of 44 years for users (SD=12 years; n=861) (t=-2.34; df=1319; $p<.05$). On the other hand, non-users of online file-sharing sites averaged 16 years of experience (SD=10 years; n=662), compared to the average of 17 years of experience for users (SD=10 years; n=690) (t=-2.31; df=1350; $p<.05$). Similarly, non-users of the online news release had fewer years of work experience (15 years' experience; SD=10 years; n=344) compared to users of this media tool (17 years' experience; SD=10 years; n=1019) (t=-2.61; df=1361; $p<.01$).

In summary, the non-use of both new and traditional media tools varies by gender, APR status, age, and experience; furthermore, the specific variations among these demographic groups depend on the actual media tool in question. Thus, sweeping generalizations regarding media tool non-usage (e.g., "Older people don't use new media tools or social media") are inaccurate and simply should not be made.

Usage of Media Tools

The second research question examined the extent to which new and traditional media tools were being used in public relations practice. As indicated in Table 1, the most frequently used new media tools were the organizational website (mean=2.52; SD=0.66; n=1392), followed by organizational intranet sites (mean=2.25; SD=0.78; n=942), and online news releases (mean=2.22; SD=0.74; n=1081). But, among all media tools, the traditional press release actually ranked third (mean=2.23; SD=.74; n=1161).

Another way to examine the extent to which media tools are used would be to consider the total number of respondents who indicated using the tool at all. In this case, the most popular media tool remained the organizational website (n=1392), followed by the traditional press release (n=1161), Facebook (n=1126), and the online news release (n=1081).

In contrast, judging by the numbers of practitioners who use these tools, the least popular tools – or perhaps the newest ones – are Tumblr, with 61 users; Pulse, with 69 users; and Plaxo, with 136 users. These three tools also were used the least frequently by those who used them at all: Plaxo (mean=1.37; SD=0.58; n=136), Tumblr (mean=1.43; SD=0.69; n=61), and Pulse (mean=1.45; SD=0.68; n=69).

Users of Media Tools

The third research question asked what practitioners were using the new and traditional media tools under study. Results indicated statistically significant differences regarding the use of some media tools by gender, age, experience, APR status, and employment status.

Gender. With regard to the 16 media tools under study, only organizational websites yielded significant differences by gender. Specifically, the frequency for men was 2.48 (SD=.67; n=358), compared to 2.57 (SD=.65; n=946) for women (t=-2.28; df=1302; $p<.05$).

Age & Experience. Age and experience were highly correlated (Pearson r=.81; $p<.001$; $n=1342$). Age and experience also had weak, but significant correlations with four media tools, while experience alone was also correlated to the use of the traditional press release. Use of search-engine optimization as a media tool was positively correlated with both age (Pearson r=.10; $p<.01$; $n=877$) and experience (Pearson r=.08; $p<.05$; $n=902$). In other words, older and more experienced practitioners used SEO more so than did younger and less experienced practitioners.

In contrast, use of Facebook was negatively correlated with both age (Pearson r=-.14; $p<.001$; $n=1025$) and experience (Pearson r=-.12; $p<.001$; $n=1049$). This pattern held true for Twitter, for both age (Pearson r=-.18; $p<.001$; $n=929$) and experience (Pearson r=-.16; $p<.001$; $n=950$). In short, younger and less experienced practitioners were more frequent users of both Facebook and Twitter, compared to older and more experienced practitioners. Yet, use of LinkedIn was positively correlated with both age (Pearson r=.07; $p<.05$; $n=884$) and experience (Pearson r=.08; $p<.02$; $n=908$), meaning that older and more experienced practitioners used this social networking tool more so than did their younger and less experienced counterparts.

Finally, use of the traditional press release was negatively correlated with experience (Pearson r=-.06; $p<.05$; $n=1099$), meaning that less experienced practitioners used this traditional media tool more frequently compared to their more experienced colleagues. This may be due to practitioners with more experience in the field having the

ability to pitch directly to specific reporters with whom they had already developed a working relationship, in contrast to less-experienced practitioners who may be sending traditional press releases to larger numbers of journalists with whom they had less-developed working relationships.

APR Status. There were no statistically significant differences in use of any of the new media tools by whether a respondent was accredited in public relations. However, there were differences in the use of traditional media tools by APR status. Specifically, accredited respondents were less likely to use traditional press releases (mean=2.17; SD=.75; n=377), compared to non-accredited respondents (mean=2.28; SD=.73; n=722). This difference was statistically significant (t=-2.43, df=1097, p<.05). Likewise, accredited respondents were less likely to use traditional press kits (mean=1.67; SD=.68; n=187), compared to their non-accredited counterparts (mean=1.83; SD=.74; n=418). This difference was also statistically significant (t=-2.55, df=603, p<.05). These results indicate that, while APRs are not necessarily using new media more frequently compared to non-APRs, accredited respondents were using traditional media less frequently. There were no statistically significant differences between respondents who earned their APRs prior to the 2003 re-engineering of the examination and those who earned their APRs in the new process.

Employment Status. The use of six media tools varied significantly among active practitioners, educators, and retired practitioners: organizational website, organizational blog, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and online news release. These results are summarized in Table 2. For the most part, active practitioners had higher frequencies of use of these tools, followed by educators and then by retirees.

Types of Media Tribes

The last research question investigated how various media tools are used in concert to achieve public relations outcomes. To answer this question, a factor analysis using principal components analysis with varimax rotation was conducted of the 13 most-used media tools; the three least-used tools were excluded from this analysis. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was .69, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was 202.14 (df=78; p<.001), indicating the appropriateness of this statistical analysis. Factor analysis yielded five factors identifying groupings of media tools, or five media tribes. See Table 3 for factor loadings.

Tribe 1: Information-Gatherers. The first factor had an Eigenvalue of 3.34 and explained 25.66% of the variance. Three media tools loaded onto the first factor: online bookmarks, online news feeds, and online file-sharing sites; all of these tools serve information-gathering functions. That the strongest media tribe centered on the use of information gathering tools reflected the standard definition of public relations as a two-way function (cf. Broom, 2009), not merely disseminating information, but also seeking information. This media tribe also underscores the continued relevance of the four-step strategic-planning process, which begins and ends with research or information-gathering (cf. Broom, 2009).

Tribe 2: Information-Promoters. The second factor had an Eigenvalue of 1.38 and explained 10.59% of the variance. Three media tools likewise loaded onto the second factor: traditional media kit, traditional press release, and online news release; these tools serve media relations or information-promoting functions. The authors believe that this

media tribe reflects the continued importance of media relations as the "bread and butter" of public relations practice. The information-promotion tribe also underscores the reality that many public relations practitioners are indeed hired for their ability to promote information according to the desires of their employers or clients. This tribe also reflects the history of the field, in terms of publicity being the antecedent to the modern practice of public relations. Finally, information-promoters primarily enact the one-way models of public relations: press agentry and public information (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

  Tribe 3: Social-Networkers. The third factor had an Eigenvalue of 1.30 and explained 9.97% of the variance. The third factor also consisted of three media tools: Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn; these tools are primarily social networking sites that facilitate community-building. It is interesting to note that the social-networking tribe was third after information-gathering and information-promoting; this finding indicates that, contrary to claims made in the trade press, the public relations profession is not today dominated by social media. Furthermore, the loading of these media tools onto their own separate factor indicate that use of social-networking tools has yet to be fully integrated with other aspects of public relations practice, such as research and media relations.

  Tribe 4: Organizational-Outreachers. The fourth factor had an Eigenvalue of 1.11 and explained 8.50% of the variance. The three factors that loaded onto the fourth factor were organizational website, organizational blog, and search-engine optimization. Because these tools are used to express organizational views, the authors labeled this tribe as organizational outreachers. This fourth tribe reflects the longstanding tradition of organizations hiring public relations practitioners to articulate organizational messages in the public sphere or to serve as the organization's "voice" (cf. Broom, 2009). It is also interesting to note that media tools being used for organizational outreach are apparently not being integrated fully with media tools used for social networking, since these tools loaded onto two distinct factors.

  Tribe 5: Internal-Communicators. Finally, the fifth factor had an Eigenvalue of 1.00 and explained 7.71% of the variance. Only one item loaded onto the fifth factor: organizational intranet site. This finding suggests that employee or internal communication has, for the most part, yet to integrate other media tools beyond the intranet. In short, despite employees being identified as the most important organizational stakeholders (cf. Broom, 2009), efforts to reach internal publics can lag behind those to reach external publics; the fact that internal-communicators comprised the fifth and weakest tribe was telling.

  In short, the five media tribes identified in this study, from strongest to weakest, were Information-Gatherers, Information-Promoters, Social-Networkers, Organizational-Outreachers, and Internal-Communicators. These media tribes are interesting because they map the current connections among various media tools, connections that may change over time. For example, as more public relations practitioners use Twitter to offer brief headlines with links to online news releases, that social networking site could later load onto the factor for information-promotion. Similarly, as organizations develop Facebook fan sites, that social network could load onto the factor for organizational-outreach. In future years, the traditional press kit might load alone onto its own separate factor (like the organizational intranet site today), which could suggest its decreasing relevance to other aspects of public relations practice beyond media relations. As

experienced practitioners become adept with various uses of new media tools, creative combinations should be developed and become more fully integrated with all types of traditional and nontraditional tools.

Members of Media Tribes

The existence of five distinct media tribes in the 2010 practice of public relations begs the question of which practitioners are likely to belong to which tribes. To answer this question, post-hoc analysis was conducted in which the scores from factor analysis (reported above) were saved as regression variables. These variables (denoting specific tribes) were subsequently compared using t-tests, ANOVAs, and correlations.

Independent samples t-tests indicated no statistically significant differences in tribal membership by gender or accreditation status. Likewise, Pearson correlation yielded no significant differences in tribal membership by years of experience. With respect to age and employment status, significant differences were found for only one of the five tribes. Specifically, the social-networking tribe was comprised of active practitioner respondents and younger respondents, more so than educators and older respondents. The ANOVA results for employment status were statistically significant ($F=11.96$; $p<.01$; $n=89$), as were the correlation results for age (Pearson's $r=-.300$; $p<.01$; $n=81$).

In short, although this study identified five distinct groups of users of media tools, membership in the various tribes was, for the most part, spread evenly across practitioner demographics. The only exception to this finding was that the social-networking tribe's members were significantly younger and active in public relations practice (i.e., not an educator or retired), as opposed to older and not active.

Limitations and Directions for Research

Like any study, this one possessed some limitations, including those related to sampling and instrumentation. One obvious limitation of this study is that the survey was only submitted to PRSA members. PRSA members would most likely often identify themselves as working specifically in a public relations function for a large percentage of their time. Perhaps other practitioner organizations would have different results, and perhaps practitioners who work in other additional organizational functions as well would have different responses. In addition, because of the topic, it is conceivable that a higher percentage responded who actually use new media tools. Many potential respondents who were not familiar with the terms at all or used little to no social media tools could have simply not answered any questions instead of bothering to identify themselves as non-users throughout the instrument.

With regard to limitations of the survey instrument, respondents were also questioned about their use within the past week. They were not asked over a longer time period or what level of importance they placed on difference media tool usage. Some respondents could have replied they used a certain tool often, but this study did not address importance of that tool. That should be addressed in later studies. Respondents also were not questioned specifically about any tools they had used and then stopped using. Perhaps that would be a valuable area of future inquiry. Vendors and researchers would need to understand why practitioners may have used a tool (especially a new method) and then abandoned that effort. Was it too complicated, or did it show no visible results?

Future studies could perhaps include additional open-ended questions to indicate specific uses of media tools in a case study format. In addition, further studies could investigate cross-promotional uses of media tools. For example, many Twitter messages now encourage readers to view a web link or watch a YouTube clip. Traditional television commercials now often ask viewers to send a text message, visit a website, or call toll-free number. As more tools are available, practitioners will continue to learn from others unconventional processes to transmit important messages. When these combination procedures work for one organization, then others will emulate and adapt.

Conclusion

This study found five media tribes in public relations practice today: Information-Gatherers, Information-Promoters, Social-Networkers, Organizational-Outreachers, and Internal-Communicators. The only media tribe with significantly different demographics was the social-networking tribe, whose members were significantly younger and active in public relations practice (i.e., not an educator or retired). The four remaining tribes showed no statistically significant differences in tribal membership by practitioner demographics.

The study also found that public relations practitioners are embracing some new media tools, but they have not abandoned the traditional tools. As practitioners understand the availability and utility of each new method, they should determine goals, target audiences, and appropriate specific messages based on traditional public relations strategies. To stay connected to diverse publics, both literally and figuratively, practitioners must engage in the proper use of new media tools, while continuing to use traditional methods where deemed more effective. The use of selective new media tools is not an option if practitioners expect to communicate in the new digital and non-stop environment.

Acknowledgements

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Table 1: Use of Media Tools

	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
Organizational website	2.52	.66	1392
Organizational intranet site	2.25	.78	942
Traditional press release	2.23	.74	1161
Online news release	2.22	.74	1081
Facebook	2.18	.77	1126
Twitter	2.15	.79	994
Search engine optimization (SEO)	2.01	.74	947
Online news feeds (e.g., RSS)	1.99	.79	937
Organizational blog	1.95	.76	719
Online file sharing sites (e.g., Good Docs, Flickr)	1.87	.77	739
LinkedIn	1.84	.77	976
Traditional press kit	1.78	.71	647
Online bookmarks (e.g., Digg, Delicious)	1.72	.74	457
Pulse	1.45	.68	69
Tumblr	1.43	.69	61
Plaxo	1.37	.58	136

Table 2: Use of Media Tools by Employment Status

Media Tool	Employment Status	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Organizational website[a]	Retired	28	2.00	.86
	Active	1304	2.54	.65
	Educator	60	2.32	.68
	Total	1392	2.52	.66
Organizational blog[b]	Retired	15	1.47	.52
	Active	669	1.97	.76
	Educator	35	1.74	.66
	Total	719	1.95	.76
Facebook[c]	Retired	21	1.43	.51
	Active	1049	2.21	.77
	Educator	56	2.00	.76
	Total	1126	2.18	.77
Twitter[d]	Retired	7	1.14	.38
	Active	950	2.16	.79
	Educator	37	2.00	.85
	Total	994	2.15	.79
LinkedIn[e]	Retired	16	1.56	.81
	Active	908	1.86	.78
	Educator	52	1.62	.63
	Total	976	1.84	.77

Table 2: Use of Media Tools by Employment Status (cont.)

Media Tool	Employment Status	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Online news release[f]	Retired	21	1.95	.67
	Active	1019	2.23	.74
	Educator	41	1.95	.77
	Total	1081	2.22	.74

Notes: (a) F = 12.47; df = 2, 1391; $p<.001$.
     (b) F = 4.75; df = 2, 718; $p<.01$.
     (c) F = 12.32; df = 2, 1125; $p<.001$.
     (d) F = 6.56; df = 2, 993; $p<.01$.
     (e) F = 3.59; df = 2, 975; $p<.05$.
     (f) F = 4.16; df = 2, 1080; $p<.05$.

Table 3: Factor Loadings for Media Tribes

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
Organizational website	*	*	*	.707	*
Organizational intranet site	*	*	*	*	.877
Search engine optimization (SEO)	*	*	*	.627	*
Online news feeds (e.g., RSS)	.723	*	*	*	*
Online bookmarks (e.g., Digg, Delicious)	.753	*	*	*	*
Online file sharing sites (e.g., Good Docs, Flickr)	.637	*	*	*	*
Organizational blog	*	*	*	.683	*
Facebook	*	*	.635	*	*
Twitter	*	*	.843	*	*
LinkedIn	*	*	.608	*	*
Traditional press kit	*	.746	*	*	*
Traditional press release	*	.791	*	*	*
Online news release	*	.502	*	*	*

Notes: Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation. KMO = .690. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, chi-square = 202.14; df = 78; $p < .001$. * Factor loadings < .50 excluded for clarity.

Command and Control v. Social Media:
The Inherent Dilemma for Fire Departments

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Abstract

For more than 50 years, fire department Public Information Officers (PIOs) have been responsible for disseminating timely and accurate information to the public, media, and partner agencies during major wildland fires and other emergencies. At the outset of each major incident, standardized management procedure gives authority to a single incident commander who determines and clears all information prior to release. However, the use of social media platforms and tools by citizens in affected areas are outstripping the traditional one-way vertical model of communication dissemination and wreaking havoc on fire departments' ability to control the content and flow of information to the public. Often, the media are bypassing the fire department and getting up-to-the-minute information from tweeters and bloggers. This has caused a crisis in the department's highly-structured communication system, which is designed to control and contain the message, channel, and delivery of all communication during the incident. This study examines factors influence PIOs' use social media. A quantitative instrument disseminated to fire departments across the United States identifies the current problems and provides recommendations. Use of social media outside of work, being a sworn firefighter, and full-time PIOs are the best predictors of social media use at work. The largest obstacles to using social media at work are lack of time, lack of support from command personnel, and concern over loss of information control. Finally, these data reveal that social media are not a replacement for traditional ways of communicating with the public as both those who do and do not use social media continue to use advisories, news releases, press conferences, interviews with reporters, and various channels of communicating directly with the public at the same rate. The only difference between the two groups is that those who use social media also use their websites more than those who do not use social media.

Wildfires swept across Southern California in 2003. The Old and Grand Prix Fires in the San Bernardino Mountains forced thousands of residents to flee the area. A resident known as "Ranger Al" ignored evacuation orders. He used his time behind the fire lines to gather information about fire progress and property damage at the request of friends and neighbors. He passed this information along to his son who posted it to a hastily developed website. Just days after creation, the site was receiving more than a million hits a day (Sutton, Palen, & Shklovski, 2008). Fire officials didn't appreciate his efforts. Not only did they seem to want nothing to do with his information, they tried to restrict his access within the burn areas. Local residents who had come to rely on his information complained so vehemently that word came from Sacramento to leave him alone (Taylor, Gillette, Hodgson, & Downing, 2005).

A different information website also based in the San Bernardino Mountains (www.rimoftheworld.net) became another central hub for information during the same 2003 Southern California firestorms. Residents relied on the site for localized updates that were posted faster and seemed more accurate than the official reports in the media. The site continued to serve the community after the fires as a source of local news and information, averaging 300,000 page views per week. When fires again hit the region in 2007 and evacuations were ordered, page views at www.rimoftheworld.net skyrocketed to nine million in just one week.

Online sources such as the examples above are indicative of the fast-changing nature of fighting fires. Getting information to people about crises that may impact their personal and professional lives becomes more and more complicated as more channels become available for disseminating information. Social media have become an important tool for Public Information Officers (PIOs) with fire departments and other emergency governmental agencies. Yet, not everyone has been quick to jump on board with social media. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the similarities and differences between fire departments/their public information officers that use social media and those that do not. More specifically, it examines the personal characteristics that best predict social media use, departmental characteristics that best predict social media use, perceived barriers to social media use, and role of social media in an overall communication plan.

Rationale and Review of Related Literature

Fire Department Culture

A series of wildland firefighter deaths in the mid-twentieth century led to United States Forest Service (USFS) investigations. A breakdown in fire crew discipline was cited as a main factor. This led to adopting a military structure for wildland fire management as a way to enforce discipline on the fire lines (Hillyard, 2000; Kling, 2009). The vertical hierarchy of fire departments and structure are often described in military terms with a unit chief leading successively lower-ranked personnel.

The Oakland Hills firestorm and several other high profile, multijurisdictional fires in the 1970s exposed inconsistencies among fire agencies in training, equipment, communication, and command structure that resulted in the creation of a standardized management system known as the Incident Command System (ICS) (Hillyard, 2000).

ICS established a single incident commander (IC) with lower level leaders reporting directly to the commander (FEMA, 2007).

ICS also created standard operating procedures (SOPs) for disparate fire agencies working together on large fires. The standardized training, equipment, and management structure makes fire crews interchangeable and allows for easy expansion of the operation as fires grow and additional agencies are incorporated into the fire attack (Kling, 2009). ICS is a highly structured and vertical system that operates similarly to Frederick Taylor's vision of top-down communication and Max Weber's organizational theory of hierarchy (Taylor, 1911; Weber, 1947). The IC manages the fire through a structured chain of command. Most firefighters are assigned to divisions along the fire line. Additional personnel with unique skills perform specialized tasks such as logistics, finance, plans, operations, or mapping. Standardization of training, equipment, and management enables the operation to be scaled up as a fire grows and allows for personnel in all sections to be replaced as they max out on their available fire days or are reassigned. The IC can be confident personnel assigned to the fire have similar equipment and skills, speak a common professional language, and have the ability to work within ICS (Hillyard, 2000). Personnel are plugged into the firefighting machine where needed.

PIO Role

In ICS, the lead Public Information Officer (PIO) is responsible for the dissemination of timely and accurate information to the public, media, partner agencies, and internal personnel (FEMA, 2007). The lead PIO has the authority to bring in additional PIOs as an emergency grows in size and scope. Information, as with many attributes within ICS, is also subject to chain-of-command control. "All information in the field must be cleared by the IC prior to release" (FEMA, 2007, p. 10). For that reason, on extended incidents, updated information is released according to predetermined rules and policies.

The PIO tends to practice a one-way transfer of information known as the public information model (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Information is reported journalistically from fire authorities to the public (Fearn-Banks, 2007). Approved statements are typically distributed in a unidirectional flow from agency officials to news media to the public (Palen, Hiltz, & Liu, 2007; Sutton, Palen, & Shklovski, 2008). The fire department has always relied on the media to be the gatekeeper between first responders and the public. "Reaching the public is not possible unless PIOs are able to work with … the media" (Politano, 2009, p. 6).

Part of the reason for the lack of connection between first responders and the public may have to do with the lack of formal public relations training for firefighters who become PIOs or handle PIO functions. They are often highly accomplished firefighters with expert knowledge, experience, and interpersonal skills. They are responsible for translating technical explanations of fire behavior and fire policy into easily understood terms. But, PIO-specific social media training for firefighters is limited.

Federal agencies and a few large fire departments offer a series of classes such as S-203 (basic PIO training) and S-403 (advanced PIO training). Participants from outside agencies are invited to attend. The aim of the courses is to train PIOs to push information to the public through traditional media regardless of the incident type or location.

Though some of the instruction involves collecting intelligence and responding to the public, the main focus is on keeping the ICS information machine functioning through a largely one-way linear dissemination model, from officials to the media to the public. Thus, PIOs learn much of what they do on the job, which is based on a communication model from the early twentieth century.

Social Media Culture

Social media are "the democratization of content and the shift in the role people play in the process of reading and disseminating information . . . a shift from a broadcast mechanism to a many-to-many model, rooted in a conversational format between authors and peers within their social channels" (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009, p. xvii). People take information they find through one social network and then pass it along through additional pre-existing networks. Sharing information through online communities contributes to more informed choices by the collective (Evans, 2008). Changes brought about by social technologies, the "groundswell," allow people to get what information they need from each other rather than through traditional media sources (Li & Bernoff, 2008).

MIT computer scientist David Reed developed what came to be known as Reed's Law, the idea that what makes social networks so powerful is that individuals form groups; those groups become communities; those communities then make connections and exchanges based on the many-to-many concept (Evans, 2008). Information posted to groups by a power user will be picked up by subgroups and be reposted for consumption in other groups. Conversations about the topic then take place and are again spread across multiple groups. "Social Media is [sic] pervasive and regenerates thoughts and ideas through a cyclical process of listening, discovering, sharing, and contributing personal or professional perspective" (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009, p. 190). Word of mouth is regarded as one of the most trusted sources of information, often garnering more trust than traditional media, or official government dispatches. Social media are essentially the digital form of word-of-mouth (Evans, 2008; Li & Bernoff, 2008).

In social media, there is no easily controlled chain of command. It involves a community of peers who collaborate freely and quickly with minimal restrictions. Because social media eliminates hierarchy, bureaucracy, and centralization, social media allow sharing across geographical borders (Collins, 2009). The structure is horizontal—the distribution is exponential—and information is not easily controlled.

Citizens can actually become liaisons between the emergency personnel or IC and the public. For example, during Hurricane Gustav, over half of the messages tweeted through microblogging site Twitter contained a link to the information source (Hughes & Palen, 2009). Evans (2008) suggests that social media are a "game changer" and control is no longer the objective. Practitioners should aim to become respected members in the communities that matter to them, enabling them to have influence within those communities especially during emergencies (p. xx).

In mass emergencies, people employ intense information-seeking behaviors as a way to make sense of what is happening (Starbird, Palen, Hughes, & Vieweg, 2010). With online capabilities, these behaviors have gone digital and give fire departments and other first responders an opportunity to reach people on their own terms rather than on the IC's terms.

Fire Department and Social Media on Collision Course

Social media have fueled the growth of community information resources with each new disaster and that trend will continue, calling the asymmetrical official-to-public model into question (Sutton, et al., 2008). These backchannel sources are gaining in credibility and reliability and sometimes are used as sources by both the news media and fire management personnel. Changes in communication technology give the public the power to seek out the information they need, bypassing official information sources they perceive as too slow (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009; Taylor, et al., 2005). Forty or fifty years ago, highly motivated people followed police and fire scanner relays. Today, people are turning to social media to accomplish the same goal—knowing the most up-to-date information available.

If fire departments and first responders choose not to participate in the social media revolution, they risk the information seekers getting incomplete or inaccurate information. Survey responses about the traditional one-way, linear model of crisis communication have included people feeling the information is too general or too focused on sensational aspects of the event (Taylor, et al., 2005).

Beyond information, people are seeking comfort during the course of a disaster. When people have a chance to share their experiences, it can result in "more efficient filtering, vetting, and emphasis on 'necessary' information" (Evans, 2008, p. 54). In 2007, a teenager who stayed in the wildfire area shared information with a number of friends in her soccer league. As they all struggled through the firestorms, the girls frequently updated their locations on their profile pages and offered words of encouragement to each other on group message boards. "I wanted to let people know what I knew and find out what they knew," she wrote (Darce, 2007, p. C-3). She acted as a hub to provide necessary information to an interested group. Social media provide a convenient channel for dozens of people scattered quickly by an emergency to stay in contact and remain informed.

Research Questions

The fire department's traditional information model has been in place for several decades and change will not be easy. Firefighters and first responders must adopt and adapt to the new technology. As noted by Solis and Breakenridge, "Web communities don't stop sharing information, bloggers don't stop publishing their opinions, and customers are seeking solutions, insight, and answers *right now*" (2009, p. 213). Though they are writing about the commercial world, the same principle applies to crisis communication. People using social media to discuss products and services at normal times will also use social media when emergencies occur. They will search out and share information. They want answers to their questions and they want them *now*. Is their community in the path of the fire? What roads are closed? Where is the nearest shelter?

Fire officials may be accustomed to releasing information at predetermined intervals, but that is not how people digest information anymore. Information exchange takes place 24 hours a day on the Web. Fire departments must consider the fact that citizens in an emergency situation will be tweeting, blogging, posting on discussion boards and calling to discuss the situation with neighbors, friends, family, and interested online communities. Information will be exchanged regardless of whether it comes from official sources or from a stranger near the action. According to the U.S. Department of

Health and Human Services, "To wait for all information to be complete and verified before releasing it to the public can create an information vacuum that will almost certainly be filled with rumor and speculation" (2002, p. 13).

PIO credibility is being squeezed from both sides – rush to release information and it may be incomplete, wait too long and it may find its way to the public through social media with someone else's perspective and possibly with errors. With that in mind, this study set out to examine the following: (1) Which factors appear to impact a fire department's use of social media, (2) What do departments view as the main obstacles to using social media, and (3) how do social media fit within the larger communication program of fire agencies and first responders.

When it comes to social media, there is not a consistent profile for who uses the medium. However, research data suggests users tend to be younger (Wright & Hinson, 2009). Because younger PIOs are more likely to have used Social Media technologies in their personal lives, they may also be less apprehensive than older PIOs about adopting social media technologies for use in the department's public relations. "Younger respondents were considerably more likely than older ones to not only advocate greater use of social media in public relations but also to use social media and other Internet-based technologies in their daily searches for news and information" (Wright & Hinson, 2009, p.22). The question remains as to whether a generation gap is forming in the use of social media. Another factor that may impact use of social media at work is education. Are those who are educated past K-12 more likely to be exposed to social media and thus more comfortable using them at work? Social media use does not appear to be segregated along sex lines with both men and women using social networking sites at equal rates (Lenhart, 2009). Finally, while there is no research to support a potential conclusion, we wondered whether being a sworn firefighter or a civilian employee impacts one's social media use. Putting all of these individual characteristics together, we posed the following research question:

- RQ1: Which combination of individual factors (age, education, sex, status, and use of social media outside work) best predicts social media use at work?

While no research concerning fire departments and first responders' use of social media specifically exists, we developed a series of organizational factors that may impact a PIO's decision to use social media. With that in mind, we posed the following research question:

- RQ2: Which combination of organizational factors (assignment as full-time PIO or full time PIO/other responsibilities, department size, PIO training, status as sworn firefighter or civilian employee, years as PIO, years in current position, years with department) best predicts social media use?

Beyond personal and organizational factors, there may be experiential factors that impact a department's choice to engage social media. The Incident Commander's ability to control information is breaking down in this digital world. Any disruption or pause in the speed of information may negatively impact a fired department's credibility. Waiting to verify may be viewed as engaging in stonewalling techniques. People will seek the information elsewhere (Taylor, et al., 2005). In an organization that values tight control over procedures, this becomes especially worrisome.

Public posting of negative comments and feedback also concern information personnel. Fire department PIOs work through the media and are not used to addressing

the public's negative feedback or comments. Responses to negative concerns are usually addressed in the form of a press release, an interview with a member of the press, or a press conference.

If these two issues were not enough, employees are also creating a challenge to the control of information (Friese, 2009). Every employee, and former employee, is potentially an unintended PIO. When the Jesusita Fire struck Santa Barbara in 2009, CJ Boyer took the initiative online. Boyer, a former firefighter, still had many friends in the fire service. He gained access to restricted areas and attended incident briefings. He posted regular updates to Twitter on topics such as evacuations, road closures, and fire statistics, often beating professional journalists to the punch. His posts were sometimes re-posted by the *Los Angeles Times* and reporters used information from Boyer and others like him in their stories ("When CJ Boyer tweets" 2009). Boyer and his fire department contacts essentially served as an unofficial PIO network.

At the 2009 Yuba Fire, PIO Captain Fernando Herrera experienced a loss of information control due to social media. A preliminary investigation suggested that the fire had started when a bird was electrified by power lines and fell into the dry grasses below. Though it was not official, firefighters on scene who had overheard the investigators' conversation posted the information to friends through Twitter, making it immediately available to the public. The information then spread through social media and offline means such as scanners. The official PIO team was blindsided by calls from media asking for confirmation of the bird as the cause of the fire. The PIO team operating at the base camp had not had any contact with investigators, so they could only deny the information. When the PIO team eventually received reports from investigators, they still could not confirm the bird as the cause with the media because it was not official information approved by the IC. The information circulated through traditional and social media for 24 hours before the PIO team had approval to confirm the information (personal communication, November 4, 2009).

Sanctioned or not, the conversations are taking place. People affected by wildfires are going to converse via social media. Fire personnel will tell friends what is happening. Technology makes the conversations immediately available to anyone who is interested. To assess these potential issues affecting social media use, we posed the following research question:

- RQ3: What obstacles do PIOs report as their largest challenges to implementing social media?

Finally, because social media are so new, we wanted to see what, if any, impact they were having on the continued use of traditional media. Thus, we posed the final research question:

- RQ4: What differences exist in the use of traditional media between PIOs who do and do not use social media?

Methods

This study is part of a larger examination of social media use among firefighters and PIOs. For this study, an online survey link was sent to firefighters/PIOs in over 200 departments with 129 responding for a response rate of over 50 percent. The results presented below focus solely on the firefighter/PIO characteristics that predict social

media use, departmental characteristics that predict social media use, obstacles social media use, and social media use in conjunction with traditional media.

Participants

The final sample contained 129 first responders, 40 of whom were female. Just over twice as many participants had duties in the department in addition to their PIO responsibilities (77) in comparison to those who had only PIO duties (36). Almost twice as many participants were sworn firefighters (80) than those who were civilian employees (44). The most common tenure in the fire department was 10 to 12 years, with a range from 1 to 31+ years; almost half (60) had only been in their current position for 1 to 3 years with all but 10 of them being in the job for less than 12 years. All but 20 participants had fewer than 15 years PIO experience, with almost half having less than 6 years (64). Fire departments ranged in size from less than 50 employees all the way up to 500+ employees with the largest numbers working in departments of 100-200 (30 or 24%) employees and 500+ employees (35 or 28%). Over half of the people were between 35 and 55, with approximately 14% under 35 and just over 14% over 55. Just under half of the participants (46%) had a bachelor's degree with 37% completing college up to and including an associate's degree. 35 percent of the departments have a policy in place for official use of social media by PIOs and 33 percent have a policy that restricts non-PIOs from using social media to relay departmental information.

Instrument

One author, who has worked closely with regional fire departments and understands the communication culture, created the survey instrument for this study. His experiences guided the list of questions regarding perceived obstacles to use of social media, the types of training people have with respect to being a PIO, and traditional media used to disseminate information. Approximately half of the questions used in these analyses were nominal data (age, education, sex for personal characteristics; assignment as full-time PIO or full time PIO/other responsibilities, department size, PIO training, status as sworn firefighter or civilian employee, years as PIO, years in current position, years with department for organizational characteristics); one-quarter were interval (reading, commenting on, and creating social media content in one's personal time and use of traditional media for disseminating information); and one-quarter were ordinal (rank order your obstacles to using social media).

Results

To address the first two research questions, we used logistic regression to predict which PIOs use social media at work; to address the third research question, we used descriptive statistics to see which obstacles people who do not use social media at work report; and to address the final research question, we completed a series of *t*-tests to see if there are differences in how each medium is used in departments that do and do not use social media. The results of these analyses appear below.

We can accurately predict 74.4% of the people who will use social media in their jobs based upon individual factors. The initial logistic regression called our attention to the following variables: education, age, status, sex, and engaging in creating social media content. Table 1 reports the findings from the logistic regression. One of the issues associated with logistic regression is that the Exp(B) used to determine which factors

increase the probability of predicting a particular behavior (social media use in this case), one needs to use interpretation rather than simply statistical significance. Extreme Wald statistics are frequently a result of small sample sizes rather than practical significance.

Insert Table 1 about here

In this case, we chose to run an additional set of analyses after seeing the results. For example, almost all of the participants had either a bachelor's degree or less than a bachelor's degree so we ran non-parametric to determine whether these large Wald and Exp(B) numbers were accurate representations. The follow-up analyses revealed that age, education and sex were not significantly different for those who did and did not use social media. It did reveal that sworn firefigher PIOs were more likely to use social media than civilian employees. Similarly, a set of follow-up t-tests did reveal that there is a statistically significant difference between those who do and do not use social media when it comes to reading ($t = -2.073$, $p = .041$; $M_{NoUse} = 3.16$, $M_{Use} = 3.63$), commenting on ($t = -2.322$, $p = .023$; $M_{NoUse} = 2.63$, $M_{Use} = 3.19$), and creating ($t = -3.731$, $p = .000$; $M_{NoUse} =$, $M_{Use} =$) social media content.

For RQ2, we can accurately predict 77.4% of the people who use social media in their jobs based upon organizational factors. The initial logistic regression called our attention to the following variables: whether the person has exclusively PIO duties, departmental size, PIO training, time in current position, and time with department. Again, we approached these results with caution and opted to run follow-up chi-square analyses.

Insert Table 2 about here

The follow-up nonparametric analyses revealed more similarities than differences. For example, the PIO training questions asked about training in one's own fire department, in another fire department, at an outside agency, and any other PIO training one had received. The lopsided numbers for each of these were likely the reason for the initial high Wald and Exp(B) numbers. That is, only training within one's fire department had a relatively equal split between people who had (65) and had not had it (63). Yet, the follow-up Mann Whitney test did not reveal statistically significant differences between the two groups. Similarly, follow-up analyses for time in current position, time as a PIO, time in current department, and department size revealed no statistically significant differences. Non-parametric analyses for assignment ($p = .001$) did reveal statistically significant differences between what would be predicted by chance and what was found in these data with full-time PIOs using social media more even though there were fewer of them in the sample. Overall, full-time PIOs are more likely to use social media than people who have PIO and other responsibilities combined. Also, there are no statistically significant differences in social media use based upon PIO training, time in your current position, department size, and time as a PIO.

For RQ3, we set out to determine which perceived obstacles to using social media existed for those who did not use social media. The three main obstacles were lack of

command support, lack of time, and lack of information control. These were ranked in people's top two reasons most frequently with lack of time being listed by 15 people (34.884%), lack of command support being listed by 13 people (30.233%), and loss of information control being listed by 12 people (27.907%). The remaining reasons included lack of personnel (11 people, 25.581%), lack of familiarity with social media tools (9 people, 20.930%), and concern over negative feedback from the public (6 people, 13.953%) for their top two reasons.

Insert Table 3 about here

For RQ4, we conducted a series of *t*-tests on the various traditional media used by the departments who did and did not use social media. Interestingly, the only statistically significant difference occurred with respect to the use of a departmental website ($t = -2.337$, $p = .021$) for those who use social media ($M = 4.26$) and those who do not use social media ($M = 3.80$). Of the traditional media that they use similarly, the most often used are news releases, media advisories, reporter interviews, homeowners association meetings, and public meetings.

Discussion

This study set out to determine the individual and organizational factors that influence social media use in fire departments by PIOs and first responders. Secondarily, we hoped to be able to present what departments that do not use social media perceive as the obstacles or challenges associated with using social media. Finally, we wanted to see what role social media play in an overall communication plan for these fire departments. In some cases, the findings contradicted expectations based upon other people's research and in other cases, they lay the groundwork as the first study of their kind.

Individual Factors

We initially looked at age, education, sex, and social media use at home, and status as the individual factors predicting social media use at work. From these variables, status as a sworn firefighter and use of social media at home were the only statistically significant predictors. So, why has previous research led us to believe that age makes a difference in social media use? In this case, we believe the reason may be how we chose to create our age categories. We attempted to maintain the age discriminations by keeping people together by decades. However, if we had split the ages into only two categories (under and over 45), we may have had different findings because 72.9% of the people in the 44 and under age group used social media at work and 59.1% of the 45 and older people used social media at work. Future research may need to come up with a better way of assessing age in relation to social media use for work.

In this case, the education distribution left no other coding options. We split the data based upon an associate's degree or less, a bachelor's degree, or a graduate degree. The thought was that people who were formally educated in a four-year program may be exposed to social media in a way that on-the-job training or as associate's degree would provide. As we can see from the data, that was not the case. While 70 percent of the

people with a bachelor's degree used social media, this was not statistically significant. In the future, we need to take this into consideration and possibly be more specific about what they are exposed to during their formal education. At the outset, we indicated that men and women both use social media equally and that played out in the data. There were no significant differences between male (60%) and female (77%) PIO's use of social media at work.

Finally, what did make a difference was status. Sworn firefighters were more likely to use social media than civilian employees. Why might this be the case? One possibility is that firefighters who have been on the front lines recognize the importance of having a dialogue with the public. Similarly, they may have stronger relationships with the community members having been part of the community for a longer time. Finally, they may be less worried about the information control than a formally trained civilian PIO who is more focused on following the chain of command present in most militarily-run fire departments.

Organizational Factors

Of all four research questions, this turned out to be the most perplexing. With the exception of the differences between full-time PIOs and firefighters who have PIO responsibilities, none of the organizational factors impacted a department's use of social media. On the positive side, this means that any department could implement social media if desired. Department size, amount of training provided to PIOs, time in current position, time as a PIO, and time with the department do not serve as significant predictors of social media use. Intuitively, it makes sense that those who are full-time PIOs are more likely to use social media. When you have to split your time between fighting fires and providing the public with needed information, there is less time to become an advocate for the technology, to become trained in how to achieve the best results, and to find the extra time needed to use another communication channel during a crisis situation.

Obstacles to Social Media Adoption

"A number of studies have found differences in attitudes or patterns of use of the same technology design across groups" (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994, p. 123). Even after seeing others use social media successfully, the thought of jumping into using them can be intimidating and scary (Evans, 2008). The idea of "inaccurate perceptions, uncontrolled forums, loss of control over your brand or message" may lead you to think it is safer to just not participate" (p. 35). However, social media must be looked at ontolotically; they exist and therefore must be addressed. Given this recommendation, how might we explain the perceptions of social media taking too much time, requiring support from one's commander, and concern over information control loss?

Whether communicating via social media actually takes more time than communicating through traditional channels remains to be seen. Of the respondents in this survey who do use social media, they indicated their workload increased by less than three hours a week on average. Any time you add a new channel of communication, especially if it is one with which you are unfamiliar, it is likely to add time and effort to your workload. However, rather than simply looking at the use of social media in terms of resources, a cost-benefits analysis may reveal the true value of using social media.

Improved community relations, being the official news source online and offline, and improved relationships with print and broadcast reporters will likely outweigh the time and effort costs of using social media. Providing a commander with this cost-benefit analysis may be the best way to change her or his perception of using social media and provide the PIO with the necessary support to undertake this endeavor.

As traditional, bureaucratic organizations, fire departments continue to maintain internal command and control ways of doing things. Command and control includes not only personnel, but also information. Lack of information control, the third most cited reason for not implementing social media, would be less of a concern if these organizations stopped and thought about the value of being the official online source. With social media, control is no longer the objective; becoming respected members in the local communities and enabling influence within those communities should be a department's primary public relations goal (Evans, 2008).

Fear of inviting negative feedback is one of the most common reasons people resist implementing social media tools (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009). Interestingly, this was not at the top of people's lists for challenges or obstacles to implementing social media. This may have been the case for these departments because they have moved from a one-way, linear model of communication to accepting feedback from their constituents. Negative feedback is going to occur whether you use social media; however, using social media makes the participant aware of the feedback and places him or her in a position to respond to those feedback messages.

Whenever participants are given a list of potential options for a particular item, there is always a question about whether the researchers have thought of everything participants might consider. That was the original concern with this question. Yet, only three people could think of an obstacle that was not on the list we provided. That said, we need to develop a better understanding of what leads people to have concerns about each of the potential obstacles when other departments have already overcome these obstacles to implement their social media communication channels.

Use of Traditional Media

With the exception of websites, departments that use and do not use social media are utilizing the same traditional channels for reaching the public. Clearly, departments that are blogging, tweeting, and Facebooking are more likely to be maintaining a website presence as well. What was more interesting about the findings in this area was that all of the other channels were being used at the same rate—why? If we think back to the shift from radio to television, we find a likely answer: people who are not early adopters of new technology still have to be reached. Social media, and websites, allow departments to reach a particular segment of their community and various publics. In this case, social media are not designed to replace other means of reaching publics; rather, they are simply another means to reach affected publics.

What was interesting and somewhat surprising about these findings was where press conferences fell on the importance list. That is, more departments are using meetings with homeowners associations and meetings with the public more than press conferences. Both meeting types create opportunities for dialogue between the department and the public, a generally superior way of interacting with the public instead of a linear, one-way model of communication. One of the other top modes for communication was

interviews with reporters. Again, these interviews offer the possibility of dialogue rather than monologue and illustrate that they recognize the importance of building relationships with their various publics. Finally, text messaging was seen as the bottom of PIOs' preferred channels of communication. It may be because this method of communication does not allow for full explanations, or it possibly contradicts their move toward more conversation with the community.

Implications

One of the implications of this study is that the traditional responsibility of PIOs—to disseminate information that has been vetted and approved by the Incident Commander—is changing. It is expanding to include the non-traditional job of connecting with important publics through social media channels. As Wright and Hinson (2009, p. 25) note, "More than half of all internet users have joined a social network, social networks have become the number one platform for creating and sharing Internet content and nearly 75 percent of all Internet users have read a blog. More people now get their news online than from traditional mass media even though many people blend online and traditional mass sources in their quest for news and information."

A second implication of this study is that the main perceived obstacles to full adoption of new media technologies are lack of time, lack of information control, and lack of support from the command staff. These are not unusual obstacles for what can be perceived as a total disruption of the time-tested command and control system of disseminating information that has been perfected by fire departments for decades. But fire departments across the country know that what has worked in the past is no longer sufficient going forward. Traditional communication channels must be augmented with new, unregulated and unsupervised channels, which is code language for "loss of control." While some fire departments may be a little slow to ramp up to the new technologies available, there is a quiet recognition that sooner, rather than later, PIOs will have to incorporate social media into the mix, or risk becoming less credible sources of important information in emergencies.

To do it right will take time and additional personnel. Those PIOs who have incorporated social media into their department's mix of communication channels indicated that social media can take an enormous amount of time during an emergency. In effect, someone has to monitor the social networks 24/7 during and after a crisis. If a PIO has to split time with other duties beyond managing communication, the social media component receives less attention than what is required to be effective.

Training is another area that could make an enormous difference for PIOs. Currently, the vast majority of PIOs who use social media learned it on the job or from personal interest. (One respondent even acknowledged that his teenage son taught him how to use social media!) Fire departments need to invest in regular, mandatory training in social media technologies for their communication personnel. The benefits will help PIOs to serve the community better. Perry, Taylor, and Doerfel (2003, p. 206) suggest, "Organizations that bring in new media tactics and engage publics in proactive discussions before, during, and after a crisis exemplify an important movement from one-way communication to two-way interaction between the public and an organization." In fact, Kent and Taylor (1998) point out that the potential for dialogue between an organization and its public is one major benefit of the Internet.

While social media are not a requirement today for PIOs to do their job, Solis and Breakenridge believe that PR professionals everywhere must engage in social media to stay relevant. "Others will waste time questioning the viability of Social Media and the need to reform, while simultaneously the world advances around them" (2009, p. xvii).

Conclusions

This study set out to examine factors that impact a fire department's use of social media, including the main obstacles to using social media, and how social media might fit within the larger communication program of fire agencies and first responders. From the survey responses, it is clear that top-down support for social media, professional training, and additional personnel available to monitor and participate in social media would assist the adoption process for all fire departments.

While the vast number of social networks make it more difficult to manage and control information dissemination, they also offer two-way symmetrical communication that fosters mutual understanding, provides immediate feedback, and enhances authenticity, accountability, and transparency—all important attributes for excellent public relations and public information credibility (Wright & Hinson, 2008). Fire departments have important and serious jobs to do. They save lives by putting out fires, rescuing people, and by providing timely safety information for the public, which is why communication should never be an either/or debate. There is room for both command and control *and* social media in the fire department.

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Table 1
Logistic Regression Results for Individual Factors

Variables in the Equation

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1[a]	EduR			5.080	2	.079	
	EduR(1)	1.452	.709	4.193	1	.041	4.271
	EduR(2)	1.521	.702	4.692	1	.030	4.577
	AgeR			5.624	5	.345	
	AgeR(1)	-.479	.898	.285	1	.594	.619
	AgeR(2)	.304	.835	.132	1	.716	1.355
	AgeR(3)	1.044	.852	1.501	1	.221	2.840
	AgeR(4)	.250	.789	.101	1	.751	1.284
	AgeR(5)	-.747	.808	.855	1	.355	.474
	StatusR(1)	1.164	.669	3.030	1	.082	3.202
	Sex(1)	.107	.594	.032	1	.857	1.113
	NMCreate	.480	.220	4.774	1	.029	1.616
	NMComme nt	.060	.236	.064	1	.800	1.062
	NMRead	.038	.222	.029	1	.864	1.039
	Constant	-2.840	1.052	7.291	1	.007	.058

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: NMCreate, NMComment, NMRead.

Table 2
Logistic Regression Results for Organizational Factors

Variables in the Equation

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1[a]	AssignR(1)	2.440	.794	9.451	1	.002	11.469
	SizeR			.751	2	.687	
	SizeR(1)	.294	.597	.243	1	.622	1.342
	SizeR(2)	-.569	.984	.335	1	.563	.566
	PIOExpR			3.875	4	.423	
	PIOExpR(1)	-.802	1.093	.539	1	.463	.448
	PIOExpR(2)	-1.046	1.034	1.023	1	.312	.351
	PIOExpR(3)	.340	1.291	.070	1	.792	1.406
	PIOExpR(4)	.967	1.057	.837	1	.360	2.630
	CurrentR			3.568	4	.468	
	CurrentR(1)	1.781	1.177	2.288	1	.130	5.934
	CurrentR(2)	1.156	1.318	.769	1	.380	3.176
	CurrentR(3)	.284	1.386	.042	1	.838	1.328
	CurrentR(4)	.431	1.201	.129	1	.720	1.539
	DeptR			6.377	6	.382	
	DeptR(1)	2.152	1.139	3.572	1	.059	8.601
	DeptR(2)	1.647	1.123	2.150	1	.143	5.190
	DeptR(3)	.757	1.178	.412	1	.521	2.131
	DeptR(4)	.182	1.114	.027	1	.870	1.199
	DeptR(5)	1.107	1.338	.685	1	.408	3.026
	DeptR(6)	.518	1.182	.192	1	.661	1.678
	PIOTrainD(1)	.446	.546	.666	1	.415	1.562
	PIOTrainAD(1)	.435	.635	.468	1	.494	1.544
	PIOTrainA(1)	-.788	.778	1.024	1	.311	.455
	PIOTrainO(1)	.254	.758	.112	1	.738	1.289
	Constant	-2.412	1.565	2.375	1	.123	.090

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: PIOTrainD, PIOTrainAD, PIOTrainA, PIOTrainO.

Table 3
Mean Difference Testing for Traditional Media

Variable	Media	N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err Mean
Release	1	43	4.42	.731	.112
	2	82	4.41	.719	.079
Advisory	1	43	4.14	.915	.140
	2	82	4.17	.717	.079
Press Conf.	1	42	3.62	.962	.148
	2	80	3.71	1.034	.116
Homeowners	1	41	4.02	.851	.133
	2	81	4.09	.762	.085
Meetings	1	43	4.21	.709	.108
	2	81	4.12	.731	.081
Email	1	39	3.90	1.021	.163
	2	80	4.16	.625	.070
Website	1	41	3.80	1.123	.175
	2	81	4.26	.685	.076
Phone	1	40	3.45	1.280	.202
	2	80	3.75	.907	.101
One-on-One	1	38	3.92	.749	.122
	2	80	4.01	.738	.082
Interview	1	42	4.19	.707	.109
	2	80	4.25	.626	.070
Texting	1	38	2.61	1.175	.191
	2	78	2.92	.923	.104

Theoretical Comments on Concrete Negative Examples of Cross-Border Product PR

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Abstract

Based on widely varying perspectives and practical evidence, this paper aims to demonstrate the difficulties of trans-national communication in practice, and in particular the dynamics linked to misunderstandings in this context. Building on this, it seeks to show opportunities to use international networking in order to avoid these stumbling blocks in the international environment.

Introduction & Overview

International communication, both internal and external, is becoming more and more important. This has always been true for large corporations, but is also increasingly the case for medium-sized companies. There is, however, very little theoretical foundation (cf Sriramesh/Verčič 2009; Schwarz 2009) and only peripheral preparatory training (cf Sievert/Breins 2009) to support the growing economic and social importance of international PR and marketing.

Four years ago, one of the two authors of this article therefore suggested for the first time an approach to an interdisciplinary theory of corporate communication (cf. Sievert 2007a; for further development Sievert 2007b and 2009; and regarding the reception of the article Bruhn 2009). In the meantime, this theoretical approach has been further developed and last year won a Euro-American PR Scholarship prize. This article aims to put the theory into practice, testing it on real experiences in the field of product PR.

The focus of the article is therefore on an annotated presentation of real, practical examples. Based on this, basic theoretical and empirical "Golden Rules" for cross-border product PR can be formulated. Particular attention will be paid not only to the external, but also to the internal success factors for cross-border communication in real-life case studies. The article ends with recommendations for futher reading on the topic.

Theory of international communication
– and what we can learn from this in practice

If we want to investigate international corporate communication systematically, we first need a differentiated heuristic working model. Taking Weischenbergs Journalism Model (cf Weischenberg 1992) as a basis, PR contexts were presented in an "onion skin" model (cf Sievert 2007c, 2008a and Sievert/Porter 2009), in order to illustrate interdependencies and interactions (cf diagram 1). Building on this, it is possible to outline a form of international PR "compass" (cf diagram 2 and, for a general background to the compass method, Kirf/Rolke 2002). The differences depicted between the country issuing the information and the target countries can make PR professionals aware of particularly important issues in the implementation of specific cross-border communication.

Within this model, the normative context is formed by the economic and political systems in which corporate communication takes place, as well as the media system environment. In the structural context, specific foreign target institutions, usually companies, are investigated in more detail with regard to their financial and leadership strucutre. In the functional context, the focus is mainly on cultural dimensions and conflicts that could (and should) significantly influence the contents of international corporate communication. Last but not least, the role context regards international target figures in the context of their various characteristics, competencies and attitudes. This analysis has so far been conducted primarily on media figures in order to provide an example, but a wider view would naturally be desirable to achieve a more comprehensive global stakeholder approach.

DIAGRAM 1: Heuristic grid of analysis of (international) communications

Standard context	Structure context
• General characteristics of political and economic systems • Concrete characteristics of media systems and media relations in particular	• Typology of company's financing ("corporate finance system") • Chosen model for company's management and controlling ("corporate governance")
Function context	Role context
• Distinctive dimensions in describing culture • Other subjects with content pertinence and communication goals	• Identification of global players for the international achievement of communication goals • Knowledge and general characteristics of the alignment of players

Source: Sievert 2007, following Weischenberg 1992

DIAGRAM 2: ICC compass for planning and implementing ICC
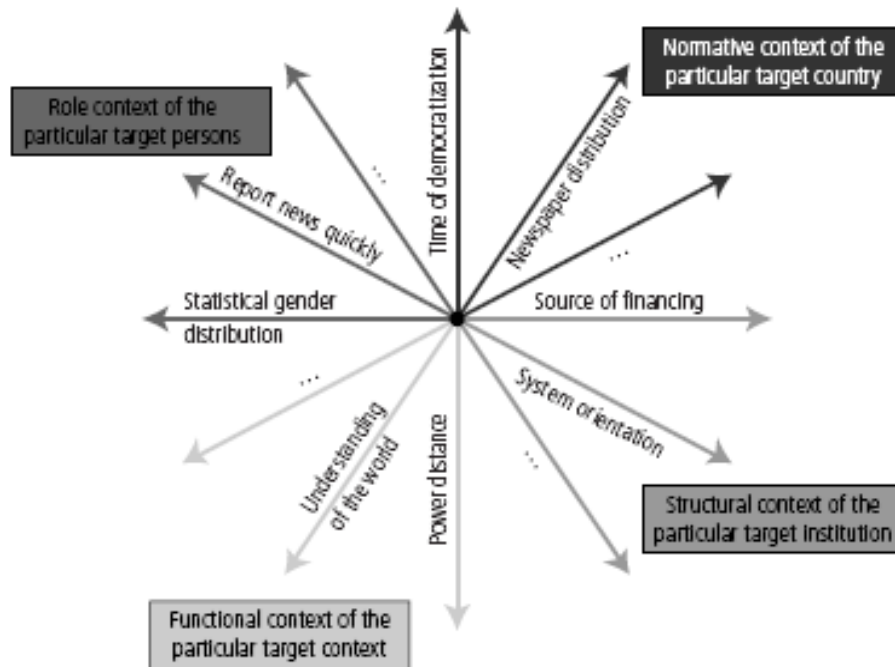
Source: Sievert 2007

DIAGRAM 3: "Cultural gap" within the "ICC Compass" framework
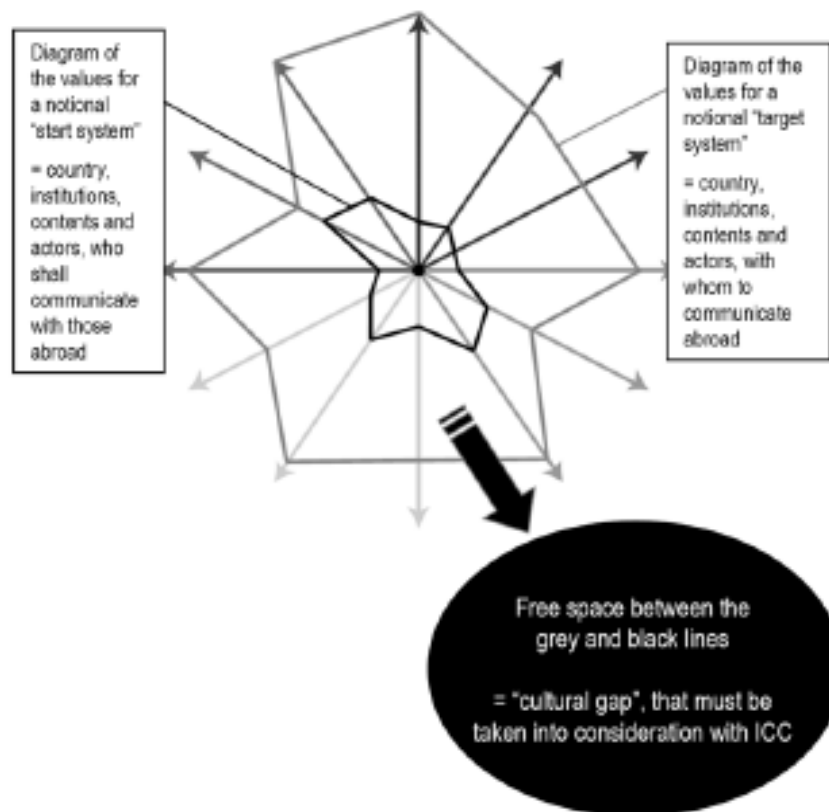
The original heuristic approach was based on the field of corproate communication, but the findings are nevertheless basically valid for product communication, although this field can often be more extensively standardised. This will be shown in the remainder of this article. Furthermore, it will show that further examples also fit the heuristic analytical grid presented. This will be done by transferring data from the various dimensions into a form of "compass". Where there is a large gap between the country issuing the information and the target countries, communication professionals are advised to take particular care (cf diagram 3).

Specific use of international communication theory
and examples of failure when it is not observed

This chapter shows anonymised, typical examples of cross-border PR, which were inmplemented in between three and seven European target countries. None of these case studies can claim to provide comprehensive evidence; they are merely heuristic examples.

The description is based on the heuristic analytical diagram described above. PR agencies were assigned with product launches for multinational companies from the IT, pharmaceutical and food industries, addressing target publics from various stakeholder segments (journalists, traders, distributors, customers and salespeople) working through targeted media (trade, public, business and online media).

Trading firm adverts and normative context of the target country

Anyone who wants to communicate successfully in an international environment must be informed about the normative context and entire system strucutre of the target country. Our first case study, examining an expanding trading firm, demonstrates this very clearly.

CASE STUDY 1: A medium-sized textile trading firm that had been very successful in Germany wanted to enter the French and Polish markets. For reasons of cost, the advertising was to be accompanied by a considerable amount of PR work. Additionally, a personal preference of the company director meant that daily newspapers were to be incorporated to a particularly great extent.

The company director assigned the task to the company's own communications department, who soon returned with a list of the most important daily newspapers and contact details for the editorial departments in the relevant countries.The placement of the information worked very well using local agencies, and the PR team was soon able to present the board with an extensive initial collection of clippings from France.

This success was not, however, mirrored in the sales and acceptance of the new shops. Once the clipping collection was later extended to include analysis of the coverage and reader figures, the company realised that, despite the many mentions in the press, only relatively few people had actually read the reports, and fewer still in the desired target group.

The company director and his communications staff made several mistakes, which ultimately led to the failure of their communication. What is particularly noteworthy, however, is their failure to take the cultural context into consideration. If we compare the media systems of the countries in question, it becomes clear that Germany has a newspaper circulation of 76 percent of the population, whereas France only reaches 45 percent and Poland 23 percent (Wruck 2006: 2; Wyka 2008: 60). A further comparison of media data, along with the inclusion of the political framework, brings more differences to light, all of which should be taken into account when planning communication (cf Sievert 2010a: 5-6).

Recall of a digital camera and structural context of the institution issuing the communication

Cross-border and cross-cultural communication takes place in complex contexts. It is influenced decisively by the management's understanding of and approach towards communication, whether there is one "best way" to ensure communicative success or whether hybrid forms and individual methods of communication can be accepted or supported, leaving room for combinations and adaptations to meet the requirements of particular tasks or situations. This is linked closely to the corporate governance of institutions, for which one can obtain internationally comparative figures.

In this context, it is possible that those involved in the campaign on the client's side could be surprised by uncoordinated decisions from the company headquarters. These have an impact on the communication and the corresponding activities, as shown in the following example.

CASE STUDY II: A digital camera is to be introduced in specialist camera shops in selected test markets in Europe. The project is based in Germany. The accompanying product PR was assigned to a PR agency network well-known in this sector.The

integrated communication concept was developed in close consultation with all the relevant agency partners in the respective target markets.

Shortly after the launch, isolated consumer complaints and criticism from the dealers were received, regarding a fault in the battery. These complaints reached not only the local communication and sales professionals, but also the company headquarters. The messages that arrived there led to a hectic, centrally-directed recall campaign.

This move from above came as a shock to those involved in the ongoing campaign in the countries affected. This was because the information linked to the recall was produced centrally and distributed to customers, dealers and journalists without consultation (regarding the structure or the content) with those responsible for local communications. Alternative scenarios for a differentiated handling of the process, which would have taken into account the specific mood, information requirements and opinions of the target groups regarding the local campaign, and considered the communicative effects, were neither discussed nor accepted.

Independent assessments and statements on the communication situation, even from the agency involved, were not requested or desired. This form of centralised communication, combined with confusing actionism without any attempt to reach a concensus, is not helpful in such problem situations. This kind of behaviour can lead easily to misunderstanding, thus endangering reputations.

A systematic analysis of the structural context would have at least served as a warning in this case. A comparison of the "control culture" of central European countries shows that German, French and Polish companies generally tend towards strong centralism. (cf Karmann 2000: 26; Buckley 2004: 45 and Liebermann et al. 1999: 92), whereas English or Danish companies allow their management more free room to act and control them only at arm's length (cf Buckley 2004: 45 and IMF 2006: 119). Initial detailed results for further indicators of the structural context are also available (cf Sievert 2010a: 6-7).

Introduction of a women's medicine and the functional context of the target content

Companies that initiate cross-border communication programmes without knowledge of or reflection on these influencing factors, success determiners and modes of action, and thereby expect the succesful blanket implementaion of centrally developed ideas, can easily have their expectations disappointed. Their intentions therefore fail wholly or partially, or they have to endure unnecessary delay in realising them.

CASE STUDY III: Shortly after the product launch in one target country, the packaging illustrations approved by the producer aroused negative connotations amongst female customers. The problem was a symbol that was neutral in the country issuing the communication, but had an erotic symolism in some target countries. This led to many unwelcome comments, which in turn resulted in reluctance amongst customers to buy the product.

Objections from doctors to pharmaceutical sales reps and the polemic reaction in the specialist media regarding the issue brought about a very critical mood, to which the product marketing and PR teams had to react. To ensure the acceptance and sales of the products, the producer felt they had no choice but to commission a redesign of the packaging. This unforeseen reaction was not anticipated by anyone working on the project, neither on the client side, nor for the agency. There was no consultation process

on the packaging design (i.e. no "first impression advance check") with the colleagues in the target country.

The partner agencies involved were also not asked by the lead agency for a success evaluation. The crisis communication plans were not prepared for a case like this. The product redesign caused extra costs which were not covered by the original communication budget, which meant that savings had to be made in other communication projects. The product management also had to answer difficult questions from the company management and attempt to exonerate themselves from responsibility for the partial damage caused to the company's image.

The same is true here as for previous examples: a glance at the "compass" of international communication could have prevented the problems occurring. A simple cultural analysis shows clear differences when it comes to sexual topics. Germany, Great Britain and Poland have ratings of between 60 and 62 in a "masculinity index", whereas France stands at just 39 and Denmark merely 10, with high femininity ratings instead. This is a clear indicator for large cultural differences even within the same continent and cultural space, which leads one also to expect differences in pictorial symbolism. The same or similar is true for other values in the functional context (cf. Sievert 2010a: 7-8).

Online wine dealer and the role context of the target public
The differences within the various indicators of an international communication "compass" become clearer still when it comes to the role context of the target public. This is shown by the case study of an online wine dealer that wanted to enter more European markets.

CASE STUDY IV: Because the PR agency commissioned with making media contact had not referred to the internationally differing routines and behaviour of journalists and the framework of conditions for their reports in different countries, the client in this example was left fairly disappointed.

During an organised press trip, not everyone could hold their drink quite as well as their French colleagues. Furthermore, following the perfectly planned and executed wine tasting and subsequent dinner, the German and English journalists were unwilling to follow the request of the organisers and simply print the company and product information as found in the basic press kit . The client was then surprised that the media echo and publicity expected after the event failed to materialise. The missing media response was not only put down to the incompetency of the PR consultants, but also impacted the sales of the product range, and was therefore economically relevant for the client.

The problems in the relationship between agency and client that occur because of such "misperformances" can be avoided by thorough prior (issues) research. One look at selected compass data would have made it clear that the events on the press trip were predictable. Even within Europe, journalists' understanding of their own role varies greatly. In Great Britain, Denmark, Poland and Germany, they see themselves as "gatekeepers". Between 74% and 83% of journalists regard the composition of independent analysis as a particularly important part of their job. In France, however, only 40% of journalists see this as a central element of their professional role (cf Hovden et al. 2009: 161, Sievert 1998, Sievert 2010b und Weaver 1998). Comparable differences

can be found for other attitudes, and also for purely demographic characteristics (cf Sievert 2010a: 9-10).

Consequences of theory and case studies
– and five "golden rules" for international communication

Any international or intercultural communication activity should ideally begin with a conception of the communication strategy based on a detailed analysis of the situation, agreement on objectives and target groups, the formulation of the content to be communicated and the thorough planning of the most suitable methods to ensure the successful implementation of the strategy. In this context, the internationl communication compass mentioned above can be very helpful as initial orientation, in order to recognize areas where there is particularly large divergence and therefore devote particular attention. .

This process also implies the need for a decision on who makes communication decisions of national and international scope, as well as who develops normative principles for the creation and control of the intended communication process. In other words, who leads, and who decides where and when high or low coordination costs can be accrued by the communication managers responsible? Are both central planning and a decentralised, local implementation of communication management planned? Is there a flow of information (content information etc) through all levels of the communication process, from the headquarters to the branches, or is there a collaborative exchange in both directions, which permits individual decisions about information? Additionally, a decision must be made as to who is responsible for the evaluation and process control of the communication, and how the (material and human) resources available are distributed in the countries involved.

Based on this, five central success factors can be formulated for the conception and implementaion of successful cross-border PR programmes:

1. *Think interculturally!* The importance of thinking in intercultural interpretation models and differentiated contexts, as well as the integration of this reflected knowledge (dependent on the task and situation) in communication strategy and tactics can be seen repeatedly in international product PR activities. Experience shows that even simple insights such as the fact that there are different communication cultures and structures in different target markets (e.g. thematic preferences in the public agenda, values and norms, mentalities, behaviour patterns, linguistic specifics), together with their communicative consequences, are often not sufficiently taken into account during the conception phase.

2. *Use local knowledge!* The next important point is to integrate the experience and knowledge of the subsidiary involved in the planned communication measures. The people there know far more than the headquarters about the communication links, interactions, interlinking between different opinion-shaping discourse arenas and cultural idiosyncracies of their public sphere, as well as the economical and political situation in their area. This is especially true with regard to identifying potential issues and being informed about their development in public spheres relevant to the company on a local, regional and national level. Making recourse to the normatively formed and practice

oriented expertise of the local colleagues can be used as part of a symmetrical knowledge management system. This is not just true for the relevant internal decision making process, but also for the informal exchange with communication service providers in the strategy development phase, as well as within the strategic controlling as part of the communication planning.

3. *Be prepared for conflicts!* By building the method explained above, i.e. sharing content and analytical knowhow, this information can easily be channelled and archived using Web 2.0 applications, then turned into orientation knowledge that informs the about actions taken. In this way, conflict topics that would influence the contents of corporate communication can be evaluated and potential problems can be recognised in the development phase. Part of this is the insight into the reputation of the company amongst the relevant groups in the target countries. Who has prejudices, where are imbalances, where is potential for support and what chances are there of collaborating with opinion leaders ?

4. *Always expect the unexpected!* The communication flexibility connected with these insights reduces problems of adaptation and misinterpretation. Semantic barriers can be overcome before they become issues and result in crises that endanger reputation. This form of strategic stakeholder oriented communication management also helps in the communicative risk assessment or risk minimization for business activities and is an influencing variable for the expected economic success.

5. *Plan topics appropriate for each country!* This is especially important for the interaction between PR and media in the planning of international media work. For this interaction to be effective, those being responsible must know which topics and contents can be placed in order to generate a positive media echo, and which have a negative interpretation context (in which media environments) in the selected countries. The knowledge of diverging roles, attitudes, routines, structures and functions of the media in the target countries, and how these influence dealings with media (representatives), should be a vital key competece for Corporate Communication practitioners .

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International Public Relations: An Experiment on A Virtual Model of Learning

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Abstract

In a global economy, where social and cultural mores affect the practice of public relations (PR) differently in different regions (and even specific countries), there is a need for an increased focus on contextual and environmental sensitivity if graduates are to emerge as effective operators on an international stage.

However, despite some educators' efforts to the contrary, most PR curricula in higher education remain focused on theory and practice relevant to the dominant PR cultures of the US and, to a lesser extent, the UK. This prompts some scholars such as Sriramesh (2003) to propose the inclusion of multicultural issues into other PR courses such as PR writing and PR campaigns. This can either be achieved through international exchange programmes or, more economically, via facilities such as IP-based web conferencing.

Meeting this need, the Ball State University and the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul have created a concept for an international PR teaching model, implemented for the first time in the spring of 2002 (Sharpe, Simões & Steffen, 2005). Since 2008, University College Falmouth in the UK and Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil have been deploying a virtual model of teaching and learning based on the same model, taking particular advantage of rapid developments in communications technology. Using virtual tools, such as IP-based videoconference sessions, email and social networking platforms, this project enables the planning of international PR campaigns for Brazilian and British non governmental organizations (NGOs), preparing students to gain expertise to deal with different cultural and communication systems on a global level.

This experience has demonstrated the importance of face-to-face interaction to identify the cultural specificities present in each other's societies. Sometimes, we have misperceptions obtained from a brief observation on the internet, which are corrected by the students during the work, demonstrating that international counterparts can learn from each other about the idiosyncrasies in the global society.

This study provides an overview of the experiment, highlighting how such activities can be practically produced and evaluated and makes suggestions for further international opportunities in the realm of public relations education.

Introduction

In the field of public relations (PR), the increased interactivity and immediacy of communication made possible by technological developments over the last decade have extended the presence of organizations beyond national borders, promoting intercultural interaction with their publics. This phenomenon has affected the practice of PR differently in different regions, encouraging higher education (HE) institutions to prepare PR students to operate on an international stage by providing them with the opportunity to develop abilities in their roles as beyond-border communication assessors. Following a proposal by Sriramesh (2003), that multicultural issues in PR might be taught through the application of academic resources carried out by faculty of different countries, it is now possible to deliver such activity through virtual models of learning. These comprise highly efficient means of teaching international PR practice by bringing together students from different countries in virtual classrooms to raise awareness of the challenges encountered by PR practitioners when dealing with clients and audiences at an international level. Such forms of international PR teaching and learning can acquaint students with decision-making processes in the global context, enabling them to become proficient in the application of technological communication and providing experience of intercultural communication systems.

To meet this educational demand regarding the processes of teaching and learning in the international arena, faculty and students from the Department of Writing at University College Falmouth (UCF) and the College of Communication of Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (Famecos/PUCRS), have since 2008 been deploying a virtual model of learning based on a concept for an international PR campaigns teaching model piloted initially in the spring of 2002 by the College of Communication, Information and Media of Ball State University (CCIM/BSU) and Famecos/PUCRS. Reporting on this pilot, Sharpe et al (2005), noted that in terms of international public relations, "the educational need is not the teaching of language, cultures and knowledge of political and economic systems, but instead an understanding of how to work with and through public relations practitioners in other countries and with international clients and audiences" (p. 135). This statement has been supporting the development of campaign classes put into practice for eight years by the universities mentioned above.

The particular virtual model of learning implemented by UCF and Famecos/PUCRS, is designed to provide students with the opportunity to:

- Study NGOs from different societies, encouraging them to work in an environment of international cooperation based on improving society, and, in this way, better understand the relationships supporting humanitarian values.
- Apply innovative knowledge systems, enhancing the progress of beneficial partnerships between and among academic communities and civil societies, demonstrating that to share appropriate knowledge at an international level is possible.
- Bring together partners from different countries with a common academic aim of understanding diversity as a source of significant benefit in the development of knowledge on regional and global scales.

- Interact with students from different societies to exchange indigenous knowledge and gain expertise in creating empirical research systems that deepen and develop knowledge in the area of international PR.

This paper presents the concept for the virtual model of PR learning referred to above, placing Brazilian and British professors and students in a campaign classes. In this way, students in both countries supervised by the faculty advisors have the opportunity to prepare international campaigns for foreign clients assisting each other and experiencing how PR practitioners depend on their international counterparts to deal with clients and audiences in each other's countries by gathering research and adjusting plans to cultural needs in order to produce workable strategies and tactics in an international level. Using contemporary communication tools, such as videoconference sessions, email and social networking platforms, this development enables the planning of International Public Relations Campaigns for Brazilian and British NGOs, preparing students to gain expertise in dealing with different cultural and communication systems, thereby emulating PR consultants working internationally.

This kind of academic resource has been recommended by members of the international PR academic community as a way of building understanding of the cultural challenges of working with practitioners and clients in other cultures to gain expertise in open-minded behavior and to respect the counsel of international peers (Sharpe et al, 2005). Moreover, initiatives like these associate the academic practice of HE institutions with the dynamics of HE and Research for Societal Change and Development, recommended by UNESCO in the 2009 world conference on Higher Education. UNESCO's 2009 Communiqué recommends the implementation of several topics including: Social responsibility of HE; Access, Equity and Quality; Internationalization, Regionalization and Globalization; and Learning Research and Innovation. (UNESCO, pp 2-6).

Literature review

Some of the emerging literature on international PR includes content relating to the local and global environment for practicing public relations and encouraging new ways of learning and teaching based on cultural diversity in order to establish and qualify relationships between companies and publics from different nations. In some instances, this literature echoes the topics proposed by UNESCO to higher education institutions listed earlier. Furthermore, it is possible to establish a relationship between these topics due to the fact that the objectives guiding the virtual model of learning (VML OBJECTIVES) presented in this study are supported by theoretical perspectives in the field of international PR (TPIPR). This situation is outlined in the table below:

Table 1
UNESCO topics for higher education linked with virtual model of learning objectives and associated theoretical perspectives

UNESCO TOPICS	VML OBJECTIVES	TPIPR
1. Social responsibility of HE	Work for NGOs from different societies, encouraging them to work in an environment of international cooperation based on improving solidarity, thus supporting humanist values.	Wilcox, Cameron, Ault & Agee (2006) Curtin & Gaither (2007)
2. Access, Equity and Quality	Apply innovated knowledge systems, enhancing the progress of beneficial partnerships between and among academic communities and civil societies demonstrating that to share appropriate knowledge at an international level is possible.	Sriramesh & Vercic (2003) Wakefield (1996)
3. Internationalization, Regionalization and Globalization	Bring together partners from different countries with a common academic aim of understanding diversity as a source of significant benefit in the development of knowledge on regional and global scales.	Sharpe (1993) Vercic (1996)
4. Learning Research and Innovation	Interact with students from different societies to exchange indigenous knowledge and gain expertise in creating empirical research systems that deepen and develop knowledge in the area of international PR.	Wakefield (1996) Ruler & Vercic (2003)

Social Responsibility of HE
    Associated with the UNESCO topic "Social Responsibility of HE", the first objective of the VML, (expressed as "Work for NGOs from different societies, encouraging them

to work in an environment of international cooperation based on improving solidarity, thus supporting humanist values") finds support from Wilcox, Cameron, Ault and Agee (2006), who point out the rise of NGOs worldwide generating cooperation between corporations and NGO activists aiming to develop socially responsible policies. Mentioning the presence of NGOs in an international context, Curtin and Gaither (2007) have created the term 'INGOs' to express international non-governmental organizations, for whom effective public relations practice constitutes a fundamental way to harmonize the interests and needs of a variety of publics. The same authors remind us that governments face the challenge of generating meaning to and for various publics, in terms of "creating a space where public relations can cooperate in more formal terms as a specialized function" (p. 33).

Access, Equity and Quality
Associated with the UNESCO topic "Access, Equity and Quality", the second objective of the VML, (expressed as "Apply innovated knowledge systems, enhancing the progress of beneficial partnerships between and among academic communities and civil societies demonstrating that to share appropriate knowledge at an international level is possible") is supported by Sriramesh (2003) who proposes the inclusion of multicultural issues into other PR courses such as PR writing and PR campaigns, suggesting "collaboration among two or more faculty of different countries who can jointly teach classes or specific modules of classes" (p. 1009). In addition, Wakefield (1996), refers to a gap which exists between current practice and theories that describe and explain effective practice in cross-border public relations programs, suggesting greater cooperation between scholars and practitioners to ensure that theories can be used to determine the effectiveness of international practices (p. 27).

Internationalization, Regionalization and Globalization
Associated with the UNESCO topic "Internationalization, Regionalization and Globalization", the third objective of the VML, (expressed as "Bring together partners from different countries with a common academic aim of understanding diversity as a source of significant benefit in the development of knowledge on regional and global scales") finds support in Sharpe (1992) who states that the academic community of international PR can have expertise in this field by learning all they can about other cultures and imparting it to their students and fellow practitioners. The author affirms this with the statement: "when we can make accurate evaluations about our own behavior as well as others', we enable the profession to facilitate change that truly contributes to the social harmonizing process for the benefit of all of global society" (p.107).

With respect to the performance of PR at the international level, considering the possibility of this activity to be applicable across cultures and political/economics systems, Vercic (1996) presents the results of research funded by the IABC Research Foundation of the International Association of Business Communicators (established by a group including J. E. Grunig and L. A. Grunig). This work – known as the Excellence Project - posited nine guiding principles for the practice of international PR in diverse contexts around the world. In addition, research indicates the need to consider a few specific variables that comprise the particularities of different nations such as the political/economic system, culture, the extent of activism, the level of development and

the media system. The study described in this paper demonstrates the concern of the academic community to scrutinize PR actions globally.

Learning Research and Innovation

Associated with the UNESCO topic "Learning Research and Innovation", the fourth objective of the VML, (expressed as "Interact with students from different societies to exchange indigenous knowledge and gain expertise in creating empirical research systems that deepen and develop knowledge in the area of international PR") is supported by Wakefield (1996), who states that "domestic research in public relations is reaching a state of maturity…the body of knowledge includes data on practitioners roles, theories on publics and communication models and assumptions about issues management, activism and strategic public relations" (p.27). Similarly, Van Ruler & Vercic (2003), point to the need to globalize the discussion of the rationale for PR initiating a dialogue between continents. According to these authors, alternatives lines of thought about how PR is oriented to cultural differences and theoretical approaches is needed.

Project description

Rationale

The speed at which communication and other technological advances affect relationships between people, implies a new concept of cultural differences, guided not only by geographical limitations but also by lifestyles. The expanding global village and the occurrence of new means of production in society require that citizens all around the world create partnerships to figure out alternative ideas and solutions to solve imminent social problems that can arise in these new contexts. Considering that the study of International PR has been introduced into academic programs with the basic aim of provide students with the opportunity to develop abilities as beyond-border communication assessors, the campaign classes described below are designed to acquaint students with the decision-making process in a global context, applying the operational methodologies of PR for planning PR campaigns and communication programs at an international level.

Outline

University College Falmouth, UK (UCF), and the College of Communication of Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (Famecos/PUCRS), Brazil, have, since 2008, been using PR campaign planning classes to acquaint students with international PR activity. According to the project concept, these campaigns classes bring together students from different countries to operate as counselors planning PR campaigns for NGOs in Cornwall (UK), and Rio Grande do Sul state (Brazil). In order to maximize each other's understandings of differences between country cultures and the performance of PR activity worldwide, each student team gives their counterpart a campaign planning brief so that UK students produce a campaign plan for a Brazilian NGO and Brazilian students produce a campaign plan for a UK NGO.

This has been accomplished by applying an operational methodology proposed by Simões (1992) through which PR activities secure the cooperation of the public in optimizing the legitimate interests of the organization. It is composed of four phases:

1. **Diagnosis**, which refers to situational analysis of the organization's behavior against public expectations and interests in order to reveal any PR 'problems'.
2. **Prognosis**, which refers to the prediction of the result of the clash between the organizational action and the public's expectations in the realm of conjectural evolution.
3. **Advising** the organisation's leaders, highlighting the occurrence of possible conflicts and their causes, and presenting suggestions for policies and procedures that avoid the conflict.
4. **Implementing** programs and information campaigns using tools and techniques to deliver the messages putting into practice the actions suggested in the previous phase.

This theoretical framework, because of its breadth, supports different guidelines to orient the construction of public relations campaigns. Among them, may be cited the model proposed by Smith (2005) composed of four phases: 1. Formative Research; 2. Strategy; 3. Tactics; and 4. Evaluation (pp. 11-13).

Moreover, Parkinson and Ekachai (2006) provide the ROSTE model, which stands for Research, Objectives, Strategies, Tactics and Evaluation created to guide the production of PR campaigns. The same authors point out the usefulness of each of these five phases in the development of a PR Campaign: The first phase – research – "serves several functions and therefore is conducted at many stages of a public relations campaign". It is commonly applied to more than one purpose such as 1. to influence management based on realistic facts; 2. to better identify objectives, to decide on actions and to determine tactics; and 3. to evaluate and monitor the campaign.

The second phase – objectives – "can guide strategic planning, serve as a tool for client persuasion, and be foundation for campaign evaluation". It is applied for the followed purposes: 1. to guide strategic planning and tactical decisions; 2. to associate public relations program with the client's organizational goals; and 3. to allow better measurement of the plan.

The third phase – strategies – can be seen as an attempt to accurately express one idea or message to persuade the public to meet the public relations objective. This understanding leads the authors to state that "public relations campaign strategy uses principles, theories, models and paradigms to guide decisions about what messages to deliver and what media to use". The fourth phase – tactics – can be seen as a way of implementing campaign strategies, "determining the timing of activities and communications, the exact wording of messages, whether advertising or publicity is best, or whether direct or mediated publicity will be most likely to deliver the intended message". The fifth phase – evaluation – constitutes the measurement of the consequences of the campaign comparing its results with its objectives.

Aims and objectives

The Campaign classes aim to provide students with the opportunity to:

- Acquire proficiency in technology used to communicate with international professionals and clients.
- Expand cultural perspectives that enhance international awareness in terms of diversity, showing them that cultures can vary widely globally and that they need to gain expertise to deal with different cultural and communication systems.

- Prepare speeches appropriate to different audiences, expanding their understanding of the need to make presentations to international management teams.
- Gain theoretical and practical expertise in the process of collecting information, implementing data collection processes and communicating the findings and their implications to organizations that operate in the international environment.
- Produce academic work at an international level.

Methods and procedures

The project is directed and supervised by the faculty advisors of the partnership educational institutions, according to the theoretical foundations described by academics in the field of international PR. It runs in the fall term for the UK university, a period that matches with the spring term for the Brazilian university. The official language is English, and classes take place at university study rooms equipped with the necessary technology to run IP-based videoconferences. The project runs for approximately 14 weeks, during which the student teams have around seven visual meetings. Each student team also participates individually in other meetings (in a no-virtual way) at other times during the same period. Information exchanged during the videoconferences, by email and through web-based social networking platforms is used as the basis of campaign research. It is fortunate that despite the great geographical distance between Brazil and the UK, the time difference is small enough to allow real-time videoconferencing to take place during normal teaching hours.

At the College of Communication of Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (Famecos/PUCRS), the campaign classes are implemented through a project called International PR Campaigns (IPRC). This Project comprises one of the Center Famecos Without Frontiers' activities and is led by a professor identified as the coordinator. The students making part of the IPRC Project come from different undergraduate courses of Famecos (Journalism, Advertising, Public Relations and Audiovisual Production). They are selected at the beginning of each semester, based on the psychological profile, in technical skills and knowledge (or interest in learning) of the English language. At University College Falmouth, the project runs as a formal part of the Level 2 (second year) BA (Hons) Public Relations syllabus. It forms the core of a mandatory unit within this three year undergraduate degree, and all students must participate. This is helped by the fact that the degree has attracted relatively small numbers of students since its inception in 2007.

Before starting the course, the ground rules for developing the work, including the agreement on the teaching plan, the schedule of activities and the details of clients for which the groups undertake the planning of the campaigns are agreed upon by professor-coordinators, identified as Faculty Advisors (FAs). When the Student Teams (STs) and client organizations have been chosen, the FAs direct and supervise the activities which are prescribed in the form of exercises (see appendices 1 to 9). The seven meetings by videoconference are described below:

1. The first visual meeting is attended by the FAs and STs. The development of activities prescribed by the FAs starts followed by the presentation of students and professors. An overview on the customs and lifestyles of each country's young people, and data on the development of PR activity in both countries is presented.

During this session STs also make short presentations about the proposed NGO clients.

2. In the second visual meeting, the FAs present the theoretical support and a guideline relating to the planning of public relations campaigns.
3. The third visual meeting develops with the presence of representatives of the NGO 'clients' who present their organizations, based on a briefing previously suggested by the FAs.
4. The fourth visual meeting refers specifically to the commencement of campaign planning. The work groups present data on the economic, political and cultural systems of their countries as well as the media systems and behavior of target audiences.
5. In the fifth visual meeting, the work groups present to each other the diagnosis and the objectives supporting the next phases of the campaign planning.
6. The sixth visual meeting is dedicated to presentation of the strategic actions suggested and to clarify questions that may arise during the course of the campaign process, specially relating to the specific cultural aspects of each society.
7. In the seventh visual meeting, the campaigns are presented to each other clients.

Human resources
- Faculty Advisors (two, one from each institution).
- Clients (two- one from each country).
- Student teams (two, one from each institution).

Technological resources
- Distance Learning Studio for sections of videoconferencing.
- Internet access (E mail, Web platforms).

Implemented Campaigns
Since 2008, the collaboration between Famecos/PUCRS and UCF students has produced 6 international PR campaigns. These were carried out for the following NGOs:

2008
- Fundacao Thiago Gonzaga – Project 'Vida Urgente' (Brazil): a regional road accident prevention charity based in Porto Alegre, Brazil
- Shelterbox: an international disaster relief charity based in Helston, Cornwall, UK

2009
- Pao Dos Pobres: a regional charity supporting underprivileged children based in Porto Alegre, Brazil
- Children's Hospice South West: a regional fundraising campaign to build a hospice for terminally ill children in Cornwall, UK

2010
- Centro de Formação Tecnológica – Centro Social Marista: a regional NGO specialising in providing technological training in computer repair and maintenance for underprivileged children

- The Merlin Project: a multiple sclerosis charity based in COrnwall, UK

Evaluation

The evaluation of the work is conducted through a research directly related to the objectives of the venture using a questionnaire covering the following topics:

- The proficiency in technology used to communicate with the international partners and clients;
- The level of international awareness in terms of diversity;
- The expertise to deal with different cultural and communication system;
- The theoretical and practical expertise in the process of collecting information, implementing data collection process and communicating the findings and their implications to NGOs.

Final Considerations

Providing intercultural dialogue, the virtual model of learning presented here facilitates the interaction between academic communities placed within different social-cultural systems.

Contributing to increasing an interdisciplinary focus through the application of information and communication technologies, this enterprise provide an innovative knowledge system, allowing students to operate on an international stage acquainting them with the appropriated technology in this field. This way, the VMOL, through the PR campaign planning classes can provide technological proficiency used to communicate with international professionals and clients.

This way, students are enabled to understand the main challenge in the international PR arena: "think globally and act locally". Bringing together partners from different countries with a common academic aim of understanding diversity, the VMOL enables to expand cultural perspectives that enhance international awareness in terms of diversity, thus becoming a source of significant benefit in the development of knowledge on regional and global scales, it demonstrates that cultures can vary widely globally and that they need to gain expertise to deal with different cultural and communication systems. At the same time, it prepares them to create appropriated speeches to different audiences, expanding their understanding of the need to make presentations to international management teams.

Gaining theoretical and practical expertise in the process of collecting information, implementing data collection processes and communicating the findings and their implications to organizations that operate in the international environment, the students gain expertise to operate as beyond-border communication assessors, may thus become acquainted with decision making process in global context.

In addition to this, the work for NGOs from different societies, encourages the students to work in an environment of international cooperation based on improving society, and, in this way, better understand the relationships supporting humanitarian values. This contributes with the main social accomplishment of HE, translated as its social responsibility.

Opportunities for further studies in international PR can be provided by this enterprise, enriching the research studies at academic level since the interaction with students from different societies make possible to exchange indigenous knowledge. The

academic community gain, so, expertise in creating empirical research systems that deepen and develop knowledge in this area.

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Appendix 1: Student international campaign planning exercises

Student international campaign planning exercise 1

Key cultural differences (guideline proposed by Professor Melvin Sharpe, Ball State University).. In this exercise, students are required to complete the following questions about the cultural factors influencing society and PR practice in their respective countries:

1. How do you identify the importance of deadlines in your culture? (Please describe what you are always willing to do to meet a business deadline: work all weekends, on holidays, give up vacation time, miss family birthdays, etc. Describe what is normal in your society).

2. What are the important holidays in your society and the reasons? (Will the holidays identified be days when professionals cannot be reached?).

3. What are the most important things to know about religion in your society? (Identify dos and don'ts in communication, in humor, about variations and differences in belief systems).

4. What are the attitudes toward gender, race, etc.? (Define in terms of working and communication needs. Are there terms that should not be used in referring to the other gender or race? What should an international professional know about acceptable or unacceptable behaviors?).

5. What are the preferred social activities in your culture? (Define in terms of social group involvement and spectator events).

6. What are the most important foods in your culture for which an international visitor will gain respect in trying? What food events would be important in planning public relations activities?

7. What are some of the most important ethical values relating to business relationships and performance that an international partner should know about?

8. How do you see the importance of public service in your society?

9. What should the international professional know about greeting colleagues, saying goodbye, addressing someone you do not know, courtesy, what you should do when invited to a social event? What will cause offense in your culture?

10. How would you describe the typical path through education in your country? At what age do people start/finish school, college, undergraduate/postgraduate study? What proportion of people in your country receive education up to the age of 16/18/21, etc?

11. How would you describe the attitude of people in your country to celebrities? Which celebrities are popular? Which are unpopular? Is there a culture of 'celebrity non-celebrity' in your country (e.g. through reality TV programmes?). What would celebrities of different types charge for their services to a charity PR campaign?

Student international campaign planning exercise 2

PR activity in each other's countries (guideline proposed by Prof. Ana Steffen, from Famecos/PUCRS and Mr. Jon Cope, from UCF). In this exercise, students are required to complete the following questions about PR practice in their respective countries:

1. Identify the daily work schedule of public relations practitioners in your country. (This is important so that you understand when to contact your international colleagues during the course of a day.)
2. How do public relations practitioners present themselves in the office/to clients?
3. Is there a professional body for PR practitioners in your country? What is its name/role?
4. What are the key PR awards in your country? Which organization and which campaign won last year's awards for best voluntary sector campaign?

Student international campaign planning exercise 3
PR theory and international campaign planning guidelines (guideline proposed by Prof. Ana Steffen, from Famecos/PUCRS and Mr. Jon Cope, from UCF). In this exercise, students are taught about basic PR campaign planning models that can be applied internationally.

Student international campaign planning exercise 4
Presenting the NGO 'client' organisations (guideline proposed by Prof. Ana Steffen, from Famecos/PUCRS and Mr. Jon Cope, from UCF). In this exercise, the NGO 'client' organisations present to the students teams about their organisations' mission, vision and values, as well as providing practical details about location, number of employees, income, etc. In this session, 'client' NGOs also provide the students teams with the opportunity to ask questions about the respective PR briefs.

Presenting the organisation
- Name
- Address
  Area of coverage
  Physical Structure
  History
  Mission (main objective)
  Values
  Vision
  Key Actions / Communication tools (last year)
  Permanent actions/instruments
- Constituencies
- Segments
- Purpose of the organization in relation to each public segment
  Expectations of the organization (what does the organization expect from the segment in terms of attitude / behavior?)
  Expectations of the public (what does the segment expect from the organization in terms of institutional policy, actions and communication?)
- PR brief guideline Q&A session

Student international campaign planning exercise 5
Brazilian and British societies – cultural analysis (guideline based on by Hosted (1984) - the starting point of this study is the idea that the societies' cultural elements can

influence the relationship between organizations and their publics). In this exercise, students are required to provide details of the extent to which their societies are influenced by the following cultural factors:

- Individualism and collectivism - this dimension relates to intergroup processes.
- Power distance - the extent to which power, prestige and wealth are distributed disproportionately among people of different social strata or classes.
- Uncertainty avoidance - this dimension refers to the extent to which a society can tolerate ambiguity.
- Masculinity/femininity - this dimension refers to the values society attached to social roles based on gender.

Student international campaign planning exercise 6
SWOT Analysis: In this exercise, students are required to produce an analysis of their respective 'client' organisations, based on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (based on the table below)

Table 2
SWOT analysis

INTERNAL FACTORS		EXTERNAL FACTORS	
STRENGTHS		OPORTUNITIES	
WEAKNESSES		THREATS	

Student international campaign planning exercise 7
Media Fact Sheet (guideline proposed by Prof. Melvin Sharpe, Ball State University).. In this exercise, students are expected to research and produce discussion materials and a media fact sheet based on the following prompt document:
Because every country has differences in the development of its media, the need is to provide a broad understanding of the media in your country so that your professional counterpart will understand needs in your country that may differ than your own. Therefore, your assignment is to prepare a media fact sheet that you can then share with your international counter part. The fact sheet may be localized for the media

communication needs of the campaign upon which you will be working. The sharing process will help build understanding of differences so you will understand needs and how to build common understanding in addressing client needs.

- Prepare a list of the following mass media with explanations of the audiences for each media.
  - Newspapers
  - E-newspapers
  - Magazines
  - Televisions stations/programmes/presenters
  - Radio stations/programmes/presenters
- Define any existing restrictions on gifts to journalists or payment for placement of what will appear to be editorial content? Describe penalties and the enforcement agencies.
- Define the libel laws in your country.
- Identify any existing laws relating to freedom of the press.
- Describe any typical promotional activities that take place between PR organizations and the media (free gifts, advertorials, giveaways/competitions, etc).

Student international campaign planning exercise 8

Target audiences - Talking about the target audiences (guideline proposed by Professor Melvin Sharpe, Ball State University). In this exercise, students are expected to research and produce discussion materials and an audiences fact sheet based on the following prompts:

The fact sheet should include: (may be related to national data or by city or regions depending on campaign needs).

- Literacy levels
- Televisions sets per home
- Number of Cell telephones in use
- Number of fixed home telephones
- Number of cable subscribers
- Satellite communication access
- Number of home computers with Internet access
- Demographic profile by age, education, race, gender, economic level etc.

Where secondary research exists, information should be provided as to how audiences prefer to receive information. Where secondary research information is not available, a video is recommended with informal surveying of people at a local mall or event where a mix of people can be asked how they like to receive information about products or programs.

Student international campaign planning exercise 9

The campaign presentation. In this exercise, students are expected to present their campaigns to their international student counterparts, staff teams and 'client' representatives using the following format:

Title; Justification; Primary Goal; Second Goal; Objective; Target-Audience; Constituencies involved; Strategies Actions; Communication Instruments; Period of implementation; Necessary Resources; Timetable, Evaluation System.

Industry Crises and External Communications during a U.S. Coal Mine Disaster: Theoretical and Practical Implications

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Abstract

This exploratory case study examines the crisis communication activities of International Coal Group during and after the 2006 Sago, WV, coal mine disaster that captured national attention for its drama and for the erroneous news reports that 12 men had survived, when actually 12 had perished. The findings were compared to a previous study of the authors', which examined another company's crisis communication activities in a 1968 coal mine disaster.

Introduction

On January 2, 2006, explosions rocked a small coal mining town in West Virginia, trapping 13 of 29 miners in the Sago Mine. One man was killed outright; the others hunkered down to await rescue. Some 41 hours later, with CNN's Anderson Cooper and Geraldo Rivera live on scene, the miners' families and media worldwide celebrated the astonishing news that 12 men had survived the accident several miles underground. Church bells rang and headlines printed in USA Today and The New York Times echoed the miracle. However, the news proved inaccurate: 12 perished; one was found unconscious but alive. They had slowly succumbed to carbon monoxide poisoning, sharing their oxygen and scribbling such notes as "it didn't hurt" to their loved ones.

The disaster captured the nation's attention for its drama and media coverage mistakes, and in its aftermath, Congress amended the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977 to improve accident preparedness and response. Ironically, that legislation has led to such a backlog of cases that repeat mine violators could operate longer before being caught ("Govn't Faces," 2010). However, the law also mandated "a redundant means of communication with the surface for persons underground," and more relevant to this paper, the law mandated that "*in such accidents, the Mine Safety and Health Administration shall serve as the primary communicator with the operator, miners' families, the press and the public*" (United States Public Laws, 2006). Such crisis communications legislation seems to be without precedent.

Within a year of the tragedy, more than a dozen lawsuits had been filed against International Coal Group and its affiliated companies. The suits cited the company's many previous safety violations, insufficient methane monitoring, poor seal construction, and a lack of required anti-lightning equipment, which was ultimately determined by federal investigators to be the "most likely" source of the explosion ("Two More," 2009).

The area had been the site of another high-profile coal mine disaster in Farmington, WV, in 1968, which had killed 78 and also resulted in strengthened mine safety regulations; 19 of those bodies were never recovered (Stewart and Martinelli, 2010). At the time of that disaster, more coal was mined and more miners were employed in West Virginia than in any other state.[24] When the Sago mine exploded, West Virginia ranked second in coal production, well behind Wyoming.

The worst mining disaster in the nation's history occurred just 10 miles from the Farmington site on Dec. 6, 1907, when 361 men and boys were killed in an explosion,[25] and 60 years before the Sago disaster, a 1946 *Saturday Evening Post* article, titled "They Don't Have to Die," included an emotional feature with the following pull quote:

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[24] Some 20 years after the more stringent legislation was passed, national media continued to highlight problems with the mining industry's "lax enforcement." "Mine Safety Agency Accused of Lax Enforcement," *The New York Times,* March 12, 1987.

[25] That disaster has been chronicled by the authors' colleague, Gina Martino Dahlia, in her award-winning documentary, "The Monongah Heroines."

"Spectacular explosions and hair-raising rescues are commonplace in the coal industry. But the stark truth is that nearly all the accidents could be prevented—saving suffering and improving labor relations" (McCormick, 1946).

Six years after that feature spread, in 1952, President Harry S. Truman signed the Federal Coal Mine Safety Act, but warned it was not a very effective safety measure: "I am advised that the exemptions in the measure were provided to avoid any economic impact on the coal mining industry," he said (Franklin, 1968). In the 16 years between passage of this legislation until the 1968 Farmington disaster, the *New York Times* reported that 5,500 coal miners had perished industry-wide (Franklin, 1968). In the 38 years between Farmington and Sago, 3,337 U.S. coal miners were killed (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 2010).

Given the widespread national media coverage of both the Farmington and Sago disasters and the resultant federal safety legislation that followed each, this paper extends work conducted previously by the authors, in which crisis communications surrounding the Farmington disaster was critically examined. This paper explores the Sago disaster in a similar way to gauge how it led to what seems to be the nation's first federal legislation surrounding crisis communications and what the implications of such legislation may portend.

Background/Literature Review

International Coal Group. International Coal Group (ICG) was formed in 2004, when WL Ross & Co. LLC (WLR) and other investors purchased mining facilities from Horizon NR, LLC at a bankruptcy auction. According to the corporate website, WLR "acquired high quality reserves strategically located in Appalachia and the Illinois Basin that are union free, have limited reclamation liabilities and are substantially free of other legacy liabilities" ("History," 2011). In 2005, ICG acquired Anker Coal Group and CoalQuest in a stock merger. Sago Mine, located near Buckhannon in Upshur County, WV, originally opened in 1999 under the ownership of Anker Coal Group.

According to its website ("About Us," 2011), ICG is a leading producer of coal in Northern and Central Appalachia and the Illinois Basin, with 13 active mining complexes, employing approximately 2,500 employees across Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia and Illinois. ICG operates both surface and underground mines, which produce mid-to-high Btu, low-to-medium sulfur steam and metallurgical coal that is marketed to U.S. electric utility producers and domestic and international steelmakers.

Sago Mine. In 2005, the Sago Mine was cited by the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) 208 times for violating regulations, up from 68 violations in 2004. Of those, 96 were considered significant and substantial (U.S. Labor, 2010).

As a result of the tragedy there, ICG closed the mine on March 19, 2007, and on December 12, 2008, they announced on their website they would be closing it permanently (ICG, 2008). During the crisis, "Hundreds of media, reporters, camera crews, satellite trucks and photographers descended on the small community, taking over yards and setting up camp outside the Sago Baptist Church and at the mine's coal processing plant. Officials had turned a small second-story room there into a make-shift briefing room for the media" ("Sago Mine," 2010).

On January 13, 2006, *People.com* ran an archive of photos and thumbnails of the 13 trapped Sago miners in a feature titled "The Miners: The Lives They Lived." A public

memorial service was held January 15 for them at West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon. More than 2,000 attended the service, which was televised live on CNN ("Sago Mine," 2010).

After the accident, ICG investor Wilbur Ross, known as the "king of bankruptcy" for "his ability to spot troubled companies … and then sell them for a profit" ("Wilbur Ross," 2008) appeared on numerous national news programs, including those on Fox, CNN, and MSNBC, to defend the company and mining industry and to publicly state his sorrow over the deaths.

Founder of Rosetta Public Relations Paul McIvor wrote a briefing titled "Communicating in the Face of Disaster" that is posted on his firm's website and that provides an overview of three 21st century coal mine disasters, including that of Sago. In it, he listed "Five Facts" of the communications environment in which the three affected companies operated. These included the public's distrust of government; the human tendency to hope and deny reality; mining disasters' visceral horror; such accidents' rapidly changing communications environment; and mining disasters' "unique phases" in which the communications role evolves.

Crisis communication scholars have employed broader research perspectives during just the past decade. For example, some scholars (e.g. Hearit, 2006; Rowland & Jerome, 2004; and Burns & Bruner, 2000) have focused on image restoration theory. Ulmer, Seeger & Sellnow (2006) note that this work focuses primarily on "the immediate aftermath of an event and does so through the lens of various strategic messages including denial, shifting the blame, mortification, corrective action, and minimization, among others. In essence, image restoration and its variants attend to questions of reputational repair by articulating the range of assorted strategic messages likely to repair the image of the organization or individual under attack" (p. 130). They go on to argue that another important part of post-crisis research that should be considered is *renewal* to a "post-crisis innovation and adaptation of the organization" (p. 131).

Still other scholars (e.g. Fearn-Banks, 2002) have extended excellence theory (Grunig & Grunig, 1992, and Grunig & Hunt, 1984) to crisis communication research, suggesting organizations should first and foremost practice all public relations, including crisis situations, in ethical and effective ways. Others (e.g. Cameron, Cropp & Reber, 2001) have explored contingency theory's continuum, from advocacy to accommodation and the many points in between, along which an organization might move its communication strategies, depending on the particular crisis situation and aftermath.

Crisis communication scholar Timothy Coombs (2000, 2008) has written extensively about crisis response typologies. As part of this work, he and Holladay (2001) integrated the relationship history of an organization with the symbolic approach "to unpack the crisis response process" (2001, p. 321). This approach examines how the "situation can influence the selection and effectiveness of crisis response strategies" (p. 321).

Coombs and Holladay (2001) discuss an organization's *performance history* in terms of *crisis history* and *relationship history* and note that "the justification of crisis history is steeped in the attribution theory roots of the symbolic approach" (p. 323). Research has indicated that the more often an organization experiences crises, the more likely people are to perceive the organization as being at fault (Griffin, Babin & Attaway, 1991). Coombs and Holladay (2001) explain that a positive relational history helps the

organization when a crisis does occur. People are more apt to see the crisis as an anomaly and more likely to retain an overall positive perception—a form of "halo" effect, they say.

This paper's authors previously proposed that industries might work more cooperatively to protect themselves against individual members that do not behave responsibly or ethically within their particular companies. Without industry-wide pressure or guidelines, entire industries are placed at risk for strengthened federal legislation, compromised investor relations, and the negative "velcro" effect of crisis association. "Relationship and crisis history can create a strong, negative velcro effect," say Coombs & Holladay (2001), in which a poor performance history or negative reputation attracts additional reputational damage (p. 335).

With repeated industry crises, the idea of image restoration or reputational repair seems less likely, and Ulmer, Seeger & Sellnow's (2006) discussion of post-crisis *renewal* to a "post-crisis innovation and adaptation of the organization" (p. 131) seems doubtful.

This exploratory paper provides insight into the problems that led to groundbreaking crisis communications legislation and will eventually be used to build upon the authors' previous coal mine crisis research to compare communication responses within the same industry some four decades apart. Theoretical and practical implications will then be posited.

Method

This exploratory study, still under way, is using a case study approach to describe ICG's crisis communication response, incorporating state and regional newspaper coverage and national newspaper, radio and network television reports; legal deposition transcripts; ICG news releases, six of which were obtained from the ICG website and five from PRNewswire between Jan. 4 and March 14, 2006; and other media coverage, including magazines and trade publications. Specifically, coverage is being examined to identify the company's spokespersons and key messages during the 41-hour ordeal and the legal aftermath of the crisis.

Findings

Media Coverage. Immediately after the tragedy, members of West Virginia's Congressional delegation were calling for hearings into how MSHA addressed the mine safety citations it had previously issued at the Sago mine. Other Democratic Congressmen joined in the calls for better accountability, including that surrounding the miscommunication (Nyden, 2006). An article a few days later reported that the company had a nonfatal injury rate the previous year that was nearly three times the average of other similarly sized mines (Ward, 2006a). Two days later, the state newspaper again reported on the company's safety violations, after the release of federal reports that stated mine managers repeatedly ignored or missed hazardous roof conditions and explosion conditions and that the mine's management was "unwilling or incapable of properly checking the mine's conditions before workers went underground" (Ward, 2006a). The following month, it was reported that a former foreman at the mine was charged with falsifying safety reports and lying about his qualifications. The 116-count indictment

against him stemmed from actions a year prior to the disaster (Ward, 2006b); the company never checked his credentials (Ward, 2006c).

In April, it was reported that federal and state investigators were negotiating with ICG to force the company to release its findings regarding its internal investigation of the disaster, after they had publicly issued statements saying they would cooperate fully in the investigation (News Release). The state and federal investigators ultimately sued to obtain those records.

National coverage, Jan. 3 to Jan. 5. In the three days following the explosion, national media covered the story extensively. Although some outlets, such as CNN, had ongoing live broadcasts, the authors used Lexis Nexis to find the news story transcripts that were broadcasted by CNN, Fox, ABC, CBS, NBC, NPR and that were distributed by the Associated Press, the Washington Post, and The New York Times. Twenty-eight stories were accessed from the first 24 hours—beginning at midnight Jan. 3. Of those, 10 were from the Associated Press; six were by CNN; three from CBS and National Public Radio; two from NBC; and one each from Fox, ABC, the Washington Post and The New York Times. Over the three days, 41 national stories were found; these also included ABC's Good Morning America, USA Today and CNBC. In these 41 stories, 56 different sources were quoted. ICG's CEO Ben Hatfield was quoted the most, in 21 stories; followed by 11 stories in which West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin and also ICG Senior Vice President Gene Kitts were quoted; a trapped miner's son, Nick Helms, was used as a source in six stories; the governor's communications director, Lara Ransburg, was cited in four; and 10 sources were cited in two articles, including President Bush and a federal Deep Mine Safety official, the Red Cross public relations director, several miners' relatives and current and former mine safety and health officials. The other 41 sources included officials, Sago residents, miners' relatives, a White House spokesman, hospital and EMT personnel, local politicians, and a pastor.

Later testimony by the company's parent investor, Wilbur Ross, indicated that CEO Hatfield had been selected as spokesperson because of his experience. He had been an executive of other coal mines and had two degrees, one in mining engineering and the other in law; however, he had no journalism or public relations experience.

News releases. During this same period, ICG disseminated two news releases from its offices and three via PRNewswire. Its first, although undated, appears to be its initial response of thoughts and prayers being extended to the families and a list of the dead, plus the announcement of its $2 million compensatory fund. In it, both ICG Chairman Wilbur Ross and President and CEO Ben Hatfield alluded to their own sense of loss. Ross said:

> A terrible tragedy has occurred and everyone at International Coal Group shares the grief of the families of the twelve miners who lost their lives despite the best efforts of our company, Governor Joe Manchin and the rescue teams. I personally understand [the families'] trauma since I lost my own father when I was a teenager and my widowed mother was left with three children, the youngest of whom was eight years old. I offer these families my heartfelt sympathy and my prayers (International Coal Group Statement, 2006).

Hatfield's quote read: "This has been the most tragic period of my life. Our goal is always to see that our people get home safely each day and we will redouble our efforts to make sure that a tragedy like this never occurs again…."

A release from its New York offices January 4 again announced the $2 million fund and the toll-free number the public could use to donate to the fund. News of the fund was also disseminated on PRNewswire, and the next day, another PRNewswire-disseminated release announced the names of the dead, but did not reiterate sympathy, instead focusing on the accident investigation phase and its designated media relations firm. ICG announced that "it is likely that new information will come in very slowly because it is essential that every aspect of what led to the tragedy be studied carefully before the findings are announced. Therefore, company officials will no longer provide regularly scheduled media briefings. Instead, as soon as is appropriate, we will communicate the findings" (International Coal Group Confirms, 2006).

In the next paragraph, the company noted that it had designated PR agency Dix & Eaton "as its media coordinator in an effort to provide timely and coordinated communications." Their agency media contact name and number was given. The same day another release issued through PRNewswire noted that an additional number had been added for media inquiries (International Coal Group Adds, 2006). A second release that day announced that "hundreds of contributions from all around the country" were coming in and that the company was "especially grateful" to one of its "fierce competitors," Massey Energy, which demonstrated "a generous humanitarian gesture of support" by pledging $250,000 to the fund.

The next release was four days later, when the company again noted its $2 million contribution to the Sago Mine Fund and announced the fund's West Virginia administrator and grant committee. In the last line of the release, it noted that more than $3 million had been pledged, with collections expected within a week (Wilbur Ross Names Donald Nestor, 2006).

The company issued a media advisory January 11 to discuss "matters related to the Sago Mine accident" (Media Advisory, 2006). The advisory noted a new online press room for information about Sago. A week later, the company again issued a statement saying that the company was:

> … committed to a speedy, full and fair investigation of the Sago mine accident and, of course, our thoughts and prayers remain with the families and co-workers. ICG has worked closely with state and federal officials every step of the way…. Our goal is to determine the true cause of this accident and means for preventing similar occurrences. However, the United Mine Workers of America now seeks to interfere with the investigation that is being conducted by federal and state mine regulatory agencies….
>
> We believe the UMWA's attempt to influence the investigation will only interfere with efforts by state and federal agencies to determine the true cause of this tragic accident. The state and federal authorities are fully capable of conducting a comprehensive investigation, unencumbered by the UMWA's ulterior motives. ICG remains focused on assisting in a full and complete investigation by the appropriate regulatory authorities (ICG Objects, 2006).

The Sago mine was not a union mine, and the company argued the union had no familiarity or knowledge of it that would benefit the investigation. It claimed the union wanted to "exploit the tragedy at the Sago Mine for their own purposes in an effort to revive organizing efforts that have floundered for more than a decade" (ICG Objects, 2006).

Two days later, the company issued another release in response to a Senate delegation's visit to the Sago Mine. The release was basically one paragraph:

International Coal Group looks forward to meeting with the Senators and addressing any questions they may have about our company and the tragic accident at Sago Mine. We are committed to a speedy, full and fair investigation of the Sago accident by the appropriate governmental agencies. Our grieving families and coworkers deserve answers as to the cause of the accident and we will do everything possible to support that effort. We hope that lessons can be learned from the Sago accident that will better protect coal miners in the future, and we welcome the opportunity to work with the Senators and enlist their support (International Coal Group Looks Forward, 2006).

Less than a week later, on January 26, ICG issued another statement in relation to a court ruling that supported the UMWA's involvement in the investigation. It read:

We regret the Court's decision, which facilitates the United Mine Workers of America's thinly veiled effort to interfere with the proper conduct of the Sago Mine accident investigation in a self-serving and improper attempt to launch an organizing campaign…. The employees of the Sago Mine are not represented by the UMWA. In fact, 93% of the active Sago Mine hourly employees have firmly repudiated the UMWA by designating three Sago coworkers, not the UMWA, as their miner representative.

It goes on to say it will appeal the Court's ruling, but will continue to work closely with officials to move the investigation forward.

The final paragraph reads:

In sharp contrast to MSHA's [federal Mine Safety and Health Administration's] decision to suspend the investigation while they pursued court action against us, we will not allow our appeal to delay the investigation. Our company remains fully committed to promptly getting the answers that the families, friends, and coworkers need and deserve (ICG Responds, 2006).

The U.S. Court of Appeals later supported the District Court's ruling that the UMWA had been legally designated by two miners to represent them in the investigation. On March 14, the company issued a lengthy release detailing the "initial findings" of its "independent" investigation, which were released to families first, then to media and workers. The release stated that the investigative team used a "diverse team of mining, electrical, and combustion consultants that are recognized industry experts in mine explosion investigation" (Findings, 2006). It concluded that the explosion was ignited by lightning and fueled by methane in an abandoned, sealed area of the mine. It also concluded that "none of the citations issued at the Sago Mine during the accident investigation ,or prior to the accident during 2005, were linked to the explosion in any way. Each citation has been promptly remedied."

It states that "the company will continue with data review and testing to verify the findings, and will continue full cooperation with the ongoing state and federal investigations." Hatfield said:

> While our independent investigation is certainly not the final word on the explosion, we are confident that the joint federal-state investigation will reach a similar conclusion…. We recognize that the Sago Mine will be under close scrutiny from state and federal inspectors, as well as our own employees, as we resume operations. Frankly, we welcome that scrutiny. We have worked hard to address all concerns and are confident that we will provide a safe working environment for our miners (International Coal Group To Resume, March 14, 2006).

The company noted that it was working with the coal industry and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in an underground coal mine communications research effort and was also independently exploring new communication technology. Meanwhile, federal and state officials were reportedly hoping to avoid legal action against the company, which was refusing to grant access to its internal investigation findings (Ward, 2006e).

Intentional Emotional Distress. On Feb. 13, 2006, the West Virginia University Perley Isaac Reed School of Journalism convened a panel of six journalists for a forum entitled "Searching for a Miracle: Media Coverage of the Sago Mine Disaster." Scott Finn, the first *Charleston* [W.Va.] *Gazette* reporter on the scene, argued that a spokesperson from the state or local government or from the coal company would have lessened confusion. "We didn't know who to go to for the truth," he stated. CBS News producer Mike Solmsen and reporter Sharyn Alfonsi agreed ("Media Coverage," 2006).

In a *Fortune* magazine article that appeared just a week after the event unfolded, ICG investor Ross reported that he was in constant communication with Hatfield during the ordeal. "We decided right away that that the company should have one voice, and that voice should be Ben," Ross said. "We didn't want to hide behind a PR firm. Also, this was a highly technical situation, and Ben understands that best" (Serwer, 2006, p. 1). He called the miscommunication "gut-wrenching" and said they set up a financial support fund for the killed miners' families.

In the deposition of Dean Michael Hymes, the ICG director of human resources, he testified that no one at the company had a public relations job title; however, he noted that the company did have an "investor relations vice president that issued press releases" about financial issues, board calls and related matters ("January 2," 2009, p. 16).

He also testified that a previous employer of his from many years before, Consolidated Coal, or CONSOL—the company that had owned the Farmington No. 9 mine during the 1968 disaster—had long had a formal crisis management plan and that he himself had participated in a two-day crisis communication training program when the company had been purchased by Dupont years before. However, he said, ICG had no such document.

The month following the tragedy, a large West Virginia law firm, Steptoe & Johnson, contributed an article to the *West Virginia Employment Law Letter* titled "Lessons of a tragedy: Be prepared." It discusses the importance of having a carefully detailed emergency plan, a designated public relations contact to handle external

communications, and a PR consultant available for additional support (Steptoe & Johnson, 2006).

Families filed suit against ICG for failing to correct the miscommunication regarding survivors. Legal Exhibit B reads:

> ICG waited to tell the plaintiffs that only one of the miners was alive after initially telling them that all but one of the miners was alive, even though ICG knew within moments of the initial miscommunication to the families that the plaintiffs' decedent had died before the mine rescuers reached him. The failure of ICG to tell the families of the miners that their loved ones were in fact deceased immediately after being made aware of the miscommunication was extreme and outrageous conduct which intentionally or recklessly caused severe emotional distress to the family members of the deceased miners, including the plaintiffs" ("January 2," 2009a, p. 15).

In Exhibit D, the explanation says in part, "ICG has contended it acted reasonably by sending a state trooper to the church to advise the ministers that the information they had heard about the miners being alive might not be true" ("January 2," 2009b, p. 1).

According to an article in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* Hatfield sent a note to the church "cautioning the family members that the early word might have been overly optimistic" ("Words that Never," p. B3). A half hour later, he informed the families of the truth, says the report. The *Charleston Gazette* carried a quote by United Mine Workers President Cecil Roberts: "That the families were allowed to believe for three hours that their loved ones were alive … is inexcusable. The UMWA strongly encourages the appropriate state and federal officials to investigate how this could have happened, so that no family member will ever have to suffer like this again" (Ward & Nyden, p. 1C).

In Bennet (Ben) Hatfield's deposition, recorded in fall 2010, he testified that about an hour and a half passed between the time the company learned the report that 12 were found alive could be erroneous and when the families were notified. In the interim, Hatfield called colleagues and his wife to alert them of the possible communication error. He defended the delay by explaining that the company wanted to be sure of the facts before communicating anything to the families, and said it was ultimately Governor Manchin who went to the command center and told them they needed to tell the families at the church ("January 2," 2010, pp. 354-355).

A newspaper article reported that a pastor at the Sago Baptist Church, who'd spent many hours with the families during the ordeal, did learn the truth "very late in the process," but believed it was the company's responsibility to tell the families. "They're not guilty of misinformation," [Rev.] Flynn said. "They promised hourly updates, and they didn't deliver them."

In newspaper articles that followed, a U.S. Department of Labor official, who was acting as a liaison with the state's Congressional delegation to support MSHA, said he made a mistake when he told the state's representatives that the miners being found alive had been confirmed by MSHA (Anderson, 2006). During hearings in May, a member of MSHA's rescue squad also publicly apologized for any miscommunication that the rescuers inadvertently facilitated (Roddy & Twedt, 2006).

In addition, an article in the *Charleston Gazette* noted that during the entrapment of miners in Pennsylvania four years before Sago, its state mine safety experts and

MSHA officials had taken part in regular press briefings. By contrast, at Sago, there were two MSHA public affairs officials on site, but they never briefed the media. Instead, the state's governor and company officials did. However, according to the article, MSHA is supposed to issue an order when they arrive that puts them in charge of the site. "When I was at the [MSHA] agency, our mine emergency manual gave specific responsibility to our MSHA public affairs specialist," said Celeste Monfurton, who worked under the Clinton administration. "The company was free to provide whatever information they wanted, but if the information was incorrect, MSHA's public affairs specialists had the obligation to quickly correct it" (Ward, 2006d).

Six months after the disaster, the U.S. Congress passed the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response (MINER) Act of 2006. It included legislation that required the Secretary of Labor to establish a policy that:

> 1) requires the temporary assignment of an individual Department of Labor official to be a liaison between the Department and the families of victims of mine tragedies involving multiple deaths;
> 2) requires the Mine Safety and Health Administration to be as responsive as possible to requests from the families of mine accident victims for information relating to mine accidents; and
> 3) requires that in such accidents, that the Mine Safety and Health Administration shall serve as the primary communicator with the operator, miners' families, the press and the public (U.S. Public Laws, 2006, Sec. 7).

On Dec. 22, 2006, the Primary Communicator Protocol was signed by the Department of Labor's Office of Public Affairs and the Mine Safety and Health Administration. It says, "By Department of Labor Secretarial Order 17-2006, the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (OPA) in consultation with the Assistant Secretary for Mine Safety and Health (MSHA) will provide direction to the 'primary communicator' following a mine tragedy involving multiple deaths" (Primary Communicator, 2006). Specifically the agreed upon protocol included: 1) that upon an accident, MSHA will notify the Office of Public Affairs and "will provide all pertinent information regarding the incident"; 2) the OPA will immediately send personnel to the accident "to provide support to MSHA's 'primary communicator'"; 3) that OPA and MSHA will "jointly develop briefing outlines" to brief the press and public on a scheduled basis.

Discussion/Conclusions

Paul McIvor of Rosetta Public Relations writes in his briefing about mining disasters that ICG ran "a textbook crisis communications plan—avoid speculation and 'what if' scenarios, support the miners' families, provide all relevant information quickly and without spin, be cautious and don't raise hopes" (p. 4). He goes on to say that he could find "no fault with their work until the media picked up the story that the miners had been found alive…. Fatally, the company let the erroneous information circulate for several hours before correcting it."

Despite ICG's positive use of a number of crisis communication techniques (Smith in Swann, 2008), including vocal commiseration strategies, such as concern and condolence; rectifying behaviors, such as investigation, corrective action, restitution; and

use of the highest-level corporate spokesperson, it also participated in defensive strategies, including denial of wrongdoing and excuses; offensive response strategies, such as attacking the UMWA and filing lawsuits; and strategic inaction by refusing to provide their investigative findings to state and federal investigators. In addition, the company did not follow other elements of basic crisis communications protocol (Wilcox, Cameron, Ault, and Agee, 2003), such as taking responsibility for the accident or miscommunication, not making itself regularly accessible to the media; not communicating immediately with its key publics (the families and media) when the error was first discovered; and not having crisis communication experts available to assist them—or even a crisis communication plan or public relations practitioner —until after the crisis occurred.

ICG did hire a PR agency immediately after the disaster: Dix & Eaton. The firm includes their ICG work on its website as a crisis communication case, saying that its team "led the effort to develop and implement a communications strategy to ensure that the company's position remained consistent and broadly visible." The agency notes that "employees, customers and investors alike remained supportive. National and local media coverage consistently included ICG's perspective including the company's leadership in advancing mine safety" (Energy Case Studies). The company reports that after an initial drop in stock prices following the accident, it climbed eight percent a month later (International Public Relations Network).

However, the most damaging company and industry outcome likely was the increased scrutiny and resultant federal regulation. Yet despite the precedent-setting Primary Communicators rule that was implemented as a direct result of ICG's communication mismanagement during the Sago disaster, it's doubtful industries have begun working in concert to protect themselves from such problems. A 2006 American Society of Association Executives survey of trade organizations found that 60% did not have a crisis plan "to deal with such events as disasters, emergency communications or the media" (p. 31).

Another case that created industry-wide ripples was recently documented by Millner, Veil and Sellnow (2010). They examined the Peanut Corporation of America's (PCA) U.S. salmonella-tainted peanut paste crisis of 2008 and 2009. The authors document how PCA's reticence about the issue forced other, "proxy," communicators to respond in its place, including health officials from the Centers for Disease Control, federal regulators from the Food and Drug Administration, and such industry leaders as Jif and Peter Pan. These entities stepped in when PCA remained silent to protect the public health and to help stem the decline in peanut butter sales, which had fallen by 25% after reports of the contamination and its associated deaths.

In the Sago case, irresponsible communications lead to an unprecedented mandate for federal crisis communications intervention during mining disasters. Now that it is has occurred, the door is open for other industries' communications to be regulated to protect the public interest. Under this precedent, such incidents as the Exxon and BP oil spills; Bhopal, India, chemical disaster; Three Mile Island nuclear crisis; and even the PCA salmonella outbreak could have resulted in their industries' voices being superseded by those of government officials. Although well meaning, such regulations could have unwanted consequences for both society and responsible companies by absolving them from an obligation to face and respond to their stakeholders and by having government

officials, who are likely not very familiar with the companies or industries involved, speaking on their behalf.

Therefore, as the authors suggested in their last paper (2010), it behooves industries to think about putting pressure on their own cohort to help protect their relationships, image, regulatory structure and communications freedom.

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Media Practice or Media Opacity?
Conceptual and Theoretical Considerations and Implications

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Abstract

The practice of purposeful media opacity, which exists to greater or lesser extents worldwide, is a powerful hidden influencer of the ostensibly impartial media gate-keepers whose publicly perceived role is to present news and other information based on these gate-keepers' perception of this information's truthfulness. Previous empirical data that the authors have collected globally illustrate the extent of media opacity practices worldwide and note its pervasiveness in specific regions and countries. Using Russian public relations as an example, the authors of this conceptual paper examine, from multiple perspectives, the complex question of whether media opacity should be categorically condemned as being universally inappropriate and unethical or whether it should be accepted—or at least tolerated—in some situations and environments.

In today's global society, in which the compression of time and space has resulted in increased social-political-economic-cultural complexity worldwide, most of what we accept to be truth comes from the myriad forms of "mass media," e.g., the newspapers that we read, the television programs that we watch, the radio stations to which we listen and the infinite internet sources that we explore. We rely–most often by necessity–upon these secondary sources to help us to determine our own truths that create our unique worldviews from which we form our individual beliefs, attitudes and opinions that directly influence the decisions that we make.

This paper is about media transparency and good-faith attempts of honesty by both the sources and the gate-keepers of news and other information that the mass media present as being unbiased. Specifically, this paper discusses conceptual considerations for understanding media transparency and its antithesis--media opacity throughout the world. The practice of purposeful media opacity, which exists to greater or lesser extents worldwide, is a powerful hidden influencer of the ostensibly impartial media gate-keepers whose publicly perceived role is to present news and other information based on these gate-keepers' perception of this information's truthfulness. Empirical data that the authors have collected globally illustrate the extent of media opacity practices worldwide and note its pervasiveness in specific regions and countries (Tsetsura & Kruckeberg, 2003). Media opacity creates difficulty accessing truth.

Truth is essential in democratic societies, but again what is truth? Those in democratic nation-states require, not only the right to express public opinion, but to form public opinion that is based on unbiased news and information and impartial gate-keepers from transparent media from which this public opinion can be informed. Much as fairness and balance are often achieved in the pursuit of the ideal of an unattainable objectivity, the paper argues that transparency and honesty can be achieved in the pursuit of an ideal truth.

In this paper, we view truth through unique lenses and from multiple sources. Each individual's worldview is comprised of an infinite number of variables that have uniquely molded each of us to be the individuals that we are, and this worldview provides the foundation from which each of us must form our own unique perceptions of truth. While we may have multiple resources to seek truth, sampling sources for truth becomes problematic because of the purposeful hidden influences of media opacity. Truth can be seen through each individual's unique lens and can be influenced by sole sources and multiple sources as well as unreliable sources and ostensibly reliable sources. Should truth be regulated; if so, by whom? Media opacity resulting from purposeful hidden influencers of what is presented is what distinguishes purposeful opacity from simple opacity, when opacity could have been a simple act of misunderstanding or a result of ignorance of social and cultural norms and practices.

Mass media as secondary sources are relied upon to form our beliefs, attitudes and opinions from which each of us arrives at his or her unique truth that forms within the context of each individual's worldview. The disintegration of the concept of news and the increasingly amorphous role of the journalist are examined, i.e., what is and should be a contemporary journalist, what is today's distinction between controlled vs. uncontrolled media and the role of the journalist as an arbiter and a representative and protector of the

disenfranchised and powerless? And in today's world, the public relations practitioner has a new critical role in presenting truth to the media as well as to the society at large.

Media Practice or Media Opacity?

The practice of purposeful media opacity, which exists to greater or lesser extents worldwide, is a powerful hidden influencer of the ostensibly impartial media gate-keepers whose publicly perceived role is to present news and other information based on these gate-keepers' perception of this information's truthfulness. Previous empirical data that the authors have collected globally illustrate the extent of media opacity practices worldwide and note its pervasiveness in specific regions and countries. This conceptual paper examines a complex question of whether media opacity should be categorically condemned as being universally inappropriate and unethical or whether it should be accepted—or at least tolerated—in some situations and environments.

Who can evaluate what media opacity is? Public relations practitioners and their clients may have an economic incentive to eliminate purposeful media opacity, but their concern must be secondary to all citizens' greater concerns about the social ills that are created by bribes paid to media workers, for example. A dynamic marketplace of ideas to sustain and encourage democratic societies and free marketplace economies require the integrity of communication channels, particularly of consumer news media that are ostensibly "fair" and "balanced" in their quest for the ideal of "objectivity." Nevertheless, compelling arguments for the elimination of mass media opacity for the placement of information subsidies, as an example, must satisfactorily address several issues.

For example, apologists for the practice will cite the need for tolerance because of journalists' subsistence or low pay in some countries; others will note an immature and unsophisticated understanding of the role and function of a free press among those in newly emerging democracies–suggesting the need for patience and forbearance because the practice might ultimately disappear on its own as these democracies continue to evolve. Accusations might also be heard concerning perceived Western hegemony through the influence of public relations agencies and their clients, perhaps accompanied by a plea for "cultural sensitivity." Cited also are indigenous societies' prevailing social/economic/political climates as well as specific cultures' historical antecedents, again accompanied with a plea for tolerance and acceptance of indigenous practices. Finally, some may say that what is called opacity in one country might be accepted protocol in another.

Such arguments can be easily refuted; however, defenders of consumer news media opacity are essentially correct that public relations practitioners cannot as a professional group impose and declare valid their professional culture and values upon another professional group, i.e., upon journalists and other mass media workers, nor do the latter have the right to impose their values upon public relations practitioners. It can be argued that, as communication professionals, public relations practitioners and journalists only have the right to control their own professional/occupational behavior, not that of other professional communities, nor does this professional community have the moral right to censure or criticize the ethics of the mass media for which journalists work.

Rather, the argument against purposeful mass media opacity by those providing or accepting information subsidies must be made solely (and ultimately more compellingly)

by public relations practitioners and mass media workers, e.g., journalists, in their mutual role as citizens of the countries in which purposeful mass media opacity occurs–but also as global citizens whose values must include truth and honesty in message construction and dissemination worldwide. Most definitely, public relations practitioners and journalists *do* have the professional right and obligation to declare what they consider to be ethical and unethical for their own discrete professional communities. For instance, if a professional group of journalists in one country agrees that a given practice is ethical and professional in their professional community, and if this behavior is within the parameters of the law, then purposeful opacity within that cultural context is both acceptable and to that extent transparent. Of course, if journalists in a country believe this is an ethically acceptable professional practice, this would mean that their understanding of professionalism in relation to journalism would be different from the predominant Western perspective on journalism. However, if a group of journalists (or public relations practitioners) in one country believes that this is a practice that does not adhere to ethical standards of the profession in that country, even though it routinely takes place in practice, that means that this is a concern for professionals in this country. Such practice, if continued, can diminish the status and ethics of the profession. As such, this phenomenon should be voiced and discussed as one of the central issues and challenges that can damage the profession throughout the world.

The authors argue that it is important to distinguish between media non-transparency and purposeful media opacity because transparency is first and foremost a requirement for credible media practices that are based on trust between the media representatives and their audiences. But what influencers should be transparent, and what should be disclosed? Must media transparency and media opacity be understood or regarded differently in different parts of the world, or should universal standards apply? A good way to answer this question is to take a look at the practices of media opacity in two completely different media environments. For the purpose of this argument, the authors chose examples from the USA, Russia, and several other countries to illustrate how the discourse about media non-transparency transforms into the discourse about purposeful media opacity with time.

Media Transparency vs. Media Opacity

Media transparency is a building block for professional media development based on trust between the media and the audience (Tsetsura & Kruckeberg, 2009). Journalists must be open, thus transparent with their audiences (Kovach, 2001). Honesty, independence of opinion, fair judgment, and traditional news values are the main factors that define journalistic principles and define media credibility. If one or several of these principles are violated, the audience has a right to know what influenced journalistic decisions (Craig, 1999, 2006, 2008). The absence of any direct and indirect influence is central to the concept of media transparency. Lack of disclosure of influences and constraints placed on journalists, editors, and the media in which articles or programs appear is often referred to as non-transparency (Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009). Publishing news in exchange for a payment or a favor compromises a traditional function of mass media in society and undermines media's roles as gatekeepers (Boynton, 2007; Craig, 2007; Pasti, 2005).

Non-transparent practices can be found worldwide (Tsetsura & Kruckeberg, 2009). Understanding how diverse information sources, such as public relations practitioners who work for organizations, can influence the news is at heart of media non-transparency studies (Tsetsura & Kruckeberg, 2009; Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009; Klyueva, 2008). The growing number of the research on the topic (Kruckeberg & Tsetsura, 2003; Tsetsura, 2005a, 2005b; Klyueva, 2008; Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009) defined the phenomenon of media non-transparency as any form of payment for or influence on news coverage. Media non-transparency has also been known as cash for news coverage (Kruckeberg & Tsetsura, 2003), media bribery (Tsetsura, 2005b), envelope journalism (Shafer, 1990), or paid news (Tsetsura & Zuo, 2009), and media opacity (Tsetsura & Kruckeberg, 2009). Many practitioners around the world also use slang words to refer to this phenomenon: *zakazukha* in Russia (Holmes, 2001, March 5), *jinsa* in Ukraine (Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009), *mermelada* in Peru (Ristow, 2010), and *pay-for-play* in the USA (Tsetsura, 2008). The authors of this paper argue that media opacity is the most accurate concept to describe such a practice as it communicated a deliberative effort to influence an editor's or journalist's decision and purposefully hide a source of information.

As an analogy, *transparency* exists in a lighted room, but *opacity* occurs when the lights are turned off and darkness results. What can be seen in the light is hidden in darkness. Perhaps the darkness hides nothing, but it certainly can hide a lot. Turning the lights off and thus bringing darkness into the room (purposeful opacity) creates a perfect condition for violating established rules and norms. Now, if someone punches you in the dark room, you may or may not know who has done it. Darkness hides the one who punched you so that individual does not have to explain why he or she has done it. This purposeful punch that has no consequences is only possible in the darkness. The same is true for the media opacity as a purposeful non-disclosure of influences on the news that allows non-transparent media practices, including but not limited to direct and indirect payments to the media from the news sources, pressures from the advertising departments, and financial pressures on the media.

Understanding Media Opacity

The problem of credibility in the media lies at the essence of independent, objective, and responsible journalism. But what exactly encompasses the objectivity and how independent the modern media, self-supported by advertiser's money in some countries and subsidized by the governments in others, can be? And what role does the journalism integrity play in the modern world of materialism? In the investigative report "Money vs. Ethics: A Balancing Act" published in 2003, the International Press Institute journalist Mike McGraw tried to answer these difficult but important questions. He provided specific examples of how media professionals can discredit themselves by accepting bribes from the information sources. He demonstrated that media bribery has become one of the most difficult problems to overcome. In the modern information era, editors, reporters, and specialized journalists become dependent on the actual sources to provide accurate, up-to-date, relevant information that becomes the basis for news. This information is fast, detailed, current. Most importantly, this information comes for free. The journalists do not need to hunt the information any longer; they often only need to perform their gate-keeping role of deciding whether to distribute the information through

the media channels and as such set the agenda. And we, as a public, rely on journalists to decide which information is the most important, most newsworthy, and most relevant for us out of the constant huge flow of information.

As such, we expect from the media to follow several essential information gate-keeping principles: independence of opinion, fair and honest judging of facts and reporting, freedom from outside, non-media influences. Most importantly, we expect them to separate for us on the pages of newspapers and magazines and on the air space of radio and TV programming what materials are truly journalistic editorials and what materials are advertising, such as paid for publication by sources of information. This is what we call a sense of ethical behavior. A special case of media opacity was at the center of debates on the nature of publicity materials and media relations practices for a long time. Offering and paying cash for publishing publicity materials, news releases and others often becomes a standard practice in many countries (Kruckeberg & Tsetsura, 2003).

Media opacity is defined as a favorable condition for any form of payment for news coverage or any influence on editorial and journalists' decisions that is not clearly stated in the finished journalistic product. Media opacity takes place in many countries (Kruckeberg & Tsetsura, 2003; Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009; Tsetsura & Kruckeberg, 2009). Research showed that media opacity is a serious problem in the Eastern European counties, including Estonia, Poland, China, Russia, and Ukraine (Tsetsura, 2005b; Pasti, 2005; Harro-Loit & Saks, 2006; Klyueva, 2008; Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009; Tsetsura & Klyueva, in press; Tsetsura & Zuo, 2009). Previous multiple studies showed that paying cash for news coverage, placing advertising in the media in exchange for news coverage, as well as providing gifts, free meals, or free trips to journalists and editors in exchange for publications in which real sources of influence are not disclosed are practices that are present in much of the world. In most of the world, however, this practice of media opacity is condemned by both professionals: public relations practitioners and journalists (Tsetsura, 2008).

Some critics advocated that such media practices are part of culture in some places around the world, but no studies have shown that culture has influenced decision-making processes of journalists and public relations practitioners in the case of media opacity. Professionals in some regions of the world emphasized that direct or indirect influences on the media are common practices in countries, such as China and Russia (Tsetsura & Zuo, 2009; Tsetsura & Luoma-aho, 2010). But almost 85 percent of the professionals who are members of international organizations, including the International Public Relations Association, International Press Institute, and International Federation of Journalists, from around the world condemn these practices as unprofessional and unethical (Tsetsura, 2008). Additional multi-year research of global media practices convincingly demonstrated that culture is not a factor that predicts these differences (Tsetsura & Kruckeberg, 2003; Klyueva, 2008; Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009; Klyueva & Tsetsura, 2010). Explaining these practices simply as a result of cultural differences might be a simplistic and somewhat naïve way of understanding and analyzing the problem. Rather than dismissing these practices as a cultural particularity, political, economic, historical, and societal factors as well as the level of professional development and practice and the development of ethical conduct should be taken into consideration when one attempts to define whether media relations practices in a certain country are

perceived as corrupt or unethical. The next section illustrates how political historical, economical, and societal factors have been manifested through the history of journalism in Russia, and how this history has influenced, and continues to influence, media opacity in the modern Russian public relations.

The Influence of Journalism on the Development of Public Relations in Russia

Understanding the history of journalism in Russia is essential for knowing how media practices developed in this country. Traditionally, freedom of press has not been the first and foremost right of the Russian citizens (McReynolds, 1991). The very first newspaper in Russia, "*Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*" [Saint Petersburg Gazette], started by the order of tsar Peter the Great, was transferred under the control of the state-run Academy of Sciences in 1703 (Zassoursky, 2004). Because of the political and economic changes, the post-Soviet Russian journalism has undergone several crucial changes, but the challenges the journalism faced were still very much a part of the historical baggage (Ragozina, 2007). The post-Soviet media system, with a strong emphasis on economic independence and market-orientation, contributed to the development of public relations in Russia. The origins of Russian public relations are in journalism as the very first public relations practitioners were journalists (Tsetsura, 2003), and the public relations theory and practice are built on journalistic traditions (Tsetsura, 2004).

Each of three major periods, into which the history of Russian journalism can be divided, have contributed to the unique development of journalism and public relations in Russia (Cassara, Gross, Kruckeberg, Palmer, & Tsetsura, 2004). The first period is the pre-Soviet period from the 18th to the early 20th centuries; the Soviet period covers 1917-1985, which includes the development of the Soviet function of journalism and the beginning of the *perestroika* period; and the Gorbachev and post-Soviet period 1985-2000, during which there was free speech without regulation, rules, or restrictions (Klyueva & Tsetsura, in press). Recently, a new period was identified as the Putin Era period, which covers the development of journalism from 2000 until the present time (Koltsova, 2006).

When Bolsheviks came to power in 1917, a state monopoly on advertising was installed to deprive the commercial press of its main source of income. The young Soviet government believed that a truly free press can only be formed without any capitalistic or market-driven principles and influences (Koltsova, 2006). But soon, the Soviet period of journalism was characterized by a combination of an extreme media control and censorship and a little attention to the public opinion about the media (Koltsova). During the Soviet era, mass media were treated as means of mass information and propaganda, and the media's function was to report the government news and to propagate socialist ideals (McNair, 1991).

A true rebirth of the principles of objectivity and openness in journalism happened when Gorbachev initiated a *Glasnost* campaign in 1984. The new information policy established principles of freedom of information, pluralism of opinions, and open exchange of ideas among citizens (Zhirkov, 2001). Economic and political reforms led to a free market economy and opened doors to the development of all market-driven industries, including advertising, marketing, and public relations (Tsetsura, 2004). Journalists were the first ones in Russia who started working in the field of public relations (Goregin & Nikolaev, 1996). The first and foremost function of these new

public relations practitioners was to deliver information to the mass media, in a similar Western tradition of media relations (Goregin & Nikolaev). And because these journalists knew how the media system worked in Russia, they were the best professionals for this new job.

As the markets developed in Russia, the concerns with corporate ownership and the commercialization of journalism became inevitable. Pasti (2005) argued that journalists of the 1990s perceived journalism as a handy public relations tool which could benefit influential groups rather than an objective profession, independent entity that serves society. Harro-Loit and Saks (2006) demonstrated that the commercialization of journalism led to the blurred borders between journalism and advertising in Eastern Europe. The continuing commercialization and economic pressures led to re-conceptualization of public relations and journalism in Russia and to the rapid development of media opacity. Are there any additional factors that can help one to understand why in certain countries, particularly in Russia, media opacity is so widely spread? In order to answer this question, one should take a closer look at the development of public relations as a field in Russia and should examine the phenomenon of "black" vs. "white" Russian public relations.

Media Opacity in Russian Public Relations

The two terms "black PR" and "white PR" were first introduced in the late 1980s and early 1990s and soon became very popular among professionals and scholars in Russia (Tsetsura, 2003). According to the "black vs. white PR" view, ethics divides public relations practices into "black" and "white," or "bad and good." "Black PR" is associated with manipulative techniques that were often used in political public relations and political election campaigns (Tsetsura, 2003). Essentially, ""black PR" emerged as another term for media opacity in Russian political public relations. "White PR," on the other hand, presented a Western view on public relations, which is rooted in the ethical Grunig's *Excellence Project* (Maksimov, 1999). In many discussions about public relations practices in Russia, public relations scholars, practitioners, and journalists often refer to the field in terms of "black" and "white."

Some scholars disagree that public relations practices should be described as "black and white" (Klyueva & Tsetsura, in press). Instead of categorizing public relations as "black" or "white," they argue that "black" public relations is not public relations at all, but rather propagandistic efforts (Tsetsura, 2003). They gleaned that "black vs. white PR" discussions take place because the profession has been slow to adopt ethical standards (Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009). Some U.S. scholars argued that "black" public relations cannot exist because "any misuse or abuse of public relations is a question, not of 'bad' public relations of which only an individual practitioner can be held responsible, but rather such misuse or abuse becomes a question of unethical professional practice which is of collective concern and which must be collective responsibility of all practitioners" (Kruckeberg, 1992, p. 34).

From a Western perspective, public relations professional ethics is not followed in Russia. Russian professionals joined associations (e.g., the International Public Relations Association (IPRA), International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)) and subscribed to follow these organizations' codes of ethics. However, many of them find these rules and codes are not well suited for the Russian public relations environment (Tsetsura, 2003). These

professionals often consider ethics codes idealistic and not suitable for the Russian public relations environment (Tsetsura, 2003). The main problem, however, lies in the fact that these Russian professionals themselves actively argue for ethical public relations in their everyday discourses and agree that they do not act ethically when they break public relations codes of ethics (Klyueva, 2008; Pashentsev, 2002). Thus, the argument that Russian public relations ethics is not the same as Western ethics becomes questionable: if Russian public relations practitioners agree that, for instance, publishing press releases for money is wrong (Klyueva & Tsetsura, in press), how can this practice be ethical in the eyes of Russian public relations practitioners?

Many Russian public relations scholars and practitioners are concerned with an existing practice of paying money to journalists and editors for publishing publicity materials (Klyueva & Tsetsura, in press; Tsetsura & Luoma-aho, 2010). While such instances originally took place in Moscow and St. Petersburg, now the problem becomes more and more common in many other regions in Russia. This practice is often called "zakazukha," a Russian slang word which means a material in favor of an organization written by a journalist and published on editorial pages but paid for by that organization to a journalist or an editor. In a classic experiment, Promaco Public Relations, a Moscow-based public relations firm, showed that 13 out of 21 Russian national newspapers and magazines were ready to publish a fake press release (without even checking the facts) charging from $200 to $2000 for the service (Sutherland, 2001). According to Russian laws, this unlawful activity is called hidden advertising. Unfortunately, a law against hidden advertising, which periodically appears in the Russian media, is not enforced. Journalists who get paid, or public relations professionals who pay for materials to be published, are not legally challenged for their wrongdoings. As a result of such non-enforcement of punishment, media opacity became a standard practice in early days of Russian public relations (Tsetsura, in press). That created a strong negative perception of the field from the very start, and to this day affects the credibility of the professional public relations practices (Tsetsura, 2003)**.**

Media Opacity in Other Countries

Examples of media opacity from Russia played a significant role in attracting the public's attention to this worldwide problem: the phenomenon was publicly discussed at several international conferences of professionals in public relations and journalism. Many agreed that examples from Moscow are probably extreme cases since often it is called a "bribery capital," but Vuslat Doğan Sabanci, CEO of Hürriyet, Doğan Media Group, confirmed that anecdotal evidence of zakazukha exists in many other countries. Examples of media bribery can be found around the world. Media bribery in Egypt was reported in *The Economist* (Sept. 7, 2002) when Muhammad Wakil, a director of news for Egypt's state television monopoly, was caught for taking a bribe to put a doctor on a popular chat show. As the investigation showed, Wakil had been charging "clients" for years to appear on popular shows. The United Kingdom specialists often report that the trade magazines ask for "color separations" payments when they use a company's photo on their pages. No one argues that certain make-up brands chosen for the front cover of many beauty magazines because those brands are the biggest advertisers in the corresponded media.

One of the latest media opacity scandals in the USA featured a well-known Ketchum PR agency and the Bush's administration. Ketchum has received a contract to promote the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) campaign, a popular educational campaign so actively advocated by the republican administration last year. It turned out that Mr. Armstrong Williams, a famous TV commentator, entrepreneur, and founder of an advertising/PR firm, who actively supported the educational campaign and often discussed it in favorable light in his programs on the American TV channels, was a subcontractor for Ketchum. His job, according to the contract, was to actively promote the campaign's benefits and advantages.

Free Press, a nongovernment organization, demanded to launch investigation with Congress and Federal Communication Commission to investigate the conflict of interests Williams clearly had in the situation. When the scandal broke out in the middle of January in 2005, Mr. Williams issued an apology: "I supported school vouchers long before the Department of Education ran a single ad on my TV Show. I did not change my views just because my PR firm as receiving paid advertising promoting the No Child Left Behind." Later, he said, "I now realize that I have to create inseparable boundaries between my role as a small businessman and my role as an independent commentator" (as cited in the Free Press news releases, available online). It seems at the very least strange to hear a comment like this one from an experienced public relations professional and, more importantly, from a famous journalist, who just now realized that he needed to create boundaries between the two roles.

Competitor's reaction was furious: Richard Edelman, president of Edelman PR, said, "Ketchum's 'pay for play PR' contract with the Department of Education has dealt a serious blow to our industry's effort to 'clean up' its behavior." "This kind of pay for play PR takes us back in time to the days of the press agent who would drop off the new record album and $10 to the deejay," continued Edelman. Edelman urged Ketchum CEO Ray Kotcher, to "take steps to assure that it never happens again." (Free Press news releases, 2005). Ketchum's response shortly followed, and Ray Kotcher, CEO of Ketchum PR, said, "We are certainly not pleased by this turn of events." Ketchum was in the process of reviewing its independent consulting and government contracts. The client, the Department of Education has also reacted on the scandal, "At this point, what I can say that at a minimum, there were *errors of judgment* (emphasis added) at the Department, and I am diligently working to get to the bottom of it all," said Education Secretary Margaret Spellings (USA Today, January 31, 2005).

But despite of the international attention and the fact that the global professional community condemns this practice, to this day, some practitioners, specifically the ones who practice public relations in the regions, readily admit that they do not always practice ethical public relations as presented in the code of ethics of the their respected professional public relations associations, such as RASO, a Russian Public Relations Association. Russian practitioners, for instance, argue that common perceptions of "black PR" and wide-spread bribery make it difficult to practice Western-style, "white" public relations (Pashentsev, 2002; Tsetsura, 2003). Some simply say that it is impossible to practice ethical public relations because nobody pays for ethics (Maksimov, 1999). But these excuses are weak for two reasons: 1) the majority of the practitioners around the world do agree that ethics needs to be taken into consideration while practicing public relations, particularly in regard to media transparency (Klyueva, & Tsetsura, in press;

Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009; Tsetsura & Zuo, 2009); and 2) scholars and practitioners around the world actively defend principles of public relations codes ethics as a unifying element of international public relations (Alyoshina, 1997; Bowen, 2008; Bowen, Rawlins, & Martin, 2010; Boynton, 2007; Egorova, 2000; Klyueva & Tsetsura, 2010; Konovalova, 2000; Lebedeva, 1999; Pashentsev, 2002; Tsetsura, 2008).

Conclusion

Public relations professional organizations as well as practitioners around the world face the same problem as those in Russia: accepted codes of ethics are not enforceable and thus are not practiced (Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009; Tsetsura & Zuo, 2009). Although codes of ethics exist worldwide, specialists point out numerous problems with their reinforcement. One of the goals of public relations practitioners and educators is to find better ways for reinforcing such codes and positioning benefits of following these codes. This goal can be quite challenging, especially for modern public relations practitioners who work in different countries; however, it is very important to continue promoting ethical practices for educational and professional communities in the name of a better future of global public relations. And this is an ultimate challenge in combating media opacity worldwide.

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A Delphi Study on Internal Communication in Europe

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Abstract

Internal communication is among the top five responsibility areas of public relations practitioners. This is a consistent finding of empirical studies in Europe and in the USA. In the UK, practitioners in internal communication organized in an independent Institute of Internal Communication (www.ioic.org.uk/), separate from the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (www.cipr.co.uk/). Together with practitioners from ten other European countries they operate a federation of internal communication associations in Europe (FEIEA - www.feiea.com/). There seems to be a tendency to differentiate and separate internal communication practice from the public relations body. To confirm or to refute this observation, a Delphi study is in progress with the leaders of the member associations of the FEIEA. The Delphi study is trying to articulate self-understanding of the internal communication practice in Europe. The paper reports the results of the Delphi study on internal communication among leaders of European internal communicators' associations on their representation of the internal communication practice.

Although communication is a central concept for organization and management theory and practice (Thompkins 1987), internal communication as a field is a contestable practice. Since 1940s, industrial relations, now transformed into *human relations* (HR), sees communication as an important management tool (Heron1942; Fitz-enz 1990; Lachotzki & Noteboom 2005). At least since 1970s, marketing perceives employees as internal customers and so it has developed *internal marketing* (Ahmed & Rafiq 2002; Dunmore 2002; Gummesson 2000), and public relations perceives employees as internal public(s) and so it has developed *internal public relations* (Seitel 1989) or simply *internal relations* (Cutlip, Center & Broom 2006): "partnerships must be built with internal stakeholders" (Sowa 2005: 433). If there is a difference between public relations and corporate communication (Argenti 1998), on *internal communication* they completely agree (Oliver1997; Cornelissen 2008). Communication is an essential element also of *change management* (Carnall 1999; Clarke 1994; Deetz, Tracy & Simpson 2000; Kanter, Stein & Jick 1992). And *organizational communication* as a communication science discipline has been traditionally "focused on acts of communication between senders and receiver within the 'container' of the organization – that is, within clearly defined organizational boundaries" (Cheney & Christensen 2001: 231), but is today becoming all-including field of study of both internal and external communication of organizations (Goldhaber1993).

While being intellectually contested from so many sides, internal communication community is developing its own identity. In the UK, practitioners in internal communication organized in an independent Institute of Internal Communication (www.ioic.org.uk/), separate from the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (www.cipr.co.uk/). Together with practitioners from ten other European countries they operate a federation of internal communication associations in Europe (FEIEA - www.feiea.com/). The second edition of the *Gower Handbook of Internal Communication* (Wright 2009) includes chapters on organizational and management theory, motivation, leadership and change, corporate social responsibility and social media. Books on internal communication are entering into multiple editions (Quirke 2008, Myth & Mounter 2008). Internal communication as a practical field is developing its own territory, while being theoretically encroached by different academic disciplines: management and human relations, marketing, corporate communication and public relations.

In the context of these lively developments, there is a need to overview the current situation in internal communication community in Europe, describe the current trends in thinking and doing, analyze options for future developments and propose some guidance for both students and practitioners about where to focus their interests.

Practical background

Internal communication as a practical field and specialization of communication management in contemporary organizations is emerging as a heir to internal (in-house) journalism and editorship. Several associations in which internal communicators organize in Europe explicitly admit to emerge out of associations whose members were in-house journalists and editors. Probably the most articulate independent internal communicators association in Europe today is the UK Institute of Internal Communicators. Established in

1949 as the British Association of Industrial Editors, it operated later as the British Association of Communicators in Business, to become the Institute of Internal Communicators in 2010. It estimates that its base can hold some 20,000 people working in internal communication in the UK.

In Slovenia, the Section of Internal Communicators (CIK) is one of six sections within the Public Relations Society of Slovenia – PRSS (with, e.g. the IABC Slovenia also being a section of the PRSS). It was established in 2005 with a transformation of a Working group of journalists in companies and public institutions that was active as a part of the Slovene Association of Journalists since 1970s.

Situation is different at the North-American continent, where in 1970, the American Association of Industrial Editors (AAIE) and the International Council of Industrial Editors (ICIE) merged to form the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC). The AAIE was established in 1938 and in 1941 AAIE became one of several charter members of the National Council of Industrial Editors Association (NCIEA), which later became the International Council of Industrial Editors (ICIE). AAIE withdrew from ICIE in 1946 over policy differences but the two organizations merged again in 1970, becoming the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC). Although there were talks to merge the IABC with the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) as its internal communication arm, they failed, and today the IABC and the PRSA compete for membership in the same practitioner pool both in North America and around the world. So, there is no parallel to FEIEA in the North America, and authors are not aware of any similar developments on other continents.

Notwithstanding differences in the ways specialists in internal communication organize, internal communication is among the top five responsibility areas of public relations and communication management practitioners everywhere where we have empirical insights. This is a consistent finding of empirical studies in Europe and in the USA (Lurat, Aldyukhov, Dixius & Reinhold 2010; Swerling Sen, Bonefeste, Rezvan, Lee & McHargue 2009; Zerfass, Tench, Verhoeven, Verčič & Moreno 2010).

Theoretical background

Academic literature is obscure on how to call the field and what it covers. Argenti (1998) is promiscuous in writing about *employee communication and internal communications* as synonyms (and using the terms *corporate communication* and *corporate communications* interchangeably). Cornelissen (2008) consistenly uses the term *corporate communication* in singular, while Kalla (2005) propagates the pular use of the term: *internal communications.* Berger (2008) writes about internal communication under the title *employee/organizational communication.* Kalla (2005) further organizes the field of internal communication in four domains: *business communication* (concerned with communication skills of employees), *management communication* (focused on management skills and capabilities for communication), *corporate communication* (focused on formal communication), and *organizational communication* (addressing more philosophical and theoretically oriented issues). *Integrated internal communications* subsume all four. Welch and Jackson (2007) break down internal communication by stakeholder groups into four dimensions: *internal line management*

communication, internal team peer communication, internal project peer communication and *internal corporate communication.*

Robson and Tourish (2005) claim that there is considerable evidence in literature that internal communication helps improve the likelihood of an organization being successful. According to Hargie and Toursih (2002) research shows that improvement in communication leads to a number of organizational benefits. Quinn and Hargie (2004) also agree that the value of superior internal communications and the relationship it has to organizational efficiency and effectiveness has been extensively recognized. Dickinson, Rainey and Hargie (2003) state that there is a significant body of research that links improved communication practices in organizations with a set of positive outcomes.

In their analysis, Clampitt and Downs (1993) concluded that main benefits of an internal communications audit include improved productivity, reduced absenteeism, higher quality of services and products, increased levels of innovation, fewer strikes and reduced costs. Snyder and Morris (1984) found that two perceived communication variables (the quality of supervisory communication and information exchange within the peer work group) were positively correlated to critical revenue and workload measures of overall organizational performance.

When groups work in isolation and people share a minimum of information over nonflexible boundaries, change slows down. Hargie and Tourish (2002) found that low quality inter-departmental communication generates a significant feeling of isolation and un-satisfaction and through this correlates with lower levels of involvement into the process of decision making. This means that poor exchange of information leads to insecurity and increases alienation.

Yet, after a thorough literature review Grunig (1992: 575) concluded: "In spite of all of this research, however, we emerge from this section with little theoretical understanding of how internal communication makes organizations more effective."

Although the majority of research in internal communication follows managerial benefits (how can we increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency through improvements in internal communication/s), it is necessary to recognize that not all work in the field is concerned with that. Klikauer (2007) provides a thorough conceptualization and a critique of the contemporary practices (and theories) in internal communication from a Marxist perspective.

Delphi studies in public relations

Delphi research method was developed by the Rand Corporation in the US for studying future, complex and/or ambiguous processes. It is consists of iterative and anonymous interviewing of purposefully selected experts. The core idea of the method is that iterative process of interviewing will produce either convergence of expert opinions somewhere in the middle, or produce clear divisions of the group opinions. It is expected that a group can articulate such 'true' opinions in two to five iterations. Investigators can start with vague and unstructured questions and go from the second to the final round of interviews by using expert's responses as inputs for each consecutive round. The Delphi technique consists of conceptualization and writing of the initial questionnaire, selection and mobilization of respondents, distribution, collection and analysis of the responses to the initial questionnaire, preparation of the second questionnaire based on the results of the first analysis, development and administration of the second and subsequent

questionnaires, and writing of the final report (Brody & Stone 1989; Emmons & Kaplan 1971; Helmer 1966; Linstone & Turoff 1975).

The Delphi method is an often used research technique also in public relations. White and Balphin (1994) used it to study public relations practice in the UK, while Wakefield (2000) used it to study international public relations. The largest Delphi study in public relations was executed in 1999 and 2000 as a part of the European Public Relations Body of Knowledge (EBOK). The purpose of the EBOK was to codify the existing body of public relations literature in Europe and to enable its fuller use and application which is restricted by linguistic, cultural and administrative barriers. 37 participants from 25 countries participated in three waves of interviewing. Results of the study were presented in the final report by van Ruler, Verčič, Bütschi & Flodin (2000), three academic articles (Verčič 2000; Verčič, van Ruler, Bütschi & Flodin 2001; Verčič, van Ruler, Bütschi & Flodin 2004), a programmatic Bled manifesto (van Ruler & Verčič 2002) and were instrumental as inputs for an ethnographic study on public relations in Europe (van Ruler & Verčič 2004) and the largest empirical survey in public relations and communication management that is carried out annually in Europe since 2007 (Moreno, Zerfass, Tench, Verčič & Verhoeven 2009).

The study

The critical element of a Delphi study is the quality of respondents. Authors decided to take the opportunity of an emergence of a pan-European association of associations representing specialist in internal communication in their respective countries. This association, a federation of internal communication associations in Europe (FEIEA) had in 2010 eleven member associations (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland, and the UK). The Czech Institute of Internal Communication (IIK) became an associate member in 2011 with a prospect of becoming a full member in 2012.

Initial questionnaires were distributed electronically (via e-mail) in November of 2010, with an intention to receive responses in a month. It took four months to receive ten responses. Investigators developed and distributed the initial questionnaire in English language, but received responses in English, French and German languages. Before analysis, French and German responses were translated by researchers into English language.

This paper reports the findings of the first wave at the time when questions are developed for the second wave to start in May 2011.

Results of the First Wave

The Definition in Use

In the first round we asked what is the definition of internal communications the participants and their associations use. The majority of the participants said it includes the engagement of and exchange of information between employees or members of an organization in order to create understanding.

Some of the participants were of the opinion that internal communications (or internal communication as they called it) align employees or members to the purpose, goals and strategy of the organization, so as to enable it to perform its activities

effectively. Some of the participants stated that internal communications are deemed to be an essential management tool in order to support company business and its development, along with the involvement of people working in it. For a portion of participants internal communications also includes all forms of communication within the organization, communication with organisation's internal publics (employees, but also former employees, scholars, students and others).

Some of the participants defined it simply as all forms of communication within the organization. There was also mention of the fact that internal communications should motivate employees and through that create value for the company. And even though there were a number of respondents that defined internal communication simply as the writing of the "staff magazine", most agreed that the stereotypical image of internal communicator that is only in charge of the magazine and the staff party has had its day. Today it is a lot more about the position of the information manager, a mediator between the management and the workers, as well as an internal coach for the management.

Finally, one respondent stated that internal communication is concerned with corporate information and communication. It is the aspiration (starting from the vision and proceeding to policy and mission statement and eventually to the strategy) of achieving a systematic analysis and distribution of information at all hierarchical levels to be simultaneously coordinated in the most efficient way possible.

The Relationship with Other Management Disciplines

As for the relationship to other management disciplines almost all participant agree that internal communications as a discipline is intertwined with other disciplines, particularly with those being used in the communications area as well as those within the human resources area. Most of the participants also agreed that most managerial activities cannot be properly performed without using internal communications to some extent. Even though almost all participants mentioned human resources as a close area, some also mentioned change management, organization development, public relations, marketing and general management. Others include corporate human resources, corporate strategy, and as the most logical partner – corporate communications. They didn't see internal communications as subordinate to any of these, except when management structures in a given organization place internal communications in a reporting line to one or other of these other disciplines. One respondent thinks that internal communications occupies the space where each of these (previously mentioned) disciplines intersects with each other.

Most respondents agree that internal communications is (or should be) part of the strategy and planning of the organizations and as such should be strategically approached, planned measured and reviewed. Since some of the respondents see internal communications as the function in the organization in which various teams meet (one respondent mentioned spokesperson, head of human resources and lawyers) it is clear why the relationship among various fields to the function of internal communications is close. As one respondent summarizes it – the internal communications (specialist) should ideally be knowledgeable in multiple disciplines because only then can he/she be a valid partner to the management.

Internal Communications As A Theory Or Practice Based Field

The agreement among participants was not very high when answering this question(s). Most of them believe that internal communications is mostly deployed in results based organizations and as such would be better defined as a technique based activity then as a theory based field. However, almost all respondents agree that the adoption of some theoretical framework, deriving from management and psychological theories can be helpful to support its daily implementation. Other participants included language studies, media work, and marketing as field to taken into account (adding that only practical application can really make an internal communicator an expert).

Most subjects stressed that internal communications should be a part of communications in general (while relying on management and human resources sciences). Only one respondent stated that the theoretical background internal communications can draw from includes public relations (together with communication science and human resource science). Two respondents were firm in their conclusion that internal communications was a completely practical field, one of them concluding that it nothing more than employee media. On the other hand, one of the participants stated that internal communication is essentially a practical field but the discipline itself and its practitioners would gain added professional credibility from a widespread recognition of an underlying theoretical basis. This basis should draw from social constructivism and notably from the work of national and organizational culture of Hofstede, Trampenaars, Hampden-Turner and others, from the insights into viral networking in organizations and from the work on organizational communication. Finally, as one respondents concluded, internal communication is in practice, at all strategic and operational levels, an inclusive discipline; theory alone will be no benefit if one is not able to communicate accordingly in leadership situations.

Knowledge And Skills Needed in Internal Communications Practice

Most participants agree that there is a number of knowledge and skills someone has to own or develop to successfully perform this activity. Typical communications skills are important, both technical and analytical: writing, speaking, presenting, gathering and analyzing data, having an understanding of web, video and editing processes in order to manage them. A communication professional must possess a deep and thorough knowledge of the company's business and market, coupled with very good listening skill, which is the ability to understand what people in the company say and how they feel. If this is so, the outcome of internal communications processes can be effective and useful.

Most of the participants mentioned some (or all) of the following knowledge and skills: languages, writing and editing, basic psychology, organizing events, communicating and understanding different cultures, understanding of various media (online, video, print, etc.), understanding of research techniques, change management, project management, marketing, work with media, branding and design.

One respondent divided required knowledge according to levels, where foundation level required editing, writing, team working, planning, time management, meeting management, networking and active professional development. At this level (according to the respondent) it was good to have knowledge on the role of internal communication, audiences, channels, design, graphic presentation of information, including photography, the law and internal communication and ethics. Advanced level required communication

planning, collaborating across functions, managing stakeholders, channel management, analytics/evaluation, managing projects, influencing the organization, business/process improvement, the business environment, successful behaviours, managing performance, solving problems.

And even though one participant stated that internal communications specialist should be only educated journalists and "layouters", most respondents stressed the importance of management skills, business skills and communication skills.

Internal Communications As A Separate Research Field

Two of the respondents stated that in their opinion internal communications is not a separate research field. All the others agreed that it is. Few of them elaborated and said it can be separated from other communication disciplines (i.e. public relations, media relations, etc.), even though it can also be perceived as a part of the overall company communication efforts rather than a separate research field. One participant thinks that internal communications is a separate field to the extent that the nature of the relationship between employees/members of the organization is distinct from the nature of other stakeholder relationships – shareholders, customers, regulators, etc.

One of the respondents concluded that depending on the company, internal communication is located in either the "Communication" or "Human Resources" department. In most companies, it is not an independent department. However, on the scientific level, internal communication becomes a fully-fledged field of research.

Current Issues in the Field

Most of the respondents mentioned various issues and some were quite elaborate in description. For example one of the respondents stated that internal communication continues to have to justify its existence. This is firstly because of the limited objective and academic demonstration to date of internal communications inherent contribution to organizational well being and fulfilment of organizational goals, and secondly because of the relative lack of a legal imperative compelling organizations to make direct provisions for internal communication, except in specific defined cases. Organizations do not challenge the need, for example, for finance, legal or health and safety expertise because the law requires them to make specific provision for each of these. Thirdly, it is because internal communication has traditionally lacked a recognised qualification-based professional development path, which leads to low barriers to entry into the field of internal communication and a consequent lack of perceived professionalism. There is also a continuing debate about the independent nature of internal communication. Some practitioners of other communications disciplines claim its space by referring to it as internal public relations or internal marketing. This presents a constant challenge to internal communication. Practitioners have seen their headcounts and their budgets reduced as organisations respond to the economic recession. There is increased pressure on time and resources, but no lessening in expectations in terms of output and activity. Organisations looking to reduce costs are pressuring their internal communication functions to opt for lower-cost electronic distribution channels without fully understand the underlying communication dynamics. Costs may be saved in the short-term but sometimes at the expense of effectiveness. Internal communication is a profession in the making. It seeks to move away from a mainly production-based model towards one that

re-positions practitioners as expert advisors and business partners. This is a similar journey to the one made in the last ten years or so by the human resources profession.

Another respondent mentioned that there are a couple of items, which are emerging stronger than others: the digital native generation started to join the job market and they will bring with them their pervasive way of experiencing communications – something that internal communications professionals and managers have to face, since that will be "the" company population a few years from now. Secondly, with the increase of second-generation immigrants we will see a progressive arrival of different cultures within a company that will probably require different ways of approaching communications.

One respondent thinks that there is more chatter about internal communication than there is reflection on it. To communicate means to balance, adjust, which is something we do through the pragmatics of language. Executives in particular feel that their language performance (written and spoken) is insufficient; lack of time causes a wish to comply with a recipe or with terms that conform to political correctness. The current events at EU internal level (finance, environmental protection, Maghreb-issue, etc.) demonstrate this wonderfully. He concluded that in his opinion the real areas of debate are: creating complete and secure information bases, so everyone can be on the same page, even if ultimately in their own language; developing principles which all managers can work with really well; developing the use of information technology in internal communication; developing and providing practical training for persons responsible for internal communications and at executive levels.

Other issues that came up among respondents included credibility of leaders, engagement and employee loyalty, motivation, social media, cultural differences and interpretation of messages, communication of line managers/managers, web based social networking, communicating change, communicating during social crisis and issue management. One of the participants stated that current issues included everyday life, anniversaries, presentations of new employees, portrait articles and short stories on how the company is doing on the market.

Various Names That Describe the Field

According to one respondent (even though most of them had similar opinions) the discipline is normally described as internal communication, internal communications or IC, or employee engagement. It is sometimes positioned as internal marketing or internal public relations. The functions with the responsibility for internal communication are sometimes given names that refer to 'corporate understanding'. In addition to that one of the respondents was of the opinion that the only adequate name is internal communication, even if public relations would like to incorporate the subject.

Other names that were mentioned included business communications, employee communications, employee relations, relations with internal publics, corporate communications, leadership communications and management communications.

One of the respondents concluded that names also include internal marketing, information, counselling, listening - all of these describe to a certain extent an aspect of internal communications, which can be more or less predominant from time to time. Finally, one of the participants thinks that the best term to describe the field would be – inside news.

Internal Communications As A Separate Field in Practice

Most of the respondents agreed that internal communications are a field of their own, since they require some specific set of knowledge and skills or, at least, a specific combination of them. But, as one participant stated, at the same time they cannot exist by themselves since they can only be successful if they "live" the company. That's why, no matter where they are placed from an organizational standpoint (being them with human resources, with communications or with top management) they must have a daily exchange with other areas (including operations) in order to be properly effective.

Another respondent believes that internal communication is primarily about the management and engagement of people within an organisation and that therefore it is close to human resources management. However, it draws from the toolkit of the other communication disciplines and clearly has a relationship with them, too. In practical terms, internal communication is managed within either human resources, corporate communications or another organisational unit according to the convenience of individual organisations.

Some of the participants feel strongly that internal communications are a separate field, and as one states - these days, human resources people are, from a legal point of view, administrators who often have little relation to linguistic communication or simply lack the time for these linguistic tasks. Public relations people are intrinsically geared to transfer of convictions; internal communications illustrates the facts which employees carry with them from their own working experience. Marketing tries, via "vivre les valeurs" (live values) to introduce its own concepts into internal communication, but these are credos, not comprehensive solutions. Ultimately, corporate communication should work out a performance concept for internal communication, as is common in the financial sector, social services, etc. But many blocks are still missing before it can be incorporated systematically into every company.

Even though most of the respondents acknowledge relationships that internal communications have with other departments (mostly human resources) all but one state that it should represent a separate field in practice i.e. a separate department in the organization or as one respondent summarizes it – a field of its own that aggregates the other ones.

Conclusions

Results of the first wave of the Delphi study on internal communication in Europe presents a variety of opinions ranging from a clear autonomist position on one extreme propagating internal communication as an independent management discipline on its own right, to a traditionalist position of internal communication as a set of communication tools directed towards audiences contained inside organizational boundaries (like newsletters or intranets).

Limitations

The Delphi study on internal communication in Europe is an exploration among an elite representing eleven nations and their professional con-federal association. From this stem several limitations that need to be acknowledged when discussing the findings.

This is a regional study covering only Europe. Even within Europe, representation is not spread evenly around the continent. Respondents come mainly from Western

Europe, with only two being post-communist and not even Eastern European countries (they are both as central in Europe). So, they may be counted politically as being politically East because of being post-communist, but not geographically. Not a single Eastern European country and not a single non-EU member European country is represented in the sample.

This is an elite study, not necessarily representing a fair picture of practice in represented countries. Quality of responses depends solely on quality of individuals responding to questionnaires which may be more or less in tune with what is going on in their countries. An explicit assumption of this study is that a first look at the situation in Europe can be gained by talking to people holding top positions in their internal communication practitioner associations.

Members of the FEIEA (Federation of European Business Communicators Association, self-described as: "FEIEA is the federation of internal communications associations across Europe." – http://www.feiea.com/index.php/whats-feiea) are not associations of an equal standing. Some, like the UK Institute of Internal Communication (IoIC) are independent organizations, others, like Slovenian Internal Communicators Section (SIK) are parts of larger organizations (in the case of Slovenians – the Public Relations Society of Slovenia).

Next steps

Authors of the Delphi study on internal communication in Europe envision two directions of their future work in the field. Firstly, the Delphi study on internal communication in Europe needs to be completed in the next two waves and the final report should bring some clarity to this amorphous mass of opinions. Secondly, although views presented in the first wave of the Delphi study in internal communication in Europe seem to be looking into different directions, one of them raises a question of differentiation and specialization of internal communication as a field of study and practice of management and/or communication (communication management/corporate communication/public relations). These directions will be discussed in the following waves of interviewing. At the present, two more waves are planned, with further one or two done if proved necessary to elicit clear positions either through consensus or a clear disagreement

Internal communication is a communication specialization that seems to be facing both qualitative and quantitative changes. It is necessary to understand what are the drivers and what are the consequences of these changes. This study would like to contribute to that understanding.

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Tapping into Twitter: The Hows and Whys of Usage and What it Means for PR

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Abstract

This research focuses on better understanding the hows and whys of individuals' Twitter usage. Fourteen interviews were done to gain information about usage patterns, activeness (information forwarding/information seeking), networking patterns, and content patterns. This qualitative research was done as a precursor, to an online survey with a larger sample to look for these patterns on a more substantial scale. The goal of this research is to help scholars and practitioners better understand the potential publics in this particular social network, their active behaviors, and how practitioners might more effectively communicate with their publics via this media.

Twitter and Social Media

Since the rise in popularity of recent social media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube) there has been an equal abundance of articles, how to books and online blogs detailing how you can use this media to your benefit. Twitter in particular, with its 140 character limit, has had arguments raised from both sides of the fence. Berinato (2010) argues that there is great value for marketers in the stream of free consumer data. Maurer (2010) offers advice on how to jump start a Twitter profile and increase your followers as a writer/journalist. Klara (2010) emphasizes the value of Twitter for smaller, independent brands with low market share and Hyatt (2010) explores the value of personal branding and corporations' use of social media with mixed results. Twitter has also been shown to be of use to travelers and the travel industry (Bellstrom, 2010) as well as in crisis situations (Walker, 2009). Despite the many success stories of businesses using social media and the advisers on how to be most effective with your Twitter account, Twitter has by no means developed a universal following.

On the other side of the fence skeptics and naysayers see Twitter as vanity, self-indulgence (Croal, 2008), and having little true utility for anyone other than those looking for a basic sender receiver channel, such as celebrities and fans (Engelbrektson, 2010). In addition, others argue that social media such as Twitter is encouraging consumers to publicly complain and attack companies indirectly instead of contacting the company with which they have the issue (Bush, 2010). This of course can lead to a larger issue for the company being complained about through the public visibility of these comments and the ease of retweeting, or forwarding comments, through social networks and cyberspace.

Work by Huberman, Romero, & Wu (2008) found that there was a significant difference between followers and what they defined as friends ("anyone who a user has directed a post to at least twice," p. 6) in terms of actual interaction. They felt their findings, that a link (follower) does not imply interaction (friend), should temper the view of scholars, advertisers, and political activists who see Twitter as "an opportunity to study the propagation of ideas, the formation of social bonds and viral marketing, among others" (p. 8). In fact they argue "most of the links declared within Twitter were meaningless from an interaction point of view" (p. 8). While this point may be valid in terms of interaction it does not necessarily mean that individuals are not gaining information from others that they follow although they are not interacting with them. In addition their work failed to mention any retweeting, or information forwarding, behavior. While it is possible that this falls under their definition of friend it is unlikely and not clearly explicated. Thus, there may still be room for arguments of viral comments, negative talk, or marketing within this media.

When exploring uses of Twitter research reports that daily chatter (what people are doing) is the most common use of twitter. This is followed by conversations, which are limited due to structural set up of Twitter's @ feature, sharing of information/URLs and reporting news (Java, Song, Finin, & Tseng, 2007). This work (Java et al., 2007) also reported three main categories of users on Twitter: information source (has a large number of followers and may or may not post frequently), friends (defined as being on the friend list and most relationships fell into this category), and information seeker (follows others regularly but might post rarely).

Despite the lack of conclusive evidence about Twitter's usefulness there has been a rather substantial urging for public relations practitioners to keep up with the times and embrace these new media, ideally finding the best ways in which to use them along the way. However, one

cannot simply rush forward and use new media in the same way we have used old media and expect the same results (Grunig, 2009). Thus it seems important to consider the users themselves, the potential publics, and their applications of this new media in order to better understand how and if it can be used as a form of communication and a means relationship building. In fact boyd and Ellison (2008) emphasized, "Scholars still have a limited understanding of who is and who is not using these sites, why and for what purposes, especially outside the U.S." (p. 224). It is based on these premises the following research questions guide the research in hopes of finding better answers to the potential utility of Twitter for organizations and their publics.

RQ1: For what purpose(s) do individuals use Twitter?

RQ2: How do they use it differently than other social media?

Method

This research was conducted with an emphasis on exploratory qualitative inquiry on Twitter usage. Participants for this research were recruited largely through convenience sampling within the researchers' social networks. Although originally attempting to recruit participants throughout the campus of a Midwestern university low response rate forced a change in recruiting tactics. A total of five U.S. citizens (1 male and 4 females) completed in-depth interviews on their usage of Twitter and other social media. In addition 10 Koreans (6 males and 4 females) completed the interview protocol (in Korean) via email. The U. S. sample consisted of mostly college students at various levels in their education with one participant being a new faculty member. The Korean sample was composed entirely of public relations professionals. The age range in the sample was from 21 to 42.

After the interviews had been either transcribed or translated, depending on original collection method and language, open coding was used to find patterns or themes in the responses. A thematic analysis was then conducted on the data.

Results

RQ 1 asked about the reasons or purposes for which individuals used Twitter. Several topics came up but the most consistent were: to follow celebrities/comediennes; for work; to get information on hobbies/special interest topics; to get specific information on immediate or unique news (eye witness accounts, social/political movements in other countries, etc.); to vent about poor products, service, experience, etc.

RQ 2 attempted to understand in what way if any participants use of Twitter differs from their use of other social network sites. Participants cited two common differences most often. First, they noted using one media (most often Facebook) for more personal and private communication than the other (most often Twitter). They frequently emphasized that these were their "real" friends. Second, they highlighted using different information behaviors on different social networking cites. Some participants report using Twitter to gather information and using Facebook to send information, while others reported the opposite pattern.

Discussion

Most of the purposes individuals provided for using Twitter were found in the literature as either a potential use (work, celebrities, immediate news) or problem with Twitter (venting). The

idea of using Twitter for specialized knowledge was reported frequently by the respondents with regards to topics such as technology, crafting, sports groups, and blogs they followed. Although this use of Twitter does not seem to be immediately evident in the literature it could be a part of the news function of Twitter. The topics that were considered to be appropriate and inappropriate to Tweet about varied some with respect to the participant's country of origin. Korean respondents talked about Twitter as a plaza or a square for conversation. One Korean participant stated that there were no inappropriate conversations because Twitter is a place of public opinion so everyone can talk about anything. However, another said that they did not think that information that was too personal was appropriate. Among U.S. respondents most had something they found to be inappropriate on Twitter, may of these participants emphasized not discussing personal or illegal things via Twitter. One mentioned that she did not find it appropriate for her to swear but thought it was ok for other established/famous comediennes to do so.

Members from both countries reported using Twitter to vent about a product or service, although it was more frequently reported among the U.S. participant group. The company to whom the complaint was directed did not contact the majority of those who reported tagging the company in their complaint. One person, who indirectly asked for an extension on a deal until the next day when she would be paid, reported having her wish granted by the company. Another reported being contacted by her cable company after having a discussion about the cost of her bill with a friend via Twitter. The company reportedly sent a message offering to help, however, after she responded to the company saying she was interested in their help she never heard from them again. A third respondent relayed a story of a celebrity they followed who had her bags lost by an airline and after tweeting about still not having them and really needing them back the airline responded to her (the celebrity) via Twitter that they had been found and were on their way. These reports seem to show two possible things. First, not all companies are actively monitoring and/or responding to talk about them on Twitter. Second, those who are may not be following through well enough to improve relations.

When it came to information forwarding (retweeting) behavior the preference was for important/breaking information, promotions and humanitarian information/aid. For example many respondents said they would retweet things that said things like "x number of dollars will be donated to (insert charity) for every time this message is retweeted." Others mentioned retweeting stories that were important (e.g. missing children) but did not get as much news coverage. Still other respondents referred to retweeting deals or sales. A few mentioned retweeting things they found humorous. An interesting aspect that arose with respect to retweeting was that participants often cited the number of times as a measure of how influential they were or were not in the network of Twitter. In fact some reported making postings about things they thought were important or relevant examples of things and expressed disappointment that no one commented on or retweeted these postings. This was particularly true when respondents felt their tweet was similar to other tweets members of their network made that usually received comments and retweeting. A closer look at retweeting patterns and effects could be useful for organizations in terms of information spread and influence.

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings from the study was the trending of social networks within each country. The U.S. respondents reported that they were more interested in Twitter than Facebook. They cited Twitter's immediacy, succinctness, as reasons they found it preferable. In addition the majority of U.S. respondents reported using Facebook for personal

relationships and personal relationship management things (e.g. reading about what their friends had been up to or were saying to each other, viewing photos of recent life events) and using Twitter more for gathering information or professional/career use. However, may of them also cited that not many of their friends used Twitter currently and so they were not able to use it socially as they could Facebook. The Korean population in this sample reported trending away from Twitter and towards Facebook. Many reported being bored with Twitter, seeing it as one-way communication, and being attracted to the amount of information that was available via email. The sample as a whole reported never having met the majority of the people they followed or had following them. The Korean responders reported higher numbers of their friends using Twitter than did the U.S. citizens.

Although these findings came from a particular and small sample they do present some interesting, though not generalizable, findings that should be further pursued. First, there may be very different trends in use of social networks within different countries. In a globalizing world, with a globalizing economy, technology is often relied on to help cross boarders and time zones. However, different social media may be more prominent or popular in different countries and may even be banned or non existent in others. These are important considerations in the face of pop culture reports that champion social media as a new cost effective way to reach millions and build relationships. Second, if organizations are going to have members monitor and respond to comments about them, there should be a clear protocol and expectations for doing so and these should be executed with reliable follow through. Certainly not all complaints about an organization should or can be responded to nor are they all legitimate. However, if an organization/company does engage someone in their complaint, there should be clear protocol for following through and dealing with the issue lest the organization further perturb the individual with their ineffectiveness. Third, it seems that there are patterns of Twitter usage and information behavior even though these patterns may vary across countries, length of use, and status as information seeker or information source, as defined by Java et al., 2007). Consistent with boyd & Ellison's (2008) urging further work is still needed to explore these patterns among larger and more diverse (international) samples.

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Public Relations for Prosocial Activism: A Theoretical Foundation toward Communicating for Positive Social Causes

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Abstract

The role of activism has begun to gain the attention of public relations scholars; however, their literature on activism focuses almost exclusively on interest groups that pressure institutions of power to make changes. These activists often employ agitation and disruption to achieve their goals, and the literature advises public relations practitioners on defense mechanisms to "deal" with such ploys. Due to this emphasis, the field still lacks literature that explains the processes and implications of public relations in activism. For example, little has been written about interest organizations whose main intent is to advance "pro-social" causes. Rather than seeking disruption, these groups aim to assist millions of people suffering from poverty, hunger, disease, or other societal maladies. As these groups gain global influence and resources, many of them hire or retain public relations practitioners to garner support for their causes. This increasing role of public relations practitioners trying to communicate on behalf of pro-social activist NGOs and organizations has created a need for more analysis in order to guide their efforts.

This paper fills the gap in public relations theory by, first, distinguishing between *confrontational activism* and *prosocial activism* and characterizing each sphere. The paper then provides a model for pro-social public relations—communication carried out on behalf of prosocial activists—by building on theories from other domains, and particularly those of political science scholar Clifford Bob (2005). The paper addresses the questions of why and how some prosocial groups gain support for their causes while other groups in the same realm fail to gain support. It analyzes the missions of prosocial groups, their need for public relations resources and strategies, and their interactions with similar prosocial groups, with various governments, with media, and other organizations. The result is a proposed theory of prosocial public relations which can serve as a framework for practitioners around the world.

Introduction

Activism has long been a critical component of "global civil society" (Stammers & Eschle, 2005, p. 50)—one that is expanding as the world becomes increasingly interconnected. The influence of activism is similar to how early democratic theorists like Edmund Burke perceived the role of the media: as a "fourth estate," a societal watchdog that keeps governments and other large organizations from corrupting constituents (Vivian, 2007, p. 438-439). Healthy activism is a process for encouraging social change, operating independent of government and business to give voice to otherwise voiceless citizens or societies (Holtzhausen, 2007). It has great opportunity to be a positive force in the world.

Despite these vital foundations, people often view activists not as noble watchdogs or progressive change agents but as irritating mutts barking incessantly at the heels of powerful institutions. It is not uncommon for airwaves and Internet sites to either trumpet or vilify the latest activist attacks. For example, the "I'd rather go naked than wear fur" campaigns of the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Deckha, 2008); the collision of a Japanese whaling boat and the anti-whaling vessel of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society in the South Pacific (McDonald, 2010); the pressure Greenpeace exerted on Nestle Corporation to stop sourcing palm oil for its products (Hornby, 2010); and numerous similar accounts where activist groups attack the powerful institutions are lauded and broadcast throughout society, often precisely because of their inherent shock factor.

The negative typecasting of activism seeps into scholarship, where even authors in public relations invariably describe such movements as oppositional forces trying to compel so-called mainstream organizations to change policies or behaviors (Freitag & Stokes, 2007; L. Grunig et al., 2002). Even when activist concerns seem valid or the pressured entities were irresponsible, the activist groups rarely are cast favorably in the literature (Stammers & Eschle, 2005). Rather, the focus too often is on how public relations practitioners can keep activists at bay so that the organizations they represent can continue to function without undue interference (L. Grunig, 1992; Kim & Sriramesh, 2009).

Portrayals of activism as oppositional may make sense when the activism is truly confrontational; however, in emphasizing this realm of activism, public relations literature ignores a preponderance of groups whose mission and purposes have nothing to do with confrontation (Heath & Waymer, 2009). As Curtin and Gaither (2007) stated, "Although [activists] may stand in opposition to other organizations, it's simplistic and reductionist to assume that they exist only in bipolar opposition to organizations" (p. 173). So if these groups are not opposing mainstream entities, what are they doing? L. Grunig (1992) characterized activism as a wide range of behaviors, from the extremely violent to the highly civil, and there is evidence that hundreds of thousands of activist groups operate solely on the civil end—often doing good for the sake of doing good.

Worldwide, seemingly endless numbers of special interest groups labor continually to help individuals or societies transcend poverty, obtain basic education, escape disease or slavery, or simply survive. This type of activism, as opposed to pressure group activism that typically is the focus of most public relations literature, stems from theoretically defined *prosocial motives*—altruistic behaviors whose singular goal is to improve the welfare of others (Batson, 2010). Fritz (2008) cited 2007 data showing more than 1.1 million non-profit groups in the

United States alone, most of which fall into this altruistic category. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also enter this realm of altruism, and more than 40,000 NGOs operate globally along with millions within nations (answers.com, 2011a).

Interest groups operating in this prosocial realm often employ mainstream public relations strategies to achieve their goals (Bourland-Davis, Thompson, & Brooks, 2010; Smith & Ferguson, 2010). Communication initiatives help some of these groups achieve success, but many others fail in their overall efforts to achieve similar outcomes (Bob, 2005). So, if only some of the groups are successful, how much does communication contribute to that success and what kind of communication activities contribute the most? Do the other groups fail because they misunderstand or misapply communication strategies to their efforts? It is difficult to know the answers to these questions unless specific research is conducted to provide insight.

However, despite this myriad of altruistic interest group activity, there is virtually nothing in the public relations body of knowledge to describe or examine their communication efforts and outcomes (Edwards, 2011; Heath & Waymer, 2009). Furthermore, scholars in domains such as political science, sociology, cultural anthropology, etc., also have been slow to study the increasing role of public relations in these altruistic special interest organizations. As a result, neither these entities nor public relations practitioners who guide their communication efforts have needed theories and guideposts to fully understand the processes and implications of public relations practice in altruistic activism. To fill this void, authors have called "for the development of public relations theories that can help activists reach their goals" (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 366; see also Dozier & Lauzen, 2000). This certainly should include the prosocial movements.

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to introduce and establish a theoretical framework for future discussion and research around the term *prosocial public relations*—the realm of public relations activity that specifically supports the altruistic movements whose singular focus is to assist those who are not in a position to help themselves out of dire circumstances. This conceptualization encompasses the communication programs and activities employed by these activist groups. Prosocial public relations certainly incorporates communication and relationship building efforts that are more or less common to all entities; however, it is distinguished in purpose from public relations whose goals are to support the promotion of products on behalf of corporations or to communicate needed information for governments and civic entities (Edwards, 2011). Prosocial public relations is delineated specifically as communication that supports the range of organizations whose main purpose is to carry out these altruistic motives.

In outlining this framework for positive activism and its correlated prosocial public relations programs, the paper first distinguishes between three classifications of activism—*confrontational activism, advocacy activism*, and *prosocial* activism—which characterize activity ranging from outright attack and even purposeful violence to the positive, civil activities that carry out prosocial motives. The paper will then build a basis for the specific actions of prosocial public relations that help prosocial interest groups accomplish their altruistic goals. Through a review of relevant literature on this topic, the paper will begin to build the theoretical framework and explanatory model that should better assist public relations practitioners who function in prosocial causes around the world.

Theoretical Foundations

When the term *activism* is broached in general society and in scholarship, it seems to confuse more than clarify. Curtin and Gaither (2007) proposed that activist groups have "fluid, conflicting identities" (p. 173). They have been depicted as *pressure groups* (Stammers & Eschle, 2005), *interest groups* (Kim & Sriramesh, 2009), *advocacy groups* (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009), *insurgents* (Bob, 2005), and similar monikers, as though the groups focus solely on selfish interests and use pressure alone to get their way. This narrow framing excludes the broader spectrum of activist groups seeking to generate change in society in positive ways. Still, these activists operating on this positive end of the spectrum are equally amorphous. Regarding NGOs, for example, one author stated, "The NGO movement is a complex mishmash of alliances and rivalries; charities and businesses; radicals and conservatives… The closer one looks, the more inclined one is to wonder whether the expression 'non-governmental organisation' has any significant meaning at all" (Hall-Jones, 2011, p. 1). Despite this confusion, Hall-Jones noted that the NGO arena is now the world's eighth largest economic sector—and even then, NGOs represent just a fraction of the groups trying to improve conditions in the world.

A large number of activist groups use communication techniques to pursue their goals (Bob, 2005). Therefore, this is a realm of civil action and discourse that public relations literature must address. Yet, even with this need to explain the entire range of activist communication, the topic has barely dented the public relations body of knowledge. Treatises in the field give the topic scant attention, perhaps assessing the level of activism in a given country or region (Sriramesh &Vercic, 2009), or including activists in a list of "global publics" (Freitag and Stokes, 2009, p. 106-107). In addition, the concept receives modest mention in core textbooks on public relations. One chapter in Wilcox and Cameron (2009) encompasses a variety of non-profit organizations—including hospitals and religious entities which generally are not categorized as activism. The chapter does contain five pages on "advocacy groups" and "other activist groups" (p. 532-537), and another page discussing NGOs. Newsom, Turk, and Kruckeberg (2007) frame activism mostly as forces opposing mainstream organizations. They devote several pages to anti-global activists, two to Internet activism, and two more to how activists use public relations. There is slight discussion on NGOs or non-profit entities. These two books, arguably among the best texts in the field, are fairly representative of the limited discussion on activism.

Some argue that all activism is purposefully downplayed in public relations scholarship. For example, Heath and Waymer (2009) said, "If we think that public relations is limited to business promotion, we can ignore the promotional efforts by activists to call attention to, frame, and advocate one or many issue positions" (p. 195). Dozier and Lauzen (200) concurred that a pro-business paradigm in public relations scholarship relegates to the background any research into the role of activism in public relations or public relations in activism. Edwards (2011) advanced the argument that ignoring the activists is deliberate. She decried the "continued dominance of empirical [scholarship] based in commercial or governmental organizations and the relative lack of attention paid to activist groups, community groups, and non-governmental organizations" (p. 30). She added that these dominant predispositions play a major role in "marginalizing and penalizing those who do not fit," including "organizations that do not use profit as their primary guide for success" (p. 38).

Reframing the Activism Spectrum: Three Major Focal Points

Virtually all activist groups can be characterized as change agents (Hung, 2007), and it is most likely that all activist groups view their own causes as just and positive, no matter how they may be perceived by outsiders. Wherever they fall in the activist spectrum, interest groups are all best served when they try to communicate in order to mobilize a following and generate influence or power. So, in these regards, there is little difference between activist groups. However, there is a significant, theoretical difference in the motivations of these groups and in the ways they try to foster influence. Understanding these differences is critical to realistic discussions of activism and the public relations efforts that support activist causes.

Confrontational Activism

When activism is covered in the public relations literature, it is almost always portrayed as a confrontational mechanism. L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Dozier (2002), for example, asserted that activists present "an enormous problem in the typical organization" (p. 450). Kim and Sriramesh (2009) added that activism "affects public relations practice across different societies" (p. 82). They proposed "two dimensions that help us understand the extent of activism in a society: the confrontational intensity and the breadth of issue spectrum" (p. 91). Wilcox and Cameron (2009) listed "the principal ways that [activist groups] work to achieve their goals" as "lobbying, litigation, mass demonstrations, boycotts, and reconciliation" (p. 535). Likewise, Heath (1997) positioned five stages of activism in an adversarial framework: strain or stress, mobilization, confrontation, negotiation, and resolution.

For many groups, purposeful creation of conflict is seen as the most effective way to gain power over the dominant institutions in society. Arguing that today's mediated culture "silences dissent and condemns resistance" (p. 128), DeLuca & Peeples (2002) positioned resistance as necessary for a healthy society; therefore, "symbolic protest violence and uncivil disobedience" are fundamental to the activist arsenal (p. 138). Activists with this worldview employ pressure tactics such as boycotts, strikes, or harassment to accomplish their goals. Bourland-Davis *et al*. (2010) stated, "…activist organizations are often more successful in graphically highlighting differences with organizations with which they are competing for power resources." They then added, "By developing situations in which perceptions of conflict are heightened, activist organizations may gain more attention than if they had tried to collaborate" (p. 418). However, while confrontation can create greater visibility, it perpetuates the negative biases businesses and governments have against pressure groups. Perhaps this is why literature on activism has almost exclusively portrayed activism as opposition, because these groups continually agitate against the so-called mainstream entities. Given, then, the inherent nature of this activism and its visibility in society, it is relatively easy to describe this range of activism, in which the basic *modus operandi* is to harass the powerful and agitate for change, as *confrontational activism*.

Proponents and investigators of confrontational activism argue (and often rightly so) that it is a vital means to a positive end—a healthier, more transparent society (DeLuca & Peeples, 2002; Holtzhausen, 2000; Stammers & Eschle, 2005). Activist groups often target businesses or governments on purpose because they see them as the cause of untenable social ills they aim to rectify. Examples include pressures against sweatshops and child labor violations or against corporations and governments that are carelessly wiping out fragile forests or contributing to other environmental problems. Nevertheless, while the end is justified, the means confrontational

activists employ to achieve these results are still seen by society at large as largely negative, disruptive, or even antisocial—at least at the time the actions are occurring. The civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s is one example which has shown positive societal results over time; yet, while it was occurring it was seen as confrontational and antisocial by much of society at large. Similarly, confrontation directed at transnational corporations or governments also has led to critical societal changes (Heath & Waymer, 2009); and yet, the activism itself still is generally viewed as a negative force.

In public relations literature, the conceptualization of activism as exclusively adversarial has two fundamental problems. First, characterizations of activists as agents of pressure against powerful organizations ignore the reality that activists are themselves organizations of variable philosophy, size, and power (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). Therefore, it is specious to claim that public relations practices must be used to combat these activist groups when they, too, use similar strategies and tactics. Furthermore, while it is noted that some activists purposefully shun positive engagement with other institutions, the tendency to always view activists as forces to oppose rather than seeing the potential for cooperative communication seems at odds with the two-way symmetrical communication model advocated as the best practice in public relations by J. Grunig (1992). Holtzhausen (2000) predicted that it will become increasingly difficult to identify activist publics, which means that corporate public relations practitioners will need to be more engaged with them "not as the enemy but as a partner in building the community with activists" (p. 103). In other words, business and government organizations, and particularly their public relations people, should find ways to cooperate with activists to foster changes in society rather than continue to inflame the battles.

Prosocial Activism

To suggest that all activism is confrontational also eschews the realities of the global activist spectrum. Many, perhaps even most, interest groups never intend to use confrontation to achieve their goals. The International Red Cross, CARE International, Save the Children, and hundreds of thousands of other assistance groups operate in hot spots or in desolate, forgotten villages or cities all over the world, rendering aid and promoting the welfare of disadvantaged groups in a persistent, daily exercise of altruism. The larger organizations are often fully-registered NGOs or international non-governmental organizations, referred to as INGOs (Stammers & Eschle, 2005). But there also are myriads of smaller and more informal organizations and, in many cases, loosely structured collections of individuals attempting to change society for the better through compassion and care.

We refer to activist groups and movements predicated on assistance to others as *prosocial activism*, which is specifically distinguished from confrontational activism because of its inherent nature and its goals to change society through helping hands instead of through confrontational means. Stammers and Eschle (2005) argued that much of the social change that occurs along these lines happens not at the global level but through the "local and less formal, more socially embedded aspects of movements" (p. 56). Heath and Waymer (2009) introduced the related concept of *constructive public relations*, a concept that seemed to embrace these nonprofit, prosocial causes. We prefer the term *prosocial* for two reasons. First, in defining constructive public relations, Heath and Waymer extended the concept to include engagement in

issues—and with that comes the possibility for confrontation. Second, the term *prosocial activism* can be readily aligned with existing theoretical constructions (Batson, 2010).

The term *prosocial* is not new to scholarly literature. Behavioral scholars have long referred to prosocial values and actions that enhance individual psychological development and societal foundations (Kitzrow, 1998). In the book, *Prosocial Motives, Emotions and Behaviors*, Mikulincer and Shaver (2010) stated that "human beings have an innate capacity for prosocial motivation, emotion, and action" (p. 10), as opposed to what they saw as selfish motives and behaviors. In the same book, Batson (2010) referred to these altruistic motives as simply wanting to increase the welfare of others. Of course, it generally is acknowledged that no one person or organization operates through completely selfless altruism, where no personal benefit to the giver is even implied in doing good deeds (Hung, 2005). Yet, for the most part, when interest organizations are reaching out to assist the downtrodden, the main goal is generally wrapped in the desire to lift others with only ancillary reward (self-actualization or esteem, recognition among family and peers, etc.) to the organization.

Mass communication scholars also have incorporated the term *prosocial* into their writings. For example, in their chapter on media uses and effects Straubhaar, LaRose, and Davenport (2009) defined prosocial behavior as:

> ...behaviors and positive qualities that we want to encourage in our children and our society: cooperation, altruism, sharing, love, tolerance, respect, balanced nutrition, contraceptive use, personal hygiene, safe driving, improved reading skills, and so on.   We can also include in this list the discontinuing of antisocial behaviors, such as smoking, drinking, reckless driving, or unsafe sex. (p. 427)

The term has been associated with the residual effects of mass communication, and particularly to those that arise from television viewing among children. Vivian (2007), for example, distinguished prosocial communication from the various alleged negative effects that occur from too much or extended consumption of mass communication, such as poor self-image, obesity and the anti-social behaviors like passive aggressiveness or violence. Drawing mostly from child development literature, prosocial communication scholars have addressed efforts such as television's *Sesame Street* or *Dora the Explorer* to teach children prosocial values and behaviors like sharing, cooperation, acceptance, respect for self and for those around you, and other traits that are generally considered desirable and positive in nature.

Many activist groups seek change in this prosocial context and they engage in activities consistent with these positive goals (Clarke and Mount, 2001). Prosocial activism is not devised to create conflict; such negative action would seem in direct opposition with their cause. Rather, prosocial activists focus on the betterment of society by helping those who are not in a position to help themselves. Prosocial activists work to communicate and cooperate, advocating and assisting a cause through their own means or with the voluntary help of other entities. In accomplishing these goals, said Smith and Ferguson (2010), activists can be "co-creators of the relationships between organizations and their publics … ultimately, to social good" (p. 396).

Some may claim that prosocial groups are not activists, specifically because they are not inherently confrontational; however, Stammers and Eschle (2005) provided distinctions of activism that embrace these assistance movements. They referred to *instrumental activism*, which articulates confrontational demands toward more powerful institutions, and *expressive* activism, which they say is "activism oriented towards the construction and reconstruction of

norms, values, identities and lifestyles … in the wider social and cultural milieu" (p. 59). While these distinctions are not exactly parallel to the confrontational or prosocial distinctions we make in this article, they do offer parameters that pull assistance groups into the activist net. Certainly groups that are constructing and reconstructing lifestyles, hopefully for the better, would include those that are attempting to lift the disadvantaged through altruistic assistance.

In developing this framework that distinguishes between confrontational and prosocial activism, it is imperative to clarify that the intent of the distinction is not to assign moral judgment on one characterization of activism or the other. We do not say that prosocial activism is more morally sound than confrontational activism. As stated earlier, *all types of activism* are fundamental to an open society, and *all activist groups* have a right to see themselves and their causes as altruistic in that they are pointing out ills in society that must be addressed. We realize that in many activist situations, each side claims high moral ground. The abortion issue is an example of this, where both sides normatively position themselves on the *pro* side—pro-life or pro-choice. Nevertheless, with this kind of issue the one side is as much opposing the other side as it is advocating their point of view. This creates a situation in which both sides serve as agents of change but in the process of seeking this change, one side is fulfilled and the other is not (or one side wins and the other loses): so, by nature, the situation is contradictory (Hung, 2007)

The distinction, then, between confrontational activism and prosocial activism comes not in the moral outcome desired, but in the social environment in which the activism is framed, the methodology employed, and the societal perception of those actions. A confrontational cause is defined by the societal issue in which the activism plays out: abortion, global warming, corporate greed that needs to be halted, government corruption that needs to be eradicated, and the like. As Hung (2007) stated, these would be issues where it is relatively easy for the average person to readily see a contradiction or debate. A truly prosocial cause, on the other hand, is founded in universal humanitarian values; few people in most societies would argue against the need to eliminate poverty, hunger, and disease, for example, where most prosocial movements spend their time and energies. The prosocial cause also would generally constitute a real possibility of a win-win situation for both sides—through altruistic assistance, victims would receive needed assistance, the interest groups involved in the assistance would be rewarded, and society as a whole would benefit from the change.

The Advocacy Bridge

It must be noted here that a bipolar conceptualization such as outlined above fails to embrace the entire range of existing activism. Curtin and Gaither (2007) explained that "binary oppositions" can "become ultimately reductionist, ignoring the many degrees of relationships that exist between the poles" (p. 169). In this case, we have created a scenario in which activists either attack on the one hand or assist on the other. However, many activist groups *both* attack *and* assist, depending on what is needed in given circumstances to provoke the desired result. For example, Greg Mortenson, founder and executive director of the non-profit Central Asia Institute, vividly described in *Three Cups of Tea* how his organizations were created to build schools for young women in Pakistan and Afghanistan; yet, he often had to resort to pressuring the governments of these nations and the United States to help break down political and cultural barriers and to rally funding and labor for the cause (Mortenson & Relin, 2006).

To represent this range between confrontational and prosocial activism, then, the activist spectrum we propose allows for a middle ground characterized by a third construct in the activist range, *advocacy*. Advocacy on behalf of a perceived positive cause incorporates both types of interest groups discussed above. It helps those groups that exist mainly to render assistance but which on occasion must try to influence the powerful institutions to make social or regulatory changes to support their goals. At the same time, confrontational groups certainly employ advocacy on behalf of their causes. The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines advocacy as an act of pleading for, recommending, or influencing in positive ways while listing antonyms to advocacy as *attack, opposition,* and similar words (answers.com, 2011b). Therefore, it seems appropriate to use this term as a bridge between the spectrum of confrontational activism and prosocial activism, as shown in Figure 1 below.

The figure represents the activist spectrum, from the confrontational on the left to the prosocial groups on the right. For the most part, confrontational activists seek change through disruption of power. They use pressure tactics such as boycotts, strikes or lawsuits to foster this disruption. Prosocial activists, by contrast, focus not on pressuring powerful institutions but

Figure 1: The Spectrum of Activism and Activist Communication
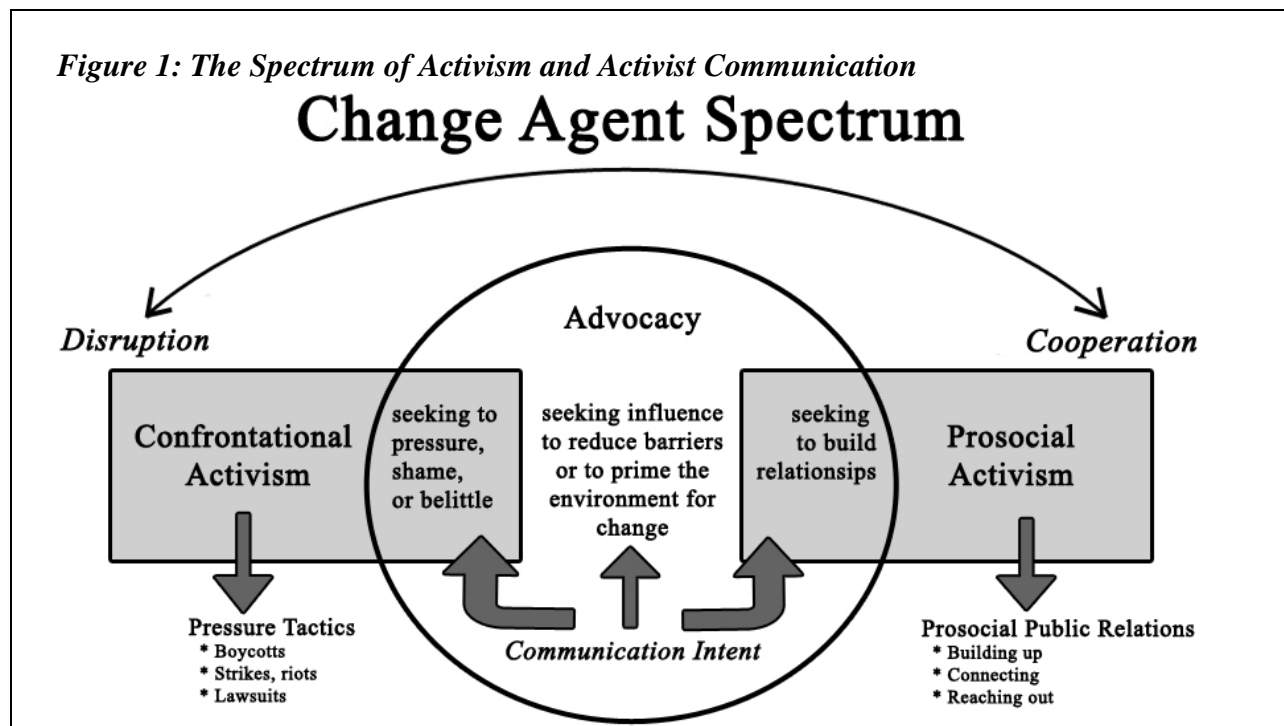
desire first and foremost to render assistance to those in need. They recognize that accomplishing this task comes mostly through cooperation with other interest groups, governments, and corporations. To gain such cooperation, they first must build up their own resources to gain credibility as an organization, then they connect with other similar entities to increase their ability to assist, and then they reach out to governments, media, and other entities to gain broader societal visibility and support. In between these realms sits advocacy, which both types of groups employ to gain more visibility and support. However, while confrontational groups often

advocate by belittling their opponents, prosocial groups advocate by trying to build relationships and to enact gentle persuasion, as it were. In each case, the interest groups are trying to reduce barriers that keep them from accomplishing their goals (by knocking them down on the one hand or by working with governments or companies to mutually remove them, on the other).

One additional consideration in developing this framework is that it should not be seen as static. Societies change, and so do governments, organizations, and activist groups. Some confrontational groups never change this basic mode of confrontation. Other groups, however, begin as radical, fringe groups seeking only to destroy and then slowly move toward more conservative stances to be able to obtain greater cooperation from mainstream organizations (Olson, 1971). Other groups may start as assistance groups, and then as they gain more resources and influence they may move more toward the confrontational spectrum. As mentioned, both groups move back and forth into the realm of advocacy in order to promote their causes. Therefore, the spectrum should be seen as one which is in a relatively constant state of flux.

Prosocial Public Relations to Support Prosocial Activism

As Clarke and Mount (2001) explained, the number of nonprofit activist organizations has rapidly proliferated, and those that are employing modern-day communication strategies have also exponentially increased. With large numbers of these organizations seeking good will instead of conflict, it seems that public relations literature needs to be expanded or reframed to encompass communication activities in such entities. Much of the communication philosophies and strategies may be similar to those of corporate or government public relations, however, it stands to reason that there would be some fundamental differences. For one thing, while altruistic activist entities certainly need to obtain funding in order to sustain their operations, they would not fundamentally be seeking to enhance profit for stockholders as in the corporate model; nor would these entities need to continually inform broad constituencies or rally future votes as per the government and political models of public relations. Therefore, we suggest in this article that discussion about public relations in these not-for-profit, largely altruistic organizations needs to be framed in new and different terminology. We believe that an applicable term to begin this new prosocial framework described above could naturally be *prosocial public relations*.

As stated previously, the scholarly literature is insufficient in positioning public relations as a vital function in activist organizations. This is particularly relevant when it comes to public relations for prosocial activist groups. Although many of the groups are small and somewhat haphazardly organized, they still are no different from any other organization; they need communication activities to gain visibility and support which, in turn, lead to the accomplishment of their broader goals.

Some scholars have pointed out that public relations and activism forge a natural connection. For example, Holtzhausen (2000) argued that activism is an embodiment of the dialogic principles that comprise the very foundation of democratic societies. Like public relations practitioners, activists provide voice and advocacy for those causes they represent. Furthermore, Holtzhausen argued that many practitioners function somewhat as activists themselves—serving as "change agents" in their own right. They serve as boundary spanning conduits for the interests of various publics to organizational management as well as advocating the perspectives of the organization to relevant stakeholders. If the organization is doing something that is not aligned with the values of stakeholders, they attempt to generate change

even within their own organization. Therefore, she added, practitioners should naturally be "activists within organizations" (p. 96).

If public relations people are natural activists, it is an easy transition to infuse the strategic principles they have learned and practiced into prosocial causes. Scholars have proposed that this be done. Starck and Kruckeberg (2001) specifically addressed the need for public relations to assist nongovernmental organizations in their work, and Holtzhausen (2007) conceded "little doubt that true grassroots activist organizations can use formal public relations help" (p. 369-70). Certainly, capable practitioners who are trained to communicate and motivate would be able to help activists create mutually-beneficial relationships that lead to cooperation and support for their causes. In doing so they, as well as the entities they serve, would be "a powerful force for social change and democracy" (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 366).

The reality is that while scholars are addressing the need for public relations to help social causes, such assistance actually has been rendered for quite some time. Cutlip (1995) studied how social movements have used communication techniques throughout the history of the United States. He concluded that "utilization of publicity and press agentry to promote causes, tout land ventures and raise funds is older than the nation itself" (p. 1). Bourland-Davis *et al.* (2010) similarly analyzed activist movements of the 20th and 21st centuries and observed, "It becomes difficult to separate the work of the organizations from the leaders and from public relations practitioners" (p. 418). While not all of the leaders in these movements were trained in public relations, they possessed the qualities and know-how of public relations professionals; each example observed by Bourland-Davis *et al.* had "a strategic vision and organizational knowledge, not just communication competency" (p. 418).

Today, formalized public relations is making a significant difference in the survival and effectiveness of activist movements (Holtzhausen, 2007). More and more of these organizations are incorporating the strategic practices of public relations, and many are hiring practitioners specifically to harness their ability to effectively communicate, gain visibility, foster support, and mobilize resources (Smith & Ferguson, 2010). Holtzhausen (2007) said that public relations practitioners can "help activists reach their goals, create alliances, and wage micropolitical struggles that would unleash a powerful force for social change and democracy" (p. 366).

Bourland-Davis et al. (2010) argued that the evolving adaptation of communication fundamentals by prosocial movements holds great promise for a public relations industry that is getting bogged down in worn out world views. They pointed out:

> The oft lamented failure of public relations practitioners to be admitted into the dominant coalitions of corporations appears counterbalanced by the refreshing instances in which activist groups are guided by individuals trained in or exhibiting high-level public relations skills. By restricting public relations roles and training our students within the narrow spectra of strategic orientations that we define as "normative" within the corporate environment, we not only limit their effectiveness to see other career possibilities in nonprofit or activist contexts but also unconsciously contribute to the status quo by suggesting that the default position of excellent public relations entails abandoning many of the tactics that equalize power differentials between established powers within our society and disenfranchised groups. (p. 419)

Why are Some Prosocial Activist Organizations Effective and Others are Not?

So far, our paper has discussed a need in public relations scholarly literature to distinguish between the typical portrayals of attack activism and the rare depictions of what we have called prosocial activism. We also proposed prosocial public relations as a framework for helping those whose main mission is assistance to communicate their goals and activities. This circles back to the question raised in the introduction: Why is it that some activist organizations are effective in communicating their causes and gaining support while others with similar missions languish in relative obscurity (Bob, 2005; Gershman, 2010)? Why, for example, has Greg Mortenson and his Central Asia Institute been enormously successful in generating visibility and support while many other, similar organizations continue to labor in obscurity?

Because of the millions of prosocial activist groups operating around the world, all of them—and particularly the small, locally focused groups—face an extremely challenging and competitive environment when it comes to getting their voices heard. They must obtain support in order to survive, much less flourish. Bob (2002) explained, "In a context where marketing trumps justice, local challengers—whether environmental groups, labor rights activists, or independence-minded separatists—face long odds. Not only do they jostle for attention among dozens of equally worthy competitors, but they also confront the pervasive indifference of international audiences" (p. 36). Lord (2006) added that "attention and money do not always go to the most deserving causes, and groups that are supported by larger international organizations often drown out small, indigenous groups" (p. 11). In another treatise Bob (2005) stated, "Movements seek simply to be heard [to] raise awareness about little-known conflicts... to lift themselves above the voiceless mass of the world's poor and oppressed" (p. 4).

Given such a competitive arena, it becomes paramount for these prosocial groups to understand and incorporate the most targeted and effective communication strategies to be able to cut through the clutter. This is where public relations can be of greatest assistance. And yet, aside from the obvious basic principles of public relations, Bourland-Davis *et al.* (2010) implied that a different model is needed to guide these communication efforts that are specifically devoted to prosocial activism. Collectively these groups are building more resources and slowly gaining in global influence. Many of them are hiring or retaining public relations practitioners to garner support for their causes through sophisticated communication and relationship-building strategies. Because public relations practitioners are now actively functioning in these prosocial NGOs, more scholarly analyses and case studies of the effective and not-so-effective programs are needed to guide them in their efforts.

Preliminary Possibilities: Elements of Success in Prosocial Communication

The types of investigations into prosocial public relations practice that are proposed here have not yet been done, therefore it is difficult to suggest what elements of public relations may be successful for prosocial entities and what may not be effective. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to attempt such suggestions as part of the research process. Babbie (1989) explained such an effort as deductive reasoning, where new, generalized theoretical concepts are proposed and then tested through a variety of methods. In the explorative vein that this represents, the deductive reasoning is often followed by qualitative methods such as case studies, in-depth interviews, participant-observation, or even Delphi studies. Thus, we will attempt to begin the process here

with some suggestions for effective communication in the prosocial realm that are extracted from bits and pieces of other scholarly works.

First, according to Smith and Ferguson (2010), activists use public relations to distinguish the issues, establish their legitimacy, and gain power (or coverage and influence). By doing these three things activists are able to attract the attention and support necessary to sustain or maintain their movement. Zoller (2009) added that when a sense of urgency surrounds the issue, it will increase the likelihood of gaining visibility in the public sphere.

In pushing visibility and support for prosocial initiatives, scholars such as Bob (2005) advocate marketing as the preferred method of communication. However, we suggest that it is *not* a marketing-centered approach which is needed, at least not exclusively, despite the theoretical formulation of social marketing as well as strong evidence that the public relations field seems to be trending toward marketing support roles (Hutton, 2001; Macnamara, 2006). Referring to social marketing as the "selling of brotherhood," Kotler and Zaltman (1971) defined the process as "...the design, implementation, and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and *involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communications and marketing research*" (p. 4—italics added by the authors of this paper).

The problem with supporting prosocial causes through marketing perspectives is that these philosophies almost always attach the social issues to some element of revenue generation, as just shown (Fox & Kotler, 1980; Rothschild, 1979). Marketers, as well as many of their public relations allies, call for a "brand" to compete in this saturated cause-related marketplace—as though every cause is nothing more than a product or a marketable name. Yet, various studies challenge the efficacy of marketing in this arena. One study by Cottle and Nolan (2007), for example, indicated that while prosocial groups need the media to gain attention, this desire to protect a brand image and engage in corporate-style marketing negatively affects their communications efforts by emphasizing passive, one-way communication rather than active, two-way relationship building and needed cooperation. Other scholars studying NGOs observed that their success depends not upon marketing to create some supposed financial advantage, but upon the maintenance of long-term relationships with key stakeholders, namely, donors, volunteers, clients, and the media (Pope et al., 2009).

Based on these studies, it would seem that more traditional, grass-roots public relations efforts would be more suited in helping the advancement of prosocial causes. Heath and Waymer (2009) suggested that when activists cause strain through confrontational communication they move "the continuum of the practice [of public relations] more toward asymmetry" (p. 204). However, in its normative state, public relations assumes a two-way exchange of information which is imperative to maintaining relationships between organizations and their various stakeholders (L.A. Grunig, 1992). It is largely this emphasis on relationships that distinguishes public relations, and especially prosocial public relations, from marketing. Furthermore, the push toward two-way symmetrical exchanges proposed by J.E. Grunig (1992) shows promise for effectively assisting prosocial groups in their communication efforts to build awareness, understanding, and support.

So what is the best way to do this? Bob (2005) stated that despite the often disheartening statistics, prosocial groups *can* emerge from anonymity because many have done so with notable results. Speaking mostly of NGOs, he suggested that to achieve positive change on behalf of individuals or a community, prosocial groups must do what might best be termed "building up,"

"connecting," and "reaching out." These three categories suggest that prosocial organizations must strengthen their resources, make and utilize connections especially with similar activist groups, and reach out to powerful organizations, the media and other constituents to achieve cooperation and support.

Building Up: For building resources, there are two imperatives: (1) excellent leadership and staffing; and (2) finding ways to set the organization apart from other entities or causes.

An excellent staff begins with outstanding leaders. Charismatic leaders, such as Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Dalai Lama, personify a movement and most supporters identify more with a single person than a faceless organization. But in today's world, even the best, most well-spoken leaders must also infuse the organization with "a balance of cosmopolitan savvy and indigenous authenticity" (Bob, 2005, p. 48). A prosocial entity must also have a talented staff, preferably with at least second-language proficiency. To communicate well, the entity must have capabilities in public relations and fund raising—and a solid list of contacts.

> Holtzhausen (2007) cited a case study as one example of why these things are important: Burek (2001) worked with an environmental activist group in Tampa Bay for six months and found that the infighting, lack of organizational skills, and lack of fundraising and media communication skills contributed significantly to the group's inability to reach its goals. On the other hand, the structured and determined approach of the activists in the Old Mining Battlefield case appeared to have played an important role in their success in reaching their goals. It thus appears that some formalization of activities, particularly in the area of public relations expertise, is crucial to activists' success. (as cited in Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 370)

In the highly cluttered global communication arena, prosocial organizations must find a way to set themselves apart from others. Most prosocial causes can take advantage of a unique angle or can shed new light on a cause. Bob (2005) noted that Free Tibet, one of the world's most well-known cause-related campaigns, is successful not only because of the Dalai Lama's good leadership and excellent staffing but also because of they also include the Tibetan culture and Eastern spirituality as an angle to set themselves apart.

Connecting: Ducas (1977), in a brochure on working with volunteers in non-profit organizations, pointed out that it is important not to overlook the valuable connections and outside resources that people working within a nonprofit entity may have. After the specific prosocial organization has built up its internal resources, it then is imperative to use these staff connections to affiliate with other prosocial entities operating within the mutual cause. For example, there are myriads of nongovernmental organizations and other non-profit entities working to eradicate disease around the world, and an equal number certainly attempting to provide education to impoverished youth. Organizations or movements within each of these issue areas could increase their influence by linking together and cooperating in their efforts instead of competing for limited resources.

Bob (2005) outlined a process of coalescing in like issues wherein the smaller, more localized organizations attempt to connect with the larger, more powerful global NGOs such as Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International. He stated that "there are clear hierarchies among NGOs, with top organizations having the deepest pockets, the best staffs, and the greatest credibility, often in a single package" (p. 22). Bob referred to these well-known, global NGOs, those that have the resources and clout to have their voices heard globally, as *gatekeeper NGOs*.

"Gatekeepers ... hold the key to broader support" for the smaller entities in the given issue, he explained (p. 24). Gatekeeper organizations usually have been around for a period of time and are highly successful. Smaller groups should seek to create mutually beneficial relationships with these gatekeepers through what Bob (2005) called *matchmakers*. Matchmakers are seen as "individuals with strong ties to a local movement for a variety of unique reasons—missionaries or academics, for instance—[who] may play this role on an ad hoc basis" (p. 19).

Reaching Out: While building up occurs within a single organization and connecting takes place among entities involved in the same issue, reaching out extends to influential institutions such as governments or the media. Such outreach requires more for prosocial causes than generating simple messages that "publicize their plight," as Bob (2005, p. 4) explained. It mandates the exchange of information with these important external stakeholders so that they can be convinced to assist the cause of building awareness and increasing support.

Outreach to a broader community is critical to a prosocial group or movement's success. Bob (2005) suggested that prosocial groups operating in certain communities or countries should be aware of and sensitive to cultural norms and not enter a community with a "superman complex." The goal is to build up grassroots outreach by blending in locally; if an organization is seen as an outsider it will encounter obstacles in trying to carry out its mission. This point is illustrated by Greg Mortenson and Relin (2006). They explained that during a troubled time in Afghanistan, nonprofit organizations were attacked and ransacked because of anti-American sentiment. The organizations were easy to target because they did not blend into the community.

Prosocials must particularly reach out to governments. Even groups with altruistic interests sometimes must become advocacy activists, as mentioned. They must petition governments to change policies or procedures dealing with their social causes or with pertinent individuals or communities. Interaction with these officials must be personal. Putting a face on a cause makes abstract claims concrete, and direct personal contact helps to facilitate the message in the manner desired by the prosocial organization. This personal touch also helps to build relationships with the government, according to Bob (2005). Seeking audience at international conferences and United Nations meetings also are good opportunities for networking and reaching out, he claimed.

Another important segment is the traditional media. Reaching out to the media can be beneficial for a cause if done well; but, if done poorly, it may do more harm than good. Prosocial groups must learn to communicate in journalistic format, including satisfying professional standards of objectivity and creating an angle to a story that benefits the journalist and his or her outlet. Successful movements also time their media campaigns around politically charged anniversaries or meetings of international organizations.

Too many entities make the mistake of throwing information at many diffuse publics and hoping it sticks somewhere. In reality, the information is better off targeted and hand-delivered to each relevant stakeholder. Savvy prosocial organizations, like any other entity, direct their appeals to "those whose identity and goals approximate their own" (Bob, 2005, p. 30). A mutual relationship builds trust and respect between the two parties. Prosocial groups are more easily heard in a two-way conversation than as one of many voices shouting in a crowd.

Summary and Discussion

In this paper, we set out to show a deficiency in the public relations literature related to activist movements. Activism does not receive the attention in the body of knowledge that it should receive; yet, the great majority of discussion is couched in the worldview of activism as a confrontational force against the powerful, so-called "mainstream organizations" (Bourland-Davis, 2010). Such a worldview completely ignores the fact that activism plays out through a rather dizzying spectrum of actions, philosophies, and organizational types.

If confrontational activism is seen as occupying one end of this spectrum, perhaps the polar opposite end would consist of activism that is not intended to provide constant pressure but to assist in altruistic causes—helping the poor, those who need education, those who are abused or enslaved, those who have significant risk for contracting pandemic diseases, and the like. Yet, as Curtin and Gaither (2007) pointed out, polarization of any theoretical construct is problematic in that it reduces complex discussion into simplistic formulas. In the activist realm, certainly there is room for variation between the poles of prosocial and confrontational activists. Therefore, we constructed the spectrum with three main points: *confrontational* and *prosocial* at the poles, and *advocacy* in the middle. Advocacy is characterized by a combination of prosocial and confrontational tactics and suggests that even the most altruistic groups (and even the most confrontational groups) must sometimes resort to a change in their communication methods.

But the focus of this article was on the assistance and prosocial end of the activist spectrum, with the term *prosocial* taken mostly from the psychological domain that examines positive, or prosocial, behaviors such as respect for others, sharing and cooperation, compromising, etc. These prosocial outcomes are also observed through studies of the mass media, for example, where certain television programs suggest positive effects on children.

Public relations can and should play an important role in helping these prosocial causes to be successful in achieving their goals. In fact, studies are beginning to show that public relations programs are increasing in prosocial organizations such as NGOs and nonprofit groups. Yet, some of this is not being performed by people with public relations background or expertise. Only recently does it seem that public relations practitioners are being hired and placed into these organizations to provide qualified assistance in communication efforts. Furthermore, little research has been conducted on public relations support for this realm. Without such research, those who practice public relations for prosocial causes are left to their own understanding or ideas of how to best help these causes succeed in their communications with various stakeholders. Therefore, we proposed the term *prosocial public relations* and suggested some elements of the practice that might make prosocial organizations successful in their efforts to communicate and build relationships with their stakeholders.

More research definitely is needed to answer these questions and build a more comprehensive framework. Little research seems to have been done related to the use of social media by prosocial causes—but this new realm of interaction certainly will provide significant fodder for future investigation. Additional research is needed into each of these other possible aspects of the practice, as well. With the immense growth of prosocial organizations and the increase in communication efforts by these entities, certainly these areas of research will become vital for guiding this realm in the future.

Each organization has its own objectives and each will have its own voice. Just as Engineers for a Sustainable World may call for more windmills or solar panels, Clowns without

Borders might ask that no child be left without a smile. Each is unique, and, most importantly, worth being heard. But the world still needs more voices calling for change and more hands to help make it happen. Too many people are still living in poverty, without basic physical needs or education. AIDS and other curable diseases have not been eradicated. Slavery is increasing.

More prosocial assistance is needed, and public relations theories and principles need to turn toward communication that can help this occur. If prosocial causes can be enhanced through stronger organizations and better public relations programs which target and reach out to their stakeholders for optimal results, they can lift their voice above the crowd, across the globe, and help to achieve at least some of the changes the world and the people in it so drastically need.

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The Point of No Return: Staying Inside the Lines of Propriety and Civility in Media Situations

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Abstract
        With the advent of social media, user generated content, and a viral video culture, the public appetite for sensational bite-sized video appears to be insatiable. In such an environment, there seems to be an increase in instances where a spokesperson or a public figure reacts to a certain catalyst and does or says something inappropriate. These instances can quickly be publicized and generate criticism in society at large, and often with little regard to context. Sometimes these situations engender devastating personal or organizational consequences, but at other times they result in little more than individual embarrassment. Whatever the outcome, this loss of control and lapse of judgment has become what can be seen as a *point of no return*—an irrevocable act that, desired or not by the instigator, leads to an often damaging outcome.
        In crisis communications, much of the literature researches, discusses, and makes recommendations regarding what to do after a crisis of this sort has been reached. Less is published regarding the various catalysts that lead to such a point of no return in the first place, as well as the process for avoiding such a crisis. Here the authors examine a number of such instances where a spokesperson has lost control or compromised judgment during a media interview or similar mediated instance. They identify and detail the characteristics and catalysts contributing to such events and the resultant behaviors and effects—both immediate and long-term. Eight guidelines are suggested for avoiding or minimizing the effects of such events.

Introduction

In August 2006, George Allen, a Virginia state Senator running for re-election, was –- "comfortably ahead in polls" (*msnbc.com,* 2006).   Then, during a campaign stop, he allegedly referred to one of his opponent's operatives, an Indian-American, as a "macaca"—a term often regarded as a racial slur. In the same set of remarks, caught on videotape, he allegedly went on to say, "Welcome to America and the real world of Virginia" (Hester, 2011).

Allen went on to lose the election by around 10,000 votes (Serwer, 2011), and the damage created by the comment may have been even more far-reaching. Sometime after the incident, the *Washington Post* speculated that it may have contributed to the erosion of Allen's presidential election chances as well:

> After years of preparing for a 2008 presidential run, including trips to Iowa and New Hampshire and formation of a national network of donors, Allen's use of the word on Aug. 11, 2006, changed the landscape of the GOP nominating contest. "The most important word uttered in the Republican presidential primary has not been terrorism or taxes, not faith or family," GOP strategist Dan Schnur wrote recently in the *Los Angeles Times*. "Rather it was macaca." (Craig, 2008).

In May of 2010, following the explosion of his company's Deepwater Horizon oil rig and the resulting oil spill into the Gulf of Mexico, BP CEO Tony Hayward noted in a tense interview with *The Today Show* that "I would like my life back" (Somaiya, R. 2010), a remark that was widely publicized and criticized, and that eventually helped lead to his departure. Hayward went on in a parting interview to fan the flames of public outrage by saying: "I became the public face and was demonized and vilified. BP cannot move on in the US with me as its leader" (*The Global Times*, 2010). The article proceeded to note that the interview did not provide clarity on whether or not Hayward felt his treatment had been fair, but he reportedly responded to the interviewer, "Life isn't fair." (*The Global Times*, 2010).

In each of these scenarios, as well as countless others, a spokesperson lost control or compromised judgment during a media interview or similar mediated instance. Sometimes these situations have resulted in devastating personal or organizational consequences, such as the loss of a job, an election or public support. At other times, they have resulted in little more than individual embarrassment and subsequent resolve to "never do that again." Yet, whatever the outcome of each situation, this overall phenomenon of loss of control and lapse of judgment has become what could be seen as a *point of no return*—an irrevocable act that, desired or not by the instigator, leads to an inevitable and often damaging outcome.

To complete this paper, the authors analyzed a number of such ill-fated interviews—both in print and electronic media—and identified the environmental, personal, and interactive variables that lead spokespeople and other public figures to cross the *point of no return* rather than stop and avert a potential disaster. These *trigger points*—those catalysts that spark this *point of no return reaction* or moment—can be obvious or subtle, common or highly unique, internally-driven or externally-provoked.

The authors believe that the cost of crossing the *point of no return* is high—not only for individual or organizational reputations but also for society as a whole. We further postulate that such situations not only reflect the steady decline of civil public discourse, but can also serve as misanthropic models that actually contribute to and encourage this decline of civility. As one

possible avenue for better understanding and stemming this tide of incivility, the authors intended to use this paper as an analysis of the trigger points and the factors that cause them. The paper developed a normative theoretical framework and subsequent guidelines which practitioners can systematically employ to help recognize when they are approaching this *point of no return.* The guidelines developed here should be able to help practitioners devise strategies to avoid being drawn into such situations, thereby helping to restore civility to public dialogue.

The Sociocultural Context

A discussion on the *point of no return* has to begin with a societal framework that precipitates such a pivotal moment in the first place. When taken to the extreme, in other words, if no one cared about what anyone says in any given situation, there would be no need to discuss such a phenomenon as a public oral breakdown or misstatement. However, public interest in and, arguably, even disgust for verbal *faux pas* seem to be getting stronger—and it seems that media must play a role. With our increasingly mediated society and with what seems to be an ever-expanding power, reach, and immediacy of both traditional electronic media and today's social media, the stakes of public discussion seem to have become much higher. But why is that? Is the advent of television and then the Internet the only reason for the elevation of awareness about misstatements in public forums?

In the United States, at least, the framework for increasing tension in public discussion is rooted in the Industrial Revolution—but it has greatly expanded through the electronic media. Ong (1982) explained that historically, the world was dominated by *oral culture*, in which people interact face-to-face. Oral culture is based on random spontaneity and impulsive behavior, and that environment persisted in agrarian America. However, in the late 1800s, the U.S. began evolving to a *print culture*, perpetuated by urban newspapers and magazines, which brought about documentation and control. But in the print world, the pace of interaction was still slow, with new information arriving once a day, at best, and reaction to it taking even longer. In this context, a public figure might say something inflammatory, but the audience was excluded to those few in attendance or those who would read about it, if it were published at all. And remarks that are read generally have much less emotional impact than those that are heard or seen in real-time. There also was no ability for people to quickly spread the remarks and readily ascertain that others were equally interested in or upset about them. Thus, the possibility of those remarks fueling instant public controversy was limited by the natural constraints of the print culture.

The speed of public reaction increased considerably, however, with the invention of radio and then television. For the first time, a mass of people—an audience much larger than could be assembled in one place—could hear a public figure in "real time," as Vivian (2010) referred to the immediacy of electronic media. Television, particularly, raised the level of instant public discussion. It ushered in the visual aspect of this real-time communication and also fostered the visual interviews, news conferences and major events that allow for a public figure to be seen as well as heard. It also fostered the "sound-bite" mentality—the demand for short, often highly edited statements that fit into television programming. Ong (1982) referred to this electronically mediated environment as *secondary orality*. It is significant that secondary orality harbors the control that was introduced with the print culture but increases the intensity of that control. An example Ong noted was the difference between the unplanned, chaotic spontaneity of the Lincoln-Douglas debates in the 1800s—debates which were held in a field and could last an

entire day, with considerable shouting and unrehearsed repartee between the candidates and the live audience—and the carefully controlled sound bites and the sanitized debates and news conferences demanded by the camera today. This instantaneous yet highly controlled setting exacerbates tensions and increases the possibility of "losing it" when things fail to go as expected or planned for the interviewee, spokesperson, or public figure. Therefore, these factors have most likely combined to significantly increase the opportunities for mediated public *faux pas*.

Extrapolation of Iyengar's (1991, 2004) discussions on priming can provide additional explanations into why mediated oral misstatements can cause so much furor in society. Iyengar (1991) explained that television news and programming contribute to the seeming societal need to vilify those public figures or spokespeople who commit a *faux pas* on air. He argued that media play a major role in framing "blame," or singling out who is responsible for a particular problem or issue. By focusing on a person who says something that may come across as unacceptable, instead of focusing on the underlying problem, media can avoid difficult but needed discussion on a specific issue in society. By doing this, media place the emphasis of social problems onto who is responsible rather than on potential solutions to the problem. Iyengar (2004) particularly observed this phenomenon in political elections. He noted the idea of "horseracism," where media have increasingly focused on the personalities of the race and who is ahead and why, rather than delving into the issue of importance to the election.

The Disappearing Context of News

There are factors impacting a *point of no return*, and more especially related to the effects categories, that are outside the control of the subject. If a more sensational news story occurs at about the same time as a *point of no return* incident, there is a good chance that this particular situation will not remain in the headlines for long, if at all. However, in a slow news week, there is a chance of it becoming a "story that just won't go away."

Possibly the most troublesome factor contributing to *points of no return* is an increasing lack of context in our news media. Rather than showing or examining the whole picture in a given story, the media often extract or highlight just a small part of an event or message related to the story. The broader implications are often ignored, supposedly to satisfy the short attention spans of modern-day media consumers (Vivian, 2010). This type of framing of media content undermines the larger message or event that media really should be deliberating.

The news consuming public is not entirely unaware of the trend toward taking news out of context. Itule and Anderson (2003) cited an observation by Freedom Forum chair and chief executive officer Charles L. Ogilvey, that one significant complaint by the news consuming public was that news "failed to tell the whole story because of inexperience, ineptitude, laziness or lack of space or time" and that "the lack of completeness affects context" (p. 420).

Delimitations of public information seem particularly salient when news items show up in social media. Flanagin and Metzger (2000) noted that newspapers, books, and, to a lesser extent the traditional electronic media, have a review process before content reaches the public; but the Internet has no such demand placed on its content. As a result, it is common to see media images snipped from traditional media stories and placed into the cybersphere. Internet users have the ability to edit, post, and even repost a clip, either from a legitimate news source or from a recording they have accessed. Users also have no journalistic obligation toward accuracy and

objectivity and often will post only the most sensational part—in fact, the more sensational or controversial, the greater the opportunity for more hits. As a result, these *point of no return* moments are natural fodder for online posting.

This haphazard posting is perhaps more pronounced when youth get involved in social media. In a study comparing how Americans get political news from print and broadcast media, Chaffee and Frank (1996) reported that adolescents "who follow politics in newspapers and magazines tend to become a more knowledgeable and active sector of the electorate" (p. 56). Part of this increased activity among youthful consumers is evidenced in web postings.

Why the Rise of Online User Generated Media Matters

There is no doubt that clip sites of user generated content have changed the landscape of how mistakes in public are reported and viewed. Any mistakes anyone makes can be instantaneously broadcast far and wide. Household names, celebrities, athletes, politicians, and even the otherwise anonymous individuals from obscure towns or villages have reason to anticipate being seen online if they do something newsworthy in a public setting.

YouTube is a major source of clips, including those depicting *points of no return*. Youtube is somewhat vague about its demographics, stating on its site that its "demographic is broad: 18-54 years old" and that it is "localized in 25 countries across 43 languages." However, it does not report which ages, genders or regions dominate (Youtube, 2011). Nielsen reported in 2006 that among Youtube users the 12-17 age group indexed the highest in terms of visitors to the site, and that men were 20% more likely to visit than women (Nielsen, 2006).

As popular as it is, the YouTube site seems to remain mostly generated by individual user repostings rather than by so-called legitimate news outlets. A cursory look for mainstream news on the site showed news outlets underutilizing the site. A search for "CNN News" produced a link to the CNN newsroom—a YouTube channel specific to CNN—which had 200 clips, the topmost being posted in Jan 2010 and which gave an error message instead of playing. A search for "ABC News" produced links to specific ABC shows such as *ABC World News with Diane Sawyer, Good Morning America,* and *ABC Nightline*, each of which had clips posted within the previous three days. An additional search for "Fox News" led to the Fox News channel which had five clips uploaded within the previous hour. And yet, even though the observed clips largely originated from a corporate camera, they were found on YouTube not from an official news outlet site but from a member of the public who had reposted it. This is significant because it indicates the power the Internet has today for significantly spreading *point of no return* moments far beyond the reach of traditional media channels.

Another important consideration is that, increasingly, the reporters from traditional news organizations are joining the general public in turning to social media sources to gather and assess information. An abundance of surveys assessing journalists' use of social media (Dunford, 2010; TekGroup, 2010) have found that a majority of journalists frequently use social media in gathering information for stories, even though in some such surveys, journalists also indicate that they view social media news sources to be less reliable and accurate than traditional news sources. This, again, shows how social media can spread news and events, including *point of no return* incidents, much more widely through society than in the past.

Examining the Trigger Moments: Influencing Factors, Behaviors and Effects

This particular study took shape from a more-or-less inductive framework. As authors of the study, we could find no theoretical underpinnings for what triggered a *point of no return* moment; we simply knew through personal and professional observation that such moments did occur. It naturally followed that *something* triggered these moments. So we set out to build a theoretical framework based on observations of numerous incidents that could be found online.

The study began with meetings between the three authors to brainstorm various *points of no return* that had gone viral in the past few weeks—reinforcing the reality of the public's insatiable appetite for viral sound bites. There was no debate as to whether such incidents occurred—we accepted that as a given. Indeed, the possible list of examples is practically endless, but it also becomes dated quite rapidly. In addition, while it was easy to find clips of situations where a spokesperson or public figure made a regrettable comment, it was not nearly so easy to examine the overall context of most moments because such clips had almost always edited out or excluded the broader details and commentaries of the situation. Over time, however, we settled on slightly more than 20 clips covering a variety of professions, settings and time periods. A listing of clips observed is included in Appendix A. The subject of each clip is indicated by number, rather than by name.

In analyzing the videos that had been selected, we searched for patterns that seemed to emerge across most or all of the situations. This analysis ultimately revealed categories of characteristics and behaviors that constitute such events. These contributing factors are: (1) the specific context or environment under which this moment comes; (2) the personal characteristics or traits carried into a given situation by a particular public figure or spokesperson that might affect an actual reaction of some kind; (3) the catalyst or main trigger points within those settings that spark the actual reaction; and (4) the after-effects of the situation—the subsequent behaviors and effects that determine whether the moment has additional coverage beyond what might normally be expected. Within each of these four factors we identified several elements that provide greater definition or clarity to the overall variable. Each of these categories is discussed below and also is presented in Table 1 on page 10.

Specific Setting

The setting and characteristics discussed here differ from the overall context outlined earlier. The overall context refers to the idea that our entire society has developing a secondary orality culture that leads to more controlled environments, more pressurized media situations, more possibility of widespread, instantaneous coverage of these situations, and the resulting opportunity for more outbursts. By contrast, each *point of no return* moment has a specific context or environment that can be distinguished from other specific settings and characteristics.

Six possible settings (as seen in Table 1) were identified as relatively typical situations in which, over the past several years, public figures, corporate executives or spokespeople have lost their verbal or behavioral decorum. The most common settings for the types of mistakes under discussion were those that were more impromptu in nature. The authors found relatively few mistakes in formal press conferences or speeches. This may not be surprising considering that there is a greater amount of preparation and rehearsal for such events on the part of the subjects.

The loss of control started to occur in these formalized situations only when time was allotted for questions from reporters. There are stark examples of long-term resultant effects

from what turned out to be press conferences gone awry (President Richard M. Nixon's infamous "I am not a crook" or President Bill Clinton's assertion that "I did not have sexual relations with that woman," to name just a couple of highly visible possibilities). These examples had few adverse effects immediately but became *points of no return* for the subjects when the gap between words and alleged behavior was noted.

Also to consider in the setting are any number of environmental issues. Was the interview room uncomfortably hot? Was the circumstance one of overall stress—such as a crisis, termination, or other factor—that caused a tense environment going in to the interview? Was it a late hour when people involved in the situation might have been tired? By contrast, was the moment one of jubilation, such as the end of a national political rally or the aftermath of a major sports victory, when the occasion would cause a subject to be caught off guard or perhaps be too relaxed? All of these examples could facilitate *point of no return* moments.

Subject Characteristics

This category identifies personality traits unique to a given individual that would contribute in some way to a mediated outburst. Certainly, long accepted tenets of public speaking are relevant here. Most likely, an aptitude or ability in public speaking could be an advantage in avoiding a *point of no return* situation. But if an individual exhibits such common traits as speaking in monotone, fidgeting, using "uh," "uh" and "er" and so forth, it probably would make a subject more nervous and therefore render her or him more prone to a mistake or outburst. Below are additional characteristics that could contribute to such a problem:

Excessive emotional involvement**.** The *point of no return* seems more easily crossed, or the chances for loss of control in a mediated situation seem to be highest, when a subject has a personal or emotional stake in the topic of discussion.

Distrust (of a particular journalist or of the media generally) can be a factor; this is perhaps not surprising considering the earlier discussion on how news items can be taken out of context rather than presenting the entirety of a subject's statement. In this way perhaps, *point of no return* moments perpetuate themselves.

An emotional pre-disposition—most commonly to anger—is a factor.

Physical discomfort. Was the subject tired, hungry or thirsty? Had he or she been giving more interviews or working under stressful conditions for a long period of time before this particular moment?

An eagerness to please, particularly from those who don't often deal with the media, creates a desire to provide information, even if little information is actually known or available; this can lead to practices of:

Winging it rather than preparing messages and comments carefully.

Myopia—the tendency of the spokesperson to focus on the problems and challenges of their organizations or themselves, rather than on stakeholder needs.

Catalyst or Main Trigger Point

With the environment and subject characteristics in place, the catalyst marks the actual point within this framework that sparks the *point of no return* comment or behavior. Specific types of catalysts were identified from observation of these moments, as follows:

<u>Provocation or goading</u>: The lines of civility in mediated situations appear to be more easily crossed when the subject perceives—rightly or wrongly—that the reporter or audience is predisposed in its view of the subject. This can happen whether the audience or reporter is perceived as friendly or unfriendly. Spokespeople or public figures can make ill-advised comments in the face of cheers, boos, heckles, hostile or provocative questions or other goading behaviors.

<u>Atmosphere/technology</u>: The euphoria of an audience at a mediated situation can spur an action that is accepted by the audience present, but which can overstep what audiences who see or hear a recording consider to be appropriate. In the discussion following the "Howard Dean scream"—where Dean's exuberance during a concession speech following the 2004 Iowa Democratic caucuses was viewed as bizarre and uncharacteristic behavior by many in the viewing audience—it was stated that the television broadcast did not capture the noise and atmosphere of the crowd, thereby making Dean's raised voice seem out of place.

- <u>Personalization</u>. This category of overactive response—closely related to the emotional investment category mentioned above—occurs when the spokesperson makes the mistake of "personalizing" the response rather than responding on behalf of an entire organization or issue. When the respondent answers questions or makes statements through the lens of personal grievances, struggles or inconveniences, rather than from a broader perspective, the responses may come across as petty, selfish or out of touch. This may have been the catalyst behind the public outrage over Tony Hayward's "I'd like my life back" comment*.

- <u>One-upmanship</u>. In some situations, the *point of no return* is reached when a subject responds to or counters previous comments or actions by an "opponent." For example, a political candidate may be asked to respond to a statement made about her by an opposing candidate, or an athlete may comment about the actions of an opposing team. The subject's sense of moral indignation and desire to "set the record straight" may lead to a more volatile level of response.

- <u>The element of surprise</u>. The *point of no return* may be more quickly reached when the subject is taken by surprise (such as the George Allen example, in which he suddenly realized he was being unexpectedly videotaped by an opponent's staffer). While it may be argued that anyone in the public eye—a politician, sports figure, executive, or spokesperson—should expect the unexpected, the advent of social media has increased the chances that comments will be captured when the speaker does not expect it and that the speaker will react negatively to that.

Table 1

Characteristics and Chronology of Behaviors and Effects

	Characteristics		Behaviors and Effects			
Setting	**Subject characteristics**	**Catalyst**	**Resultant behavior 1 (point of no return)**	**Resultant effects 1 - immediate**	**Resultant behavior 2**	**Resultant effects 2 - long-term**
Formal interview	Emotional involvement	Agent provocateur	Anger	Media	Apology (admission)	Media
Informal interview	Distrust	Atmosphere	Exit	Audience	Apology (excuse)	Audience
Press conference	Emotional predisposition	Technology	Inappropriate comment	Competitors	Denial	Competitors
Formal speech	Eagerness to please	Subject mistake	Inaccurate comment	Public	Blame shift	Public
Informal speech	"Winging" it	Personalization			Personal experience	
Private/public conversation	Myopia	One-upmanship				
		Surprise				

Notes

Only the setting category is exclusionary. All others can be combinations of listed items.

In many cases more than one element from a single factor can be at work, for example if a subject has a pre-disposition to anger as well a strong emotional involvement in the issue.

Resultant Behaviors and After-Effects

The final undeniable—yet often unanticipated—factor in a *point of no return* moment is post-event circumstances that change societal judgments of the event from the time it occurred. Many times the critical issue is not so much what happens in the actual incident but in how the situation is assessed later. Something may happen during that time that will cause a previously acceptable—or last least, non-problematic—comment to be viewed through a different lens. In other words, in some cases "mistakes" only become so after the fact. This suggests need of a broader rationale for considering the implications of comments before they are made. These societal reactions can be defined from both short- and long-term perspectives. We referred to these aftermath factors as resultant behaviors and effects.

- •Resultant behavior 1—immediate: The subject of this paper—the *point of no return*—which becomes the focal point of the effects is resultant behavior one. As authors, we identified an exhibition of anger, physically leaving the situation, inappropriate comments and inaccurate comments as the four common ways the *point of no return* is immediately manifested.
- •Resultant effects 1—short-term: These follow the resultant behavior immediately, or at least appear within the immediate news cycle. The broad effect is that the *point of no return* is broadcast among various publics to the point that there is an adverse reaction from at least some of those sectors. Rather than list all possible effects, we felt it more beneficial to look at individual publics and their reactions. These publics include the media (how they spread the news); the audience present when the mistake is made; competitors or hostile publics; and the general public.
- •Resultant behavior 2—long-term: This second set of behaviors on the part of the subject is the result of the first set of effects. At this point, the mistake has become so widely visible that the subject must take some sort of secondary action to account for the initial action and aftermath. Usually this second-hand reaction by the subject is to issue the expected public apology—but other behaviors also are possible. In this category, then, we identify two types of apology (admission of guilt or an excuse for behavior without actually admitting responsibility); straight out denial; blame shifting; and referring to previous personal experience as underlying reasons for frequent secondary behaviors.
- •Resultant effects 2—long-term: Finally, there are the *long*-term effects. Is the subject's reputation permanently tarnished? Does the public forgive the subject over time or just forget about it and move on with life? These effects should be monitored among the same publics as identified in resultant effect number one.

Guidelines for Avoiding *Point of No Return* Situations

Having reviewed the factors leading to a *point of no return*, we think it is unreasonable to assume that such situational outbursts can be avoided all the time, especially given the pressures that stem from our societal context of secondary orality discussed above (Ong, 1982). However, steps can be taken to minimize the likelihood of their occurrence and their negative impact. From this study, we suggest eight guidelines focused on avoiding *points of no return* and managing resultant behaviors. While this study lacks sufficient theoretical evidence to assure full confidence or reliability in the results, these guidelines come from our own professional and academic experiences combined with our observations of the clips selected for examination in this paper. The guidelines are as follows:

Maintain a heightened awareness of your environment whenever speaking

Even if there is not apparently anyone filming or taking notes, behave as though anyone can publish anything you say at any time, because today that is possible. With the advent of variable instant recording technology and user generated media, much is being discussed about the reach and influence of citizen journalists. Fedle *et al* (2005) warned that writers who are not professional journalists may feel no obligation to abide by journalistic rules (objectivity, accuracy, civility, etc.) and are more likely to state or reflect their biased opinions.

A recent case in point, as reported in *USA Today,* was the capturing on hidden camera of Ron Schiller, former president of the National Public Radio Foundation, allegedly making inflammatory, anti-Republican remarks (Moore, 2011). The footage was obtained in a sting scenario organized by journalist James O'Keefe. Even though commentary in the aftermath questioned O'Keefe's use of false identities and allegedly misleading editing, it still cost NPR CEO Vivian Schiller (no relation to Ron Schiller) her job (Moore, 2011).

Stop and think

Placing several seconds between the end of a question and a response is a learned behavior. In just about any situation, taking a brief pause before responding can help. Many spokespeople operate under the impression that pausing indicates indecisiveness or lack of knowledge. However, in print or online reporting, a pause isn't discernible (the journalist isn't likely to write, "The interviewee paused for several seconds before answering"). Even in live interviews, a slight pause is acceptable, as is a bridge phrase such as, "'Let me think about that for a moment….'"

In the discipline of public speaking, pauses are seen as useful and powerful, helping with the presentation of the message but also allowing the message to sink in with an audience (Lucas, 1989; Redmond & Vrchota, 2007). Even though interview settings differ from public speaking in that the audience is often not present, the same principle can be applied.

Answer in plural, not singular

Thinking and responding with "We" instead of "I" helps to avoid excessive personalization of a comment. It helps the speaker think of an answer in terms of broadly representing an organization or idea, instead of just doing some personal vetting. A possible downside to this approach is that a spokesperson can seem detached from the situation if he or she does not respond in first person.

Direct comments to an audience, not to the interviewer

Remembering that the true target for comments is a particular key public rather than the journalist asking the questions helps avoid tendencies to direct frustration at the journalist. Profiling various publics is well-established public relations practice, as is tailoring messaging to those specific groups (Wilson & Ogden, 2008). Media priming (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987) also has particular application here.

Media priming is often considered an extension of agenda setting. Priming (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987) discusses the influence of news media in political rhetoric, occurring when "news content suggests to news audiences that they ought to use specific benchmarks for evaluating the performance of leaders and governments" (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007,

p.11). Priming discusses the role of memory in information processing (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973): What have we heard recently? What have we heard frequently? Those pieces of information are accessible. That fact is useful to subjects who face the aftermath of a *point of no return*.

Public relations professionals are acquainted with "talking points." It may not be possible to predict every question a reporter may ask, but practitioners can plan what they want from their messaging. Whatever the question, practitioners who take responses from their own list of messages and do not stray from those messages stand a greater chance of getting their messages reported. This is especially applicable in the category of resultant behavior 2. In a situation where the news media will report whatever the subject says, the subject has an advantage.

Open with an apology or acknowledgement of the problem (if indeed there is wrongdoing).

A sincere apology or acknowledgement can be tendered without assigning guilt or blame (particularly advisable if the circumstances of the event are still under investigation). This apology can be as simple as saying, "We understand that a great many people have suffered in this tragedy, and our hearts go out to them." Beginning on this note reduces the chances that subsequent remarks will be (or will perceived as) blaming, inappropriate, overly-emotional, or focused on self, rather than on others.

Scher and Darley (1996) defined what constitutes an apology. "In order for an apology to be performed, the speaker must acknowledge responsibility for having committed some offending act, and he or she must express regret about the offense" (p. 129). Their research tested different types of apologies and determined that "When expression of speaker responsibility, offer of repair, and promise of forbearance were all absent, subjects indicated that the apology was least appropriate, that the speaker was least apologetic, and that they blamed the speaker more and wanted to sanction him more" (p. 137-139). Coombs and Holladay (2008) suggest, however, that "sympathy and compensation can be just as effective [as apology] in producing a favorable reaction from stakeholders who are not victims of the crisis" (p. 256), providing the level of crisis responsibility is low to moderate.

Focus on a single question and respond with specific messages

It was frequently noted in our analysis that it was the follow-up questions or "goading" from those conducting the interviews that led to the ill-advised comment, rather than an original question. Practitioners would do well to focus on the fundamental question being asked and avoid getting sidetracked.

Do not comment on the words or actions of another person

This is especially true if the subject has an emotional stake in the issue. Many of the interviews we analyzed that reached a *point of no return* involved an interviewee comment on the words or actions of others not present. When the subjects of such interviews are not present to defend or explain themselves, an important check and balance for civility is removed.

Develop a conclusion to the remarks

If an interview becomes volatile and a spokesperson is tempted to cut it short, moving to a formal conclusion—even just a recap of a couple of key messages and a sincere "thank-you" —helps suppress the desire to abruptly end the interview and exit.

Conclusion, Limitations, and Future Research

The role of the news media in setting agendas, framing issues, and impacting people's perceptions on those issues has been long studied and widely discussed. As mentioned earlier, in the United States a culture of secondary orality has evolved that reflects a controlling framework of print culture exacerbated by the far-reaching, sound-bite characteristics of electronic media. This increases the pressures of an environment where glib statements are expected while "the whole world is watching."

Today, with the ushering in of social media, any statement can be taken out of context by anyone with a computer and downloaded for consumption by anyone else in the world at their own convenience, and remain there, "on the record," in perpetuity. These factors combine to engender a highly pressurized communication environment where the margin of error is zero. Understandably, then, this leads to situations where, with the right circumstances and the right trigger points, it is relatively easy if not excusable for a public figure, celebrity, or spokesperson to erupt with an inappropriate outburst—a *point of no return* moment.

As authors of this study, we gathered theories that could serve as a potential framework to better understand these critical moments. We then gathered and analyzed over 20 mediated clips of what we thought were broad representations of incidents of this type, and observed patterns that seemed to run through the various clips. From those patterns, we identified the characteristics and framework for *point of no return* moments as discussed above, noting the specific setting of given incidents, the personal traits and characteristics brought to the situation by the subject, the various trigger points that sparked a negative reaction from the subject, and the short-term and long-term aftereffects.

It is easy to conclude from this study that *point of no return* moments are increasing in our social media environment and that they will not go away any time soon. However, this cannot be said definitively from this study because there was no attempt to actually track the number of specific incidents that have occurred over a given time frame. Also, based on our selection of the over 20 specific examples of the *point of no return* it is not possible to say that there was any scientific representativeness of all of the incidents that occur. Nevertheless, we believe the study contributes to the public relations body of knowledge in being an initial attempt to analyze the factors that contribute to these moments that definitely do occur and that often involved practitioners who serve as spokespeople for their organizations.

Watching the clips specifically with the catalyst factor in mind, it was surprising to realize just how many *points of no return* are not immediately apparent when they occur. In many clips viewed for this study, there are no obvious mistakes from the subject, no adverse reactions from the audience present, and no sense of outrage from an interviewer. Rather it is the result of inaccurate framing of the incident by the media or by an individual working within social media after the fact that makes it an issue.

The guidelines included in this paper come mostly from observations of the clips combined with our own professional experiences and collegial anecdotes, but we believe that they serve a useful purpose in assisting practitioners in these situations. We do believe it is possible that by using these guidelines, it is possible to avoid point of no return incidents, or at least to reduce the short- and long-term consequences of those situations. However, more research certainly will be needed in the future to provide greater evidence that the framework shown here and the normative guidelines proposed actually are as effective as we believe them to be.

Perhaps some of the decline in civility of social discussion comes from media consumers increasingly seeing only the most sensationalized versions of any given mediated situation or issue. Such sensationalization likely stems from the tendency of media, and social media users, particularly, to extract the most controversial or heated parts of mediated segments from the overall context. Perhaps one of the important roles public relations people need to play is to provide full context of situations to their stakeholders. And, likewise, perhaps consumers of news could be best served by demanding and examining the delivery of that news in its full context, rather than through inflammatory sound bites.

As a tool in minimizing the effects of these out-of-context clips, James Lukaszewski (2006) discussed why correction and clarification of news stories is an acceptable and powerful trend in public relations. One technique he recommended is to record interviews, allowing an organization to release unedited versions or transcripts with full context intact.

Our research also would suggest a greater application of public speaking skills in mediated situations. Certainly abilities in techniques of persuasion (such as controlling the conversation and using the power of story selling) would be helpful both in avoiding a *point of no return* and in minimizing the damage when one has occurred. Aspects of culture must also be considered. Certainly a news story can be framed differently by different nations.

There is also a case for educating the public as to what constitutes good journalism. If media consumers can become less susceptible to unethical journalism—whether from professionals or citizen journalists, perhaps they will be more likely to be reasonable and accurate in how they perceive the situation. We can only hope that under these circumstances, greater civility will return to public discourse, thereby avoiding its own crossing of a *point of no return.*

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Appendix A
Examples of Points of no Return

Name	Profession	Setting						Trigger point							Resultant behavior (1)
		Formal int.	Informal int.	Press conf.	Formal Speech	Informal speech	Private/Public conversation	Provocation/ goading	Atmosphere	Technology	Subject mistake	Personalization	One-upmanship	Surprise	
Subject 1	Doctor	✓						✓							Exit
Subject 2	Politician			✓					✓		✓		✓		Perceived inappropriate comment
Subject 3	Athlete			✓							✓				Exit
Subject 4	News personality							✓			✓		✓		Anger
Subject 5	Celebrity	✓				✓	✓	✓							Exit
Subject 6	Politician						✓			✓	✓				Perceived inappropriate comment
Subject 7	Politician	✓					✓		✓		✓				Confusion
Subject 8	News personality	✓													Exit
Subject 9	Clergy	✓						✓	✓	✓		✓			Exit
Subject 10	Politician					✓			✓	✓		✓			
Subject 11	Politician	✓													Confusion
Subject 12	TV personality	✓						✓					✓		Exit
Subject 13	Athlete			✓				✓			✓		✓		Perceived inappropriate comment

Name	Profession	Setting						Trigger point							Resultant behavior (1)
		Formal int.	Informal int.	Press conf.	Formal Speech	Informal speech	Private/Public conversation	Provocation/ goading	Atmosphere	Technology	Subject mistake	Personalization	One-upmanship	Surprise	
Subject 14	Executive		✓												Perceived inappropriate comment
Subject 15	Politician	✓								✓	✓				Allegedly pretends not to hear
Subject 16	News personality							✓			✓	✓	✓		Various perceived inappropriate comments
Subject 17	Politician		✓					✓			✓				Anger
Subject 18	Politician	✓									✓				Confusion
Subject 19	Celebrity	✓						✓							Exit (by aid)
Subject 20	Celebrity	✓						✓							Perceived inappropriate comment
Subject 20 (2)	Celebrity	✓					✓	✓							Exit
Subject 21	Executive	✓							✓	✓	✓				Perceived inappropriate comment
Subject 22	Celebrity		✓								✓		✓	✓	Perceived inappropriate comment

Note. Where possible clips are of the original, unedited moment. Some, however could only be found in a news broadcast containing editing and commentary. Very few were available complete and unedited.

Clips analyzed spanned 1997 to 2011. To respect the anonymity of the subjects, names and precise dates are not listed in this table.

What Does ROI Mean to PR Practitioners? A Small-Scale Investigation on the Use of "Return on Investment" in the UK

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Abstract

'Return on Investment' (ROI) is defined in management literature as a measure of financial effectiveness concerned with the returns on capital employed in business. In PR practitioner parlance, ROI is used in a much looser form to indicate the results of activity. This mixed method research investigates practitioner understanding of ROI with a UK and European sample.

Introduction

Management literature defines 'Return on Investment' (ROI) as a measure of financial effectiveness that is concerned with the returns on capital employed in business (profit-making) activities (Drury 2007). In public relations practitioner parlance, however, ROI appears to be used in a much looser form to indicate the results of activity (Gregory & Watson 2008).

There have been reports into the role of ROI in PR measurement (IPR 2004) which disputed whether ROI had real meaning in the public relations context. Watson (2005) found that the term was not widely used or recognised in academic discourse. Professional literature and practitioner discourse (cf. European Measurement Summits and the IPR Summits on Measurement), however, clearly show that ROI is a term widely used, if not tightly defined. As well, Likely, Rockland & Weiner (2007) proposed alternatives to ROI with four models which each have a 'Return on' prefix.

Investigation

This mixed method research (Daymon & Holloway 2011) investigates the practitioner understanding of the term with the aim of bringing best practice in public relations measurement together with the language of public relations and corporate communications practice. The sample was taken from the UK. The data gained from the study will inform questions for large-scale research amongst European practitioners

Data Collection

Eight core questions were framed from earlier research and the survey was distributed online (SurveyMonkey) via the researcher's email network and the UK PR e-newsletter www.prmoment.com in November/December 2010. 66 responses were received in a four-week period before the survey was closed.

Sample

The sample of respondents was 55% female and 45% male. Their workplaces were 44% in-house, 44% consultancy, 12% freelance or other and they mainly held management roles with 42% identifying as a director, 39% manager and only as 11% executive. The residue was freelance or did not identify a role title. The sectors in which they worked were diverse with a preponderance of corporate (39%) followed by 22% product, 19% services, 16% government with the residue in not-for-profit or giving no answer. As could be expected from the researcher's UK base, 83% of the sample came from the UK of which 50% were from England (outside London), 27% London and 3% Scotland, with no responses from Northern Ireland or Wales. Some 17% of respondents identified themselves as coming from outside the UK, mainly Europe.

Results

Q1: Do you regularly use the term 'ROI' or 'Return on Investment' when planning and evaluating PR activity? If you answer NO, please go to Q5.

YES   66.7%   44
NO   33.3%   22

Q2: If YES, do you plan for a specific financial ROI outcome or is the ROI related to achievement of communication objectives? (Choose one)

Financial outcome	14.3%	6
Communication objectives	66.7%	28
Other (Please enter in Comment Box)	19.0%	8

"Other" Comments (12): "It depends on the campaign/client" (5), Combination of financial and communication objectives (4) "Mix of inputs and outcomes" (efforts and results)

Q3: If you work in a Consultancy or Freelance, do you offer clients an ROI formula or is it set by the client?

Offered by us	67.7%	21
Set by client	12.9%	4
Not offered	19.4%	6

Comments (16): AVE-based formula - "PR spend to AVE = ROI" (6); Negotiate measurements with client; flexible (6); Meet media volume targets / media ranking (3) Relate press activity to outcomes, sales, enquiries (2)

Q4: If you work in-house, does your organisation have an ROI formula?

YES	21.7%	5
NO	78.3%	18

Comments (6): AVE-based formula (2); Tonality of media coverage; Sales link to PR activity; Media ranking system

Q5: Separately from any formula used, what does ROI mean to you in the public relations context?
Comments (58): Demonstrate outcomes; show value of PR (11); Return on expenditure/effort (9); Value of media coverage, divided by PR budget, e.g. AVE (6); Contribution to organisation's success (5); Impossible to measure/ problematic (5); Sales generated, measurable financial gain (4)

Q6: Should there be a standard ROI adopted by the PR industry?

YES	33.9%	21
NO	64.5%	40
No answer	1.6%	1

Q7: If YES, what would your formula or parameters be??
Comments (18): Yes, but don't know/not sure (7); Broad or flexible parameters, coupled to best practice information (6); AVE / PR costs formula (3)

Q8: If NO, what are your reasons for opposing a standard ROI?
Comments (42): "One size does not fit all" (32); PR is different from business and finance (3), but this response often mentioned as a secondary comment in 'one size' comments; Others (6) – too much measured already; waste of time; ROI is not related to output.

Discussion and conclusions

It was evident in the data that despite avowed use of ROI (66.7%), practitioners have very vague notions of ROI. Although many say they use "ROI", few nominated a process or methodology which was either robust or appeared to be applied consistently. As Gregory (2001) has observed, the reality of the application of public relations measurement and evaluation does not match the rhetoric. Indeed, AVE was the single most frequently mentioned ROI metric (Wright *et al* 2009) which may not be surprising given its prevalence amongst practitioners who, on the evidence of this study, mostly apply publicity-oriented tactical actions. The main emphasis of practice, according to this study, is that PR = media relations and thus ROI is operated as a simplistic calculation of media coverage and online hits, although some corporate and governmental responses focused on organisational and non-financial objectives. The strongest response, other than the claimed use of ROI mainly in relation to communication objectives, was the rejection of a single formula for ROI in the public relations context which leads this researcher to consider further investigation into a set of ROI guidelines. These guidelines, supported by best practice models, may be a route forward that gains acceptance by practitioners.

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Barriers to Communication Audits

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Abstract

Consultants who conduct communication audits have identified a number of barriers that they encounter when executing communication audits. Forty-five consultants that conduct audits as a significant portion of their business were surveyed. Qualitative findings provide additional insights.

Introduction

It would seem to be a pretty straight forward proposition for organizations: If you want to improve your communication with important audiences, conduct a study of your communication programming. Look for answers to questions concerning information needs, organizational objectives and aspirations, resources, culture and technological capability. Understanding those factors—quantifying where possible—should lead to understanding how to better a program. Simple, but not easy to get done.

Why? Because organizations are living, dynamic organisms that are restrained by such basic emotions as fear, worry, concern about the unknown and, unfortunately, a great deal of ignorance about the value that research can bring. Consultants in the industry will attest to the fact that it is never easy to "sell in" the concept of an audit.

And yet, research is a relatively easy sell in for other places in the organization: HR conducts climate studies at a rate many times that of communication audits. Marketing would never consider introducing a new product without first testing the market place for a good understanding of market needs. Shareholder research is as old and recognized as any form of study. Even reputation studies have gained acceptance through a multitude of studies. (Fortune's Most Admired Corporation list in the 1990s, for example, became a place to be seen, a value proposition that showed customers how good they are.)

But if the organizational communicator asks for dollars to better understand any one or several factors that can impact their success, red flags seem to pop up all over the place. Even some of the largest corporations in the world don't have available staff to work on communication research. Very often, the best one can hope is that HR or marketing or IR will share research they've done. If an organizational communicator is really lucky, other departments will even add a question or two to an already approved project.

So, what creates barriers to communication research? Why is it that communication departments are often unable to gain funding for their explorations, and if they are lucky enough to fund a study, significant barriers stand in the way of conducting such research effectively. Obviously, organizations want to prove they are getting their money's worth, uncover communication dysfunctions, find ways to cut costs, make their staffs more accountable… The list goes on and on.

But, communication audits are still relatively rare. And even when conducted, significant and sometimes intractable barriers stand in the way of success.

We hope that the research in this paper will help provide a better understanding of typical barriers, making it more likely that such barriers can be anticipated, and overcome.

Stream of Research on Communication Audits

This paper is the fourth in the stream of research analyzing communication audits. In the first paper (Williams & Dozier, 2008; Williams & Dozier, 2009, November), we explored audits that were conducted by one of the authors over a twenty-five year time span. (A career tour, as one academic friend put it.) Some 23 audits were examined to identify factors important to the process. On the one hand, that study was limited because the audits were all based on one company's experience. On the other hand, we were able to get first-hand knowledge (and depth) of each of the studies, something that would have been more difficult in a broader based study.

In the second paper (Williams & Dozier, 2009, March), we explored in greater depth the results of two of the most successful audits and two of the less-than-successful audits used in the earlier study. Those two studies created a working framework of three general categories

of project determinants, elements considered essential to the process: 1) logistics, including such items as budget, methodology, length of time for the process, and the complexity of the organization; 2) coincidental items, including the experience levels of the public relations staff (and the actual buyer), cooperation of HR, an organization's previous audit experiences, financial strength of the organization, and "status" of the communication department within the organization; and 3) cultural attributes of the organization being studied, including management support, politics, and openness to bad news and candor levels.

In the third paper (Williams & Dozier, 2010, March), we reported partial results of a population study of consultants in the United States that conduct communication audits as a significant portion of their business. This allowed us to (1) expand the scope to the population of other consultancies, strengthening external validity; (2) move from a multiple case study methodology to a quantified process that other researchers may replicate; (3) explored philosophies and techniques used by audit consultants, especially their client reporting strategies, and definitions of success; and (4) gained further understanding of how recommendations that emanate from an audit are framed, communicated, and linked to organizational acceptance and successful outcomes.

In this paper, we explore the barriers that communication audits encounter when they seek to conduct communication audits of organizations. As in our prior study (Williams & Dozier, 2010), we combine quantitative and qualitative measures to better answer our research questions.

Research Questions

Communication audits are objective reports of an organization's internal communication, based on a comprehensive study of the communication philosophy, concepts, structures, flow and practice within organization, in order to improve communication and organizational effectiveness (Hargie & Tourish, 2002). As such communication audits are powerful tools for both communicators and organization management to understand and improve communication processes and organizational outcomes. Nevertheless, consultants who conduct communication audits have identified a number of barriers that they encounter when executing communication audits. What are the barriers and obstacles to the successful completion of a communication audit? We partially answer that research question in this paper.

Methods

This research project sought to conduct a population study of established, nationally recognized communication audit consultants. Louis C. Williams assembled the list of communication consultants, based on his knowledge of the top communication audit consultants in the United States, as well as input from others in the field. Thus, the sampling strategy was purposive/judgmental, not a probability sampling technique. For this reason, this study follows the methodology and data analysis strategy of a quantitative case study (Kafka & Dozier, 2009; Allen & Dozier, 2010; Allen & Dozier, in press) for the quantitative portion. For the qualitative analysis, the research design most closely resembles a Type 3 holistic multiple case study design (Yin, 1989).

The original sample frame consisted of 48 communication audit consultants. Of those, three were employed by the same organization. After conferring with the participants, one participant responded for the entire organization. This reduced the valid sample to 45. Another communication audit consultant on the list was no longer active in the business, reducing the valid sample to 44 participating consultants/organizations.

Data were collected using an online survey, with an embedded link sent to each participant. Multiple emails were sent in December 2009, and January 2010. Responses were received from 32 participants, a 72.7% completion rate. Data were downloaded from the online survey vendor and transferred into a data file for statistical analysis (SPSS 11 for Macs).

To test relationships, the following decision rules were utilized. Because the present research involved a purposive or judgmental sampling strategy, quantitative relationships are not tested by statistical inferences from samples to populations. Rather, the researchers utilized the decision rules previously reported by Kafka and Dozier (2009).

A relationship is rejected and the null accepted if the independent variable accounts for less than 5% of the variance in the dependent variable. If the independent variable accounts for 5% or more of the variance in the independent variable but less than 10% of variance, then the relationship is confirmed and denoted as a *weak* relationship. If the independent variable accounts for 10% or more of the variance in the dependent variable, but less than 20% of variance, the relationship is confirmed and denoted as a *moderate* relationship. If the independent variable accounts for 20% or more of the variance in the dependent variable, the relationship is confirmed and denoted as a *strong* relationship.

This brings quantitative rigor to the study of small populations (see Kafka & Dozier, 2009) or to purposive/judgmental samples such as those used in this study. The goal is not to generalize to a larger population from a sample, as is explicitly done when tests of statistical significance are invoked. Rather, the goal is to assess the relative strength of the relationship with a particular population or non-representative sample (in the statistical sense) and to make judgments about relationships that are interesting to pursue in future studies and those that seem less promising.

The online questionnaire utilized a mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions. The instrument was designed in two phases. First, the two researchers designed a series of open-ended probes. Then the first author, who worked as a communication audit consultant for several decades, completed the open-ended probes, as if he were a participant in his own study. His responses were then used to design closed-ended questions for the quantitative portion of the study. After completing the quantitative items, participants were asked to provide additional comments. In the sections that follow, the quantitative data analysis is presented first. Then qualitative findings are reported next.

Results of the Quantitative Study

The results of the study reported in this paper focus on the roadblocks or barriers that communication audit consultants encounter. Respondents were given the following written instructions in the questionnaire:

Audit consultants often encounter roadblocks when conducting communication audits that reflect the culture within an organization. For each of the following, how frequently do you encounter these roadblocks?

The answer choices were often, sometimes, almost never, or never. The results are displayed in Figure 1.

The most frequently encountered roadblock was: "Lack of trust in the organization." Fully 87% of participating audit consultants said they *often* or *sometimes* encountered that roadblock when conducting communication audits. The second most frequent roadblock was: "Not enough time available from communication staff." Fully 70% of participating communication audit consultants said they *often* or *sometimes* encounter that roadblock when

conducting communication audits. Note that only 13% indicated that they *often* encountered that roadblock, compared to 57% who *often* encountered a lack of trust in the organization. The third most frequent roadblock is: "No support from management. About 56% of participating audit consultants said they *often* or *sometimes* encountered that roadblock. However, only 3% said they *often* encountered that roadblock.

Interestingly, lack of management support is highly and positively correlated with the communication staff not providing enough time to properly execute a communication audit, r (30) = .48. Using Kafka and Dozier's (2009) criteria, the explained variance of 23% indicates a strong relationship in the population studied. Further, no management support for the communication audit is positively correlated with a lack of trust in the organization, r (30) = .31. The 10% explained variance indicates a weak to moderate relationship in the population studied.

These three roadblocks were correlated with background characteristics of the communication audit consultant. These background characteristics included (1) gender, (2) years of professional experience as a communication audit consultant, and (3) percentage of the consultant's business generated by conducting communication audits. Consultants with more years of professional experience conducting communication audits experienced fewer roadblocks with regard to management support, r (29) = -.17, and time commitments for the communication staff, r (29) = -.16. But these were weak correlations; neither relationship accounted for 5% or more of the explained variance. Percentage of the consultant's business dedicated to conducting communication audits showed no meaningful; correlation with encountering the roadblocks identified in Figure 1.
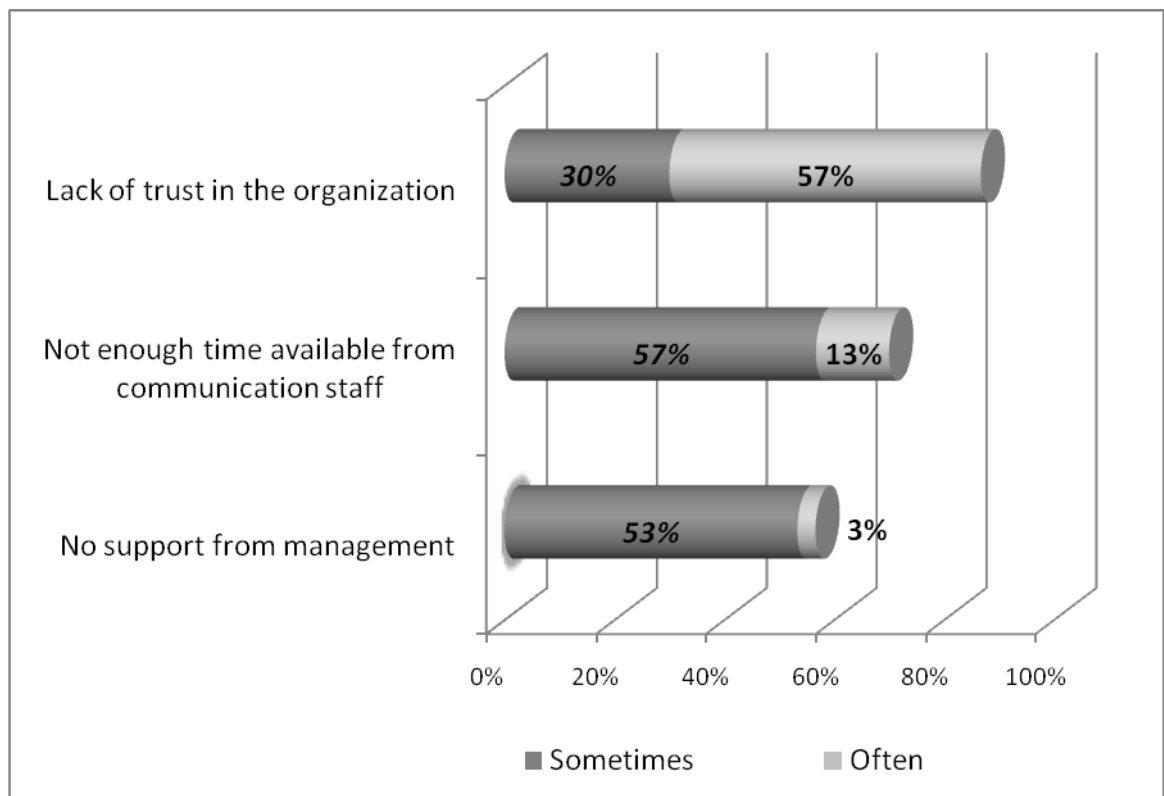
Figure 1. Breakdown of responses to the closed-ended items regarding barriers to conducting successful communication audits.

When compared to men, women consultants encountered fewer roadblocks involving a lack of trust in the organization, r (29) = -.46. Gender accounts for 21% of the explained variance in the frequency of encountering lack of trust in the organization as a roadblock; this indicates a strong relationship in the population studied (Kafka & Dozier, 2009). Women also had less difficulty getting communication staffs to commit the necessary time to conduct communication audits properly, r (29) = -.16. However, gender accounts for only 2% of the explained variance in lack of time from the communication staff.

Results of the Qualitative Study

In addition to the quantitative (closed-ended) questions, the following open-ended question was also asked:

Are there any <u>other</u> roadblocks within organizations that make it difficult to conduct a communication audit?

The responses to this question are provided in Table 1. We consider it noteworthy that nearly half, 15 of the 32 participants in the study (47%), took the time to provide a written response to this probe. This is obviously a significant area of concern for the consultant group.

Table 1.

Open-Ended Responses to the Probe: "Are there any other roadblocks within organizations that make it difficult to conduct a communication audit?"

Poor management relationships with employees.

Access to appropriate decision makers; failure to facilitate arrangements (open doors); Perceived bad timing (economic changes).

Change of focus from when the project started.

Too many other priorities competing for prominence.

Extreme time crunch -- client wanting to get audit done within 2 weeks.

Lack of trust by employees that they are really anonymous. People fear being identified by the company and having negative repercussions for criticizing the company.

Not understanding the role of comm or what "good" communications should look like or result in.

Union opposition or sabotage (usually from the union leaders not the rank and file).

A highly decentralized company structure sometimes makes it hard to get the participation of all business units in a timely way.

Turf issues.

The quality and/or agenda of the Project Authority the client assigns to be the consultant's liaison/door opener/logistics manager/etc. with the organization.

One or two members of senior management team that are suspicious of the process and don't cooperate/try to sabotage.

Finding ways to get customer-facing staff off the job for focus groups can sometimes be challenging. Rarely HR does not want more surveys done. And once elevated the audit to a full employee opinion survey.

Internal politics and differing agendas.

Employees unwilling to share ideas or suggestions. Leaders who want to sit in the same focus group with their employees. Leaders who have established ideas and won't listen to conflicting findings. Leaders who are convinced of their communication expertise and refuse to change.

What is also interesting about the list provided by the consultants is the breadth and depth of concerns. Only a sophisticated researcher—one who has experience working in corporate culture, behavioral sciences, labor relations AND communication—would seem likely to overcome many of the barriers listed.

Some of the responses are logistical in nature: problems with resources, time crunch, business structure, access to information and the like. But, understanding expectations for the results of "good" communications, the ebb and flow of focus group information, labor relations issues (legal and philosophical), how turf issues affect communication decision-making, the ability to judge communication staff competence, management/employee relationships all call for significant backgrounds to properly conduct this type of research.

This is a very broad demand for expertise. If one were to use the legal profession as a comparison, it would like asking your lawyer to be expert in litigation, insurance, HR law, financial regulations, and more. Or, a bit closer to home, it would be like ensuring your most senior HR officer was expert in labor law, workers compensation, pay, benefits and, of course, had the requisite knowledge of the behavioral sciences and organizational culture.

Breaking down the responses one level further, it is obvious that the key word is variety. There are, at minimum, 15 different thoughts expressed in the open-ended responses. Although we can categorize them as being logistical or issue based, they are all truly different. Consultants must able to identify and solve the issues raised here. Some call for diplomatic responses (time, creating focus, helping to set appropriate priorities are examples) while others call for a deep knowledge base of issues (labor and culture, for example).

Discussion

Barriers to conducting successful communication audits are many, and complicated. Much is at stake in the process and results of a major communication audit. Management has its fears—that they will be blamed for not providing leadership or, worse, that the leadership they provide is rejected by important constituencies. Communication staff is on the line for results. They must prove their competence. The attitudes of audiences being researched are at stake, as well. The pure and simple act of conducting an audit can and will raise expectations. A management that doesn't follow through on both reporting back—and with a plan that responds to stated needs—will cause a letdown that can lead to disappointment, mistrust, and loss of faith.

What that says is that the responsibility of the consultant conducting the audit is large indeed. Researchers who do no more than report numbers are not going to succeed in this type of research. Conducting effective communication audits demands an ability to recognize barriers that are sophisticated and complicated AND find ways to overcome those barriers. This is a special type of consultant, and may speak to the question of why there are not more consultants who practice in this field.

What consultant is able to overcome lack of trust, a roadblock cited as present sometimes or often 87 percent of the time? How does a consultant change or create time for an overworked staff, named as a barrier sometimes or often 70 percent of the time? And how does a consultant create support from management, an issue that was identified as difficult sometimes or often 56 percent of the time?

What that says is that one should want only the best and most experienced consultant conducting an audit. Classes may teach how to devise a survey instrument, crunch numbers, or conduct a focus group. However, only experience will create the necessary knowledge for

dealing with a close-minded management, an incompetent communication staff, or an organization where fear rules.

For, in the final analysis, communication audits are studies that attempt to delve into the politics of the personal: the personal views that determine how groups interact and relate to each other inside and outside the organization. We would posit that the good consultant facing the barriers outlined in this paper must have deep insights into what drives individuals from a variety of socio-economic groups.

This means that the skill and knowledge base of communication may, in fact, be the smallest and least important factor leading to success. Certainly there are skills considered to be the foundation of success, such as writing. But, if one thinks of professionals successful in almost any field—communication included—it isn't the foundation skill that makes them thrive. That may be the entry fee, if you will, but it is that understanding of the broader picture, the forest more than the individual trees, if you will, that can be the best determinant of success.

In the case of communication consultants, that broader picture includes knowing that the sale of a product is only a limited and circumscribed event, that an employee who gets a pat on the back is only a moment in time, or that a shareholder who cashes a dividend check is making only one trip to the bank. In each of those cases, the event must be a part of a continuum. If the product purchased doesn't ultimately satisfy a need or is poorly constructed, if the pat on the back isn't repeated regularly or appropriately, or if the dividend check isn't supported by responsible corporate behavior, then the mission is not complete. The line of the continuum is broken. True success will be attained only through repeat sales, ongoing employee loyalty, and investor reinvestment and steady stock growth.

The consultants in this study seem to recognize that. They intuitively know that they need to identify the doors that have locks that impede their efforts. And, given that the vast majority (about 88 percent) of them believe the best preparation they had for becoming a communication audit consultant was their own professional experience, we can say with some certainly that they have a good chance of opening those doors.

There is still much to be learned about communication audits and those who conduct them. We need to better understand the process itself, as well as those who conduct audits. Clearly, communication consultants are far more that "just" researchers or communicators.

Further, the process itself is clearly something of a risk for organizations.

Confronting embedded corporate culture is not for the weak of heart…or for amateurs. Much can go wrong when attempting to challenge a management belief or union feeling threatened over issues of turf.

Interestingly, failure can have many faces, some silent and behind the scenes, where feelings are hurt, trust is weakened, and relationships damaged. Others are more overtly observed, where money is wasted or careers are affected.

But—if the risk is great—so, too, can be the payoff. Who would deny that improved communication is a very good thing? How good may be difficult to define, but then, what is a good life?

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Autonomy-Dependency Paradox in Organization-Public Relationships: A Case Study Analysis of a University Art Museum

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Abstract

This study presents an exploration of the autonomy-dependence paradox inherent in organization-public relationships. The value of this study is that it illustrates how paradoxical tensions can influence the decision-making process in organizations, as well as the ways in which organizations can manage their own behavior and communication in spite of natural tendencies to manage and control stakeholders and publics.

In October 1997, the Brigham Young University Museum of Art, located in Provo, Utah, opened a touring exhibition titled *The Hands of Rodin: A Tribute to B. Gerald Cantor*. This exhibition featured 54 bronze and plaster sculptures that highlighted Auguste Rodin's "fascination with the diverse forms of hands and their expressive capabilities" and his "mastery of portraying the lines of the human hand while communicating their strength, movement and expression" (Past Exhibitions, n.d., ¶ 6). Museum press materials acknowledged that Rodin was "widely regarded as . . . the finest sculptor since Michelangelo" (Winters, 1997, ¶ 1). However, when the exhibition opened at the museum, four sculptures were left in their crates. Among these sculptures were three nude works, including *The Kiss*, one of Rodin's best-known works.

The decision not to show these works caused a number of BYU students to protest what they perceived as censorship. The university's decision was criticized in newspapers across the globe. The museum director "insisted that censorship had not occurred" because not exhibiting those works enhanced the exhibition's attempt to highlight hands in Rodin's work (Kamman, 2006, p. 85). The decision also raised eyebrows in the art world. The curator of the Rodin exhibition was aware that university and museum officials, who belonged to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), "were troubled by both the poses and presentations" of the four Rodin sculptures in question; however, she added that "Rodin's subject matter is the nude, so you can't really not have nudes if you want to have a Rodin show" (Kamman, 2006, p. 85-86).

Others in the local community, especially members of the LDS Church, were supportive of the university administration's decision. A letter to the editor from a member of the community expressing the opinion that the nude pieces weren't necessary to learning about art and that the decision was consistent with the teachings of the university's sponsoring institution, was representative of this group's feelings about the criticism of the university and the museum in the local and national press.

Seven years after the Rodin controversy, the BYU Museum of Art hosted a traveling exhibition from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, about the artistic contributions of the ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman civilizations. The exhibition, titled *Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World: Egypt, Greece, Rome*, was designed to educate visitors about the way these cultures influenced each other and continue to influence Western civilization. Once again museum officials were faced with making a decision about displaying nude works with this exhibition. While there were a few nude works, the work that caused the most concern was a marble statue of a nude male torso, especially with large numbers of elementary-school children expected to attend the museum on field trips. In the end, the museum exhibited all of the nude works but mediated the impact of the pieces by contextualizing them within the display. Museum officials also worked closely with the two groups who would be most affected by the decision: the university administration and the Utah State Office of Education. At the end of the exhibition's year-long run at the museum, the museum officials were surprised that they did not receive one complaint about the works.

These two incidents expose the paradox that art museums face when making decisions that have consequences on their stakeholders and publics. If art museums become too dependent on their governing bodies or their visitors in the decision-making process, they will likely face the protests of a vociferous art community seeking to protect the art museum as an institution of high culture. If art museums feel they are completely autonomous, at liberty to collect and exhibit artworks that are too extreme or avant garde for the communities they

represent, they will likely face the prospect of community outcry and possible public sanction. Zolberg (1994) recognized this paradox, explaining that art museums are "praised for collecting and preserving works of art for a discerning public" on one hand, but on the other hand, "they are called upon to draw in to that public a population with little understanding of fine art" (p. 49). According to Zolberg, this paradox forces art museums to make an either/or choice between providing "a safe haven for high art" or "catering to a crowd it [the museum] did not select" (p. 49).

MacDonald (1992) explained that the debate over whether American museums should have autonomy to make decisions based on quality or whether they should recognize their dependence on the market has become a significant battleground. He lamented that both sides of the issue have become so polarized that they see it as an either/or choice: "One of the greatest challenges facing museums today is to reconcile these two elements of our reality" (p. 165).

Museums experience the autonomy-dependency paradox that encompasses so many public organizations. Paradoxes are difficult to experience and often create great anxiety and tension within an organization. Many organizations find themselves choosing one option over the other, resulting in self-destructive defensive mechanisms. Paradoxical tensions also have caused public relations scholars to define the practice in terms of either/or dichotomies, forcing organizations to decide if their communication efforts will be symmetrical or asymmetrical, one-way or two-way, pro-active or reactive, and socially responsible or self-interested (Rawlins & Stoker, 2007a). But understanding the nature of paradoxes and applying divergent thinking can help communication professionals more easily navigate these tensions.

Cameron and Quinn (1988b) suggested that studying paradox allows for "richer analyses in which we are forced to look more deeply than usual, and to ask about the positive opposites that might not be recognized in a given situation" (p. 304). The primary focus of this study is to explore the autonomy-dependency paradox in organization-public relationships by analyzing the two cases presented above. This study will then evaluate how a paradox framework can bring greater depth and understanding to public relations theories about organization-public relationships, specifically those theories that address the paradox of organizations and publics being simultaneously autonomous from and dependent on each other. The study will conclude by evaluating how structuration theory and authenticity can help organizations more effectively manage their behavior and communication in the face of the centripetal and centrifugal tensions of the autonomy-dependency paradox.

Literature Review

The Paradoxical Frame

After a review of the existing paradox literature, Lewis (2000) defined a paradox as "contradictory yet interrelated elements—elements that seem logical in isolation but absurd and irrational when appearing simultaneously" (p. 760). Paradoxes have become important in organizational science because organizations are inherently paradoxical (Cameron & Quinn, 1988a). Ford and Backoff (1988) explained that in the act of organizing "distinctions are drawn that are oppositional in tendency: differentiation and integration, collectivity and individuality, stability and change, uniformity and complexity, morphostasis, the maintenance of structure, and morphogenesis, creation of new structure" (p. 82). Rapid technological change, globalization, and increased diversity in the workforce are responsible for creating

paradoxes that force managers to "increase efficiency and foster creativity, build individualistic teams, and think globally while acting locally" (Lewis, 2000, p. 760).

Paradoxes represent divergent rather than convergent problems (Cameron & Quinn, 1988a). Convergent problems are solvable. Answers to convergent problems tend to converge into a single accepted solution. Paradoxes are divergent problems because they do not have one single accepted solution. In fact, the more paradoxes are studied the more the solutions tend to diverge, or become more contradictory. However the promise of the paradox is that the process of "wrestling with divergent problems" will lead to greater breakthroughs and insights than what can be learned by solving a convergent problem (Cameron & Quinn, 1988a, p. 6).

The simultaneous presence of mutually exclusive opposites causes paradoxical tension (Vince & Broussine, 1996). Paradoxical tension has the potential to lead organizations to breakthroughs and insights. But these tensions can also cause organizations to become trapped in reinforcing cycles that "perpetuate and exacerbate" the tensions caused by the paradox (Lewis, 2000, p. 763). Convergent thinking often leads to a reinforcing cycle by making either/or distinctions—choosing one pole of the paradox while ignoring or rejecting the other (Cameron & Quinn, 1988b). These either/or choices are often defensive routines established by organizations to deal with potential embarrassment or threat posed by paradoxical tensions (Argyris, 1988).

Managing paradox involves "exploring, rather than suppressing, tensions" (Lewis, 2000, p. 764). Vince and Broussine (1996) argued that the only way to derive benefit from a paradox is to embrace it rather than try to resolve it: "Staying with the paradox makes it possible to discover a link between opposing forces and opens up the framework that gives meaning to the apparent contradictions" (p. 4). Handy (1994) suggested that managing paradox in the sense of trying to plan for or control it is itself paradoxical. He argued that the management of paradox should be thought of in terms of coping—the original meaning of the word management.

Organizations need to develop the ability to think paradoxically to transcend a paradox (Lewis, 2000). Paradoxical thinking leads to critical self-reflection that may help managers "reframe their assumptions, learn from existing tensions, and develop a more complicated repertoire of understandings and behaviors that better reflects organizational intricacies" (Lewis, 2000, p. 764). Organizational scholars have identified four methods of dealing with paradox: acceptance, confrontation, compromise, and transcendence (da Cunha, Clegg & e Cunha, 2007; Lewis, 2000). These strategies permit organizations to move beyond the either/or distinctions that lead to reinforcing cycles by enabling them to look at paradox from a both/and perspective (Ford & Backoff, 1988). Acceptance assumes that organizations are aware of the paradox and have learned to live with it (Cameron & Quinn, 1988a; da Cunha et al., 2007; Lewis, 2000; van de Ven & Poole, 1988). Confrontation is a strategy that calls for organizational members to discuss paradoxical tensions in order to "subject their ways of thinking to critique, thereby raising their chances of escaping paralysis" (Lewis, 2000, p. 764). Compromising to paradoxical tensions can take the form of a contingency approach "where the organization chooses the right mix of opposites" (da Cunha et. al., 2007, p. 14). Transcendence involves looking at paradox from new perspectives (Rothenburg, 1979; Poole & van de Ven, 1988; da Cunha et al., 2007).

Paradox in Organization-Public Relationships

The focus on relationships between organizations and publics as the unit of analysis in public relations provides a natural starting point to look for paradoxes in public relations

practice. The most obvious paradox that affects the organization-public relationship paradigm is embedded in the very nature of relationships: two parties becoming dependent on each other for the fulfillment of individual needs while, at the same time, they try to influence each other to achieve their individual goals (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Murphy, 1991).

Using a relational dialectic framework, Hung (2007) described how these opposing centripetal and centrifugal relational forces draw relational partners together and push them apart. This paradox has been referred to as interdependence by organizational management researchers, public relations scholars, and social exchange theorists (Canary & Zelley, 2000; Gollner, 1984; Grunig, Grunig & Ehling, 1992; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Provan, 1982) and is a key component to the organization-public relational dynamic (Hung 2007). Grunig, Grunig, and Ehling (1992) explained that "building relationships—managing interdependence—is the substance of public relations" (p. 69).

The approach advocated by public relations scholars to manage interdependence is based on social exchange and resource dependency theories (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Grunig, Grunig & Ehling, 1992; Hung, 2005; Ledingham, Bruning, & Wilson, 1999). Because these theories do not address the autonomy-dependence paradox inherent in organizational-public relationships, they can lead organizations and public relations practitioners to react to paradoxical tensions with defensive mechanisms that could potentially damage relationships or establish hollow quid pro quo relationships (Stoker & Tusinski, 2006).

Social exchange theory holds that social relationships involve the voluntary exchange of resources to accomplish individual goals that can only be achieved through cooperation and reciprocity (Oliver, 1990; Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Lawler & Thye, 1999; Ledingham, Bruning, & Wilson, 1999; Leichty, 2005). Oliver (1990) explained that social exchange theory is based on the idea that partners enter into relationships seeking "balance, harmony, equity, and mutual support" (p. 245), and anticipating that the benefits of the relationship will "far exceed the disadvantages, particularly the loss of decision-making latitude and the cost of managing the linkage" (p. 245). However, Lawler and Thye (1999) stated that "*Self-interest* and *interdependence* are central properties of social exchange" (p. 217); and Macy (1991) explained that the tensions between these two paradoxical poles can lead to social traps.

Resource dependence is a theoretical framework that exposes the power dynamics in exchange relationships (Aldrich, 1976; Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Cook, 1977; Emerson, 1962; Leichty, 2005; Oliver, 1990). The desired relational outcome of resource dependency theory is autonomy and control, not cooperation and reciprocity (Oliver, 1990). "The more power an organization has, the more influence it has to determine the nature of the interorganizational exchange" (Cook, 1977, p. 66). Control is important because it enables autonomy in organizational decision-making, allowing organizations to manage their environments and avoid uncertainty (Aldrich, 1976; Oliver, 1990; Schermerhorn, 1975).

The relationship management literature acknowledges that organization-public relationships are formed and maintained through a combination of behavior and symbolic communication, which are "intertwined like stands of a rope" (Grunig, 1993, p. 123). When an organizational decision has consequences on a public it affects the relationship (Grunig 2005; Hon & Grunig, 1999). Relationships are also affected by communication. Ledingham (2006) argued that communication is a tool in the "initiation, nurturing, and maintenance of organization-public relationships" (p. 466). According to Grunig (1993), when an organization and public have a good behavioral relationship, good communication improves

that relationship. However, "a poor behavioral relationship can destroy attempts to use communication to build a symbolic relationship or to improve a behavioral relationship" (p. 123).

The organization-public relationship literature primarily focuses on interactions based on the social exchange model, seeking to transcend the autonomy-dependency paradox by establishing mutually beneficial relationships through two-way symmetrical communication (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006; Hon & Grunig, 1999). The literature also advocates that organizations should manage their relationships to ensure stability by exerting influence on its surrounding environment, which reflects a resource dependency paradigm of control and autonomy (Ledingham, 2006; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). The simultaneous use of both the social exchange and resource dependency paradigms to define organization-public relationship theory underscores the paradox that continues to have a significant influence on public relations theory and practice. Organizations are pulled by the paradoxical tensions caused by their desire to be autonomous and ensure stability and the need to be dependent and cooperate with stakeholders and publics for mutual advantage.

Hon and Grunig (1999) included a variable of this paradox in their relationship measurement tool called control mutuality. Control mutuality acknowledges that while a power imbalance in an organization-public relationship may be normal, the most stable and beneficial relationships are achieved when organizations and publics "have some degree of control over the other" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 19). The concept of control mutuality implies that stakeholders and publics have the ability to affect relationships with organizations independent of an organization's attempts or manage the relationship (Blewett, 1993; Durham, 2005). According to Blewett (1993), the language used in public relations literature implies that public relations practitioners try to manage—or control—their publics. He argued that public relations professionals can and should manage an organization's communication practices and techniques but they have no control over the outcome of communication with a public (Blewett, 1993). To suppose to control publics does not recognize their autonomy in the relationship.

This research proposes two frameworks that may assist public relations scholars and practitioners in thinking divergently about the autonomy-dependency paradox: structuration theory and authenticity. In combination, these frameworks provide a pathway to divergent thinking about both the behavioral and symbolic-communication components of organizational-public relationships.

Structuration Theory

The two primary sociological paradigms applied in public relations research, structural functionalism and interpretivism, represent opposite extremes of a long running debate that questions "whether human behaviour is determined by the structural institutions of society or if human behaviour creates and determines those structures" (Rawlins & Stoker, 2002, p. 670). Those who adopt a functionalist approach view social reality as objective, orderly, and external to the individual, while those who advocate an interpretivist approach view society as a construction that grows out of the interactions between individuals (Putnam, 1983). Ultimately, the way in which an organization views the role of human agency in its relationships and the nature of social structures has a significant impact on how that organization responds to the autonomy-dependence paradox.

Researchers have found Anthony Giddens' structuration theory useful in understanding and managing paradox (Harter, 2000; Poole & van de Ven, 1989), in part

because it is a theory developed to transcend the structure/action dichotomy reflected in functionalism and interpretivism (Durham, 2005; Edgar, 2007; Falkheimer, 2007; Miller, 2000). Structuration theory attempts to achieve a balance between human agency and structure "by stressing the need to understand interralationhips between the two" by reconceptualizing the structure/action dualism as a duality: the duality of structure (Krone et al, 2005, p. 294). The duality of structure asserts that social structures are "the medium of human agency as well as the outcome of human agency" (Falkheimer, 2009, p. 108). Rawlins and Stoker (2002) explained the concept of duality of structure as accounting for the ability of individuals to produce and reproduce through their actions the very process that will constrain or enable them to repeat those actions. Therefore, from a structuration perspective human agents should not be theorized as autonomously creating structures (the bias of interpretivism), nor should structures be theorized as totally determining human action (the bias of functionalism). Rather human action should be understood as it both enables and is constrained by social structures (Krone et al, 2005).

Giddens defined structure as "an internal construct composed of an agent's memory" (Rawlins & Stoker 2002, p. 271). These structures can be related to the expectations that relational partners have of each other (Coombs, 2000; Ledingham 2006). In structuration theory, individuals have autonomy to either act in accordance with their knowledge of previously learned social norms (Banks & Riley, 1993; Witmer, 2006) or to act in ways that create new social structures (Banks & Riley, 1993; Rawlins & Stoker, 2002). Additionally, structuration theory posits that individuals are capable of actions that are based in self-reflection and motivated by individual goals as well as actions that are based on habitual routines that are generally taken for granted (Banks & Riley, 1993; Rawlins & Stoker, 2002). Rawlins and Stoker (2002) explained that self-reflexive action, referred to as reflexivity, represents an individual's ability to understand and explain the logic and reason of his or her actions.

Banks and Riley (1993) noted that social structures consist of rules and resources that are "formed, codified, memorialized, and concretized" through interactions that occur over time (p. 176). Socially constructed rules are behavioral recipes that provide the definitions of what certain behaviors mean and which behaviors are appropriate in certain circumstances (Harrison, 1994). Structuration theory identifies two types of rule structures: structures of signification, which are created and reproduced through communication and interpretation, and structures of legitimation, which represent relational norms that are legitimized through interaction (Harrison, 1994; Loyal, 2003). Organizations can foster structures of legitimation—or the ethical, legal, and cultural norms of social structures—through structures of signification, or communication (Rawlins & Stoker, 2001). Achieving legitimacy in a relationship "depends upon the morality of what the organization says and does in relationship to the norms that have guided its communications and actions in the past" (Rawlins & Stoker, 2001, p. 273). This type of interaction is capable of producing and reproducing new and lasting relational structures (Rawlins & Stoker, 2001).

A structuration view of organization-public relationships embraces the tensions of the autonomy-dependency paradox. This view has the ability to shift the focus of public relations from ensuring organizational stability and reducing uncertainty through relational control to enabling organizations to become participants in, rather than managers of, the creation and perpetuation of relationship structures. Durham (2005) noted that structuration theory can assist organizations in reconceptualizing relationships with publics: "Rather than being defined as distinct parts of a power imbalance, institutions and those they would affect are

bound to each other within a common social context" (p. 34). Falkheimer (2007) proposed that viewing public relations through the lens of structuration theory means that practitioners should see communication as a process of developing shared meanings and sense making, where organizational members mutually construct a social reality. Cozier and Witmer (2003) commented that "from a structurationist perspective, public relations is a communicative force in society that serves to reproduce and/or transform an organization's dominant ideology, rather than solely adapting to a stakeholder group or public (cited in Falkheimer, 2009, p. 111).

  Rawlins and Stoker (2002) argued that organizations cannot unilaterally change their environments because the structures that govern the environment are co-created and reproduced through interaction. Because of the duality of structure, an organization's sense of self and position in the environment is only known in relation to an organization's public and stakeholders: "This position is a result of past interactions with stakeholders and the future expectations of who, what and where the company should be" (Rawlins & Stoker, 2002, p. 272). Rawlins and Stoker argued that organizations should become aware of how their actions will impact their relational partners, and accept their duty to behave in a way that is respectful of their relational partners' agency. To achieve this kind of self-consciousness and respect, Rawlins and Stoker (2002) argued that organizations must come to an understanding and knowledge of themselves "that is, more than a simple sense of their 'position' in their society, a sense of the part their action might play in relation to the parts played by other people's actions in maintaining or progressing their society's aims" (Shotter, 1983, p. 37).

Authenticity

  The understanding of self that is necessary for organizations can be explained by the scholarly literature on authenticity. Lionel Trilling (1972) defined sincerity as the congruence between an individual's expressed feelings and their actual feelings. In other words, sincerity is "whether a person represents herself truly and honestly to others" (Erickson, 1995, p. 124). According to Trilling, being true to oneself connotes loyalty, constancy, honesty, and reconciliation with one's self. He acknowledged that attempts to manage one's image with others can lead to insincerity, or the incongruence between expression of feeling and an individual's true feelings, and suggested that true sincerity can be found in authenticity. Gilmore and Pine (2007) proposed two standards of authenticity: 1) being true to your own self, and 2) being who you say you are to others. They argued that individuals and organizations have to contend simultaneously with both the public and the private aspects of being, even "while one of these may overshadow the other" (p. 96).

  Based on philosophical observations by Heidegger, Erickson (1995) noted that authenticity is not an either/or experience (p. 122). People are somewhere in-between completely authentic and completely inauthentic because of the "complex, changing, and inconsistent" behaviors enacted by individuals (Erickson, 1995, p. 122). Additionally, individuals become more authentic when they realize they are partners who must cooperate with other individual agents in the social construction of reality, because the authentic self both shapes and is shaped by social exchanges with others (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Eagly, 2005; Erickson, 1995).

  Leaders seeking to guide organizations toward authenticity must develop positive psychological capital, positive moral perspectives, heightened levels of self-awareness, and practice disciplined self-regulation to align their values with their intentions and actions (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Leaders with positive moral perspectives should follow what

Avolio and Gardner (2005) describe as "an ethical and transparent decision making process whereby authentic leaders develop and draw upon reserves of moral capacity, efficacy, courage, and resiliency to address ethical issues and achieve authentic and sustained moral actions" (p. 324). Self-awareness is a constant struggle to understand organizational values, identity, and goals. According to Avolio and Gardner (2005), self-regulation is a process of self-control that involves organizations in the alignment of their values with their intentions and actions. This process is composed of three different stages that lead to organizational authenticity, which the authors also term organizational transparency: "(a) setting internal (either existing or newly formulated) standards, (b) assessing discrepancies between these standards and actual or expected outcomes, and (c) identifying intended actions for reconciling these discrepancies" (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 325).

As organizations become more transparent about their true endeavors and motivations, individuals who make up the organizations' stakeholders can decide if they are aligned with such purposes and want to be associated the organizations. If these individuals do not share their values they may choose to look elsewhere to fulfill their impulse to be part of an authentic collective. This echoes structuration theory and Blewett's (1993) prescription for organizations to manage their own behavior and communication rather than trying to manage the behavior and communication of their stakeholders and publics.

Methodology

A case study methodology was selected to conduct this research because of the complex nature of studying paradox. Cameron and Quinn (1988b) explained the purpose of their research about organizational paradox was not to develop a "set of specific, testable hypotheses explaining paradox," but to use a paradoxical framework as a "stimulus for asking new and richer questions" (p. 289). Case studies are effective in answering explanatory "how" and "why" questions "about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control" (Yin, 1984, p. 20).

In this study, the influence of paradoxical tensions on organizational decision-making will be studied in the context of the Brigham Young University Museum of Art. The two cases that will be compared in this study are the Brigham Young University Museum of Art's *Hands of Rodin* exhibition in 1997 and *Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World: Egypt, Greece, Rome* in 2004. Analysis will compare the cases to identify the methods used by the museum to negotiate the paradox in both cases and to understand what the museum learned from the first case that was applied to the second.

Data were gathered through fourteen semi-structured in-depth interviews with current and former (at the time of this writing) employees of the Brigham Young University Museum of Art. Most interviews began by asking participants what they remembered about the discussions and events that occurred due to the nude artworks in both of the exhibitions considered in this research. Additional questions were then asked to focus the interviewee on specific areas of interest to this study (see appendix for interview guide). All interviews were recorded on a digital audio recorder and transcribed using Express Scribe software to assure that the interview data considered in the analysis were complete, as well as to enhance the reliability of the data analysis. Transcripts of the interviews were content analyzed to identify the paradoxes, tensions, relationships, pressures, and inconsistencies discussed by each participant.

Data also were gathered from archival documents from the museum that included meeting minutes, internal memoranda, exhibition contracts, exhibition object lists, and

exhibition-related materials produced by the museum or the exhibition organizers. Additional data were gathered from news media sources. The museum had an archive of much of this media coverage, but to ensure completeness of the record, searches were performed on Lexis Nexis and ProQuest. Microfilm records housed at Brigham Young University's Harold B. Lee Library were also used to find those media sources not contained in the online databases.

In order to increase the trustworthiness of the research, six interviewees received a copy of the completed case studies to check them for accuracy and researcher bias in a process called member checking (Yin, 2009). In order to increase the dependability of this research, in-text citations in the case study section establish a chain of evidence to give readers access to the same information available to the researcher and to reveal the multiple sources used to construct the case studies.

Case Studies

The following case studies are provided as a means to explore the viability of the propositions of this study. The first case study examines Brigham Young University's decision to withhold four nude Rodin sculptures from a traveling exhibition of the French sculptor's work in October 1997. The second case study examines the BYU Museum of Art's decision to exhibit a handful of nude works in an exhibition on the ancient cultures of Egypt, Greece, and Rome. The cases were developed using secondary sources such as newspaper articles and reports and primary sources through interviews and examination of organizational documents.

The Hands of Rodin: A Tribute to B. Gerald Cantor

Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, was founded in 1903 on the principle that secular learning would be fused with the religious teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A local newspaper article examining the university's history after 100 years of operation explained that despite the growth in enrollment, "remarkably, little has changed in the way of the school's mission" (Walch, 2003). The Museum of Art officially opened on the BYU campus in October 1993. At the time, it was the largest museum facility between Denver, Colorado, and San Francisco, California, containing more than a dozen art galleries and state-of-the-art storage facilities (Reese, 1993).

Administrators at the BYU Museum of Art first heard about the traveling Rodin exhibition organized by the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation in the first few years of the museum's existence and immediately sought to bring the exhibition to Utah. The exhibition was of enough significance that it would be traveling to other major U.S. venues.

Before the scheduled opening of the exhibition in Provo, the university, the Cantor Foundation, and the museum experienced changes in leadership. The university's Board of Trustees appointed Merrill J. Bateman, the presiding bishop of the LDS Church, as the 11th president of the university in November 1995. On July 3, 1996, 79-year-old B. Gerald Cantor passed away in Los Angeles, California, leaving his wife Iris to assume the leadership responsibilities of the foundation. In November 1996, the university appointed a new director of the art museum. The museum's new director, Campbell Gray, was an Australian citizen with the right qualifications for managing a university art museum, but somewhat unfamiliar with the uniqueness of BYU.

Additionally, in the spring of 1996, officials at the Cantor Foundation decided to honor B. Gerald Cantor by supplementing the exhibition with some larger, more spectacular works from Cantor's collection, including *The Kiss*. With the opening of the exhibition

approaching, museum administrators began a serious review of the objects in the exhibition. After carefully looking at images of the works, museum officials were concerned about the possibility of a negative reaction from the community to a few of the nude works because museum personnel had received complaints about less provocative works in the past.

In fact, issues of nudity and pornography had also come to a boiling point in the surrounding community during this time period. In 1996, criminal pornography charges were filed against the owners of a local movie rental chain (Miller, 1996b; Romboy, 1996b), concerned residents formed an anti-pornography group that included local church leaders and city officials (Romboy, 1996a), and parents from the community gathered 2,500 signatures on a petition to oppose what they called "pornographic materials and concern about loosening public morals" (Miller, 1996a, ¶ 9).

Not wanting the university leadership to be surprised by unanticipated complaints from the community about the Rodin exhibition—let alone an organized community protest—museum administrators decided the best way to mitigate this problem was to involve the new university president. Museum administrators sent images of the works in the Rodin exhibition to the new president for review prior to the exhibition opening.

During this same time period, museum employees had been sending out regular updates to the local media to generate excitement for the exhibition. When word came back from the university president that he was uncomfortable with some of the works, communication with the media abruptly stopped. Museum officials assumed that the situation would be resolved rather quickly—one or two discussions at the most—that the exhibition would go on, and that the communication with the media would resume; but the discussions lasted two months. Because of the abrupt silence, it soon became apparent to the media that something was going on, and reporters began to ask questions that museum officials could not answer. The lack of response from the museum sparked the media's curiosity about what was happening with the exhibition.

When the works arrived, the group of university administrators and museum officials who were involved in the discussions about the potentially problematic nude works went to see them at the museum. Ultimately this group made the decision not to exhibit three of the nude figures. On Friday, October 24, 1997, three days before the exhibition was scheduled to open, university and museum officials were ready to make their decision public. Museum administrators called the Cantor Foundation to inform them of the decision (Wertheimer & Brandwynne, 1997).

On Sunday, October 26, 1997, three stories about the Rodin exhibition ran in local newspapers: one in the Salt Lake Tribune and two in The Daily Herald, Provo's community newspaper. On Monday, October 27, 1997, the opening day of the exhibition, The Daily Herald article about the university's decision, which had been rewritten by the Salt Lake Tribune ("BYU bans," 1997) and distributed by the Associated Press (AP), appeared on the AP Web site ("Nudes from Rodin," 1997), The Seattle Times ("Across the nation," 1997), CNN Online ("University censors," 1997a), and The Chronicle of Higher Education (Wanat, 1997). The first few paragraphs of many of these articles made specific mention that the university was excluding one of the most famous works, *The Kiss*, by one of the most important sculptors of all time.

On Tuesday, October 28, 1997, seven more articles were printed in local and national newspapers about the university's decision. Versions of the AP story ran in the New York Times ("Footlights," 1997) and USA Today ("BYU officials," 1997). By Wednesday, October 29, 1997, the story about the university's decision to keep four works out of the

Rodin exhibition was getting more national exposure and was beginning to receive increased global attention. Two days later more than 200 BYU students staged a protest in front of the main administration building on campus (Carter, 1997c; Cole & Sonne, 1997; Meyers, 1997; Van Benthuysen, 1997c; "Y. students," 1997). During the remaining three months of the exhibition, portions of the AP story continued to appear in newspapers across the United States and in other countries.

Shortly after the Rodin controversy was first reported in the news media, letters from passionate writers on either side of the Rodin issue began to pour into the editorial offices of *The Salt Lake Tribune*, *The Deseret News*, *The Daily Herald*, and *The Daily Universe*. These letters continued to be printed for the remaining months of the exhibition's stay in Provo. Additionally, museum personnel received numerous letters, phone calls, and e-mails either applauding the decision to stand up for the standards of the LDS Church or condemning the decision and insulting the people who made it.

Thursday, November 14, 1997, essentially signaled the end of the media coverage of the Rodin decision. The president of the university held a question and answer session with students in which he specifically answered questions about the Rodin decision ("BYU President," 1997; Carter, 1997d). The president took responsibility for making the decision and acknowledged making a mistake in "failing to issue a formal statement about why the statues were being excluded" (Carter, 1997d, ¶ 8). The president explained that the values of the larger community, and not just the university student body, had to be taken into consideration because of the large number of schoolchildren who visit the museum every year ("BYU President," 1997; Carter, 1997d). Finally, he promised that the university would avoid future controversies by not contracting to show exhibits that may contain questionable material.

In the years following the Rodin controversy, under the guidance of the museum's new director, the staff created a new vision for the museum that would try to incorporate the spiritual and academic aims of the university.

Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World: Egypt, Greece, Rome

Sometime between December 2001 and January 2002, museum officials learned about an opportunity to mount a traveling exhibition from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, comprised of artifacts from the three most influential civilizations of the ancient world: Egypt, Greece, and Rome (Thompson, 2004; *Art of the Ancient*, 1999). The exhibition was curated with the intent to demonstrate how these three civilizations "influenced one another throughout their histories" (*Art of the Ancient*, 1999, p. 17) and how they continue to influence the modern world (BYU Museum of Art, 2004).

In the spring of 2003, museum officials began to evaluate the exhibition to determine whether or not to take the show (Lambert, 2003b; Thompson, 2004). One of the issues staff members were concerned about during this evaluation period was that a few works in the Greek section of the exhibition were nudes (Lambert, 2003a). Staff members were not surprised that there were nude works in this section of the exhibition; in fact, most staff members expected these kinds of works to be included in an exhibition about the ancient world.

Early on, museum officials decided that this exhibition was consistent with the retooled academic mission of the museum, and instead of a broad marketing campaign for the show, museum personnel would focus their resources on the groups most likely to benefit from the academic discourse of the exhibition: university students and middle school students in grades

6 through 9. Museum staff members working on the exhibition felt strongly that these particular nude works were integral to the exhibition because the accurate and proportional depiction of the human form was an important cultural and artistic contribution of classical Greece.

Despite the strong desire to show these works, staff members were still worried about the potential problems associated with elementary school children exploring a gallery with nude works of art, particularly the easily noticeable marble sculpture of the male torso. They were also concerned about not creating another Rodin-like problem for the university.

Before the contract for the exhibition was signed, museum officials determined that they needed to get support for their decision from the Utah State Office of Education and the university administration. The museum educator assigned to work with the public schools made a phone call to the arts coordinator at the Utah State Office of Education to let this person know about the nude works that would be a part of the exhibition and to get feedback on the decision. Museum staff members also worked closely with university administrators to get their support for showing the nude works. The proposal from the museum was not automatically accepted by the university. In spite of all the museum's proposed efforts to mitigate the problem, university leaders were still concerned that there would be a negative response to these works. However, university leaders felt that museum officials had done about as much as they could to mitigate and minimize the potential for problems with these works and agreed to support the museum's decision.

In June 2003, museum staff members working on the exhibition held a team meeting to discuss the language that would be used to address concerns about the nudes in the exhibition (Lambert, 2003e). In addition to crafting the language they would use to talk about their decision, museum staff members working on the exhibition thought about ways to contextualize these works within the gallery so visitors could understand the reasons they were included. With support from the pubic school system and the university in place, museum administrators proceeded with the legal negotiations, officially contracting to exhibit the show in November 2003, seven months before it was scheduled to open (Lambert, 2003f).

After the exhibition opened on June 4, 2004, a large number of school groups began to schedule tours, and museum staff members debated whether or not to alert teachers about the nude works before they brought their classes. In the end, staff members decided to address any questions that teachers asked; however, they decided not to make a big deal of the nude works because they had the support of the State Office of Education.

All museum communication with the media was focused on the educational discourse of the exhibition. The exhibition received significant coverage that included many color images of the major works in the show in Utah's two major daily newspapers, as well as Provo's community newspaper (Clark, 2004; Fellow, 2004); and not a mention was made of the nude works. Other media outlets, including the BYU campus newspaper, *The Daily Universe* (Giles, 2004; Santiago, 2004), *The Church News* (Swenson, 2004; Swenson, 2005) and *BYU Magazine* (Winters, 2004) published positive reviews of the exhibition and the educational programming surrounding the exhibition.

Discussion

Recognizing Paradox

The first proposition of this study was that relationships between organizations and publics are defined by interdependence—or the autonomy-dependence paradox—and that the constant tension generated by the poles of this paradox can influence the decision making of

relational partners. A natural consequence of this proposition is that organizational decisions or decisions made by publics can intensify the paradoxical tension in the relationship, increasing the desire of the relational partners to reduce the tension.

The case studies presented in this research clearly demonstrate that BYU Museum of Art employees felt the tensions caused by the autonomy-dependency paradox. The research also shows that these tensions had an effect on organizational decision-making and communication. Additionally, these case studies reveal that the BYU Museum of Art experiences the autonomy-dependency paradox on two distinct but closely related levels, increasing the tension when both levels of the paradox are manifest. The first level of the paradox is common to all art museums and is embedded within art museum culture and practice. The autonomy-dependency paradox at this level is manifest when art museums are forced to reconcile their historical mission of showing the public artworks that museum professionals think the public needs to see with the need to show the public artworks that the public wants to see. In other words, the central question of this level of the paradox is "who or what agency defines and determines a museum's offerings" (Kotler & Kotler, p. 30), the autonomy of the museum or dependence on the market?

The second level of the paradox exists specifically for the BYU Museum of Art because the museum is part of Brigham Young University. The autonomy-dependency paradox at this level has a direct correlation to the university's struggle to integrate secular academic pursuits with the religious principles and values of the LDS Church. This level of the paradox is manifest when museum decisions could be seen to compromise the spiritual and religious mission of the university. The central question of this level of the paradox asks whether the academic mission of the university, which would allow the museum a great deal of autonomy, or the religious mission of the university, which would cause the museum to be more dependent on religious criteria, "defines and determines [the] museum's offerings" (Kotler & Kotler, p. 30). This second level of the paradox may be the most important for the museum because it reflects the essence of Brigham Young University, of which the museum is a part. A BYU official addressing concerns over academic freedom at the university explained that "BYU intends to remain true to its intellectual and spiritual mission. If we abandoned our mission, there would be no reason for us to exist" (Carter, 1997a, ¶ 6- 8).

Museum officials used different paradox management strategies in the two cases reviewed in this study, providing additional insight into their level of understanding of the paradox. One interpretation of the events leading up to the university's decision about the Rodin sculptures is that museum officials adopted a defensive mechanism to deal with the potential embarrassment or threat posed by the paradoxical tensions of the Rodin situation (see Argyris, 1988). When museum officials decided to approach the university administration, they were seeking the administration's support and assistance in dealing with what they saw as a potential negative reaction from the community. It could be argued that the museum's decision to go along with the university's decision, even though some members of the museum staff felt that some of the works should not be excluded, was evidence of first-order thinking characteristic of defensive mechanisms, which are primarily used "to preserve the fundamentals of the existing order of things by changing the non-fundamentals" (Esterhuyse, 2003, p.2). By going along with the university's decision, the museum would be seen institutionally as a team player and not be sanctioned for stepping out of line with the university.

Another interpretation of the events leading to the university's decision about the Rodin sculptures is that museum officials adopted a compromise approach to deal with the

paradox. According to da Cunha et al. (2007), compromising to paradoxical tensions can take the form of a contingency approach "where the organization chooses the right mix of opposites" (p. 14). van de Ven and Poole (1988) described this strategy as taking the "role of time into account," (p. 24). Similar to the contingency approach, when looking at paradox from a temporal perspective "one horn of the paradox is assumed to hold at one time and the other at a different time," (van de Ven & Poole, 1988, p. 24). Museum officials enjoyed considerable autonomy in their ability to determine the museum's exhibition program up until the point that museum officials realized that the Rodin exhibition they agreed to exhibit might cause problems for the university and the community. Because museum officials were under the impression that the exhibition had been approved institutionally they felt like they were being responsible in inviting the university president to the opening of the exhibition to assist the museum in quelling any negative response from the public. Once the university president realized that some of these works were more problematic than museum officials thought they were, museum officials abandoned the autonomy horn of the paradox in favor of the dependency horn, subjecting themselves and their decision making to the university to ensure the moral and religious integrity of the institution. After the controversy was over, museum officials returned to the autonomy horn of the paradox, selecting and exhibiting exhibitions without much intervention from the university. In fact many museum staff members felt that their support of the university's decision resulted in increased trust in their decision-making.

The museum's decision to support the university in the Rodin decision did not propel the museum into a self-destructive reinforcing cycle. On the contrary, by the time museum officials began dealing with the nudity issue in the *Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World* exhibition, they had learned to recognize the paradox and live within the limits of their autonomy. Being aware of the paradox and learning to live with it constitutes the paradox management strategy of acceptance (Cameron & Quinn, 1988; da Cunha et al., 2007; Lewis, 2000; van de Ven & Poole, 1988). van de Ven and Poole (1988) argued that acceptance is a good first step in dealing with paradox because individuals and organizations "acknowledge that things need not be consistent; that seemingly opposed viewpoints can inform one another" (p. 23). This strategy allowed museum decision makers to exercise autonomy in deciding to exhibit the nude works, which they felt were an integral part of the exhibition, while at the same time acknowledging that they needed to secure support from the stakeholders that would be affected by their decision. As a result of the university's increased trust in the museum, and the perceived broad autonomy of the museum, in the wake of both the Rodin and the *Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World* exhibitions, museum officials seem to be flirting with a strategy for transcendence of the paradox, namely that increased organizational autonomy is directly related to increased recognition of organizational dependence.

The Hands of Rodin case study illustrates the problems that result from a limited understanding of the structuration process (Giddens, 1984). The museum did not understand the relational structures that have been co-created over time and space with stakeholders and publics and failed to acknowledge the agency of these groups to affect those structures. This case study also underscores the danger organizations face when they engage in routine action—assuming that because certain actions have been successful in the past that those actions will continue to be successful in the future. *The Art of the Mediterranean World* case study demonstrates the ability of organizations to work within the parameters of existing relational structures while recognizing the agency of stakeholder and publics to achieve structural change that is mutually accepted by all relational partners. This case study also

shows the importance of reflexive action, or the ability to understand and explain the logic and reason of organizational actions.

The Hands of Rodin Case

      The Hands of Rodin case study demonstrates that museum officials did not understand the relational structures they had co-created with stakeholder groups when they initially made the decision to host the Rodin exhibition. This case study also demonstrates that museum officials did not recognize the agency of the stakeholder groups that would be affected by this decision. Because museum officials did not understand these relational structures or recognize the agency of stakeholders to affect the structures, the actual outcome of their decisions was very unexpected. Many of the museum personnel interviewed for the case study expressed surprise at the reactions of various stakeholder groups both to the initial decision to host the exhibition and the subsequent decision to withhold the four works from the exhibition.

      While museum officials seemed perplexed by the contentious outcome of the situation, it appears that the medium of the museum's interaction and the outcomes of it were, in fact, the same as predicted by Giddens. The museum's actions in contracting for the Rodin exhibition were based on misunderstanding—both of the museum's reasons for wanting to bring the exhibition to BYU and of the expectations of stakeholders about the appropriateness of certain works. Because misunderstanding was the medium of interaction initiated by the museum, the outcome of this interaction was also misunderstanding—misunderstanding with the university administration, with the Cantor Foundation, with BYU students, with professional peers, and with members of the community. Three main factors contributed to the museum's miscalculation of relational structural and the agency of affected stakeholder groups: 1) The museum was a new institution that was still forming relationships with stakeholders and publics; 2) The still-forming relational structures enabling and constraining the museum were subjected to radical change just prior to the Rodin exhibition; and 3) Museum officials were not reflexive about their actions, relying instead on routine actions established before the structural changes occurred.

      The interactions between museum officials and university administrators before the Rodin exhibition opened at the museum illustrate how two groups can experience congruent, or legitimate, change that is mutually constructed by two parties. Once museum administrators recognized that there might be a problem with some of the works in the Rodin exhibition, they entered into a two-month long dialog with university officials about how to handle the problematic works. In the end, the university president made the decision to withhold four works from the exhibition, including *The Kiss*. Museum officials supported the decision and defended it publicly. The university president summarized the shared understanding between the university and the museum in the question and answer session for students near the end of the exhibition. He explained that the museum had to take into consideration the values of the larger community, and not just the university student body. He also explained that the university would avoid future controversies by not contracting to show exhibitions that may contain questionable material.

      There were also members of the community for whom the university's decision was a legitimation of existing relational structures. This group of people wrote letters to the editor defending the museum, the university, and the decision to withhold the Rodin sculptures. For example, one letter writer asked, "what is wrong with a private, religious institution deciding to display only artwork which is in harmony with the teachings of the religion that sponsors it?" (Ball, 1997, ¶ 1). Another letter writer explained that "it's refreshing to see an institution

that stands up for what it believes, regardless of internal and external pressures to conform to society's prevailing attitude" (Jarman, 1997, ¶ 1). Members of this group also sent letters of support and phoned museum personnel to applaud them for standing up for standards of the LDS Church. For this group the decision did not need any explanation. The decision was consistent with the ethical, legal, cultural, and in this case in particular, religious norms to which they expected the university to adhere.

Conversely, museum officials felt that their relationships with the groups that did not agree with the university's Rodin decision, including members of the community, as well as professional and academic peers who have the ability to veto loans of artworks and exhibitions, were damaged. Some of these organizations obviously felt that the museum had stepped far outside the bounds of professional museum practice, expressing surprise and disappointment, and accusing museum officials and university leaders of censorship. These accusations were surprising to members of the museum staff, as one person explained: "I would never in a million years have thought that it would be that big a deal because museum cut pieces out of exhibitions all the time for various reasons."

Museum and university officials failed to recognize the agency of these stakeholder groups. Before the Rodin decision was made, museum officials and university administrators did not consult with any of the groups that reacted negatively when the decision was announced. Most notably absent from the decision discussion was the Cantor Foundation, who was told about the university's final decision three days before the exhibition opened. These groups did not have priority in the initial discussion between university and museum officials about what to do with the questionable Rodin works. The power balancing mechanisms the dissenting groups consisted of protests covered by the media, and opinion pieces and letters to the editor in the local newspapers. For example, the organizer of the student protest explained to the media that the main reason for the protest was that students were not consulted about the decision. He noted that "had students been included in the decision . . . we wouldn't have this protest" (Carter, 1997c, ¶ 13).

After the Rodin controversy ended, it was apparent that museum officials had learned something about the relationship structures that had been created and reproduced with these groups as a result of their interactions during the controversy. In essence, the media coverage of the Rodin controversy enabled interaction between the museum and all of the museum's stakeholders by bringing them into the same space. Additionally, the extended media coverage and three-month run of the exhibition provided the museum with multiple opportunities to interact with these stakeholder groups. In the end, the multiple interactions between the museum and its stakeholders caused museum personnel to become more reflexive about their actions and resulted in museum personnel developing better understanding of their relational structures. One staff member explained: "I think we are even more careful now than we were. I think that we are more sensitive to the fact that we are going to have a part of an audience that is greatly offended by a work of art." Much of what museum staff members learned from the Rodin experience influenced, to a great degree, the development of a new mission and vision for the museum that incorporated both the religious and academic facets of the museum's identity.

The Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World Case
The interaction of museum officials with the stakeholders who would be affected by the decision to show in the *Art of the Mediterranean World* exhibition demonstrated that museum officials had a better understanding of the museum's relationships with its

stakeholders and understood the importance of allowing these stakeholders to exercise their agency in co-producing the structures of the relationship. Before museum officials signed the contract to bring this exhibition to the university they actively sought out the stakeholders who would be affected by their decision and discussed the matter of the nude works with them. The result of these discussions was that all of the relevant stakeholders came to agreement that these were the types of works that the museum should be exhibiting. Once again in this case study, the medium and the outcome were the same. Museum officials were sure of their actions, they better understood the potential reaction of their stakeholders, and they approached the issue of exhibiting the nude works with openness, transparency, and genuine dialog. The outcome of this interaction was open and transparent response from the museum's stakeholders and positive response to the resulting exhibition from the media and museum visitors.

From the moment museum officials learned about the possibility of bringing the *Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World* exhibition to BYU, they were engaged in reflexive action. Museum officials did not rely on habitual or routine action. They recognized that the museum was "clearly in the post-Rodin era" and always would be because the Rodin controversy was such a "defining moment for the museum." The Rodin experience was so powerful on the minds of the museum staff that one expressed that there was not "any doubt that the Rodin experience has informed everything that we do around the subject [of nudity], ever." The controversy surrounding the Rodin decision helped museum personnel better understand potential community reactions, including the possible "flash points, both on the positive and negative side" of the issue.

After some internal debate, museum personnel determined that the nude works were an integral part of the exhibition. They also determined that the nude works were consistent with the museum's new mission and the university's religious mission. After making this evaluation, museum personnel began the process of figuring out how to work within their existing relational structures to achieve legitimation for this decision through open and transparent communication and dialog. Museum officials did not try to force their decision on stakeholders by attempting to exercise control through relational resources, rather they acknowledged the agency of these groups to draw their own conclusions about the museum's decision. Museum officials expressed a "deep desire to remain respectful to the feelings of our audience" and made a serious effort to "examine the issues surrounding the appropriateness of making them [the nude works] available to our visitors" (Thompson, 2003, ¶ 2).

Additionally, the museum's positive engagement with stakeholders to create and reproduce relational structures since Rodin has seemed to heal some of the museum's relationships with a few of the stakeholder groups that became defensive during the Rodin controversy. According to museum staff members, there had not been trouble borrowing works or contracting for exhibitions with other art institutions. Museum staff members reported that they had attended many professional conferences and had not been treated poorly by peers. And the museum's director was eventually accepted into the most prestigious association for art museum directors in North America. A few staff members commented that the museum's consistent program of "dynamic, adventurous, provocative, stimulating exhibitions" had built up relationships with a number of these groups over time. However some staff member also noted that there are some groups "whose views are never going to change."

Authenticity

When museum officials achieved a deeper sense of organizational self-awareness and understood the need for self-regulation, they were able to stay in the paradox, exploring its tensions rather than attempting to suppress them. This enabled museum officials to manage the museum's behavior and communication in relation to those tensions rather than resorting to defensive mechanisms focused on control and autonomy that exacerbate tensions for the museum's stakeholders and publics. Additionally, these case studies reveal that self-awareness and authenticity are fundamentally linked to paradox. In these cases, the museum had to understand and reconcile three different layers of its identity to become self-aware: 1) What it means to be an art museum; 2) What it means to be a university art museum; and, 3) What it means to be a university art museum operated by the LDS Church. The simultaneous interaction of these three different identities is the origin of both levels of the autonomy-dependency paradox experienced by the museum. The interaction of the first two layers of the museum's identity defines the first level of the paradox, and the interaction of the second two layers defines the second level of the paradox. Therefore, the paradoxes of museum vs. market and academy vs. religion are embedded into the very fabric of the museum's existence and are integral components of the museum's identity.

Hands of Rodin

The *Hands of Rodin* case study demonstrates that museum officials struggled with self-awareness. Museum officials were not organizationally self-aware because they had not yet come to understand the unique contextual factors that defined the museum's existence. One of those contextual factors was the autonomy-dependency paradox. In the first few years of the museum's existence, museum officials responded to the first level of the autonomy-dependency paradox by favoring market-dependence over museum autonomy. Museum officials hoped that an exhibition featuring a well-known artist who had created iconic works of art would be exciting opportunity for the surrounding community. At the same time, museum staff members were also interested in the educational value the exhibition could provide for the students and professors on campus, who would have a rare opportunity to learn from these works in person rather than just studying them in a book. These two motivations for agreeing to host the exhibition demonstrate that museum officials were struggling to reconcile the first two levels of organizational self-awareness.

As previously explained, museum officials also struggled with the second level of the autonomy-dependency paradox, which has its roots in the third layer of the museum's identity: the university's affiliation with the LDS Church. Museum staff members were aware that the museum was expected to uphold the same standards of the LDS Church as the rest of the university. They also knew from experience that nude works of art were problematic for some museum visitors who thought an LDS university shouldn't exhibit nude artworks. However, museum officials wanted to show works of art that they thought were important, and they felt that problems with nudity in this exhibition could be overcome because of the iconic nature of the works. One staff member summed up the museum's attempts to deal with these paradoxical tensions by noting that these works were pushing the edge of what could be shown at the museum, even though these works were considered masterpieces.

Explanations of why the museum decided to withhold sculptures also reflected a lack of self-awareness to some stakeholder groups. These explanations were inconsistent with the expectations these groups had of what an art museum should be—the first and second layers of the museum's identity. The explanation for withholding the four works was out of respect

for the museum's more conservative and sensitive community members. The most inauthentic statements reported in the media carried an air of paternity and control. This conflicted with what museum leaders thought of the purpose of an art museum, which was to "connect and engage with an audience . . . and expand not only in number but in intellect and appreciation and . . . affection for art" in a way that encourages the appreciation of others and their ideas. This inconsistency between the explanation about why the decision was made and the true nature of the art museum experience was a key factor in the negative response of some stakeholders and publics to the decision. While some groups saw the museum's public explanations of the Rodin decision as inauthentic, other groups felt that the decision and the explanations were completely authentic. The decision and the subsequent explanations were consistent with the expectations these groups had of what an art museum on the campus of an LDS Church-owned university should be—the third layer of the museum's identity. While museum officials mostly talked about concern for museum visitors, university officials explained that the decision was made to uphold the standards of the church. On a few occasions a university spokesman emphasized that BYU was "a peculiar place with a peculiar set of old fashioned values" ("Four Rodin," 1997, ¶ 7).

The *Hands of Rodin* case study also demonstrates that museum officials struggled with self-regulation. Museum officials did not self-regulate because they had not yet set internal standards against which they could assess discrepancies between their standards and the expected outcomes of their decisions. Because museum officials had not figured out how to reconcile the three layers of their identity, it was hard for them to set a standard against which to judge the decision to bring the Rodin exhibition to the museum. The outcome of the case study demonstrates that the third layer of the museum's identity was the most crucial in setting a standard against which to judge the decision; however, museum officials only appear to have seriously considered the first two layers of the museum's identity in initially judging the appropriateness of their decision.

Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World
The second case study clearly demonstrates that museum officials had become more self-aware of the three layers of the museum's identity. Early in the evaluation of the exhibition, museum officials determined that the nude works in the show were not of the same order as the sensual, provocative works that caused the Rodin controversy. Staff members explained that classical sculpture has a certain air of conservatism because of its age and history of cultural acceptance. They felt that not showing these sculptures would be inconsistent with the mission of the museum and the educational message of the exhibition.

Once museum officials determined that these works were in line with the mission of the museum, now in line with the mission and values of the university, they proceeded to engage stakeholder groups in the decision in open and transparent dialogue that allowed for potential scrutiny regarding their reasons for the decision.. This seems to indicate that museum officials were comfortable enough with the two levels of the paradox at this point that they could help other groups navigate through its tensions. Museum visitors from campus and the community did not seem to see inconsistencies in this decision either as there were no complaints about the works, even though there was ample time in the year-long run of the exhibition for someone to complain. As shown in the *Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World* case study, organizations become more authentic when they realize they are partners who must engage other agents in the social construction of reality, because the authentic self both

shapes and is shaped by social exchanges with others (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Eagly, 2005; Erickson, 1995).

Based on their experiences in the Rodin exhibition and their new understanding of the mission of the museum, museum officials had set internal standards by the time of the *Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World* exhibition. While evaluating the exhibition, they exercised self-control discussing the discrepancies between museum standards and the outcomes of potential decisions, which were influenced by paradoxical tensions. Ultimately, as a result of this process, they identified a way to reconcile internal museum standards with external behavior.

Conclusion

These case studies demonstrate that self-awareness is not a destination point, but an emerging process that is influenced by the paradoxical tensions that define organizations and organization-public relationships. As organizations become self-aware, they have a better ability to self-regulate, which keeps them in the midst of the paradox, to explore its tensions rather then succumb to them. Even though organizations may become self-aware and develop the ability to self-regulate, there may be stakeholders groups or publics that decide that the organization no longer shares their values and may look elsewhere to fulfill their impulse to be part of an authentic collective. This is not an indication that the organization is no longer trustworthy. It is an indication that the organization is not holding anything back. The organization has become the embodiment of its authentic self which has allowed the stakeholder group or public to decide for itself whether it wants to continue the relationship or not. In this situation organizations can adopt the conflict management strategy identified in the organization-public relationship literature of agreeing to disagree (Hon & Grunig, 1999) instead of trying to force a two-way symmetrical relationship with an uninterested party. However, organizations should always leave the door open for reconciliation with these stakeholder groups should they decide to align themselves with the organization again in the future.

Adopting a structuration perspective can help organizations think divergently about the autonomy-dependency paradox by assisting them in realizing they are dependent on the relationship structures that have been co-created and will be reproduced by interactions with stakeholders and publics (Erickson, 1995; Rawlins & Stoker, 2002), and in recognizing that stakeholders and publics can influence the relational structure through their agency (Eagly, 2005; Rawlins & Stoker, 2002; Stoker & Tusinski, 2006). As such, the case studies support the OPR notion that relationships are defined by interdependence, or the centripetal and centrifugal forces of autonomy and dependence, and that the constant tension between the two poles of this paradox influence the decision making of the relational partners. Organizational acknowledgement of the agency of stakeholders and publics is a key step in moving organizations deeper into paradoxical tension where true breakthroughs can be achieved and reinforcing cycles can be avoided.

Finally, this study showed that organizations that consider their authenticity can more effectively negotiate paradoxical tensions by managing organizational responses to those tensions rather than attempting to manage the behavior of their stakeholders. This perspective also can assist organizations in thinking paradoxically by encouraging organizations to become self-aware (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Rawlins & Stoker, 2002), and to use their knowledge of relational structures along with their understanding of their authentic selves to

self-regulate (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Eagly, 2005; Rawlins & Stoker, 2002; Rawlins & Stoker, 2006, March; Stoker & Tusinski, 2006).

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Appendix

Interview Questions:

RQ1) Did museum decision makers recognize the paradox and/or the elements contributing to the paradox?
1. When did you first realize that there was a potential problem with the nude artworks in the exhibition?
2. Why did you think it was going to be a problem?
3. Who did you think it was going to be a problem for?
4. What did you think their reaction would be? Why?
5. How would you describe the situation the museum was in because of these artworks?

RQ2) How did museum decision makers experience the tensions of the paradox?
1. Do you remember what it felt like to be in this situation? Can you describe it for me?
2. Were there pressures on the museum to behave a certain way?
3. Where did those pressures come from?
4. How influential on the museum were they?

RQ3) How did organizational decision makers view the organization's relationships with its publics?
1. Once the decision about the artworks was made, how did expect the museum's various publics/stakeholders to react?
2. Why did you feel they would react this way?
3. How did the publics'/stakeholders' actual reactions to the decision about the artworks affect your view of the museum's relationships with them?

RQ4) Did organizational decision makers believe they stayed true to the values and mission of the organization in their decision making?
1. Do you feel that the decision about the artworks was consistent with the mission and values of the museum? Why do you feel that way?
2. Is there anything that could have been done to ensure that this decision was consistent with the mission of the museum and its values?

RQ5) Did organizational decision makers believe their communication with their publics was aligned with their decision making?
1. Do you feel that the way the decision about the artworks was communicated to the museums publics/stakeholders was consistent with the reasons the decision was made? Why do you feel that way?
2. Is there anything that could have been done to improve communication about this decision with the museum's publics/stakeholders?

A Systematic Review of the Contribution of
Public Relations Theory and Practice to Health Campaigns

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Abstract

This paper begins by establishing the scope of health public relations. We accomplish this by first differentiating health public relations from social marketing and from healthcare policy public relations. We conclude by proposing ways that public relations researchers can "push the envelope" in public relations theory and research and advance the practice of health campaigns.

In a recent article, McKie and Toledano (2008) use the metaphor of a "potential marriage" between public relations and social marketing as a means to explore the benefits of a strategic alliance linking the two fields. After discussing the genesis of social marketing as a recognized subfield of marketing that focuses on developing and implementing campaigns with pro-social outcomes (e.g., campaigns to increase seatbelt use; campaigns to decrease binge drinking among college students), McKie and Toledano discuss the contribution they believe public relations could make to social marketing. The authors conclude by suggesting that public relations as a field would derive benefits from the proposed alliance, as they contend that social marketing is viewed as "less self-centered" and "more altruistic" than public relations, and they suggest that public relations agencies might "earn more respect from the organizations they serve and gain positive social recognition" by being associated with social marketing (p. 323).

While we wholeheartedly agree with the McKie and Toledano that a strategic alliance would likely benefit both fields and that the field of public relations could benefit from some "good PR," we also assert that public relations researchers and practitioners *already are* making significant contributions to the study of exactly the type of campaign associated with social marketing. Further, we believe that the authors significantly underestimate the contribution of public relations to a specific type of pro-social campaign—those campaigns with health-related outcomes.

For example, a number of researchers have used public relations theories to explain how best to develop and implement campaigns with health-related outcomes, including media advocacy (e.g., Cho & Cameron, 2007; Slater, Kelly & Edwards, 2000), agenda building (e.g., Len-Ríos, Hinnant, Park, Cameron, Frisby & Lee, 2009), reputation management (e.g., Springston & Lariscy Weaver, 2005), and crisis management (e.g., Avery, 2009; Lee, 2009). Further, leading PR agencies such as Edelman and Porter Novelli have long had health public relations practices that offer counsel on designing and implementing health campaigns. Finally, the Health Academy is the Public Relations Society of America's largest professional interest section.

As we began to formulate a response to the McKie and Toledano article and to argue that they may be understating what public relations already brings to the "marriage," we discovered a systematic review of health-related public relations research had yet to be published. Certainly one issue here is that the term "health public relations" is very broad and often includes research about public relations and healthcare policy (e.g., Springston & Lariscy Weaver, 2003) or healthcare lobbying (e.g., Levy, 1993). Another issue may be that health public relations literature is spread across journals related to public relations, social marketing and public health and thus is subsumed under the larger heading of "health communication." Finally, it remains an open question as to how much influence public relations theories and tactics have had on health campaigns literature.

This latter point is paramount in the current paper, and our goal is to offer the first systematic review of health public relations research, where such research relates to topics directly or indirectly associated with health behaviors (e.g., breast cancer awareness, but also media relations and health journalism). We also note that our goal to move beyond a simple review of literature, and to respond to the IPRRC call to "push the envelope in public relations theory and research and advance practice." We do this by analyzing the literature and identifying "lessons learned," as well as suggesting avenues forward for public relations researchers.

Our paper has two broad sections. In the first section, we review health public relations research that uses theories associated with public relations applied to a health-related topic or that uses concepts such as publics or media relations associated with health public relations. In the second section, we discuss some of issues facing researchers and practitioners who seek to apply public relations theories to health awareness and behavior. Within this section, we briefly discuss how the term "health public relations" has been used, and we argue that it should be recognized as a subfield of public relations, much in the same way that social marketing is recognized as a related but distinct field of marketing. We conclude the paper by suggesting a direction forward for health public relations researchers and practitioners.

Organizing, Understanding, and Relating to Publics in Health Public Relations

Establishing and maintaining effective relationships with the variety of stakeholder groups that influence and are influenced by an organization is essential for successful public relations. Although public relations scholars and practitioners have defined "public" in a variety of ways, members of a public typically share common interests, goals, values, attitudes, behaviors, etc. (e.g., Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Van Leuven & Slater, 1991) and relate in some way to a given organization (e.g., Hallahan, 1999). Dewey (1927) argued that publics arise in response to a problem, where the "public" is defined both by being affected by the problem and sharing a common interest in its resolution.

Key publics in health public relations vary depending on the particular health organization or issue, but they generally include audiences targeted for change, consumers of health products and services, providers of those products and services, policymakers, and funding organizations. A public relations practitioner in a hospital, for instance, communicates with a variety of internal and external publics including current, former, and prospective patients, physicians and other health providers, legislators and other governing bodies, donors, families and friends of patients, fire/police/rescue teams, hospital staff, and the general public. Successful establishment and maintenance of relationships with these diverse stakeholder groups is necessary for the hospital to achieve its organizational goals; modern public relations recognizes that these relationships hinge on whether practitioners can effectively detect and promote goals that benefit both the organization and its publics. The following sections outline how strategic tools including stakeholder analysis, audience segmentation, relationship management, and message tailoring have been and can be applied to help practitioners and scholars organize, understand, and relate to publics through health public relations campaigns and interventions.

Understanding Publics: Stakeholder Analysis

As public relations has progressed from a tactical, technician-driven profession to a strategic management function, practitioners have recognized the need for research to identify and understand key publics, develop and test message strategies that will resonate with those publics, and evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts. This is particularly true in health public relations, where limited budgets necessitate cost-effective strategies and the high stakes associated with health outcomes underscore the need for successful communication. The following section examines the purpose and application of stakeholder analysis in health public relations, exploring both methods for and examples of its use in health-related contexts.

Effective relationship management originates with research to identify and define key stakeholder groups and opinion leaders (Rausch, 2010). Given that resources such as time and

money are often limited in health campaigns, an initial goal of stakeholder analysis in health public relations is to identify the most important stakeholder groups that a campaign should target. For example, when Ogilvy Public Relations was hired to implement the federal government's first campaign to address heart disease among women (*The Heart Truth*; Wayman, Temple, Taubenheim, & Long, 2008), an initial task was to identify the sub-populations of women (e.g., young adult women, Hispanic women) that the campaign would target. Ogilvy's PR practitioners used a variety of selection criteria, such as size of the public, risk for disease, and potential reach through media and partnerships, to identify its key targets.

Stakeholder analysis allows public relations practitioners to not only identify the groups that are most likely to change, but also to assess the needs and motivations of these groups (Servaes & Malikhao, 2010; Thomas, Smith, & Turcotte, 2009). Identifying and focusing on characteristics common to a homogeneous group bolsters the likelihood that a message will impact that group. Comprehensive stakeholder analysis examines a variety of factors that define publics, extending far past demographics. In *The Heart Truth* campaign (Wayman et al, 2008), for example, audience analysis explored demographics, sociographics, psychographics, disease risk, health-related knowledge, attitudes and behaviors, and lifestyle factors.

Practitioners consider additional individual-level characteristics in stakeholder analysis, such as popular and preferred channels of information, points of contact with the organization, prevailing self-interests (i.e., the "What About Me?" question, Ristino, 2007, p. 64), health-related efficacy (e.g., Rains, 2008), norms, and values, that typify members of a public. Analyzing the beliefs and practices of a target public equips public relations practitioners with the knowledge needed to deliver their campaign messages through the channels most likely to have an impact. For example, researchers developing a cancer prevention campaign for low-income African-American women used research to determine locations where these women would be most likely to use a kiosk to watch health-related videos, such as laundromats, beauty salons, and libraries (Kreuter et al., 2006). Campaign planners also analyze factors that characterize the situation, such as the complexity and time-frame of a health issue (e.g., an emergency disease such as H1N1 versus a lifestyle disease such as high blood pressure).

Public relations practitioners rely on a range of methods to conduct stakeholder analysis, such as secondary data analysis combined with focus groups (Wayman et al., 2008), quantitative surveys (Thomas et al., 2009), and one-on-one interviews (Springston & Champion, 2004). Findings subsequently guide campaign planning and implementation. In its effort to eliminate lead poisoning incidence among children, for example, the Rhode Island Department of Health conducted a series of focus groups and interviews with at-risk populations and conducted secondary data analysis of demographic and poisoning incidence data to develop message and outreach strategies (Ristino, 2007). Similarly, Springston and Champion (2004) conducted one-on-one interviews and focus groups with individuals from their target public to develop and subsequently test culturally-tailored mammography brochures.

It deserves note that successful public relations campaigns rely on research not only in development and planning stages, but throughout and following implementation, as well. Public relations scholars advise practitioners to maintain channels for stakeholder feedback after implementation begins, using this input to refine strategies and messages (e.g., Wayman et al., 2008) and fostering a dialogue to ensure that organizations continue to pursue goals that are mutually-beneficial with stakeholders (Grunig, 1993; Rausch, 2010).

Organizing Publics: Audience Segmentation

Given the number and complexity of an organization's internal and external publics, practitioners must prioritize segments of their audiences to isolate targets that are most ripe for action – that is, the publics that are most likely to engage in a desired behavior related to the organization. A variety of models and methods exist to guide the process of segmenting audiences into primary and secondary publics. This section examines approaches to segmentation that can be applied to health public relations campaigns, such as Grunig's situational theory of publics and the Community Readiness Model.

While demographics can be a useful segmentation tool (particularly in cultural tailoring, which is explored in the following section), sophisticated public relations practitioners recognize that differences occur even within a given demographic. Grunig's situational theory of publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) proposes that how individuals perceive an issue or situation can predict their search for and engagement with information better than demographics alone. Situational theory organizes publics across three psychological dimensions: problem recognition (awareness of the issue/situation and its impact), constraint recognition (perceived barriers or constraints to problem resolution), and level of involvement (perceived degree of how much the issue/situation affects the individual).

According to situational theory, whether publics are low or high in each of these areas can predict the degree to which they will seek and process information related to the issue or situation. Active publics, those most likely to engage in information seeking and processing, are characterized by high problem recognition, low constraint recognition, and high involvement. Aware publics tend to recognize the problem, but typically have either lower involvement or higher constraint recognition. Latent publics are typically low in problem recognition, high in constraint recognition, and low in involvement. The latter are not likely to seek or process information related to the issue or situation, but they may progress toward action following effective public relations outreach.

Situational theory has two key applications for health public relations: identifying active publics who are most likely to change health-related attitudes and behaviors (i.e., "low-hanging fruit"), and identifying aware and latent publics whom practitioners can target with outreach designed to move them to action. For example, in the context of cardiovascular disease, members of an active public would comprehend their risk for and the negative consequences of heart disease and also perceive that they can do something to reduce their risk. These individuals are most likely to comply with a campaign promoting heart-healthy attitudes and behaviors. Aware publics may understand the risks and dangers of heart disease while not recognizing opportunities to improve their cardiovascular health. This group may be the most strategic target public for an efficacy-based campaign. Finally, latent publics may not recognize the severity of heart disease, their susceptibility to it, nor their ability to prevent it, making them prime candidates for a campaign designed to motivate individuals to seek more information from their doctors. Public relations scholars have also applied situational theory to segment publics in AIDS prevention campaigns (e.g., Cameron & Yang, 1991), efforts to promote organ and bone marrow donation (e.g., Kim, Shen, & Morgan, 2009), and injury prevention campaigns (e.g., Aldoory & Bonzo, 2005), among other health contexts.

While Grunig's situational theory organizes publics based on their recognition of a problem, the Community Readiness Model (Oetting, Donnermeyer, Plested, Edwards, Kelly & Beauvais, 1995; Slater, Kelly, & Edwards, 2000) organizes publics based on their readiness to embrace change. The model outlines nine stages of community-level readiness to commit to policy-driven health-related change, ranging on a continuum from "no awareness," to

"preparation," to "confirmation and expansion." Different levels of readiness to change/commit to health-related initiatives dictate which public relations and marketing strategies will be most effective for a given community. According to this model, communities with no awareness of the need for localized change should be targeted with motivating rather than enabling messages, such as public service announcements featuring fear or guilt appeals. Once a community is prepared to change, it should be targeted with enabling strategies, such as providing informational hotlines, to move motivated individuals to action.

The Community Readiness Model is based on a theory of individual-level readiness for change, the Stages-of-Change model (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). This model proposes that individuals progress through six cyclical stages in the process of changing health behaviors – precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance, termination – and guides interventions by matching outreach strategies to a target public's readiness for change. The stages-of-change model emphasizes the need for different approaches at different stages of change, using stage-oriented messages matched to segmented sub-audiences. For instance, publics who deny a need for immediate change respond best to consciousness-raising and emotional appeals, while publics in action stages are best enabled by educational techniques such as counter-conditioning and stimulus control. Studies with weight control therapy clients indicate that stage-of-change predicts weight loss better than socioeconomic variables, problem severity, self-efficacy and interpersonal support (Prochaska et al., 1992). Stage-matched interventions have also found success in diabetes control (Jones et al., 2003) and smoking cessation during pregnancy (Aveyard, Lawrence, Cheng, Griffin, Croghan, & Johnson, 2006).

Health audiences may be segmented not only by stage of readiness for behavior change, but also by other health-related variables, including attitude-related traits such as sensation-seeking (Donohew, Palmgreen, & Lorch, 1994) and health orientation (Wolff, Holly, Maibach, Weber, Hassmiller, & Mockenhaupt, 2010), or knowledge-related variables such as health numeracy skills (Schapira et al., 2008) and level of health literacy (Bernhardt & Cameron, 2003). Public relations campaigns may also segment audiences by more traditional variables, such as media use. Avery, Lariscy, and Sohn (2010), for example, organized publics according to their adoption of social media, noting that adoption was greatest in urban communities, modest in suburban communities, and lowest rural communities.

While the relative success of any given segmentation model varies depending on the organization, health context, and target publics, organizing and segmenting publics is a hallmark of effective health public relations. Once practitioners comprehensively understand and organize publics, their focus turns to developing and implementing strategies to reach these stakeholder groups.

Relating to Publics: Tailored Campaign Outreach
Successful health public relations practitioners parlay the information gleaned by thorough stakeholder analysis and segmentation into messaging and outreach strategies that are most likely to reach and resonate with key publics. Tailoring public relations campaign messages to address different publics' unique interests and concerns allows public relations practitioners to create communication that can stand out in an increasingly saturated media environment. For example, when mounting a campaign to gain public support for a merger between the University of Massachusetts Medical Center and Memorial Health Care in 1996,

public relations practitioners tailored messages to address the key concerns of their primary publics, in an attempt to elicit and hold their attention. Key messages for legislators focused on economic implications of the merger, while messages targeted at patients ensured continued access to physicians and health services (Ristino, 2007). The following section examines the theory and application of tailoring in health public relations, noting its potential benefits for health outcomes and focusing in particular on cultural tailoring to address health disparities.

Tailoring represents the marriage of audience segmentation and message customization (Hawkins, Kreuter, Resnicow, Fishbein, & Dijkstra, 2008). Tailoring strategies maximize the appeal and perceived relevance of mediated messages among a target public by featuring content designed to trigger that public's self-interests. Messages and delivery channels can be tailored to the seemingly infinite list of audience variables discussed earlier, such as demographics, health knowledge, or change readiness. Health public relations campaigns guided by the stages-of-change model (Prochaska et al., 1992; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997), for instance, would tailor personalized content to match individuals' position on the change continuum, targeting segments with messages that variably emphasize problem awareness or readiness preparation, depending on how willing/able a public is to change a health behavior.

Hawkins and colleagues (2008) proposed a matrix to guide message tailoring along dimensions of intended goal (enhance message processing; influence behavioral determinants such as norms or efficacy) and tailoring strategy (personalization; feedback; content-matching). Personalization strategies, such as using a person's name, are most effective to garner attention, while feedback-gathering strategies most effectively foster effortful processing. Content-matching strategies, such as giving reasons *why* to quit tobacco for the low-knowledge smoker versus detailing reasons *how* to quit tobacco for the high-knowledge, low-efficacy smoker, are most effective to target more immediate determinants of behavior change, such as knowledge or efficacy.

In addition to developing targeted message strategies, public relations practitioners also tailor outreach based on delivery channels most likely to reach key publics. For example, The Seven Hills Foundation, a Massachusetts-based wellness and rehabilitation center, segments donors by level of giving and tailors outreach strategies accordingly: higher-end donors are invited to one-on-one luncheons and receive direct mail pieces, while the Foundation stewards relationships with those who donate less through an electronic newsletter, solicitation letters, and copies of the annual report (Ristino, 2007). The Hanford Community Health Project (Thomas et al., 2009) also approached different publics through different channels: physicians were provided with treatment guidelines and targeted through presentations at medical association meetings, while web videos and self-assessment tools were created to reach the mass public.

The potential benefits of tailoring extend past organizational goals, such as fundraising, to more altruistic outcomes. Research from public health demonstrates that messages tailored to a particular public can elicit long-term change in health-related knowledge and attitudes, sometimes even more effectively than interpersonal interaction can. Elder and colleagues (2006) compared the effectiveness of tailored print newsletters mailed to diabetic Latinos to tailored print newsletters used in conjunction with interpersonal support. Initially strong effects in the combined intervention (interpersonal + print) dissipated over time, while outcomes in the tailored-print-only group continued to improve. These findings suggest that health public relations campaigns can rely on low-cost tactics, such as direct

mail, to elicit lasting health-related attitude and behavior change – certainly good news for the government and non-profit agencies that underwrite many of these campaigns.

The intervention from Elder and colleagues (2006) featured cultural tailoring, an increasingly common strategy to address racial and ethnic health disparities through health communication campaigns. The health realities of different publics necessitate the inclusion of cultural factors when developing tailored messages. For example, a disparity exists in breast cancer survival rates among Caucasian and African-American women, such that African-Americans are equally likely to develop breast cancer, yet significantly more likely to perish from the disease (CDC, 2010). Recognizing this disparity, Springston and Champion (2004) developed culturally-tailored educational brochures promoting mammography screening for African-American women. Based on formative research with members of the target public, brochures were tailored with strategies such as addressing barriers commonly perceived by this public (e.g., cost, transportation) and incorporating photographs and testimonials of African-American women who had survived breast cancer. The culturally-tailored brochures, compared to non-tailored brochures, led to significantly greater perceived benefits of and lower perceived barriers to mammography, reduced anxiety and fatalism related to breast cancer, and increased breast cancer- and mammography-related knowledge.

Cultural competence can increase comprehension of mediated health information by increasing message credibility, level of audience attention and degree perceived relevance by the audience (Kreuter & McClure, 2004). Principles of culturally competent communication include delivering information in the audience's preferred language, using cultural symbols and contextualizing information, and, importantly, soliciting stakeholder input throughout the design process (Kreuter & McClure, 2004; Len-Ríos, 2009; Whittemore, 2007). Kreuter and McClure (2004) outlined four tailoring strategies to improve the cultural competence of health communication: (1) peripheral tailoring: using familiar fonts, colors or symbols, (2) evidential tailoring: providing prevalence or other data specific to the target population, (3) linguistic tailoring: using the preferred language of the target audience, and (4) sociocultural tailoring: contextualizing messages with the norms, values, and beliefs of the target audience.

These strategies can theoretically be extended to understandings of culture aside from racial or ethnic identity. Moreover, some research indicates that the most effective tailoring approach integrates multiple levels of a public's self-interest, such as combining group- and individual-based tailoring strategies (Kreuter & Haughton, 2006). In Kreuter and Haugton's study, for instance, cancer prevention messages tailored for African-American women that combined behaviorally and culturally-tailored content were more effective than those relying on either strategy alone.

As communication technology becomes increasingly advanced, so do the possibilities to implement tailored messaging on a broad scale (Kreuter, Farrell, Olevitch, & Brennan, 1999). Messaging that considers and incorporates cultural, religious, or other group-specific values is more likely to garner attention and seem more relevant to a public, but perhaps more importantly, this type of outreach is more likely to establish and grow relationships with the stakeholders tailored to by these messages (Rausch, 2010). Public relations scholars have long argued that these relationships are fundamental in the effective practice of public relations.

Relating to Publics: Relationship Management

Effective relationship management with stakeholders is essential for successful health public relations, especially in the context of government-based or non-profit organizations. (Rausch, 2010). Establishing and nurturing relationships with stakeholders is a necessary step

for health organizations, particularly public health organizations, to achieve their organizational goals and mission. As Wise (2007) noted, "collaboration in public health…is not an option – it is *necessary* for success" (italics in original, p. 11). Examples of high-profile health-related collaborations, such as the National Partnership to Help Pregnant Smokers Quit (Orleans, Melvin, Marx, Maibach, & Vose, 2004) coalition of more than 50 organizations ranging from universities to corporations to government entities, illustrate the value of partnerships in driving health-related behavior and policy change.

      Grunig (2000) underscored the importance of collaboration for successful public relations, arguing that the public relations function's greatest potential value lies in fostering collaboration between organizations, publics, and society (p. 25). The efforts of health-focused NGOs (non-governmental organizations), for example, rely on a network of relationships with stakeholders including diverse governments, funding organizations, religious and social groups, health departments, and corporate partners (Rausch, 2010). Effective relationship management enables practitioners to identify and pursue mutually beneficial goals to maximize collaboration, cooperation, and change – as well as progress toward the organization's goals – while minimizing dissent and resistance from stakeholders (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham, 2003; Rausch, 2010). As Ledingham (2003) explained, "effectively managing organizational-public relationships around common interests and shared goals, over time, results in mutual understanding and benefit for interacting organizations and publics" (p. 191). Key factors to consider in organization-public relationships, such as relationships between physicians and patients (Dimmick, Bell, Burgiss, & Ragsdale, 2000), include levels of trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).

      As Rausch (2010) outlined, relationship management incorporates conducting research to identify and define key stakeholder groups, involving stakeholders and opinion leaders in campaign development and implementation, and executing a diverse yet cohesive range of communication strategies to maintain and grow stakeholder relationships. Relationship management is a continuous, dynamic process that involves a series of sequential and repeating stages: (1) identifying key stakeholders, (2) gathering data about relationships with these stakeholders on a consistent basis, (3) developing a communication plan based on analysis of these data, and (4) evaluating the public relations program (Wise, 2007).   As noted earlier, successful public relations campaigns maintain channels for stakeholder feedback during implementation, both to refine strategies (Wayman et al., 2008) and to foster an ongoing dialogue with key publics (Grunig, 1993; Rausch, 2010). Social and digital media can be particularly effective channels for health organizations operating on limited budgets to foster two-way communication through a cost-efficient means (Avery et al., 2010).

      Scholars such as Wise (2007) have tasked public relations practitioners with leading the charge to implement relationship management as the overarching organizational/outreach strategy in health-related organizations. Indeed, Wise argued that it is better to envision public relations practitioners as "relationship managers" than as "communication managers," given the idea that communication is a tool to engage and maintain relationships, rather than the end goal itself (2007, p.15).

      Implementing relationship management at the organizational level entails convincing management of the value of this approach for both the health organization and its publics, choosing/developing and applying a system of relationship measurement for the organization (possibilities for measuring these organization-public relationships include Hon and Grunig

(1999), Huang (2001), and Jo (2006)), and effectively channeling the data found through this measurement system into the strategic nurturing and growing of relationships. Implementation of relationship management at the organization level for health organizations, Wise (2007) suggests, will culminate in the attainment of mutually-beneficial goals, as well as improved health outcomes.

Engaging Publics: Media Relations and Health Journalism

Although media are typically – and arguably, most appropriately – conceptualized as a channel rather than a public, some public relations studies approach media professionals as a stakeholder group that can be segmented and targeted with tailored messages. For example, the Media Channel Framework (Flora, Saphir, Schooler, & Rimal, 1997; Schooler, Chaffee, Flora, & Roser, 1998) was developed to guide media planning for the Stanford Five-City Multifactor Risk Reduction Project. This framework segments media channels along two dimensions, reach/specificity and arousing/involving. Different segments in the typology lead to different levels of impact; for example, high reach media such as television expose a larger audience, but high specificity media such as magazines may engage more desired audiences, such as at-risk populations. Health public relations campaigns can employ this framework to determine the mix of media channels that is most likely to maximize both impact and resources.

Another way to conceptualize the media is as a gate-keeper, and here we can see one of the classic roles of public relations—gaining attention for a health issue via earned media. Several researchers have examined how journalists and public relations practitioners view their respective roles with regard to providing health information. For example, Avery, Weaver Lariscy and Sohn (2009) conducted a study of public information officers (PIO) at public health departments, and the goal of the study was to compare how similar heath journalist and PIO perceptions were about barriers to providing health information to local communities. Their findings indicated that there were some significant differences in perceived barriers (e.g., PIOs perceived that financial resources were significantly more important barriers than health journalists). Similar differences emerged in perceived differences in the interest of audiences and available resources, which included human resources and time.

Other researchers have looked at the nature of the relationship between public relations practitioners and health journalists. Examples here include studies by Len-Ríos, Hinnant and Park (2008) and Cho (2006). In the Len-Ríos et al. study, the authors applied communication rules theory (Shimanoff, 1980) to this relationship. Rule theories suggest that communications interactions are guided by formal and informal expectations of communication behavior. Failure to follow expectations can result in negative interactions and repeated violation of these rules can create stress on a relationship.

Len-Ríos et al. tested whether heath journalists have unique expectations about how public relations practitioners should contact them. They contacted a fairly large sample ($N = 598$) of health journalists to determine what type of expectation they had. The authors did find there were some differences in perceptions of federal news releases, and perhaps the most interesting finding was the relatively high credibility of PIOs (compared to other sources of information).

Cho (2006) and Cho and Cameron (2007) apply the typology of power (see French & Raven, 1959). These studies use the French and Raven framework to analyze how public relations practitioners view their relationship with journalists. The five bases of power in the

French and Raven typology are reward, coercive, legitimate, reference and expert. The findings indicated that the health public relations practitioners perceived themselves as having expert power (e.g., being viewed as experts) and that those practitioners who reported regular contact with reporters also felt they were more likely to be recognized as experts.

Influencing Publics: Agenda Building and Media Advocacy

A second approach to studying the relationship between health public relations practitioners and the media relates to the effect of health PR professionals on building the media agenda. Agenda building (Curtin, 1999; Kiousis, Mitrook, & Xu, 2004) looks at how the interaction between media and other institutions influence the media agenda. Several researchers have suggested that one of the key roles for public relations practitioners is to influence the media's agenda and that understanding the interaction between media and public relations professionals will help us understand how the agenda is built and how it can be influenced.

One way of studying how the media agenda is built is by asking health journalists how they make decisions about which stories to cover. Len-Ríos, Hinnant, Park, Cameron, Frisby and Lee (2009) did that in a recent study in which they explored the agenda-building process via a nationwide survey of health journalists. Len-Ríos et al. surveyed a national sample of health journalists and found that health journalists were more likely to report relying on personal or audience interest and other news media than on news releases or public relations pitches for story ideas. This finding suggests that health public relations professionals may have a limited role in building the media agenda, although the authors note that the health media agenda may be different given that everyone to some degree is a health consumer, which suggests the value in using one's own experience for choosing topics.

While the empirical literature testing agenda building theory is somewhat limited, there are several examples where researchers have suggested strategies for influencing the media agenda. For example, Servaes and Malikhao (2010) argue for a more context-based approach to media advocacy, whereby public relations professionals recognize the strengths associated with different message channels, such as mass media vs. interpersonal communication and the desired outcomes, which may range from behavior change to stakeholder participation. They make a number of suggestions about how to perform advocacy, concluding that media, interest groups and the general public must be engaged in order to change policy.

Two additional examples of media advocacy come from the perspective of public health. Wallack, Dorfman, Jernigan and Themba (1993) discuss media advocacy from a public health perspective. Interestingly, they discuss media advocacy from a public health perspective and from a social marketing perspective, but they do not discuss media advocacy from a public relations perspective. They define media advocacy as having three parts: setting the agenda, shaping the debate and advancing policy (p. 79). They also talk about the importance of training community stakeholders to be able to tell their story to the media in their own words. The ultimate goal of media advocacy is not just to inform publics about public health issues, but also to use media coverage of public health issues to create pressure on policy makers to change policy.

More recently, Wallack, Woodruff, Dofrman and Diaz (1999) have written a workbook for people interested in media advocacy. In it, they outline steps for developing a media advocacy plan. Their recommendations would be familiar to public relations practitioners, as they include things like "Developing a Strategy," "Thinking Like a Journalist," and "Evaluating Your Media Efforts." Wallack et al. do also mention public relations in the

second book. In one short section they suggest that some groups may want to enlist the support of a public relations agency. They state that public relations agencies can be useful, because they are "excellent at logistics," such as setting up press conferences, getting the media to turn out for events and understanding how the news-making process works. They also assert that PR professionals are not experts on the advocate's issues and suggest that PR firms have an over-reliance of assuming that media coverage is the same thing as success (p. 36).

Pushing the Envelope: Health Public Relations Research and Practice

The next task for the current paper is to consider some of the next steps to move health public relations research and practice forward. We begin by identifying how public relations agencies have self-identified as having health PR practices. We then move on to a discussion of how the term or field of "health public relations." We do this by identifying key historic references to public relations and health. We then offer our own definition of health public relations. Another task is to differentiate health public relations from social marketing, and health communication. Finally, we suggest a path forward for the field.

Public Relations Agencies and Health PR

Several PR agencies have claimed to practice health public relations, even though they each differ in their approach. For example, Edelman looks at health from the standpoint of public engagement by influencing personal, professional and policy decisions. Some of Edelman's areas of expertise include Rx health, personal health and wellness, health policy and public affairs, corporate and organizational health, life sciences, public health, health alliances, health media, and clinical development (Edleman, 2010). Other companies such as Porter Novelli see health care as a way of informing physicians and analyst about new therapies and their benefits, and educating parents about childhood diseases and their prevention (Porter Novelli, 2010). Other PR firms see health public relations from a health and beauty standpoint dealing with pharmaceutical companies, weight loss organizations and plastic surgeons (5W Public Relations, 2010). Under the health and wellness section, Ruder Finn Public Relations breaks its health public relations into pharmaceuticals, biotech, consumer health, public health, eHealth, nutrition and fitness (Ruder Finn, 2010).

Porter Novelli Public Relations also has a separate section for social marketing where it discusses how the firm has used social marketing in health related matters such as reducing the nation's blood pressure average, increasing fruit and vegetable intake, HIV/AIDS education and the development of the Food Pyramid (Porter NovellI, 2010).

Defining Health Public Relations

While it is difficult to pinpoint the first use of the term "health public relations," one of the first times health and public relations were used concurrently was in a 1962 report by the Public Relations Institute titled "Trends and Techniques in Public Relations." That report contained a summary of a symposium sponsored by the National Public Relations Council of Health and Welfare Services. This report focused on the practical issues associated with applying public relations tactics in the service of public health agencies. A similar example can be found in a collection of essays titled *Public Relations in Health and Welfare* (Schmidt & Weiner, 1966). In neither case does the term "health public relations" appear, but in both cases the content addresses how to apply public relations concepts such as "two-way communication" (Schmidt & Weiner, 1966; p. 108), publicity, developing strategy, and media

relations to issues of concern to public health practitioners. This suggests that the origin of health public relations stems from the field of public health and the recognition that public relations had something to offer to professionals in public health fields.

The earliest use of the term "health public relations" is in a short article by Levy (1993). While Levy does not define health PR, he does identify what he calls the three classic objectives in health public relations. According to Levy, those objectives are to: 1) sell health-related products and services such as purchasing nonprescription drugs or persuading people to see a doctor if they have symptoms; 2) creating awareness of an issue and writing to Congress in order to influence health policy; and 3) serve the public interest by highlighting an issue or a problem in the community and offering to help alleviate the problem. So, in the earliest use we see the term being used broadly and encompassing product sales, lobbying and campaigns.

Over the years, health public relations has come to encompass many different aspects, such as media advocacy (e.g., Cho & Cameron, 2007; Slater, Kelly & Edwards, 2000), agenda building (e.g., Len-Rios, Hinnant, Park, Cameron, Frisby & Lee, 2009), reputation management (e.g., Springston & Lariscy, 2005), and crisis management (e.g., Avery, 2009; Lee, 2009).

We believe that a definition of health public relations should help to establish its identity as a subfield of public relations that is different than healthcare policy and healthcare lobbying.

Thus, we offer the following definition of health public relations:
the application of public relations theories and public relations tactics to campaigns in which outcomes focus on raising awareness of a health issue, building health-related knowledge, changing attitudes toward a health behavior, and/or changing a health behavior.

Health Public Relations and Social Marketing

Andreasen (1995) describes social marketing as "the application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, execution, and evaluation of programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of their society" (p. 7).

Andreasen (1995, p.14) also highlights seven important features of social marketing: 1) consumer behavior is the bottom line; 2) programs must be cost effective; 3) all strategies begin with the consumer; 4) interventions involve the Four P's: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion; 5) market research is essential to designing, pretesting, and evaluating intervention programs; 6) markets are carefully segmented; 7) competition is always recognized.

Successful social marketing campaigns that have followed the recommendations include the National High Blood Pressure Education Campaign that was started in 1972, the short-term Pawtucket Heart Health Program, the HealthCom Projects sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development, the PREMI Project in Ecuador, the Philippines National Urban Immunization Program, the Central Java Vitamin A Campaign and the Stanford Five-City Project Smoker's Challenge.

Based on the previous discussion and definitions, it is clear that although health public relations and social share some similarities, they are not the same. Traditionally, public relations concerns itself more with media relations, community relations, fundraising and lobbying; whereas social marketing is the offspring of business marketing tactics and social

justice proponents (McKie & Toledano, 2008). Public relations is also grounded in building and maintaining relationships while social marketing is more concerned with health or prosocial behavior change. Additionally, social marketers are less concerned about their client's bottom-line and public image, rather, their efforts are geared towards benefiting the public. Overall, the practice and research of public relations has a longer history and deeper roots in the professional and academic world. Interestingly, while some researchers have attempted to illuminate the differences and similarities between public relations and social marketing (Springston & Lariscy, 2003; McKie & Toledano, 2008), they choose not to argue that health public relations should be considered a subfield of social marketing, a position that we adopt.

Health Public Relations and Health Communication
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS, 2005) defines health communication as "the art and technique of informing, influencing and motivating individual, institutional and public audiences about important health issues" (p. 11). The Department also notes that health communication encompasses "disease prevention, health promotion, health care policy and the business of health care as well as enhancement of the quality of life and health of individuals within the community" (p. 12). Health communication has been defined in the context of intrapersonal communication, interpersonal communication, organizational communication, intercultural communication, mass communication health campaigns and more recently new technologies and their application to health information dissemination (Wright, Sparks & O'Hair, 2008).
The core function of health communication is the "process of advocating for and improving individual or public health outcomes" (Shiavo, 2009, p. 4). Like social marketing, health communication often employs public relations tactics (McKie & Toledano, 2008; Shiavo). Looking at the literature available, it seems as though one of the major differences between the health public relations and health communication is the originator of the message. Health public relations is a term most commonly used by public relations practitioners and academics because of the public relations tactics employed; whereas health communication is more widely used by communication experts and government agencies because of the multidisciplinary (Schiavo, 2009) nature of the process.
The characteristics of health public relations and health communication are not mutually exclusive. There is some overlap in the terminology and execution even though they both maintain their individuality. Shiavo (2009) provides some key characteristics of health communication such as: Strategic, relationship building, audience and media specific (p. 12). These key words are similar if not exact to those used in the public relations arena.
As one can see, clearly defining social marketing, health communication and health public relations is a challenge because of the overlap in goals and strategies. However, the blurred lines must not supersede the obvious differences in the disciplines that warrant separate definitions.

Health Public Relations: What's Next
We began our paper by referring to McKie and Toledano's (2008) "proposed marriage" between public relations and social marketing, and we return to the idea as we conclude our review and offer suggestions for future research and practice. Our first suggestion for moving forward can be found in the paper itself, which is recognition of the contribution public relations has made to our collective understanding of how to influence health behavior. This

can happen directly through campaigns that have as a goal changing behavior, but also indirectly through campaigns that influence how media cover a certain topic.

Similarly, it is worth noting how many manuals about the practice of health communication use terms, concepts and tactics directly from a "public relations playbook." For example, Noar's (2006) review of health mass media campaigns contains a list of "major principles of effective campaign design," that includes conducting formative research, segmenting audiences, selecting channels, and conducting both process and outcome evaluation. As well, Schiavo (2009) includes practitioner advice such as establishing measureable goals and objectives, conducting situational analysis, identifying stakeholders, developing a strategy before identifying tactics, and, of course, program evaluation.

Certainly at one level neither public relations nor health public relations own any of these ideas. Rather, we view this type of discussion as an opportunity for public relations researchers and practitioners to step forward and to offer guidance and best practices for campaigns. This review has shown that some are doing this already, but we suggest that there is considerable room for growth here.

At the same time, our review also indicates that we as public relations researchers have room for growth. Specifically, much of the health public relations research is descriptive and neither tests nor develops theory. While first steps in the research process often revolve around describing a process or a relationship, recognition of our contribution as a field (i.e., public relations) or subfield (i.e., health public relations) will be enhanced when we can offer a theory-based explanation for campaign outcomes.

We also suggest that greater emphasis be placed on testing and building theory. This is not unlike other charges to researchers (e.g., Noar, 2006), but we would argue that there is (or should be) a symbiotic relationship between practice and theory whereby theory-based campaigns lead to better practice while also campaigns can be designed to test theory.

Finally, we believe that the best PR for the field will occur when we as researchers and practitioners advance knowledge about health campaigns. Then we will attract the attention of suitors who are interested in our theory and practice – and not just our money.

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The Influence of Culture on Public Relations: Comparison of Communications in Three Cases of Contest for Corporate Control

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Abstract

Culture affects how an organization communicates. It also affects how communication activities are received and interpreted. This case study looks at how an U.S. activist investment fund tries to influence Japanese companies and compares these cases with a similar case involving only Japanese organizations. The analyses of these cases also showed that Japanese newspapers tend to take sides after the fact.

Introduction

The interest in and the growth of public relations coincides with the growth of international trade worldwide. As each region of the world has a different culture, public relations practitioners must tailor their activities and techniques to suit the cultural idiosyncrasies (Sriramesh & White, 1992). However, "there is very little empirical evidence on the nature of public relations in many regions of the world" (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003, p. 1).

It is difficult for the Westerners to understand Japanese culture (Hall & Hall, 1987). The difference in culture creates different types of communication (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1994; Hall & Hall, 1987) and the differences in communication between Japan and the United States have led to numerous instances of misunderstanding (Hall & Hall, 1987; Yamada, 1997). However, there is dearth of research on public relations practice in Japan (Watson & Sallot, 2001). Public relations practice in Japan and how it operates in Japanese culture need to be further studied.

Many of the factors identified or perceived as market entry barriers in Japan, and remedial actions to overcome such barriers, are closely associated with communication activities. Intense competition requires communication activities to be an integral part of marketing. First, different *language* requires different communication styles. Second, understanding of business practices cannot be achieved without understanding the context in which business conduct takes place, and *business communication* is a vital part of business practices. Overcoming the barriers of consumer behavior can be achieved through two-way communication with consumers. To secure the commitment of a parent company overseas, the business environment, market potential, and the needs of the subsidiary must be clearly communicated to the parent company. To build corporate/product image and properly position the company/product, effective communication is essential. To modify a product and cater to the local needs, a company must listen to the consumers, and to market the modified product, the message must be locally created and communicated to the consumers. And, third, recruitment of management is heavily dependent on the *perception of the company* held by candidates because employment in Japan is long-term oriented.

If communication is vital to successful market entry, it is important to identify how communication in Japan differs from other parts of the world, in particular North America and Europe. It is also important to understand variables that cause communication in Japan to differ.

This study looks at two hostile takeover cases initiated by an American investment fund and one similar case initiated by a Japanese investment fund. Through theses case studies, this study aims to illustrate how public relations operate within Japanese culture and how American and Japanese entities operate public relations differently.

Literature Review

Culture

Culture *is* communication (Hall, 1959/1990, Hall & Hall, 1987) because it is "a system for creating, sending, storing, and processing information" (Hall & Hall, 1987, p. 3). Communication is a fundamental aspect of public relations as evidenced by the fact that public relations textbooks place communication as a vital part of public relations practices (e.g. Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006; Wilcox & Cameron, 2006). Grunig and Hunt (1984) defined public relations as "management of communication between an organization and its

publics" (as cited in Grunig, 1992). Whether it is one-way communication for persuasion or two-way communication for relationship management, public relations cannot function without communication. Culture then "should affect public relations, and public relations [in turn] helps alter culture" (Sriramesh and Verčič, 2003).

Hofstede (2001) defined culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (p. 9). "In research on cultural differences, nationality . . . should . . . be used with care" (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 18) because not everybody, physically located within a nation identifies with that nation since many national borders were artificially set by colonial powers. However, nationality "is often the only feasible criterion for classification" (p. 19) in research on cultural differences. "Rightly or wrongly, collective properties of people are ascribed to the citizens of certain countries" (p. 19), and all kinds of statistics are collected for each nation about its population. Therefore, "it makes practical sense to focus on cultural factors separating or uniting nations" (p. 19). Hofstede (2001) identified four dimensions of culture: power distance; uncertainty avoidance; individualism and collectivism; masculinity and femininity; and long- versus short-term orientation.

Hofstede (2001) identified that relative to other countries Japanese culture is very high in uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, long-term orientation, and relatively high in power distance and collectivism. Benedict (1946/2005) identified "faith and confidence in hierarchy" (p. 22) as one of the most important inbred attitudes of Japan. Nakane (1970/1998) identified the system of *ranking* as one of the key characteristics of Japanese culture. Because functional groups in Japan contain heterogeneous elements—members of various kinds of qualifications and specialities—"the principle by which these elements are linked is always dominated by the vertical order" (Nakane, 1970/1998, p. 25). To the Japanese, shame is the root of virtue and "a man who is sensitive to it will carry out all the rules of good behavior" (Benedict, p. 224). Because losers wear shame, the Japanese have always tried to devise ways to avoid direct competition. Japanese carry out high context communication. Context is "the parts of a discourse that surround a word or passage and can throw light on its meaning" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2009). In a high-context communication, "most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message" (Hall, 1976/1989, p. 91). When dealing with foreigners, Japanese need every detail to be well informed and it is apt to make Japanese seem low-context (Hall & Hall, 1987). However, this applies only to the outsiders and one must be aware that, because of the wealth of information stored, many important things are left unsaid. Negotiation with foreigners must also begin with a "getting to know each other" period. This is particularly important because for Japanese negotiation is not a game of win or lose, rather, it is an art of creating a win-win situation (1987). "The Japanese hesitate to express their ideas and feelings openly because they are afraid of the possibility of hurting others' feelings or breaking the harmony between people" (Sriramesh & Takasaki, 1999, p. 346). This leads to "an inability to explain one's actions or express oneself to others clearly. As a result, misunderstandings and friction often occur when the Japanese interact with people from other countries and cultures" (Inoue, 2003, p. 77).

Media

Sriramesh and Verčič (2003) contended that "media and public relations have a symbiotic, sometimes contentious relationship. Most public relations practitioners would agree that media relations account for a significant portion of their public relations efforts

because they wish to use the media for publicity purposes" (p. 11). Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2006) endorse this view: "Knowing about the media . . . is a major part of many practitioners' jobs" (p. 266). Sriramesh and Verčič (2003) described three key factors that determine the media environment of a country: media control, media outreach, and media access.

Freedom House's 2008 *Freedom of the Press* essay classifies the status of the media in Japan as free. However, there is a concern about the lack of diversity and independence in reporting political news, partly due to the existence of *kisha club*, or the press club system (Freedom House, 2008; Kelly, Masumoto, & Gibson, 2002). Japan has the highest daily newspaper circulation per capita in the world (Freedom House 2008). The total circulation of daily newspapers in print in 2008 is over 51million, which is 0.98 copy per household (the Japan Newspaper Publishers & Editors Association, 2009). The potential sources of influence upon Japanese media are, sources who have cozy relationships with mainstream media; commercial influence; and journalistic ideologies of neutral media and media as serving as watchdogs (Kelly, Masumoto, & Gibson, 2002). Japanese media are viewed as "spectators and neutral observers" (p. 266). The large media in Japan are "heavily dependent upon the government and business for information but also move back and forth between support of the establishment and of alternative movements" (p. 269).

Stakeholder versus shareholder

There exist differing views as to whose interests management should bear in mind while running corporations. Milton Friedman (1962/1982), at one extreme, argues that "Few trends could so thoroughly undermine the very foundations of our [American] free society as the acceptance by corporate officials of a social responsibility other than to make as much money for their stockholders as possible (p. 133). In the Anglo-American conception of corporate governance, "it is the fiduciary duty of company directors to conduct the affairs of the company in the interests of its members" (Gamble & Kelly, 2001, p. 110). *Shareholder theory's* current dominant explanation of this shareholders' privilege is that "shareholders are owed this duty because they bear the residual risks of the enterprise; for this reason they remain the ultimate owners of the enterprise" (Easterbrook & Fischel, 1991, as cited in Gamble & Kelly, 2001). On the other end of the pole is *stakeholder theory*. Stakeholder theory is "the theory that a firm should be run in the interests of all its stakeholders rather than just the shareholders" (Vinten, 2001, p. 37). The concept of stakeholder is receiving increasing mention and has become a integral component of corporate strategy, and even more so outside the Anglo-Saxon world such as in Japan, France, and Germany (Vinten, 2001).

In a case study of a hostile takeover battle between two Japanese companies, Yamamura and Stacks (2008) showed the importance of relationship with stakeholders such as employees and local community, and how it could play against financial benefit potential in a takeover bid. The concept of *wa*—harmony—plays an important role in building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders. The case also showed that when shareholders are also stakeholders, such as employees or key members of local community, they might put their interest as a stakeholder ahead of financial interest as a shareholder.

Case studies

"A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 18). A frequently raised question about case studies is that they are not generalizable. However, the "case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universe" (p. 15)

Mergers and acquisitions

Mergers and acquisitions, often referred to as M&A, is a vital part of today's business activities. The definitions of M&A vocabulary in the narrowest sense differ from one jurisdiction to another, and may have different implications depending on the branches of law being applied even within the same jurisdiction (Colcera, 2010). Although many definitions have been introduced by various scholars and practitioners, one of the definitions is that merger is "a combination of two or more companies in which the assets and liabilities of the selling firm(s) are absorbed by the buying firm" (Sherman & Hart, 2006, p. 11) while acquisition is "the purchase of an asset such as a plant, a division, or even an entire company" (p. 11).

Takeover is a term often used in discussions of mergers and acquisitions. It is "the acquisition of controlling interest in a firm. Although the term is often used to refer to acquisition by a party hostile to the target's management, many takeovers are friendly" (Scott, 2003, p. 371). A takeover bid, or tender offer, is "an offer made directly to stockholders to purchase or trade for their securities" (p. 371). Because of "the difficulties involved with creating a perfect and universal standard of terminology, scholars and practi[ti]oners . . . are inclined to use the catch-all term "M&A" when referring to those operations" (Colcera, 2010, p. 9).

Case 1: Bull-Dog Sauce versus Steel Partners

Steel Partners

Headquartered in New York, Steel Partners was known as an activist fund (Kikuchi, 2008), although the fund calls itself "relationship/active value investors" (see Appendix A-1). "The primary emphasis of activist shareholders has been to focus on the poorly performing firms in their portfolio and to pressure the management of such firms for improved performance, thus enhancing shareholder value" (Gillan and Starks, 2000, p. 276). In 2002, Steel Partners set up its Japanese unit, Steel Partners Japan Strategic Fund (SPJ) ("Bei Suchiiru daihyo," 2007). In 2003, SPJ proposed takeover bids (TOB) to Soto and Yushiro Chemical. Though the TOB failed, SPJ gained financially as the two companies substantially increased their dividends. In 2006, SPJ proposed a TOB to Myojo Shokuhin (an instant noodle company) and materialized a substantial profit by selling Myojo Shokuhin's stock to Nisshin Shokuhin (the leading instant noodle company), who acquired Myojo Shokuhin as a white knight ("Suchiiru toushi saki," 2007). A white knight is a friendly acquirer the target company chooses to be acquired by rather than the hostile acquirer. According to a letter SPJ sent to its investors, SPJ's annual return on investment between 2003 and 2005 was in the 20 to 30 % range, but 2006 return on investment was 8.4%. In the five years since SPJ started, the value of the fund increased by 126.6% ("Bei suchiiru, unyo," 2007). According to the Securities and Exchange Surveillance Commission (SESC) filings submitted by April 2005, SPJ owned or had once owned five percent or more shares of 33 Japanese listed companies ("Suchiiru paatonaazu no shoutai: Daihyo," 2005). In 2007, Steel Partners invested about JPY 500 billion (US$4.167 billion at JPY120=US$1.00, the exchange rate as of May 1, 2007) in Japan and over JPY 800 billion worldwide (US$6.667 billion) (Sakai, 2007).

Outline

Founded in 1902, Bull-Dog Sauce was a cooking sauce manufacturer in Tokyo. The company was incorporated in 1926 and was listed in the second section of the Tokyo Stock Exchange in 1973 (Bull-Dog Sauce website). During the fiscal year ending March 2007, the company posted revenues of JPY16.8 billion and a net profit of JPY541 million. The

company was cash rich with JPY1,879 million in cash and deposit and JPY4,499 million in account receivable (as of March 2007). In addition, the company had only JPY800 million in long and short term debt and JPY1,565 million in accounts payable (as of March 2007) (Bull-Dog Sauce, 2007). SPJ first acquired the shares of Bull-Dog Sauce in 2002 and as of January 2007 the fund owned 10.15% of the shares outstanding.

On May 11, 2007, SPJ sent a letter signed by Warren Lichtenstein to Shoko Ikeda, the President of Bull-Dog Sauce. The letter described the history of Steel Partners, SPJ's investment philosophy and activities, and SPJ's approaches to the companies it had invested in. The emphasis was placed on Steel Partners core value that all shareholders should be treated equally. The letter concluded by stating that Lichtenstein hopes to get together with President Ikeda and get to know each other better to work together for the benefit of all stakeholders and shareholders. SPJ sent another letter to Bull-Dog Sauce dated May 15, stating its intention to commence a tender offer for all of the outstanding shares of Bull-Dog Sauce at JPY1,584, a 20% premium over the May 14 closing price. The copies of these letters were attached to the SPJ's press release on May 16th notifying that the fund had sent such letter to Bull-Dog Sauce.

Bull-Dog Sauce tried to adopt an anti-takeover measure and sought shareholder approval at the 2007 annual shareholders meeting. The planned anti-takeover measure would, upon recommendation by the independent committee, issue stock options to all shareholders of the company. The acquirer, if the committee finds it unfavorable to the interests of the shareholders, would be denied the right to convert the option to the shares of the company. SPJ filed a motion to the Tokyo District Court seeking a temporary injunction order to suspend adoption of the measure. The case went to the Supreme Court but SPJ's motion was declined.

Steel Partners' communication

Warren Lichtenstein was said to have little trust in Steel Partner's staff in Japan ("Nihon de kirawareru," 2007), and the local management of SPJ rarely appeared before the press (Yamamoto, 2007). Lichtenstein's appearance at a press conference on June 12, 2007 was said to be the first time ever in the world ("Bei suchiiru daihyo," 2007). Although public relations firms in Japan generally do not reveal their involvement with clients and newspaper articles do not mention public relations firms involved in corporate campaigns, a Bloomberg online article (Ueno & Shiraki, 2007) revealed that PRAP Japan, a public relations firm known for the role it played in the Liberal Democratic Party's sweeping victory in the 2005 general election, was representing Steel Partners. According SPJ's public relations firm (PRAP Japan), the fund decided to hold the press conference because despite active investments and shareholder proposals, the lack of an open explanation had created anxiety among companies the fund had invested in, and leaving the fund misunderstood was not preferred ("Nottori ya wa," 2007). The press conference was meant to have SPJ better understood by the companies and other investors so that its offer would be welcomed by management and other shareholders would sell their stocks to SPJ or vote alongside the fund when necessary. However, Lichtenstein did not adequately address questions and concerns of other shareholders.

In the June 12 press conference, Lichtenstein stressed that Steel Partners was a long-term investor that emphasized relationships with management and the fund conducted itself alongside local conditions, while paying respect to local culture and customs. When asked why SPJ did not intend to participate in the management of Bull-Dog Sauce and Tenryu

(another SPJ target) while seeking 100% ownership, Lichtenstein only responded by saying, "we don't have time to be engaged in management" and did not provide any tangible management vision ("Suchiiru daihyo kaiken," 2007).

In an interview conducted for Nikkei Business published on May 21, 2007 (Yamakawa & Kise, 2007), when asked why he had not appeared in media, Lichtenstein said, "I didn't want to be visible as others might copy our investment style. I should have tried harder to let the target company management understand our investment strategies and philosophy. I think this led us to be misunderstood" (p. 6). However, the lesson was not adequately applied to the press conference in Tokyo.

On June 13, Lichtenstein visited and had a discussion with Bull-Dog Sauce President Shoko Ikeda. It was reported that although Ikeda asked questions such as the purpose of the takeover and post acquisition management plan, Lichtenstein did not answer any of these questions. Instead, he asked Ikeda at what price the company would agree with the takeover bid (Anzai, 2007).

On June 22, two days before Bull-Dog Sauce's annual shareholders' meeting, Lichtenstein held a telephone conference with Japanese reporters. In Japan, a geographically small country with most of the political and economic functions concentrated in Tokyo, a telephonic press conference is a rarity. During the telephonic conference, Lichtenstein repeatedly criticized Bull-Dog Sauce's anti-takeover measure, the issuance of stock option.

During the press conference on June 12, Lichtenstein said: "We need to educate the management of the Japanese companies that we invest in, as well as our fellow shareholders" (Shimizu, 2007). Whatever his intent might have been, this comment backfired (Kinji henpen, 2007), giving impression that Lichtenstein was arrogant and inconsiderate of Japanese business culture. This was in stark contradiction to his own words during the press conference that Steel Partners would pay respect to local culture and customs and act according to the local circumstances.

Lichtenstein is reported to have said during the meeting with Bull-Dog Sauce President Ikeda that he had never tried the sauce and that he didn't like it ("Kinji henpen," 2007). In a press release dated May 18 announcing the tender offer, SPJ's messages were addressed to the shareholders and employees of Bull-Dog Sauce; however, no action targeting employees seemed to have been taken until June 12, when SPJ sent a letter addressed to Bull-Dog Sauce employees seeking a constructive discussion. The letter was in response to the press release issued by Bull-Dog Sauce on June 8, announcing the receipt of a letter from its employees expressing their support of management and opposition to the SPJ tender offer. The fund did not take any action toward Bull-Dog Sauce's trade partners either. In many Japanese companies, particularly the ones with long a history, it is not uncommon for its employees, retirees, and trade partners to own shares of the company. To motivate these stakeholders to sell the company shares they own, it is important to provide a rationale for disposal of the shares beyond economic gain. SPJ failed to take the actions necessary for this to occur.

On February 19, during a weekly press conference, Takao Kitabata, the Vice Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry said, referring to SPJ's actions towards a beer maker Sapporo Holdings, that the SPJ's activities in Japan had been "Green-mailer-like" (Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, 2010). Colcera (2010) defined a green-mailer as:

> A raider that actively acquires a certain number of shares in order to be
> able to threaten the target with a takeover manuever aimed not at obtaining

control over the company, but at encouraging the target to repurchase its shares at a substantial premium. (p. 154)

Kitabata (Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, 2010) also noted that SPJ must demonstrate that it was not a green-mailer by presenting a management vision that would enhance the corporate value of the target company. Kitabata was keeping close watch on the case because Sapporo Holdings had installed an anti-hostile takeover measure as set forth by the guidelines jointly established recently by the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, the Ministry of Justice, the Financial Services Agency, and the Tokyo Stock Exchange. On June 12, during the press conference, Lichtenstein said that the type of anti-hostile takeover measure as set forth by the guidelines were the worst kind in the world and that it would be illegal in other countries. On June 14, Kitabata refuted Lichtenstein's charge that the guideline was legitimate and in line with international standards. Kitabata also reiterated his earlier comment that he still saw Steel Partners as "green-mailer-like" and did not think the fund was ever successful in increasing the corporate value of the companies it invested in.

Bull-Dog Sauce's communication

On May 16, the day Bull-Dog Sauce received a letter from SPJ indicating the fund's intention to initiate a tender offer, the company responded by immediately issuing a press release. On May 18, at a previously scheduled press conference concerning year-end results, Masaomi Tamiya, a senior executive director representing Bull-Dog Sauce answered questions from reporters regarding SPJ's tender offer. Trying to stress the company's willingness to take any action necessary, Tamiya did not deny any of the possibilities reporters listed as part of their questions, including the possibility of a white knight (friendly acquirer). On the same day, evening editions of major newspapers reported that Bull-Dog Sauce was considering the introduction of a white knight. Bull-Dog Sauce immediately issued a press release denying the report that the company was considering such an option.

On June 7, Bull-Dog Sauce President Ikeda held a press conference announcing the introduction of an anti-takeover measure. On June 20, Ikeda herself responded via a telephone interview by *Yomiuri Shimbun* ("Bull-Dog to suchiiru," 2007) and spoke of the legitimacy of the anti-takeover measure Bull-Dog Sauce adopted. For the annual shareholders' meeting on June 24, Bull-Dog Sauce changed the venue from its plant to a downtown Tokyo hotel to facilitate attendance by more shareholders at a convenient location.

Court decisions

In a ruling to dismiss SPJ's motion to issue a temporary injunction to suspend Bull-Dog Sauce issuance of stock options, the Tokyo District Court noted that first, the disadvantage SPJ suffered from reduced shareholding ratio could be justified because the decision was made with a special resolution (over two-thirds) of a shareholders' meeting, and all the shareholder's equal economic benefits were secured with appropriate consideration in return for the forced purchase of the stock option; and, second, the measure taken by Bull-Dog Sauce was not grossly unfair and could be acceptable as shareholders collectively determines at the shareholders meeting that the acquisition of the controlling stake by the acquirer undermined corporate value. The Court stated that whether SPJ was a "green-mailer" or not was irrelevant to the case ("Bull-Dog bouei saku "tekihou"," 2007).

In response to SPJ's appeal, the Tokyo High Court ruled on July 10 that (1) a corporation should try to increase its corporate value not only for shareholders benefit but by

keeping in perspective the relationships with various stakeholders including employees and business partners; (2) SPJ only sought its own benefit and it was appropriate to view SPJ as an abusive acquirer; (3) a discriminatory treatment among shareholders does not necessarily infringe the principle of equality among shareholders; and (4) there was a legitimate need for Bull-Dog Sauce to take defensive measures in reaction to a tender offer by an abusive acquirer ("Suchiiru wa ranyou teki," 2007).

On August 7, the Supreme Court dismissed SPJ's appeal.

Media reaction

Japanese media tend to withhold judgment in their reporting. However, media revealed their opinions as these cases went through different stages. As Karel van Wolferen (1989/1990) noted, "it is socially acceptable in Japan for 'reality' to consist not so much of the results of objective observation as of an emotionally constructed picture in which things are portrayed the way they are supposed to be" (p. 8). If the entire picture is not yet clear, it is difficult to report events in depth. "Because the Japanese media believe it is their task to help defuse social conflict rather than reflect it, much remains unreported" (p. 336).

A *Yomiuri Shimbun* article on June 13 ("Suchiiru daihyo kaiken," 2007) the day after Lichtenstein's press conference in Tokyo, stated that Lichtenstein laid out well-sounding phrases such as ". . . we are a long-term investor that highly regard relationships with management," and ". . . we respect local culture and customs and we act according to local circumstances" (p. 11). However, the article also stated that "it was hard to say that the press conference adequately addressed the questions and concerns of investors," and "the sense of caution held by Japanese companies against SPJ only increased by the attitude displayed during the press conference "(p. 11).

A *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* article on August 8 ("Bull-Dog bouei saku," 2007) pointed out the problem SPJ had from a shareholders perspective was that "opacity exists as to what SPJ wants to do" (p.3). *Yomiuri Shimbun*, on August 12 (Kawato, 2007) pointed out that "one could not sense from SPJ a willingness to gain trust from Bull-Dog Sauce stakeholders such as management, employees, other shareholders, and business partners through such means as explaining post acquisition business plan" (p. 7).

Case 2: Aderans versus Steel Partners

Aderans Co., Ltd.

Aderans Co., Ltd. (Aderans, 2009) was the largest wig retailer in Japan. The company served both male and female customers with custom-made wigs, ready-made wigs, hair regeneration services, and maintenance services. Founded in 1968, the company was incorporated in 1969 and was listed on the second section of the Tokyo Stock Exchange in 1987. Backed by aggressive advertising, Aderans enjoyed rapid growth and a high profit margin. In the fiscal year ending February 2007, the company reported JPY73.5 billion sales and JPY6.1 billion net profit. In 1986, Aderans established a subsidiary in Thailand that manufactured wigs for the company. In 1992, the company established a subsidiary in Holland to market their products in Europe. As of February 2007, Adrans had manufacturing subsidiaries in Thailand and the Philippines, and marketing/sales subsidiaries in the U.S., France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, England, Sweden, Taiwan, Thailand, Korea, Singapore, China, and Malaysia. It's overseas sales comprised 25.7% of total sales (Aderans, 2009).

Aderans' sales peaked in 2003 at JPY77.1 billion and had since stagnated, although it was still the industry leader as of February 2007. Similar to Bull-Dog Sauce, Aderans was a

cash-rich company. At the end of February 2007, of the company's total assets - JPY87 billion - JPY14 billion represented cash and deposit and JPY9 billion represented marketable securities. On the liabilities side, the company had no short-term debt and only JPY1 billion long-term debt.

Steel Partners Japan (SPJ) started investing in Aderans in 2004 ("Aderans baishuu bouei," 2007). As of February 2007, according to Aderans' fiscal year 2006 Annual Report, SPJ owned 24.69% of Aderans' shares outstanding. Foreign entities altogether owned 50.86% of Aderans' shares (Aderans, 2007), far more than 28%, the average foreign ownership of companies listed on the five major Japanese stock exchanges (Tokyo Stock Exchange et al., 2007). Further, foreign shareholders were said to be more likely to oppose to management proposals or agree with shareholder proposals at shareholders' meetings as they were pure investors (Iwatani, 2003).

In December 2006, Aderans board of directors introduced an anti-takeover measure. Under the measure, a tender offer seeking to own more than 30% would be scrutinized by an independent committee and, if the committee determined the offer to be detrimental to the corporate value and/or collective interest of shareholders, the company would issue to all shareholders a stock option which the potential acquirer that initiated the tender offer could not exercise. In March 2007, SPJ submitted a shareholder proposal for the annual shareholders' meeting seeking the abolishment of the anti-takeover measure introduced in December 2006. In April 2007, Aderans announced that the company would seek shareholder confirmation of the anti-takeover measure introduced in December 2006. SPJ followed the suit, seeking shareholders support for its own shareholder proposal. At the annual shareholders meeting on May 24, 2007, Aderans shareholders affirmed the company proposed anti-takeover measure.

As Aderans continued to perform poorly, SPJ sent Aderans management a letter in February 2008 expressing the fund's disappointment over the company's performance, accompanied by a detailed analysis of Aderans past performance. SPJ recommended the appointment of SPJ representative as director, and incorporation of alternative business plan including the possibility of merging with another company. SPJ disclosed the letter and the analysis as attachment to a press release. At the annual shareholders meeting held on May 29, 2008, with the exception of two new outside directors, the appointment of company nominated directors was rejected by shareholders. Following the shareholders meeting, Aderans consulted SPJ and announced new board of directors nominees. The list did not include five of the former directors and included two SPJ appointments. Their appointments were confirmed at an extraordinary shareholders meeting held in August 2008.

In search for potential capital and business alliance partner, Aderans conducted a series of bidding from October 2008 through December 2008 and awarded a preferential negotiating rights to the Unison Capital Group (Unison). In March 2009, SPJ submitted a shareholder's proposal to replace board directors except the President and two SPJ nominated directors. In April 2009, despite opposition from the SPJ nominated directors, Aderans board of directors decided to go ahead with Unison's alliance proposal that include a takeover bid (TOB) plan. The proxy battle between Aderans management and SPJ resulted in SPJ winning at the annual shareholders meeting in May.

SPJ's communication

In the first round leading to the 2007 annual shareholders meeting, the communication vehicles Steel Partners Japan (SPJ) used regarding its campaign against Adearans' anti-

takeover measure were its press releases. All of SPJ's communications focused on shareholders' interest that, theoretically, all shareholders including SPJ should commonly adhere to. However, there was no effort to establish SPJ's credibility and reputation. SPJ did not try to explain who SPJ was, what their management philosophies were, and what the fund intended to do (not do) if the Aderans anti-takeover measure was voted down. The only media appearance by SPJ prior to the Aderans shareholders' meeting was an exclusive interview of Lichtenstein by *Nikkei Business* in its May 21 issue (Sakai, 2007); however, as far as what was reported in the article, Lichtenstein did not specifically mention Aderans. The SPJ's communication concerning Aderans were primarily through the press releases and the discussions focused on shareholder values and interests and how it judged the company's proposals. Lichtenstein met and had a discussion with Aderans then Chairman Okamoto only three weeks after the annual shareholders meeting. In the meeting, Lichtenstein told him that SPJ might acquire up to 100% of Aderans shares ("Aderans kabu," 2007).

In the second round leading to the 2008 annual shareholders meeting, SPJ's communication began with a letter sent to Aderans management asking them to resign. The letter was accompanied by a presentation detailing SPJ's analysis of the company's environment and performance, comparison between the past business plans and actual performance, and the feasibility of current business plan. In conclusion, SPJ suggested 1) the appointment of the head of SPJ as Aderans board director; 2) the use of an investment bank as the company's financial advisor; and 3) the consideration of strategic alternative business plan, including potential merger with another company that may be entrusted with management of Aderans. This was a clear departure from SPJ's 2007 communication strategy. For the 2007 annual shareholders meetings of the companies of which SPJ was a major shareholder, it either initiated a shareholder proposal or expressed its opposition to the company proposals of eight companies (Steel Partners Japan, 2010). While taking various initiatives such as shareholder proposals, anti-management campaigns, and takeover bids for annual shareholders meetings in 2007, SPJ did not disclose any business plan of its own for the companies it was attempting to acquire. SPJ only claimed that the fund wanted to see management improvement or takeover ownership, leaving the day-to-day running of the company to the current management. For Aderans 2008 annual shareholders meeting, SPJ did not take any action after it sent a letter to Aderans management in February seeking a seat on the board and a change in corporate strategy. After the management-nominated directors, with the exception of the two outside directors, failed to gain shareholder support, SPJ engaged in discussions with Aderans to find a mutually agreeable solution.

In the third round leading to the 2009 annual shareholders meeting the battle began with Aderans effort to bring in Unison to replace SPJ. In April 2009, Aderans management decided to support Unison's planned tender offer, nominate current management and Unison personnel as director candidates at the next annual shareholders meeting, and to hand over treasury stock in Unison's tender offer subject to the election of management-nominated directors. In response, SPJ prepared a nine page long letter to Aderans shareholders detailing why shareholders should oppose Aderans' proposals, why they should support the SPJ proposals, and why the proposed Unison tender offer price was unreasonable. In a press release issued on May 15 announced that proxy advisors Glass Lewis and Risk Metrics Group (formerly ISS) recommended support of SPJ-nominated directors and opposed the management proposed treasury stock sales to Unison; unlike in 2007, SPJ laid out a detailed explanation of the arguments made by the proxy advisors.

Aderans' communication

In the first round leading to the 2007 annual shareholders meeting, the Aderans' press release of December 18, 2006, announcing the introduction of an anti-takeover measure was thorough, detailing the measure in 27 pages including attachments. The April 20 press release announcing that the company would seek shareholders approval regarding the introduction of the anti-takeover measure was 28 pages long. On May 11, the company provided a three page press release detailing its opinion and a counterargument in response to Steel Partners Japan's proxy solicitation. On May 14, the company again detailed its counterargument in a four pages press release when SPJ argued against its anti-takeover measure. In those press releases, the company provided thorough and detailed explanations of its proposals and counterarguments. On April 20, Aderans held a press conference in which Chairman and CEO Takayoshi Okamoto spoke about the proposed changes in the corporate structure that would enhance corporate governance. These measures led the proxy advisor, Institutional Shareholders Services (ISS) to recommend approval of Aderans' proposals at the upcoming shareholders meeting, providing a tail wind for the company ("Bei suchiiru, Aderans," 2007). The Adrans' action and communication successfully sent important messages to ISS, one of the key influencers in a battle for corporate control.

In the second round leading to the 2008 annual shareholders meeting, Aderans responded on February 28 to the SPJ's letter dated February 8. The reply was attached to a press release dated the same day announcing that the company had responded to SPJ. The one and a half page letter stated that Aderans was employing an outside consultant to identify problems and to create a new mid-term business plan. The letter also noted that, because of the addition of outside directors and the transformation of the corporate structure implemented in the previous year, the company was making progress toward better quality management and compliance. In short, Aderans did not provide any concrete evidence or persuasive argument that the company was on track for a turnaround of its businesses. On April 17 the company disclosed its new mid-term business plan. However, the plan did not seem reliable. For instance, in comparison with 2008 actual figures, the 2009 forecast for domestic core business (wigs) was JPY67 million less sales, JPY326 million less advertising cost, JPY415 million more in labor costs, and JPY487 million more in projected profit (Aderans, 2009). There was no tangible explanation as to how profits could increase with less sales and more cost.

When shareholders rejected the appointment of seven out of nine company-nominated directors, Aderans management panicked and did not even release a comment ("Aderans gyoseki teimei," 2008). After the annual shareholders meeting, Aderans management apparently had discussions with SPJ, as the company included two SPJ affiliated personnel as company-nominated board directors at the extraordinary shareholders meeting. In a press release issued on June 30 announcing the nomination of director candidates, Aderans clearly stated that the company had consent from multiple major shareholders including SPJ for selection of the director nominees (Aderans, 2009).

In the third round leading to the 2009 annual shareholders meeting, Aderans issued a press release on April 16 announcing a strategic capital and business alliance with Unison. The release detailed the process the company went through in searching for a potential strategic partner and how Unison was selected. The press release also described how SPJ-nominated directors were eliminated from the process for potential conflicts of interest. The release clearly sent a message that Aderans was in conflict with SPJ. The release was accompanied by a slide presentation describing its strategic alliance with Unison. Although

the presentation acknowledged that the company had failed to meet the objectives set in the business plan announced a year earlier, the presentation again recited the company's mantras without concrete detail to support the company's claim it was turning itself around and becoming a profitable business.

Lessons learned

In the first year (2007), there was hardly any positive reaction to SPJ's move. In response to SPJ's announcement of its shareholder proposal to abolish Aderans' anti-takeover measure, *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* ("Sapporo koubou," 2007) wrote that, because half of the company's shareholders were foreigners, the chance was high that management might lose if the issue went onto a proxy fight. *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* ("Aderans, shagai," 2007) also described Aderans' planned appointment of additional outside director as a move to meet the standard set by the leading proxy advisor, ISS. However, the majority of articles simply stated facts and arguments released by both sides.

In the second year (2008), SPJ kept silent after it sent a letter asking for the resignation of Aderans management. One of the lessons SPJ learned from the Bull-Dog Sauce case in the previous year was that,

> In Japan, the more SPJ makes noise, the harder it becomes to obtain consent of other shareholders. Even those shareholders who are dissatisfied by the current management cannot make any move as they don't want to be seen as going along with SPJ. (Nakahara & Omamyuda, 2008)

The *Nikkei Business* called it SPJ's "stealth attack" (2008).

In an interview with *Nikkei Veritas* published on September 2008, when asked what lessons he had learned from the Bull-Dog Sauce case, SPJ's Lichtenstein said, "the lessons were that how important it is to communicate with the companies we invest in. We have since then changed our investment style in Japan" ("Bei suchiiru, Nihon," 2007, p. 54). The SPJ's new investment policy was to weigh heavily the dialogue with the companies in which it invested. SPJ communicated its thoughts and ideas through written statements and posted them on its web site. Lichtenstein also pointed out that he had learned the importance of media relations from the Bull-Dog Sauce case. He noted that in countries other than Japan, such as the U.S., Europe, Korea, and China, he had visited companies to talk with management and to see their plants. Lichtenstein acknowledged that it was a mistake that SPJ did not employ such communication activities in Japan.

Words and deeds

At the 2007 annual shareholders meeting, Aderans shareholders supported management. During a press conference on April 20 announcing the fiscal year end results, Aderans provided a February 2008 fiscal year-end projection with JPY77.8 billion in sales and a JPY3.6 billion net profit. However, on October 11, 2007, the company revised its forecast downward to JPY76.8 billion in sales and JPY 1.2 billion in profit. On January 10, 2008, the company again revised its forecast downward to JPY75 billion in sales and JPY0.6 billion in profit. The final figure disclosed on April 17, 2008, was even worse—JPY749 billion in sales and JPY0.59 billion in profit. As to the reason why shareholders did not support the management-nominated directors, a *Yomiuri Shimbun* ("Aderans gyoseki," 2008) article stated that it was because other shareholders had aligned with SPJ due to Aderans' underperformance. *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* ("Aderans kabu," 2008) also noted that individual shareholders said "no" to Aderans management because declining performance led to sluggish

share prices. When management lacks the ability to do what they should be doing, there is only so much that communication can do.

Unwelcome victory?

As was the case a year earlier, Aderans revised its forecast downward three times during the fiscal year ending February 2009. Without anything drastic and persuasive enough, it was hard to imagine shareholders willingly supporting any management proposal. However, SPJ had no other choice but to submit its own proposal to prevent Unison's takeover of Aderans. SPJ's average purchase price of Aderans shares were about JPY2,700 per share, far more than the Unison's tender offer price of JPY1,000 per share ("Aderans, TOB," 2009). Because two SPJ-nominated directors were elected in August 2008, SPJ could neither sell nor buy Aderans stock in the market for such actions could potentially be regarded as insider trading (Sato, 2009). The SPJ's victory at the 2009 Aderans shareholders meeting may not have been a welcome one, but a choice forced by the environment. As Lichtenstein noted in a 2007 press conference, he had no intention to manage the companies that SPJ invested in. Although Lichtenstein claimed that Steel Partners (U.S.) had been involved in the management of the U.S. companies that it had invested in, it might have been only natural not to be involved in managing the companies in Japan given his lack of trust in its local management and his unfamiliarity with the local business culture. Since winning a majority of Aderans board at its 2009 annual shareholders meeting, SPJ would no longer be seen merely as a major shareholder, but as the leader of Aderans turnaround effort (Sato, 2009).

Case 3: TOC versus DaVinci Advisors

Yonetaro Otani, a former sumo wrestler in the early 20th century, created a business empire that consisted of businesses in steel, hotel, real estate, and pharmaceutical industries. In 1952, Otani acquired Hoshi Pharmaceutical ("Otani Yoneharu," 2000). Later, the company merged with one of its subsidiaries that focused on real estate businesses and renamed the company TOC. As of March 2007, TOC owned 13 buildings and one building project under way (TOC, 2010). During the fiscal year ending March 2007, the company had JPY17.9 billion sales and JPY2.9 billion net profit. TOC constantly yielded stable profits and it had a sound balance sheet ("DaVinci kara no," 2007). As of March 2007, New Otani Co., Ltd., a privately held company that owned and managed New Otani Hotels, owned 12.67% of TOC shares. Takuo Otani, the President of TOC, was Yonetaro Otani's grandson and Kazuhiko Otani, the President of New Otani, was Takuo's cousin. Takuo Otani served New Otani as board director, and Kazuhiko Otani was the Chairman of TOC. In total, Otani family and the companies under their control owned over 30% of TOC shares (TOC, 2010).

DaVinci Advisers was founded in 1998 by Osamu Kaneko as a real estate investment advisory firm (DaVinci Holdings, 2010). In 2001, the company was listed on Nasdaq Japan stock market. In 2003, the company expanded its business into investing in real estate on its own account. During the fiscal year ending December 2006, the company posted JPY15.9 billion sales and JPY6.9 billion net profit. As of December 2006, the company had JPY45 billion in gross asset (DaVinci Holdings, 2010).

DaVinci was interested in the properties TOC owned and wanted to be involved with the redevelopment of some of these properties. DaVinci and its subsidiaries started investing in TOC in 2006. Learning about DaVinci's TOC share ownership, TOC management initiated in April 2007 a management buy-out (MBO), a tender offer of a company share by the management of the company at JPY800 a share. Arguing that the offer price was below

TOC's true value, DaVinci countered with a tender offer of its own for TOC shares. With the announcement that DaVinci had proposed a takeover bid (TOB), the MBO by the TOC management failed. DaVinci officially initiated the TOB in May but failed to acquire enough shareholder support to take control of the company.

DaVinci's communication

In the early stages of the contest, DaVinci based its messages on the Revlon standard. The Revlon standard is a guideline commonly referred to in mergers and acquisition, and was based on a Delaware Supreme Court ruling in Revlon Inc. v. MacAndrews & Forbes Holdings (1986). Under the Revlon standard, once the sale of the company becomes inevitable, the duty of the management is not to consider alternatives, but to maximize shareholder value through the sales process (Gilson and Kraakman, 1990.) Based on the fact that TOC board of directors supported the management buyout (MBO), DaVinci argued that because TOC board determined that the tender offer at JPY800 a share was in the best interest of the shareholders, the board should support DaVinci's tender offer at JPY1,100 a share. This might have been a winning argument in the U.S; however, Japan was still in the process of formulating rules and regulations regarding mergers and acquisitions procedure. Although this argument might have persuaded shareholders in general as to who was right, the argument could not force the TOC board of directors to change its decision.

DaVinci also briefly stated its business strategies for managing TOC in its letter to TOC management on April 25 proposing the tender offer for TOC shares. The letter was made public as an attachment to the press release on April 25 concerning the proposed tender offer.

On May 7, TOC issued a press release concerning its project in Yokohama. In the release, the company touched on potential financing for the project, including the possibility of equity financing. Equity financing is "the acquisition of funds by issuing shares of common or preferred stock" (Scott, 2003, p. 128). These shares could be issued to either all existing shareholders or certain third party(s). If the shares were issued to third parties, the voting right of existing shareholders would be diluted. On May 11, DaVinci sent a letter to TOC management pointing out that TOC's consent to the management buyout meant that the company intended to withdraw from the capital market and that potential equity financing would contradict the decision. DaVinci also noted that it was willing to assume such equity and provide funding to TOC if the management determined that equity funding was absolutely necessary.

On May 11, DaVinci President Osamu Kaneko conducted an exclusive interview with *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, the leading business newspaper in Japan. Kaneko told *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* reporter that if TOC went ahead with equity financing, he would file a petition to issue an injunction order ("Zoushi ketsugi," 2007).

TOC's communication

TOC's message focused on DaVinci's trustworthiness. On March 13, 2007, the Financial Services Agency sanctioned one of DaVinci's subsidiaries for failing to provide adequate information to an asset appraiser and ordered a three-month suspension of its operations. TOC claimed that this was an indication of DavVnci's lack of compliance assurance and placed the issue as main component of its argument against DaVinci's tender offer. TOC also argued that DaVinci's proposal to replace TOC's flagship building— a 37-year old building that needed to be rebuilt—with another equally profitable asset while the

building would be rebuilt was similar to selling the company's assets piece-by-piece and was detrimental to the core business of TOC.

TOC repeated these two points in its argument against DaVinci, but did not provide any comment as to its stance on DaVinci's offer relative to its stance on the management buyout initiated by its President Otani. While questioning DaVinci's legitimacy, TOC management did not address its own legitimacy. TOC President Otani did not disclose the purchase of TOC shares by his private company and himself during DaVinci's tender offer period. New Otani Co., Ltd. also purchased TOC shares during the same period. These actions were only made public later as they reported the purchase to the Finance Ministry. President Otani reported to the Finance Ministry that he and two of his private companies jointly made the purchase, but New Otani Co., Ltd. filed the report separately. Had New Otani owned more than 20% of TOC share, they would have been regarded as "special stakeholders," making a joint purpose, which would have required them to make any purchase by way of tender offer. Had they jointly made the purchase, they would also have been required to make the purchase through tender offer. President Otani was able to get away with this, but he lacked transparency in the process.

Media response

During the tender offer period, the media remained for the most part neutral. They did not discuss the Revlon standard on which DaVinci's argument against TOC management was based. Only one article cited DaVinci's comment that not agreeing to a tender offer at a price higher than the previously proposed management buyout was a breach of fiduciary duty, but did not elaborate the issue ("TOC sougyou ke," 2007). As to DaVinci's claim that Otani group's purchase of TOC shares during DaVinci's tender period was unfair was reported in one article, however, the article only stated that "DaVinci criticized additional stock purchase by Otani family as an obstacle to the takeover" ("TOC sougyou ke," 2007). The article did not analyze nor further discuss the issue.

An anonymous institutional investor was quoted as saying that "If you think about future business and relationships, we could not make moves based on economic rationality" ("Ugokanu toushika," 2007). *Weekly Diamond* ("DaVinci dai kaibou," 2007) noted, "Thus the hostile takeover ended in failure. DaVinci challenged Japan's establishment. What was highlighted could be the labyrinth of Japanese market that one cannot pass through with economic rationality alone" (p. 118).

Liability of foreignness

The liability of foreignness is "the costs of doing business abroad that result in a competitive disadvantage for an MNE subunit" (Zaheer, 1995, p. 341). Multinational enterprises doing business abroad face costs arising from an unfamiliarity with the environment; from cultural, political, and economic differences; and from the need for coordination across geographic distance. Gesteland (1999) described Japanese business culture as relationship-focused (as opposed to deal-focused); formal (as opposed to informal); rigid-time (as opposed to fluid-time); and reserved (as opposed to expressive). In a relationship-focused business culture, one must spend time getting to know the other and maintain face-to-face contact. In a formal business culture, one must respect the person he or she is dealing with. In a rigid culture, one must be punctual and on schedule. In a reserved culture, silence is not uncomfortable and one would feel uncomfortable engaging in conversation without pause (1999).

Foreignness in display

       SPJ took various actions that seem to stem from either their unfamiliarity or neglect of Japanese business culture and system. SPJ did not build relationships with the Japanese media. It was only after repeated requests from various newspaper outlets that the local head of SPJ, Yusuke Nishi, appeared before the press for interviews in the early 2007 (Yamamoto, 2007). It was reported that the press conference held on June 12, 2007, was the first time that SPJ CEO Lichtenstein appeared in a press conference ("Suchiiru daihyo kaiken,", 2007) and merely obtaining his photo was said to be difficult (Sakai, 2007). There were no traces in media reports that SPJ local head Nishi acted as the spokesperson for SPJ. The only method of communicating with media was their press releases; the only opportunity provided to media to openly communicate with SPJ personnel after the June 12 press conference was a telephone conference on June 22, in which Lichtenstein participated from his home in Aspen, Colorado. A telephone press conference may be common in the U.S., but it is a rarity in Japan as journalists prefer face-to-face interactions.

       SPJ also failed to build relationships with the management of the Japanese companies it had invested in. The Lichtenstein's letter to Bull-Dog Sauce President Shoko Ikeda dated May 11, 2007, and delivered on May 14, 2007, stated:

> I would hope that we can get together soon so that we can continue to get to
> know each other better and our organizations can get better acquainted so that
> we can continue to work in a congenial constructive manner for the benefit of
> all stakeholders and shareholders. I will contact you this week to find out when
> it will be convenient for you to meet with me.

However, SPJ sent a letter dated May 15, 2007, to Bull-Dog Sauce stating its intention to commence a tender offer. Despite Lichtenstein's invitation to "get together soon so that we can continue to get to know each other better," commencing a tender offer before even making an attempt to see each other would be regarded as a sign of insincerity in the Japanese culture.

       During a press conference in Tokyo on June 12, 2007, Lichtenstein said, "We need to educate the management of the Japanese companies that we invest in, as well as our fellow shareholders" (Shimizu, 2007). This comment was perceived as arrogant and as a sign that SPJ was looking down on Japanese management and shareholders. One newspaper columnist wrote, "Co-founder of the fund Mr. Lichtenstein abruptly came to Japan and said, 'I want to educate Japanese management and investors.' Who do you think you are?" ("Kinji henpen," 2007). Another article quoted an unnamed source in the securities industry as saying that Lichtenstein's comment that he had come to "educate Japanese management" led to SPJ losing the battle (Udagawa, 2007).

       When Lichtenstein visited Bull-Dog Sauce and had a meeting with President Ikeda, it was reported that he did not answer any of the questions Ikeda had regarding the tender purpose and the post-acquisition business plan. Rather, Lichtenstein asked Ikeda at what price Ikeda would agree to with the tender. Lichtenstein also reportedly told Ikeda that he didn't like the sauce and had never tried it ("Bull-Dog to suchiiru," 2007). This comment was reported in Nikkei Sangyo Shimbun, a daily newspaper that covers a wide range of industries. What would Bull-Dog Sauce employees think after reading the article? Especially since two days prior to his comments at the meeting, SPJ had issued a letter to Bull-Dog Sauce employees seeking their support for its tender offer. Lichtenstein apparently misunderstood or did not care how his words might affect employees. He also lacked an understanding of the emotional ties Japanese workers have with their workplace, their work, and the products they

manufacture. One newspaper article noted, "We could not see from SPJ's actions that the fund wanted to gain trust of its stakeholders including Bull-Dog management, employees, other shareholders, and Bull-Dog business partners" (Kawato, 2007).

SPJ was able to learn from the mistakes it had made and change the way it communicated with the Japanese public. On May 24, 2007, SPJ lost its proxy battle against Aderans management concerning the adoption of the anti-takeover measure. Despite the management's promise of its business turnaround, the company revised its profit forecast downward twice during the fiscal year 2007. On February 8, 2008, SPJ sent a letter to the Aderans management seeking seats on its board of directors and a change in the company's business strategy. SPJ issued a press release concerning the letter and posted the release, the letter, and a strategy proposal. In the proposal, SPJ listed two director nominees as Aderans board members. After the posting, SPJ remained largely silent.

At Aderans' annual shareholders meeting, on May 29, 2008, two SPJ-nominated directors were elected and none of Aderans management nominated directors were supported. Why did "no action" in 2008 yield a better result than vocal activities in 2007? A newspaper article discussed the nature of the shareholders meeting as, "a shareholders meeting resolution might sound democratic, but since proxy voting is not confidential, it is difficult for shareholders that have business relationship with the company to vote against the current management" ("Bull-Dog Sauce baishu," 2007). The lesson SPJ learned from its experience in 2007 was that "in Japan, the more noise the fund made the harder it became to obtain approval of other shareholders. Even those who were dissatisfied with the management didn't want to be seen as aligning with Steel, and couldn't make any move" (Nakahara & Omamyuda, 2008, p. 10). Incorporating the lessons learned, SPJ conducted a stealth operation against Aderans management.

In an interview with Nikkei Veritas published in September 2008, Lichtenstein spoke of the lessons he had learned from his experience with Bull-Dog Sauce. Asked what the lesson from SPJ being named an "abusive acquirer" by the Tokyo High Court, Lichtenstein responded:

> The lesson learned was, how important it is to communicate with the companies we invest in. Since the Bull-Dog Sauce case, Steel Partners has changed its investment style in Japan. The essence of the new policy is to attach importance to the dialogue with the companies we invest in. We will convey our thoughts clearly on documents, and we will make it publicly available by posting on our website . . . The aim of our investment aligns with the interest of other shareholders and stakeholders. We also learned from Bull-Dog case that we should not neglect media relations. ("Bei suchiiru, Nihon," 2008, p. 54, English translation from the original Japanese article)

The change in SPJ's communication strategy could be observed in a recent proxy solicitation battle between SPJ and Sapporo Holdings. During the proxy solicitation at Sapporo's 2010 annual shareholders meeting, SPJ held a series of briefing sessions in March 2010 in Nagoya, Osaka , and Tokyo. One of the SPJ-nominated candidates for a Sapporo Holdings directorship was interviewed by Sankei Shimbun and discussed how he would manage the company's strategy ("Dounaru? Sapporo," 2010). SPJ also started a Twitter account in March 2010. SPJ is implementing the lessons learned.

Even though the tone of most media articles did not take sides, many simply introduced facts released by one or both of the parties. For example, in the Bull-Dog Sauce versus SPJ case, statements opposing SPJ's tender offer by Bull-Dog Sauce employees, Bull-

Dog Sauce subsidiary Ikari Sauce employees, and Bull-Dog Sauce business partners were reported in newspaper articles on different dates. The articles simply introduced the facts in neutral tone and without comment; however, the introduction of such facts could influence public perception of the incident. Japanese journalists tend to "emphasize facts over opinion, especially on controversial subjects" (Gamble & Watanabe, 2004, p. 42) and they fail to "delve into detailed analyses of events" (p. 65). Because of such characteristics of Japanese mainstream media, it is a wise strategy to guide public perceptions by building facts upon facts.

Conclusion

Steel Partners' lack of understanding of Japanese culture affected it negatively, resulting in a failure to obtain support from other shareholders. Steel Partners' overt communication activities, its lack of relationship building, and lack of respect for emotional ties in and around workplace resulted in alienating itself from other stakeholders of the companies it invested in. However, Steel Partners was able to incorporate the lessons it learned and improved upon its communication activities and saw a better result in subsequent years.

Any foreign company coming into Japan would benefit if it would study lessons Steel Partners had learned. A foreign company trying to establish its presence in Japan can expect better results if it were to invest time and energy to understand its stakeholders, build relationships with them, understand the importance and the role media relations plays in Japanese public relations, avoid overt communication activities, and let the facts speak for itself.

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Between Convergence And Power Struggles:
How Public Relations And Marketing Communications Professionals Interact in Corporate Brand Management

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Abstract

This paper analyzes new developments in the relationship between marketing communications and public relations in the field of corporate communications with a specific focus on corporate branding. The results presented herein stem from an empirical study conducted in four large German industries (energy, telecommunication, insurance, and chemical industries). In each company, both the head of corporate communications/PR and the head of marketing communications were interviewed (n=104; random sample, CATI telephone interviews). The results draw an interesting albeit contradictory picture. On the one hand, the data showed a strong convergence of stakeholder priorities, goals, and instruments of branding, and a high level of structural collaboration. On the other hand, the data revealed a number of underlying conflicts, discrepancies, and contradictory perceptions. Although integration seems to be rather advanced in day-to-day branding activities, marketing and public relations managers do not share the same mindsets. The perceptions of their roles and functions within the organization vary considerably. In contrast to other publications in the field, this paper does not focus on organizational structures and departmental power struggles, but rather identifies a fundamental turn in the relationship between marketing and corporate communications/PR both in scientific discourse and in corporate practice.

Introduction

Recent years have seen a new dynamic in the confluence of marketing communications and public relations (PR). Trends and developments in the social and technical environment of organizations, such as a growing concern for how businesses affect the natural environment, critical stakeholder movements, and new ways of communication and content production in social media settings, provide both functions with a common challenge.

A complex digital and virtual new world of media and communication, the decline of traditional journalism, and new areas of public conversations (Gillmor, 2006; Beckett & Mansell, 2008; Papacharissi, 2009; Rosenberry & St John, 2010) have led to new organizational challenges. Bold and simple forms of unidirectional marketing communications have come under fire. Customers and other stakeholders increasingly question traditional modes of production and sales. Critical and popular reflections in the forms of movies (e.g. Michael Moore's satiric documentaries), books (e.g. Klein, 2010; Foer, 2010; Chomsky, 1999; Herman & Chomsky, 2002), and blogs (e.g. Huffington Post) attract large audiences. At the same time, scattered individuals can quickly form a critical mass via the Internet. An ever-increasing population questions the legitimization of companies continuing doing business the way they do. The role of companies within modern societies is put to the test stand. Many companies have started to internalize their externalities, i.e. to take responsibility for their products and their impacts on nature and society (Meyer & Kirby, 2010, pp. 39–40). The overall goal of profit maximization has been complemented by the goals of sustainability and responsibility (Argenti, 2009; Lubin & Esty, 2010).

Thus, intangible assets such as corporate image and reputation have gained in importance and have started to function as the basis of trust and credibility (Fombrun & van Riel, 2003; van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). In this context, the PR function has gained importance and broadened its spheres of activity towards classical marketing areas such as branding or corporate advertising (Hutton, 1996, 2010). At the same time, marketing theory and practice have increasingly adopted traditional PR-related approaches and dialogical modes of communication.

However, the revaluation of such society-oriented forms of communication has not necessarily led to an absolute devaluation of market-oriented communication. Instead, we find two broadly equal communication functions in many organizations today: marketing communications and PR. These functions are characterized by increasingly overlapping topics, instruments, spheres of activities, and stakeholders. And although, from a historical point of view, both derive from different paradigms, in today's working environment their scopes of duties are increasingly overlapping and hard to distinguish. Thus, the need for integration and cooperation is becoming greater. This is especially the case in areas where both sides have high stakes, such as corporate branding.

Corporate branding has for several years been a growing field of interest (Schultz, Antorini, & Csaba, 2005; Hatch & Schultz, 2008). Building up a strong corporate brand and an integrated communication strategy with a common core and shared polyphonic instruments (Christensen, Morsing, & Cheney, 2008, Zerfass, 2008) is a preferred solution to master the challenge of increasing homogeneity and the growing interchangeability of products and services. However, the implementation of such strategies is often hindered by a struggle for power and conflicting worldviews between the marketing communications and PR functions. And while, traditionally, brand management, especially product branding, has been located in

the marketing function, because of the all-embracing concept of corporate branding, corporate brand management increasingly penetrates the scope of the PR function and is co-managed from there.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the relationship between marketing communications and PR, taking into consideration the developments of recent years. Therefore, we are not looking for a new approach to integrated communications but rather aiming to reveal fundamental trends in the development of both disciplines and functions. A literature review will provide a short overview of the relationship between the two disciplines since the late 1970s and the debate about integrated communications. It will then reveal the increasing convergence of both disciplines because of developments inside and outside organizations that have led to a change in the conception of both functions. Corporate branding is then introduced as an example where this trend has become especially obvious. To underpin the impression gained from the literature search we present data from an empirical study. An extended discussion of this research with the inclusion of qualitative case studies can be found in Süss, Zerfass, and Dühring (2011).

Literature Review

Marketing and PR: Towards a New Relationship

The academic debate on the relationship between marketing and PR started in the late 1970s (Kotler & Mindak, 1978). As far as marketing communications is concerned, the debate was almost exclusively carried by Schultz, Kitchen, and related scholars under the unspecific buzzword "integrated marketing communication" (IMC) (Schultz, Tannenbaum, & Lauterborn 1993, 1996; Schultz, Kerr, Kim, & Patti, 2007; Kitchen, Kim, & Schultz, 2008; Kitchen & Schultz, 2009). This concept has never been truly accepted by either the marketing community where it was often claimed to be nothing but another management fad (Cornelissen & Lock, 2000b) or the PR community where it was interpreted as an attempted hostile takeover and labeled with catchwords such as "imperialism" and "encroachment" (Lauzen, 1991; Spicer, 1991; Broom, Lauzen, & Tucker, 1991; Varey, 2005). So far, despite a continuous stream of international research and publications covering this theme, the scientific debate has produced few results. Recent studies still paint a chaotic picture concerning the theory and practice of IMC. Scholars criticize the lack of theory building and the inconsistent educational programs (Kerr, 2009; Schultz et al., 2007). So today even the initiators of the concept acknowledge that is has to be revised and adapted to new challenges in the marketplace and changes in the interpretation of the roles and functions of marketing and PR (Kitchen & Schultz, 2009).

While the North American and Australian research landscape is dominated by the IMC approach, the concept is less popular among European marketing and PR scholars. In Europe, the debate is fragmented, characterized by individual approaches and a lack of conceptual clarity. Scandinavian authors often use the term "corporate communications" (Christensen, Cornelissen, & Morsing, 2007; Christensen, Firat, & Cornelissen, 2009; Simcic Brønn & Berg, 2005), although they do not necessary refer to integrated approaches but oftentimes cover meso-level approaches deriving from a PR or organizational communication background. Another term frequently used by European scholars is "integrated communications" (Holm, 2006; Vos & Schoemaker, 2008; Bruhn, 2009), equally encompassing a broad range of approaches from both marketing and PR scholars. The concepts differ depending on the disciplinary background of the respective author and his or

her interpretation of what constitutes and contains the concepts of PR and marketing. They also differ immensely in their depth of analysis; some take integration for granted, some focus simply on organizational matters of integration and coordination, and many concentrate on media-related problems, ignoring the fact that PR and marketing communications have long broadened their fields of activity. Cornelissen and Lock state "a remarkable dearth of critical analysis of the relationship between these two functions as well as of the ways these functions can be most effectively structured within the organizations. In particular, the presuppositions of the various theoretical perspectives of the relationship between both functions have to date not been fully made explicit" (2000a, p. 231).

Almost unnoticed (but see Hutton, 1996, 2010) from this debate has been another trend in the relationship between both disciplines: that of their increasing convergence in theory and practice. From a historical point of view, marketing and PR derive from different paradigms. While marketing was always designed to serve organizational goals and to contribute to overall organizational value, PR often took a conflicting, boundary-spanning position, serving the organization as well as the general public. What we have seen recently is that, on the one hand, marketing theory is moving towards a PR-related approach, becoming more and more concerned with critical stakeholders in the entire environment of the organization rather than concentrating merely on customers. Approaches and fields of research such as 'critical marketing' (Saren, Maclaran, Goulding, Elliot, Shankar, & Caterall, 2007), 'macromarketing' (Shapiro, Tadajewski, & Shultz, 2009; Wilkie & Moore, 2006; Maclaran, Saren, Stern, & Tadajewski, 2010), and 'postmodern marketing' (Brown 1995, 1998) have broadened the academic field and ushered in a more society-oriented perspective. Research conducted in these areas refers to the relationship between an organization and its environment as well as the responsibility of organizations on behalf of their environments. Scholars, therefore, have to take a critical look at the impact of marketing on society, such as the impact of advertising on children, the promotion of a consumer society, and adiposity as a consequence of the promotion of unhealthy food. It is unsurprising that these fields are currently experiencing a revival. Societal changes, such as the growing concern for the natural environment, stakeholders becoming more and more critical of large organizations and institutions, and the growing criticism of western lifestyle and its consumer society, are the breeding ground for the named fields of scholarly interest.

Up to now, the scope of influence of the everchanging structures, channels, and applications of the Internet on marketing in general and on marketing communications in particular has been uncertain. Nevertheless, it is already clear that marketing will have to continue to change its ways of communicating with customers, consumers, and other stakeholders. Online communication will never again be monological and unidirectional. Organizations have to engage in dialogical, two-way communication, taking into account the views and interests of their stakeholders. While PR scholars have long cherished this idea, even before these ways of communication were made possible on a large scale through technical advancement, many marketing scholars have acknowledged this paradigm shift only recently (Finne & Grönroos, 2009). Instead, marketing practitioners seem to be ahead of the academic discourse. Recently published books in the field of marketing communications (Shiffman, 2008; Pulizzi & Barret, 2009; Scott, 2010) address exactly this challenge.

In PR research, we find the opposite trend. Historically, PR theory and practice has been grounded in the relationships between an organization and its public. Building, fostering, and maintaining good relationships with the public, whether that may be journalists, activists, politicians, or other influential stakeholders, has always been at the heart of PR theory and

thinking. This traditional conceptualization of PR as a 'service to the public' is grounded in the normative concepts of symmetrical communication, trust, balance of interests, and social responsibility. But in the 1990s, starting with the Excellence Study (Grunig, 1992), we saw a significant turn in PR theory and thinking. This time marked the beginning of management thinking in PR research on a broad scale. The research team around James E. Grunig designed its study with the aim to link management thought and theory with PR theory and practice. It took up a current trend and at that time influential school of thought in management that has been established by Peters and Waterman's (1982) famous book *In Search of Excellence*. This strategic turn constituted a more company- and management-focused perspective, conceptualizing PR as a management function that verifiably contributes to organizational and shareholder value.

> "Public relations contributes to organizational effectiveness when it helps reconcile the organization's goals with the expectations of its strategic constituencies. This contribution has monetary value to the organization. Public relations contribute to effectiveness by building quality, long-term relationships with strategic constituencies." (Grunig, Grunig, & Ehling, 1992, p. 86)

This perspective continuously gained ground in the discipline. Many approaches, especially those oriented at the Excellence Study, incorporated primarily rationalist models of strategic management (Grunig & Repper, 1992; Verčič & Grunig, 2003; for a critique, see McKie, 2000) to advance communication as a key management function. As Sandhu (2009) observes, the functional/managerial perspective was buttressed by the import of various models based largely on rationalistic strategic management literature such as strategic planning (Smith, 2009), issues management (Ansoff, 1980; Lauzen, 1997), scenario planning (Sung, 2007), or evaluation methods (Watson & Noble, 2007). This managerialization of communication as a strategic function was increased by the proposition of sophisticated measurement systems (Fleisher & Burton, 1995; Fleisher & Mahaffy, 1997). A general societal trend towards accountability (Power, 1997) increased the importance of managing communication processes efficiently and effectively and proving PR's return on investment (Baskin, Hahn, Seaman, & Reines, 2010; Lee & Yoon, 2010). These developments promoted relatively new fields of research such as communication controlling and management accounting, where researchers developed methods to prove communication's return on investment to identify value links between communication strategies and business goals (e.g. Fleisher & Mahaffy, 1997; Watson & Noble, 2007; van Ruler, Tkalac Verčič, & Verčič, 2008; Zerfass, 2010). It also opened the field towards adjacent fields of management and organizational theory. Here, topics such as corporate identity, corporate culture, and corporate branding, which has gained importance in recent years, have been of increasing interest for both marketing and PR.

Corporate Branding: A Concept in Change

Corporate branding has been a growing field of interest for many years (Schultz et al., 2005; Hatch & Schultz, 2008). Several reasons can be identified. Globalization without common legal or ethical boundaries motivates many stakeholders to ask from more transparency and a detailed legitimization of corporate interests: "The move towards greater transparency has generated a more holistic way of communicating who the organization is and what it contributes to its various stakeholders" (Schultz, 2005a, p. 36). Moreover, it becomes more and more difficult and costly to establish individual product brands on a global

scale. Corporate brands have the advantage of being able to brand the whole company, including its unique history and identity (Barney, 2007; Aaker, 2004). In contrast to product branding, which is traditionally anchored in marketing, corporate branding is tangent to all departments and hierarchies of the company. The conception and management of a corporate brand has to be rooted in the heart of the company and goes along with processes of identity and image management (Balmer, 2001; Ind & Schultz, 2010). While product brands are usually focused on customers, corporate brands reach all internal and external stakeholders of the organization, from employees to the general public. Thus, the task to create a consistent image across all stakeholders and via all channels becomes more demanding.

Owing to the large scope of areas touched by corporate branding, the field of research has become interdisciplinary and related to areas such as organizational theory, management theory, corporate communications, corporate identity, and so on. Corporate branding represents a blending of parallel developments within different academic disciplines. Each discipline points to the need for a more integrated understanding of how corporations express themselves in situations of complexity and change. In this context, Schultz formulates the following definition of corporate branding:

> "[…] corporate branding can be conceptualized in the following ways. As alignments between the origin and everyday practices of the organization (organizational culture); where the organization aspires to go (strategic vision); how the organization is perceived by external stakeholders (image); all nested in perceptions of who the organization is (identity)." (2005a, p. 24)

Thus, the corporate brand is not a "larger product brand", but rather a complex construct, which is created and recreated in mutual relationships with different stakeholders. The shift from classic (product) branding to corporate branding includes a number of dimensions, which are summarized in Table 1.

	Classic Branding	**Corporate Branding**
Foundation	Individual products are the foundation of most brands	The company or organization is the foundation of the brand
Conceptualization	• Marketing • Inside-out and outside-in thinking	• Cross-disciplinary • Combines inside-out with outside-in thinking
Stakeholders	Consumers and customers	All stakeholders
Responsible for branding	Marketing and communication functions	All functions driven by top management
Time perspective	Short: product lifecycle	Long: organization lifecycle
Core process	Marketing and communication decide brand promises and marketing/communication mix	Managerial and organizational processes align the company behind brand identity
Key issues	• Brand architecture • Brand positioning • Brand identity	• Brand as a strategic force • Relations among strategic vision, organizational culture and stakeholder image • Brand alignment
Difficulties	• Difficult to build and sustain product differentiation • Restricted involvement of employees and use of cultural heritage • Limited involvement of stakeholders in communication efforts	• Difficult to align internal and external stakeholders • Difficult to create credible and authentic identity • Difficult to involve different subcultures and shifting stakeholders

Table 1: Differences between classic branding and corporate branding
Source: Schultz, 2005, p. 27

Corporate Brand Management as a Challenge for Integrated Communications

One of the most profound implications of the shift from classic branding to corporate branding is that corporate branding has become a strategic process (Schultz, 2005b, pp. 182–184). The implementation of a corporate brand requires an organization-wide change process

involving multiple internal and external stakeholders and departmental resources. The management of corporate brands places high demands on the integration and involvement of managers and employees from different functions and subcultures in realizing the vision of the corporate brand. The tensions embedded in these processes exceed those of other kinds of brand implementation. In particular, the cross-disciplinary and cross-functional nature of corporate branding makes the implementation process vulnerable to turf issues, such as corporate power struggles and status conflicts. In this context, the two functions in question here – marketing communications and PR – have to be especially integrated and coordinated. Unfortunately, the literature provides little advice here. Authors state the problem but will not go beyond critical descriptions of the status quo and will not offer clear advice concerning the structuring and coordinating of the departments involved in the corporate branding process. Most marketing authors do not mention the problem at all, and naturally pinpoint the head of corporate branding in marketing while defining PR as a supportive function. However, corporate practice shows that this constellation is not prevalent everywhere. Instead, in an increasing number of companies corporate branding is managed by the corporate communications or PR function.

The paper sets out to address this research gap and tries to give a more sophisticated impression of the relationship between both functions today. Our statements are grounded in the current literature and the results of an empirical study we conducted in four large German industries in 2010.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The study addressed the formal and informal structures of integrated communications and brand management, the quality of collaboration, the leadership in brand management, and the communication manager's role perceptions. It focused on the following main research questions:

RQ1: Which factors influence the structural organization and functional implementation of a company's specific branding strategy?

RQ2: Who has the leading part in the conception and steering of the branding architecture and why?

RQ3: What can be said about the level and quality of integration and cooperation in general and with regard to corporate branding specifically?

RQ4: Do the communication managers share a common understanding of the functions and goals of communication management and branding?

From these questions, the following hypotheses were generated:

H1a: At least two-thirds of PR managers rely on inbound-oriented dimensions of communication.

H1b: About two-thirds of marketing communications pursue outbound-oriented objectives of communication.

H2a: The majority of marketing communication managers identifies customers and shareholders as their most important stakeholders.

H2b: The majority of PR managers focus on policymakers and the general society.

H3: In most companies, collaboration occurs in an ad hoc manner and sporadically and is not based on formal structures.

H4: Marketing communications and PR use different branding instruments:

H4a: Marketing favor classical marketing instruments such as events and advertising.

H4b: PR favor instruments such as press relations and corporate social responsibility.

H5: Communication managers differ in their assessments of branding objectives:

H5a: Marketing managers name "differentiation and profiling" and "accomplishment of price premium" as most important.

H5b: PR managers rank the "establishment of trust and credibility" and the "communication of key messages" first.

Conceptual Framework

We developed a multidimensional framework to illustrate the basic factors of influence and their mutual interactions (see Fig. 1). This was based on the assumption that three factors at the micro-, meso-, and macro-level have an influence on the strategy, structures, and understanding of communication management in general and corporate branding in particular:

a) The sector/branch of the company with the main characteristics: image, competitive situation, and level of regulation;

b) The organization with the main characteristics: structure, corporate culture, strategy, and the understanding of the tasks and functions communication has for the organization; and

c) The acting marketing communications and PR managers and their levels of power and influence, personal understandings of their roles and functions, and their individual characteristics.
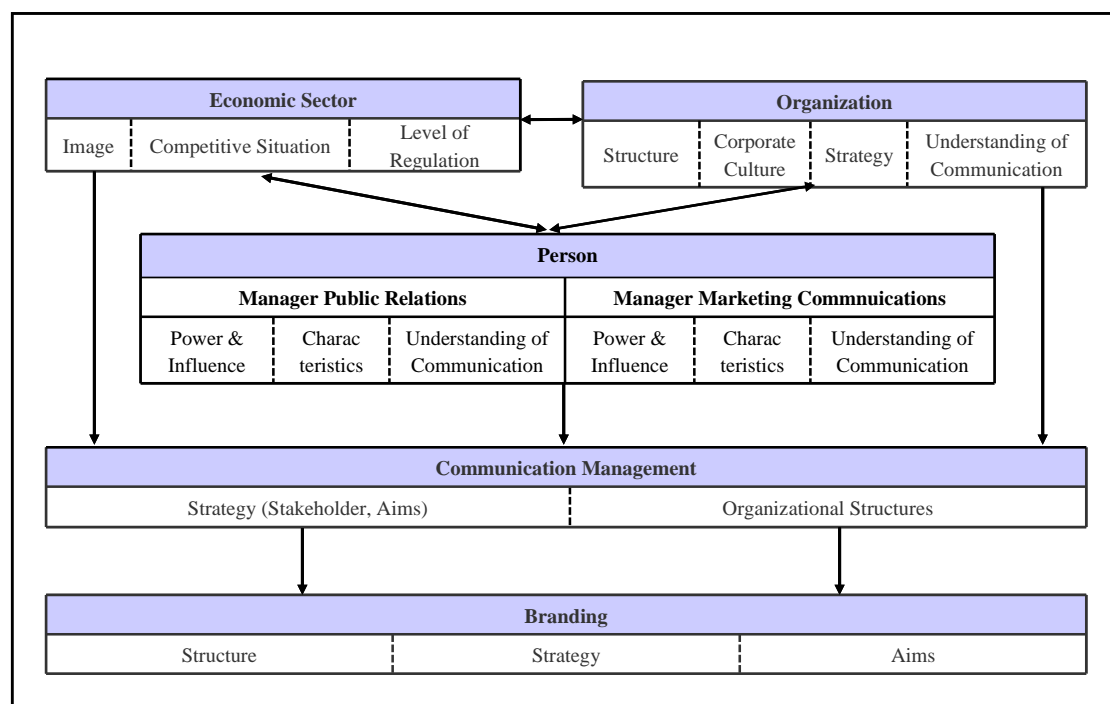

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

These factors form the structural framework for the conception and implementation of the corporate branding strategy. The factors influence each other as well. We assume that the economic sector and the respective competitive situation as well as organizational culture and structure influence marketing and PR managers. They have to align their work to the demands posed on them by their business environments. They act in certain structures and their scopes of action are enlarged or reduced depending on how important their work is perceived by

superiors and the organization at large. The more important the role of marketing communications or PR is perceived, the more power, influence, and resources these managers will gain. This attribution of significance and the preference of marketing- or PR-related forms of communication depend on the challenges imposed on the respective communication functions. Companies such as energy suppliers and those in the chemical industry whose politics and products are under constant critical public surveillance have a different focus to those who do not have significant problems with their public images and reputations. The importance of different communication functions will shift accordingly. Likewise, the communication managers themselves are able to influence their positions and significance to the organization by their behavior and role assessment. Managers that think innovatively and future-oriented might be able to question obsolete structures and processes.

Methodology

To analyze the relationship between both functions in the context of communication management in general and in the processes of corporate branding specifically, we conducted an empirical study in four major industries in Germany. We investigated companies in the energy industry (32.7% of the respondents), telecommunication industry (17.3%), insurance industry (25%), and chemical industry (25%). In a random sample, 52 companies were contacted. In each company, both the head of corporate communications/PR as well as the head of marketing communications were interviewed. Overall, 104 communication managers participated. The gender distribution was 57.7 per cent female and 42.3 per cent male. Most managers were between 40 und 49 years old (50.5%);almost one-fifth (19.4%) were 50 years or older, whereas 4.9 per cent were younger than 30 years. The average work experience was 17.3 years. The survey was conducted via computer assisted telephone interviews by a professional market research institution in February 2010. We used descriptive and analytical statistics with SPSS to analyze the data.

Owing to the fact that in each company both the head of PR and the head of marketing communications were interviewed, we were able to directly compare their answers to detect underlying conflicts, discrepancies, and contradictory perceptions.

Selected Results and Findings

High overlap concerning the assessment of goals and task of communication

The study showed a strong convergence concerning the goals and tasks of both communication functions (Fig. 2). It was expected that marketing would favor outbound-oriented goals (hypothesis H1b), while PR would value more inbound-oriented goals (hypothesis H1a). But only hypothesis H1b could be verified. Both functions name the "facilitation of business processes" as the number one goal (90.4% each). It was expected that marketing communicators would favor the "adjustment of corporate strategies" according to expectations from the markets and customers. But corporate communications professionals took this perspective, as well. By contrast, marketing communications seem to have realized the importance of reputation for corporate success. A total of 44.2 per cent of the respondents from this function think that the avoidance of reputational risks is important. These data confirm our approach that the inclusion of topics and opinions from the social environment into the business and branding strategy is now estimated highly by marketing professionals, too. By contrast, we see a trend towards the managerialization of PR having assigned itself the task of value contribution. We found a new kind of self-confidence when we asked PR

professionals about their assessments of PR's contribution to corporate success. Over half (59.6%) think that they have a very high or high share in the company's success.
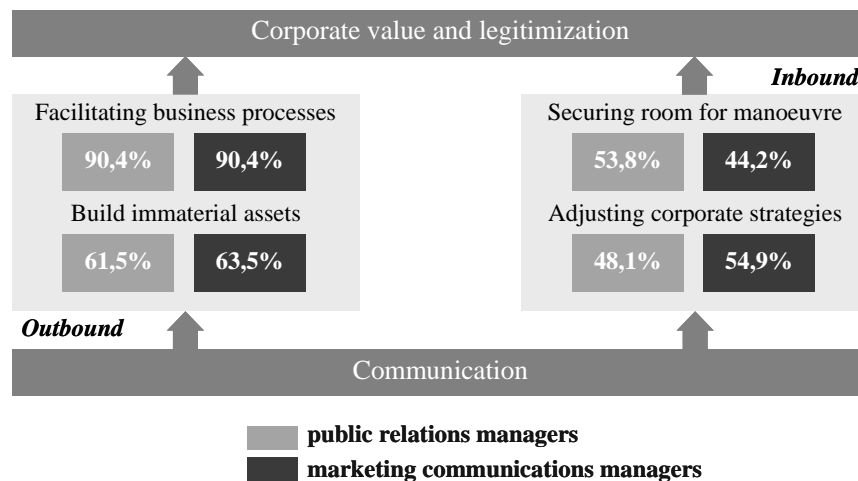

Figure 2:   Assessment of objectives of communication
n = 104; perception of the goals and functions of communication (scale 1–6; goal
          accomplished = scale points 5 and 6)

Overlapping Stakeholder Maps

The stakeholder map in Fig. 3 shows that marketing and PR managers prioritize the same set of stakeholders. Both ranked customers first. This is not surprising on behalf of the marketing function, but rather surprising for PR. Here, we expected a preference for the social environment/public sphere and policymakers. The analysis shows that the interests and demands of both functions can no longer be separated. Customers do not only expect high-quality products with fair prices but sustainable and responsible behavior, as well. Thus, stakeholder groups are increasingly overlapping. Hypotheses H2a and H2b could only partly be verified. We were right in our assumption that marketing communications stress the importance of customers, but they do not take responsibility for shareholders. PR managers surely take into consideration the perspective of the society at large but do not feel responsible for policymakers.

Structure and Quality of Cooperation

PR can be considered an independent organizational function today. The perspective of PR being part of the marketing function, which is still perpetuated in marketing literature, is obsolete. In 86.5 per cent of the companies participating in our study, the PR department is organized as an independent function; only 13.5 per cent of PR departments are subordinated to marketing. This independent structure can be rated positively because it shows the value of PR in most companies today. By contrast, it can lead to functional silos. The functional structure of many companies is often referred to as an obstacle for integration. The focus on one's own department and inflexible hierarchies are a hindrance for better cooperation. The success of integrated communications, therefore, often depends on the actual formal and informal modes of cooperation beyond functional structures. These can be more or less institutionalized. In our study, the degree of institutionalization was about two- thirds, taking

into consideration common departmental or staff structures and management guidelines (Fig. 4). In more than one-third of the companies, the impulse to cooperate stems from individual efforts.
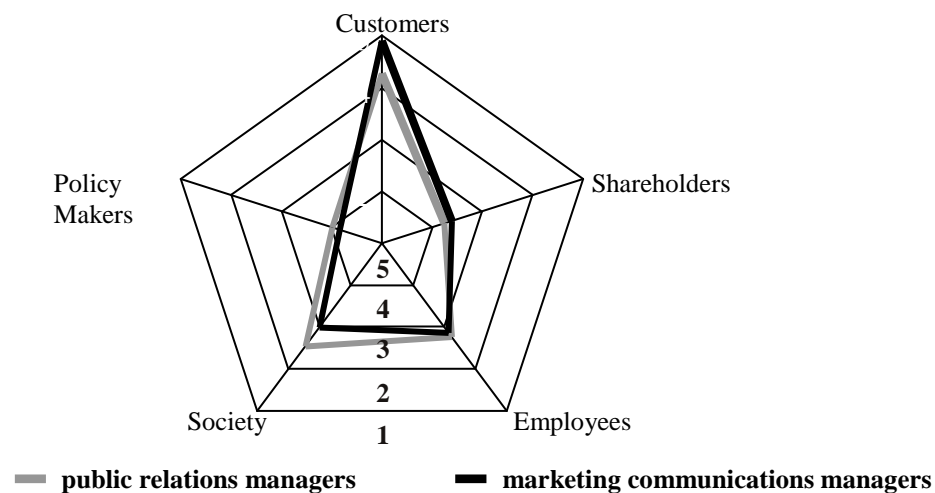

Figure 3:   Convergent stakeholder prioritization
n = 104; importance of stakeholders in accordance to communication strategy; scale 1–6; important stakeholder = scale points 5 and 6.

We found some contradictions in the statements concerning the depth and quality of cooperation. To analyze whether the perceptions of both marketing and PR managers within the same company corresponded, we compared their answers to different questions. There was an 82.7 per cent correspondence regarding the first statement "In project teams representatives of both departments work together". The second statement "We have regular meetings and exchange news about current projects" showed only 69.2 per cent correspondence; in 28.8 per cent of the companies involved, the communication professionals answered differently and 1.9 per cent said that this is not the case. Concerning the statement "We develop a communication strategy for the company", 30.8 per cent gave contradictory answers. This confirms that cooperation occurs in an ad hoc manner and that it is not institutionalized in many companies. Thus, we consider hypothesis H3 as verified. But the respondents do not question this deficit critically.

Collaboration arises as a result from

2.9%

32.7%

28.8%

35.6%

- Official management guidelines
- Initiative of single managers/employees
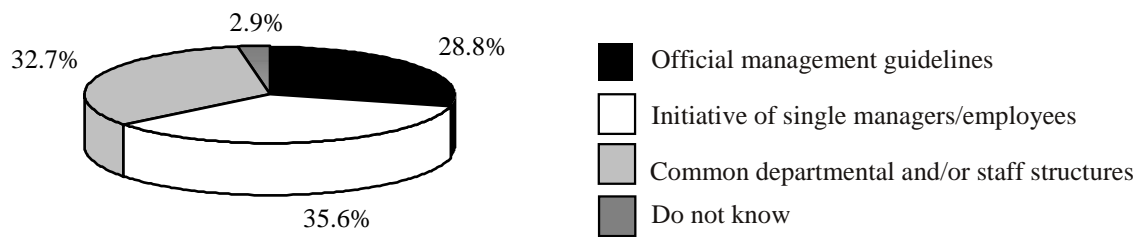- Common departmental and/or staff structures
- Do not know

Figure 4:   Initiators of cooperation
n = 104; who takes the initiative in collaboration and integration?
Instead, cooperation in general is estimated to be positive. In 82.7 per cent of the companies, both parties estimate cooperation as positive.

Who manages the corporate brand?

The data presented up to now analyzed the relationship between marketing and PR in general. In a next step, we took a more specific look at the relationship in the field of corporate branding. First, we were interested in the participation of both functions in the conception of the branding strategy. The study confirmed our expectations that the responsibility for the branding strategy is foremost in the hands of the marketing function. Altogether, 90.4 per cent of the marketing communicators, but just 73.1 per cent of the PR managers, stated that they were involved. In the majority of the companies (69.2%), marketing and PR share this task, in 21.2 per cent, just marketing is involved, and in 3.8 per cent just PR. Nevertheless, the final decisions on the conception and implementation of branding strategies are made by marketing communications professionals. In total, 62.5 per cent of this group state that they have the management responsibility. Only 25 per cent of the PR managers claim this role for themselves.

	PR	Marketing communications
We have the same objectives	54.1%	50.0%
Our scopes of functions are well separated	43.2%	42.5%
Out standpoints are always taken seriously and into consideration	32.4%	47.5%
We have a good and regular cooperation	59.5%	52.5%

Table 2: Assessment of cooperation in the context of corporate branding
n = 77; evaluation of the quality of cooperation in the context of the conception and implementation of branding strategy; scale 1–6; Agreement = scale points 5 and 6.

When asked for the degree of satisfaction with cooperation in the field of corporate branding, the respondents were more critical than before (Table 2). Only 43.2 per cent think that the spheres of responsibility are well defined. On average, just 51.9 per cent say that both functions have the same objectives. Furthermore, just 55.8 per cent of the respondents state that both work well together. In addition, only 32.4 per cent of the PR managers have the impression that their points of view are seriously taken into consideration.

Despite these results, we find clear traces of convergence in the field of branding as well. We received interesting results when we asked the respondents for the importance of different instruments they use for branding activities. As can be seen in Fig. 6, marketing and PR practitioners ranked the instruments in the same order. It was assumed that PR managers prioritized press and media relations, but it was a surprise to see that marketing communications professionals in those industries do the same. They also stressed the importance of corporate social responsibility and were even more definite than were their PR colleagues. This shows that both functions are closer than they think they are. Hypotheses H4a and H4b were therefore falsified.

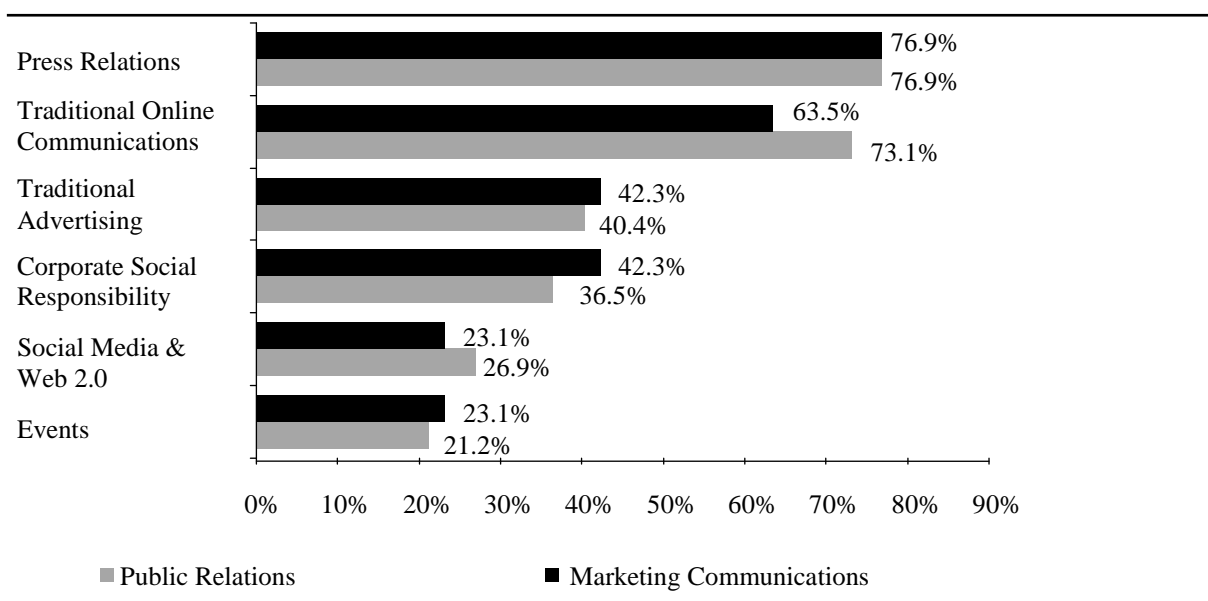| Instrument	Public Relations	Marketing Communications
Press Relations	76.9%	76.9%
Traditional Online Communications	73.1%	63.5%
Traditional Advertising	40.4%	42.3%
Corporate Social Responsibility	36.5%	42.3%
Social Media & Web 2.0	26.9%	23.1%
Events	21.2%	23.1%

Figure 5:   Importance of branding instruments
n = 104; scale 1–6; method used = scale points 5 and 6.

This impression was confirmed by the statements concerning the objectives of branding (Fig. 6). "Establishment of trust and credibility" – a typical PR objective – is ranked in first place by marketing communications, too. By contrast, "differentiation and profiling" or "increase in customer loyalty" – classical marketing objectives – are also ranked very high by PR managers. Finally, the "accomplishment of price premium", a rather traditional branding goal, is ranked last by both marketing and PR managers – just another hint that traditional approaches towards corporate branding are under change. Therefore, hypotheses H5a and H5b were falsified.
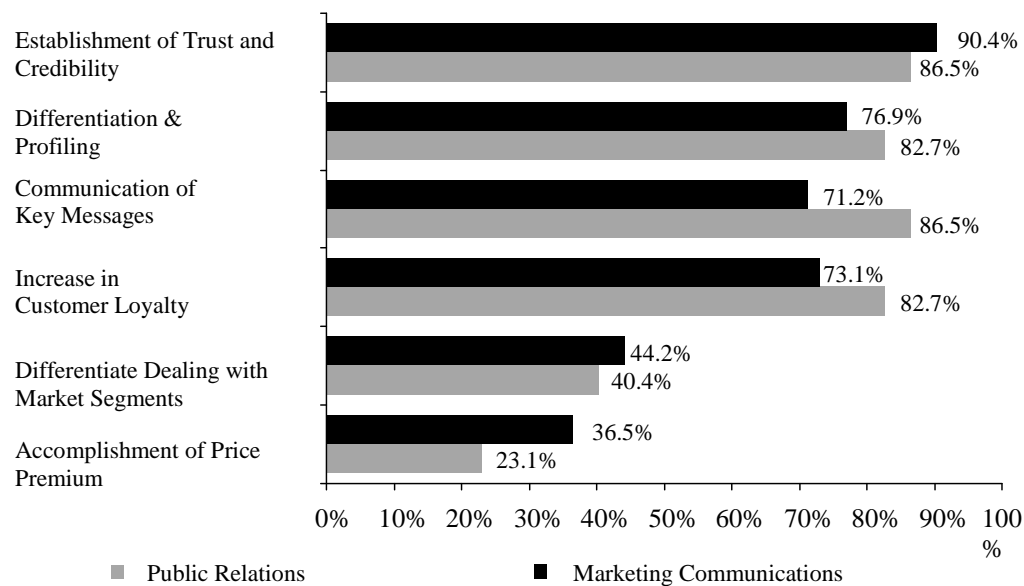
Figure 6:   Importance of branding objectives
n = 104; scale 1–6; Importance = scale points 5 and 6.

In-depth Analysis via Typologies

        In the descriptive analysis of the study, we illuminated different aspects in the field of tension between marketing communications and PR. To deepen the analysis, we constructed a typology of the participating organizations and communication professionals to identify distinct types of organizations and managers, apart from functional affiliations. Those types offer a deeper insight into the quality of integrated brand management and a look at the mindsets of respondents. Some conclusions can be drawn from these typologies on behalf of factors contributing to the success or failure of integrated brand management.

        The basis of the organizational typology was the assumption that the participating organizations differ in their ways of planning and realizing a branding strategy and in their understandings of the roles and functions of branding. Thus, we took the following questions as a basis for our matrix construction.

        On the vertical y-axis were the characteristics of the variable "development of branding strategy", which refers to the question "Are you involved into the conception and implementation of the branding strategy?", which in turn covers the structural integration of marketing and PR. When both parties are involved, the organization is classified as bilateral, whereas when just one party is involved, the organization is classified as unilateral. On the horizontal x-axis were the characteristics of the variable "understanding of the branding of the communication managers". To analyze the congruent or differing understandings of branding of the managers working within the same organizations, we constructed an index based on the four questions concerning the objectives of branding, branding instruments, importance of

sustainability, and conditions for a successful implementation of branding strategy. We were able to identify four different types of organizations (see also Fig. 7):

- *Fragmented organizations*: Fragmented organizations constitute the majority of the companies (40.8%). In these companies, marketing communications and PR work together but do not share the same understanding of the contents and objectives of their work. Therefore, there is no foundation for a truly integrated brand management.
- *Champion organizations*: In about one-third of the companies (32.7%), we find both shared structures and a shared understanding. We named these "champions" despite the fact that there is still room for improvement. These companies have a good foundation as they have both integrated structures and a common understanding.
- *Isolated organizations*: In 14.3 per cent of the companies, we find no common structures, modes of collaboration, or shared visions about the functions and objectives of branding activities.
- *Focused organizations*: This group shows a lot of wasted potential. In 12.2 per cent of the companies questioned, marketing communications and PR have the same vision and understanding about the role and importance of corporate branding. But they do not collaborate at a structural level, so there is no chance to profit from synergies.

The most important findings of this typology were:

1. *High level of structural integration*. Overall, in 73.5 per cent of the companies in our sample marketing communications and PR work together during the planning and implementation of corporate branding strategies.

2. *Strong variations in the basic understanding of objectives and purposes of branding*. Organizational structures are often identified as the main hurdle for integration. But the evaluation of this typology hints at other reasons. The cause for the manifold problems of integration seems to be grounded in the mindsets of the responsible managers, too. In 55.1 per cent of the companies, communication managers do not share the same understanding of the objectives and purposes of corporate branding, of relevant stakeholders, and of branding instruments.

3. *Low level of satisfaction with cooperation, especially in champion organizations*. The results of the study revealed that high integration within formal or informal structures and the level of satisfaction with integration are not objective criteria for the actual quality and success of the branding strategy. An analysis of the four types concerning statements of general cooperation within the context of branding confirmed this assumption. Therefore, isolated organizations are even more content with integration and have stronger opinions about sharing the same mindsets with their partners in the other departments than are the champions. A possible explanation would be that the champions reflect on their situations more critically and realistically, whereas the isolated do not.
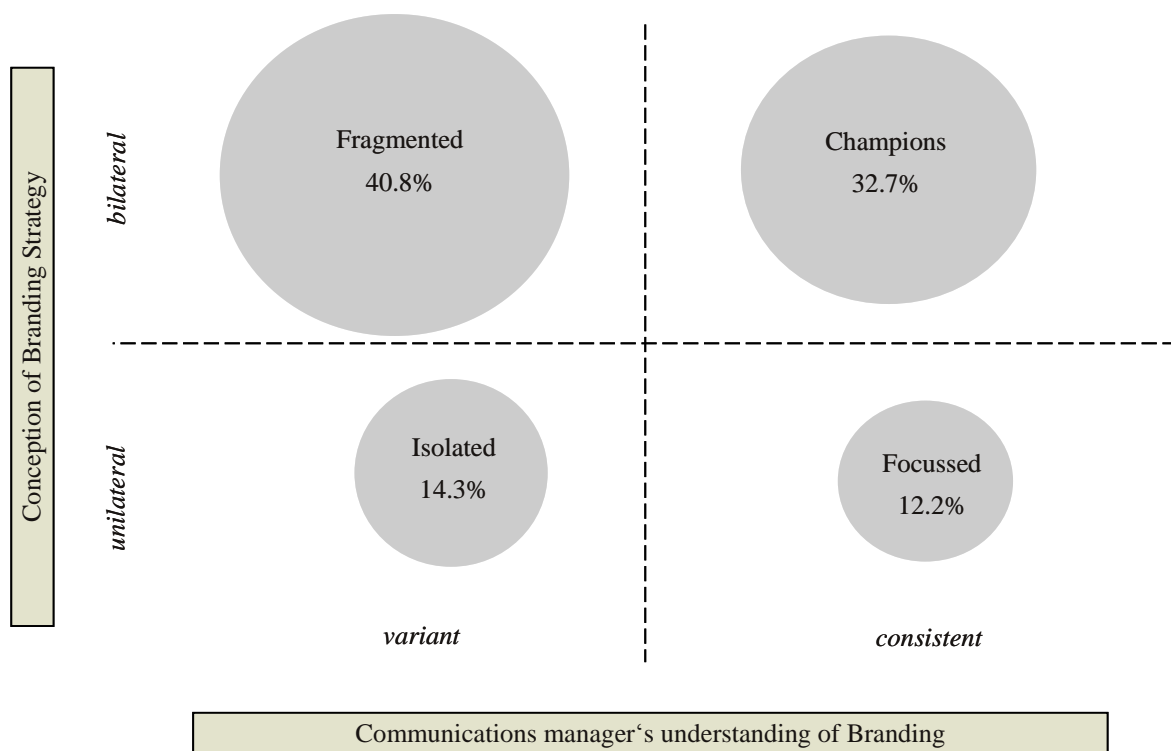
Figure 7:   Typology of organizations
n = 98; y-axis deriving from the level of cooperation in the conception of branding strategy (structural level); x-axis formed by index deriving from discrepancies in the four answers of PR and marketing communications managers within the same company (the objectives of branding, branding instruments, importance of sustainability, and conditions for a successful implementation of branding strategy).

Typology of communication managers

As confirmed by the organizational typology, important hurdles of integration are based on the communication managers themselves. This is why another typology would provide deeper knowledge about the mindsets of the communication managers involved in the branding process. The construction of the matrix was again based on two relevant variables from the study. The y-axis was formed by a question concerning the basic understanding of the objectives and purposes of communication for the organization (see also Fig. 2). Communication managers that value all four dimensions high or very high were grouped as "holistic", whereas those that just stress a selection of these dimensions were classified "partial". The x-axis was defined by the assessment of value contribution to corporate success. In the category "high" were those respondents that assess their own contributions as high or very high and get the same assessment by their peers. In the category "low" were those who did not and those that were not esteemed by their colleagues.
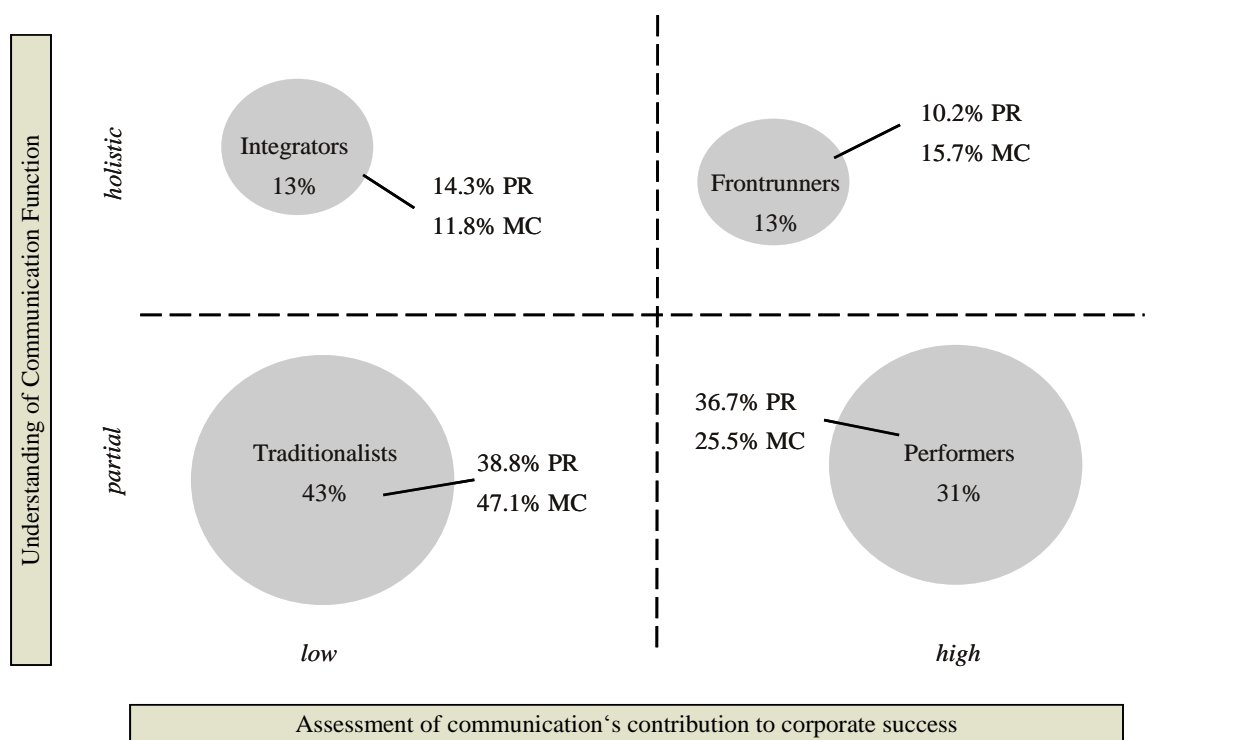
Figure 8:   Typology of communication managers
n = 100; x-axis: self-assessment of communication managers' value creation; y-axis: partial: inbound- <u>or</u> outbound-oriented understanding of communication function. Holistic: inbound- <u>and</u> outbound-oriented understanding of communication function.

In the matrix in Fig. 8, four different types of communication managers are located, independent of departmental affiliations:
- *Traditionalists*: The largest group (43%) consists of rather traditional thinking and acting communication managers who stick to old role models.
- *Integrators*: This type is more integrated, at least in its role understanding. These communication managers, which provide just 13 per cent of all respondents, are inbound- and outbound-oriented and have an extensive understanding of their roles and functions. But they assess their value contributions as low, which is either a sign of a lack of confidence or a restriction by organizational structures and hierarchies. The assessment might be grounded in the fact that they do not have access to top management and, therefore, the impression that their voices are not heard.
- *Performers*: The performers (31%) are just the contrary. They do not have an integrated, holistic understanding of the communication function but nonetheless assess their value contributions as high. It is hard to draw conclusions from an outside perspective as to whether this can be explained by hubris or better access to higher management levels.
- *Frontrunners*: The small group of frontrunners (13%) provides the best combination: a mixture of holistic understanding and a high value contribution to corporate success.

The most important findings from the further analysis of the types are below:

1. *Lacking holistic approach.* A holistic approach towards their roles and functions seems to be the weak point of many communication managers. Overall, just 26 per cent share this kind of approach towards their jobs.

2. *Trend towards professionalization and feminization.* An analysis of the personal characteristics of the respondents confirms the assumption that the new generation of communication managers acts and thinks differently to their predecessors. Data revealed that the frontrunners are the youngest and least experienced group. It seems as if they were educated and trained differently. Younger managers seem to assess their tasks more professionally and acknowledge the advantages of an integrated approach. Moreover, there is another trend expressed in this typology – the feminization of communication management. More than half of the frontrunners (61.5%) are female.

3. *Widespread traditional structures and mindsets.* This typology shows that some of the fundamental problems of integration have their origins in the mindsets of the communication managers themselves. A total of 43 per cent remain in obsolete structures and ways of thinking. Their own value contributions are judged rather low, and they act tactically rather than strategically. The devaluation of their own functions results in little motivation to change the current structures or to think in an interconnected and strategic manner. Thus, many communication managers engage in a rulebook slowdown without thinking about the possible ways to improve their own situations and that of communication management in general.

Discussion and Perspectives for Future Research

The different perspectives on the tension between marketing communications and PR showed that this field has to be considered differentiated and needs to be rerated. Instead of an irreconcilable opposition, we found different levels of convergence. We found evidence in the academic discourse as well as in corporate practice that the relationship between both disciplines is changing. This is especially true in areas where both are highly involved, such as in corporate branding. The study revealed no significant differences in the assessment of communication channels and instruments between both functions. Thus, arguments for a strict separation of the two departments and separate spheres of action become shaky. PR has outgrown its roots in press relations and acts in many fields considered the traditional areas of marketing. Taking over the responsibility for corporate values is at the heart of the professional identity of modern PR. By contrast, concepts such as "license to operate", "intangible assets", "social responsibility" and "trust" are no longer dominated by the PR function but have become part of many marketing concepts.

Of course, traditional structures coined by historic development are still prevalent in many organizations. But there are more and more communication managers who think and act ahead of these structures. Young PR professionals with a profound education and training in communication science and economics enter organizations with new role models and job descriptions in their minds. In the long run, these managers and the actual challenges placed on communication management today might result in a structural transformation of the field. It has become obvious – and this can no longer be ignored by science and practice – that marketing communications and PR both contribute a great deal to corporate success. It is also clear that their impact depends on the level and quality of their coordination and integration. Many managers at the board level understand that the successful management of social capital (reputation, image, stakeholders) is as important as a good performance of real capital

(production, sales) to reach advanced levels of performance. This offers great chances for communication management, but places it under pressure as well. Efficient organizations do not duplicate functions. Whether the increasing convergence of these concepts will result in organizational consolidation remains open. But certainly the demand for a clear allocation of responsibilities, structural collaboration, and coordination will increase. Today, unfortunately, neither marketing nor PR have truly overcome their departmental silos and turf wars. The latent pursuit of hegemony on both sides is one of the main reasons for the tensions and a loss in value creation. Thinking ahead, we will close by naming important challenges that have to be addressed by top management, communication managers, and academic research and teaching.

Challenges for top management

The orchestration of marketing communications and PR is a major management challenge. It is the task of top management to provide the adequate organizational frame and to openly discuss structures, processes, responsibilities, and hierarchies. Top management should encourage horizontal cooperation with mutual acknowledgement and respect. A holistic, all-embracing approach of corporate branding is only possible when all parties involved act in concert.

Challenges for communication managers

The study revealed that the main obstacles of integrated communications and brand management are not grounded in organizational structures. The mindsets of the communication managers in charge are a major issue. Any sustainable change has to start in the hearts and minds of the professionals. Only when they accept and live new structures and processes does integration have a chance to succeed. A basic prerequisite is to remove existing prejudices about the functions and contents of other departments and to aim for common goals and values. In particular, the data showed that younger employees might act as forerunners.

Challenges for academic research and teaching

The new constellation of a still problematic relationship offers diverse topics for further scientific consideration. First, focus should be placed less on structures and more on the communication managers that actually work in and with these structures – or against them. Educational background, job experience, and overlapping or contradictory role perceptions in PR and marketing (Holtzhausen & Tindall, 2011) are important issues to be analyzed. Organizations that train these managers – including universities and private institutes for further education – should rethink their missions. Courses for training and studies in marketing communications and PR still proceed more or less parallel without intersections. Thus, marketing and PR managers enter companies with different mindsets. It is up to each company to invest in a reintegration of both functions. This would be a worthy goal and would help establish new forms of mutual knowledge exchange. For instance, marketing science, because of its position in business schools, possesses a more elaborate understanding of corporate processes and acts in a more market-oriented manner. PR, by contrast, has its roots in communication studies, possessing sophisticated approaches to (interpersonal) communication and social change. Interdisciplinary dialogue can be promoted via common research projects.

In fact, it is one of the missions of university courses to prepare students for today's working environment. Part of this is to teach a holistic understanding of communication management and to follow the developments in business practice in order to integrate them into research and teaching. This means that both disciplines should rethink their own concepts and topics and reassess their images of other functions. Respect and appreciation for other disciplines should start during times of education.

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Social Media Governance: Regulatory Frameworks As Drivers of Success in Online Communications

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Abstract

This paper introduces the concept of "Social Media Governance" as a means to accelerate the establishment of social media in communication practices. While previous studies have focused on single aspects of Social Media Governance, e. g. guidelines, very little research has been done on the overall concept. The data presented here stem from a quantitative survey that was carried out in Germany as a joint project between the University of Leipzig and Fink & Fuchs Public Relations, supported by Pressesprecher magazine. The results indicate that although many organizations claim to have strategies for social media communications, nine out of 10 had no explicit regulatory frameworks. Strategic pillars, such as managerial commitment and a participative corporate culture, were reported by one-third of the organizations. This is crucial, because correlation analyses have revealed that the presence of such structures has a positive effect on skill levels, strategies and the level of activity. According to structuration theory, the actions of individual agents will only succeed if everyone involved can resort to structures in the sense of a common stock of (informal) rules and resources. This research indicates that public relations (PR) practices should focus on developing basic structures for social media communications and should not be limited to communications activities. At the same time, in terms of theory, the concept of governance may be used in order to analyze the dynamics of introducing new modes of online communication.

Introduction

After the "digital evolution" from classical online communications to social media, a broad theoretical and practical discussion evolved around this topic, with opinions ranging from the perception of social media as a new chance for PR (Kelleher, 2009; Kent, 2010; Macnamara, 2010; Breakenridge, 2008; Wright & Hinson, 2010; Zerfass, Tench, Verhoeven, Vercic, & Moreno, 2010) to major fears about an inevitable loss of control (Holtz, Havens, Johnson, & International Association of Business Communicators, 2008; Pleil, 2010; Safko, 2010; Wigley & Fontenot, 2010). The basic contradiction within this topic has already been identified by Ihator (2001). She states that although new technologies offer organizations new opportunities to present their viewpoints directly to key constituents, they tend to lose control over the dissemination of information. New technologies are challenging norms with regard to controlling the flow of information between individuals as well as across organizational boundaries (McAfee, 2009, p. 5). In sum, there exists a great deal of recent research in this field, containing mixed opinions. However, researchers with both positive and negative perceptions see technological development as a major change within the field of communication.

Despite these intense discussions, the actual rate of the implementation of social media communications has not lived up to expectations in every organization, and it is not clear whether PR will lead the way. Corporate communication professionals are challenged to organize the activities of the various players who are involved in such a way as to achieve overall goals. Within the scope of Enterprise 2.0 (see, for example, McAfee, 2009), nearly every organizational function and academic discipline offers different solutions. The term Enterprise 2.0 refers to corporations that increasingly implement social software in their everyday business and consequently have to face "the social and organizational changes associated with it" (Corso, Martini, & Pesoli, 2008, p. 599). While Web 1.0 provided new capabilities or pathways through which to send information to the public, Web 2.0 seems to be different. "It is not just a technological enabler of existing methodologies. There is a fundamental shift in what Web 2.0 has enabled and the way it's being used" (Pavlik, 2007, p. 9). One of the key characteristics of social media is that they spread anarchically in most organizations (Fitch, 2009). As a result of the dynamic evolution in recent years, responsibilities are seldom assigned, and qualifications and training for employees as well as guidelines for online communications and key performance indicators designed to measure success are frequently missing (Fink & Zerfass, 2010).

Therefore, the shortcomings of pure activism as a result of the hype surrounding social media in practice are revealed. The results of recent research (Li & Bernoff, 2008; Fraser & Dutta, 2008; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Vaughan & Tinker, 2009) support this idea and lead to the conclusion that more initiatives should focus on strategies and overarching frameworks for the use of social media in organizations.

In order to achieve this aim, this paper proposes to use the concept of Social Media Governance. The general concept of governance itself has a long research history. In social science, this term encompasses all of the institutional structures and processes for handling the interdependencies between various, mostly collective, actors (Kooiman, 2007; Van Kersbergen & van Waarden, 2004). This paper transfers the concept to the field of social media communications. Therefore, the term needs to be reevaluated and conceptualized in order to analyze current practices. As clarified in the next section, Social Media Governance refers to the formal or informal frameworks which regulate the actions of the members of an

organization within the social web. The purpose of this empirical study, which will be described in subsequent sections, is to evaluate the status quo of regulatory frameworks for social media activities in German organizations. Previous studies have analyzed single aspects of Social Media Governance, e. g. guidelines (Bell, 2010; Turner, 2010; Wright & Hinson, 2009), but research on the overall concept is still missing. This study addresses this research gap by using data from a German online survey carried out in 2010 and by asking on an overarching level: how is social media communications strategically applied in German organizations? The results will tell us how social media activities are strategically rooted and how various aspects of organizational frameworks for social media interrelate with others. The final sections of this paper discuss these findings in relation to general developments in research and practice.

Literature review

As a great deal of confusion exists concerning the rapidly developing field of social media communications, every study on this topic has to start by clarifying what is understood by the research object. While there are many definitions, this paper follows Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) in defining social media as Internet-based applications built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0.

On the one hand, this comprises the technological, economic and juridical phenomena encompassed within Web 2.0. O'Reilly (2005) characterizes Web 2.0 according to six trends: programs become platforms; the wisdom of crowds; data inside; customer integration/user-based content; being ubiquitous and dynamic; and browser-independent content. The major change in comparison to the first development phase of the World Wide Web (see, for example, Contractor, Eisenberg & Steinfield, 1990) is that social media allow the rapid mass creation and interactive exchange of user-generated content. Many view this change as important, and have termed it a "digital evolution" (Döbler, 2008), or a paradigm shift. Whilst Web 1.0 is seen as a static collection of documents that do not change once they have been written and uploaded, the content of Web 2.0 is constantly changing. Every link and every comment alters the new web, by rapidly creating a network of content and users (ibid.). The first version of the World Wide Web allowed most of its users to read the uploaded content, whereas the new one has evolved to a "read-write-web", with a wide variety of users contributing user-generated content and, along the way, creating collective intelligence (Argenti & Barnes, 2010).

On the other hand, the term "social media" explicitly means that web-based applications enable users to exchange information, create relationships and communicate (Hippner, 2006). This has a social impact that reaches far beyond the actual documents or data. The networks of relations and their structures may change. According to Hippner (2006), social media applications have certain things in common, as the focus always lies on the individual user or group. People, relationships, content and ratings are intended to be demonstrated publicly. Groups and platforms are run following the principles of self-organization. Social feedback, e. g. via rating systems, acts as a major motivator. In general, the so-called "wisdom of the mass" is not embedded within the aggregation of multiple pieces of information, but within the linkages and structure between them. These principles apply in varying degrees to all different social media platforms, including wikis, weblogs, social networks or social sharing platforms. In addition, other applications may also correspond to this description, but cannot be categorized precisely into one of the aforementioned types.

Instead, they fit into all of the categories. Examples are tagging, clouds or newsfeeds.[26] Together, these tools have changed the perception and use of the web into a virtual space where users no longer passively consume, but actively create, change and share information.

The use of social media for public relations purposes

As noted by market research (Nielsen, 2010), the global web traffic to social media sites has steadily increased over recent years. The number of people visiting these sites rose by 24 per cent in 2010 to three-quarters of all web users. All together, people spend over 110 billion minutes per month on social media sites. This is dominated by Australian web users. On average, each Australian web-user uses the social web seven hours and 19 minutes each month. The biggest social media platforms have become powerful brands and expansive networks. MySpace has more than 100 million users, and the outperforming platform Facebook reached the level of 500 million members at the end of 2010.[27] The blog search tool Technorati tracks 133 million blogs and, in some countries, the use of social networking sites accounts for more than 75 per cent of all web traffic (Postman, 2009, p. VII)

Corporations have acknowledged these trends, and increasingly use social media platforms for communications. Spending on Web 2.0 technologies has increased immensely over recent years and, according to Forrester Research, will reach 4.6 billion US$ globally by 2013. Social networking, mash-ups and Really Simple Syndication (RSS) are expected to have the greatest share in this spending. Currently, the majority of the budget is spent on employee collaboration tools. However, it has been estimated that these trends are in the process of turning. By 2013, investments in customer-facing Web 2.0 technology will be nearly one billion US$ more (Young, Brown, Keitt, Owyang, Koplowitz, & Lo, 2008). One prominent example of a company increasing their investment in social media is Pepsi Co. in the United States (US). The company broke its 23 year-long tradition of advertising in the Super Bowl in 2010. Instead, it spent 20 million US$ on launching the Pepsi Refresh Project, an interactive social media campaign.

The case of Pepsi indicates a general tendency in business: in 2009, 43 per cent of the fastest growing private companies in the United States (Inc. 500) judged social media to be "very important" for their business, while 91 per cent used at least one social media tool, most commonly social networking platforms. Social networking and blogging have grown steadily over the last three years, while message boards, online video, wikis and podcasting have leveled off or declined (Barnes & Mattson, 2009).

Many studies have addressed the potential positive impacts of social media (Bauer, Große-Leege, & Rösger, 2007; Picot & Fischer, 2006; Pleil & Zerfass, 2007; Ruisinger, 2007), which range from the implementation of companies' own formats to the incorporation of third-party applications. In accordance, European communication professionals interviewed in the European Communication Monitor 2010 survey assessed social media as having an increasing level of importance and predicted that they would become the third most important channel or instrument for public relations by 2013. One out of four professionals thinks that social media are important for the profession today. Communities, videos and weblogs are particularly highly appreciated. Consequently, it is considered that coping with

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[26] For a more detailed description see, for example, the work of Ebersbach, Glaser and Heigl (2010).

[27] Numbers retrieved from www.myspace.com/pressroom/fact-sheet and www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics.

digital evolution and the social web will be the most important issue for communications management within the next three years (Zerfass et al., 2010, pp. 90-93). From the perspective of strategic communication, new communication platforms revolutionize the dynamics and dimensions of communication within organizational settings and between organizations and their stakeholders. Examples of social media applications can be found in all phases of the communications management process. Analyzing communication in social communities can enhance monitoring and evaluation, while collaboration platforms may help to establish advanced planning routines. During their implementation, communications professionals can apply different measures such as spreading image videos via Youtube or establishing the Chief Executive Officer as an expert on Twitter. Thus, customers may become more committed and more loyal to the company, its products and services (Lattemann & Stieglitz, 2007). Hence, the possible advantages that practitioners expect are multiform. Unparalleled access to information, enhanced brand awareness and perception, better engagement with stakeholders, collaboration, a richer experience for users and improved web metrics are just some examples that have inspired many companies to implement social media for corporate communications (Postman, 2009).

Threats and Vulnerabilities	Risks	Risk Mitigation Techniques
Introduction of viruses and malware to the organizational network	• Data leakage/theft • "Owned" systems (zombies) • System downtime • Resources required to clean systems	• Ensure that antivirus and antimalware controls are installed on all systems and updated daily. • Consider use of content filtering technology to restrict or limit access to social media sites. • Ensure that appropriate controls are also installed on mobile devices such as smartphones. • Establish or update policies and standards. • Develop and conduct awareness training and campaigns to inform employees of the risks involved with using social media sites.
Exposure to customers and the enterprise through a fraudulent or hijacked corporate presence	• Customer backlash/adverse legal actions • Exposure of customer information • Reputational damage • Targeted phishing attacks on customers or employees	• Engage a brand protection firm that can scan the Internet and search out misuse of the enterprise brand. • Give periodic informational updates to customers to maintain awareness of potential fraud and to establish clear guidelines regarding what information should be posted as part of the enterprise social media presence.
Unclear or undefined content rights to information posted to social media sites	• Enterprise's loss of control/legal rights of information posted to the social media sites	• Ensure that legal and communications teams carefully review user agreements for social media sites that are being considered. • Establish clear policies that dictate to employees and customers what information should be posted as part of the enterprise social media presence. • If feasible and appropriate, ensure that there is a capability to capture and log all communications.
A move to a digital business model may increase customer service expectations.	• Customer dissatisfaction with the responsiveness received in this arena, leading to potential reputational damage for the enterprise and customer retention issues	• Ensure that staffing is adequate to handle the amount of traffic that could be created from a social media presence. • Create notices that provide clear windows for customer response.
Mismanagement of electronic communications that may be impacted by retention regulations or e-discovery	• Regulatory sanctions and fines • Adverse legal actions	• Establish appropriate policies, processes and technologies to ensure that communications via social media that may be impacted by litigation or regulations are tracked and archived appropriately. • Note that, depending on the social media site, maintaining an archive may not be a recommended approach.

Figure 1: Risks of social media and mitigation techniques
Source: ISACA, 2010, p. 7

In addition to these new opportunities, a variety of new risks are also threatening organizations and their communications departments. Attention should be paid to the specific "dangers and methods of social engineering, common exploits, and the threats to privacy that social media present" (ISACA, 2010, p. 6). Figure 1 sums up some of the most common risks and appropriate risk mitigation techniques. It reveals that traditional organization-centered thinking is becoming out-dated, as interactions become more complex within multiple new and ever-changing arenas (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010). Participants in the European Communication Monitor 2010 judged the fact that everyone within an organization is able to spread information to be especially ominous (Zerfass et al., 2010, p. 83). When employees who are not adequately trained get involved in social media dialogue, many risky situations arise. "Indeed, many managers and communication professionals still think that anonymous postings to blogs and discussion groups cannot be tracked back to their source. They can, and

anonymous posters are regularly exposed by blog moderators. Such exposure always makes the organization that posted the message look desperate or stupid" (Kent, 2008, p. 37).

As soon as one looks behind the scenes of the social media boom, it becomes clear that only a minority of organizations have the skills, strategies or structures which are necessary for long-term social media success. Most organizations manage their social media implementation from a predominantly technical perspective, without addressing the more strategic and structural aspects of organizational and change management (Corso et al., 2008, p. 609). More than half of the communication professionals interviewed in the European Communication Monitor 2010 were neither planning special training programs for their employees nor implementing key performance indicators in order to measure their social media activities (Zerfass et al., 2010, p. 79). However, optimal conditions for supporting the overarching organizational goals can only be established with coordinated activities among the plurality of actors involved. Along these lines, Pavlik calls for consideration of not only the impact of technology on how PR practitioners carry out their work, but also of the "implications of technology on organizational structure, culture and management" (Pavlik, 2007, p. 3).

Conventional structures that allow only single actors, e.g. the official spokesperson, to communicate the will of the organization reveal weak points in today's dynamic and complex external environment, where polyphony and diversity are required (Christensen, Morsing, & Cheney, 2008) and a plurality of stimuli from the environment have to be monitored (Lenhart, 2006; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). However, this has not been realized in many organizations, which for many years have worked with a "command and control" approach regarding the management of new technologies (Marfleet, 2008, p. 153)

In summary, despite the importance of social media, "meaningful gaps exist between what is happening and what should be happening in terms of all the social media" (Wright & Hinson, 2009). Organizations are still lacking appropriate structures, cultures and strategies for participative modes of online communication. Subsequently, new ones are needed. One possible solution – social media governance – shall be introduced in the following section as a concept for studying the conditions for social media communications.

Governance and social media

In the social sciences, the understanding of "governance" differs widely and encompasses a variety of aspects without one singular binding definition. There is no consensus on which set of phenomena belongs to "governance", while, at the same time, the significance of the topic is agreed upon by most researchers (Van Kersbergen & van Waarden, 2004, p. 165). In general, *governance* includes all institutional structures and processes used to handle interdependencies between various, mostly collective, actors (Kooiman, 2007; Van Kersbergen & van Waarden, 2004). The theoretical roots of this concept can be found in both economics and political science.

The first of these scientific streams started when Coase (1937) claimed that markets alone could not be considered as perfect coordination mechanisms because they still had a number of coordination problems within the economic sphere. Williamson (1975) added to this theory by stating that other institutions may be far more suited to minimizing transaction costs than the market itself. This led to the notion that modern economies are regulated by a mixture of markets and other governance mechanisms.

Political science has explored this field from a different angle. Beginning with an analysis of interstate relationships, it was affirmed that "governance without government"

occurred (multilevel governance) (Rosenau & Czempiel, 1992). Policy research also went from talking about planning to controlling to governance, demonstrating that the state cannot apply control over society, but that there are many more coordination mechanisms that need to be considered (Benz, 2007, p. 13).

The scientific roots of the term "governance" demonstrate its essential perspective: on the one hand, neither political actors nor the state can apply their goals to society, nor can the market as such alone guarantee the efficiency of production and distribution in the economic sphere. On the other hand, alternative modes of dealing with interdependencies besides the market and the state come into play (Benz, 2007). This causes other transformations as well. With changes in the location of rule production, the style of governance changes as well. The current trend has turned towards negotiation and the management of information in networks (Van Kersbergen & van Warden 2004, p. 155). McAfee (2009, p. 6) highlights that, with a new style of leadership, people themselves can experiment within boundaries established by the actual leaders, while the latter stay in the background. If these leaders show their subordinates the way and motivate others to follow, this may be in the organization's best interests. In other words, the concept of governance focuses on a mixture of non-hierarchical and hierarchical forms of coordination. Governance as an umbrella term refers to the logic of action and the causal relations between structures, interests and interactions (Kooiman, 2007). This special perspective has recently been applied in many different social sciences, such as political science, law, sociology or economics. However, the foci in these different areas vary. While the political sciences analyze the interplay between action, interaction and institutional frameworks, the discussion on governance in economics revolves around governance configurations and their costs, efficiency and competitive advantages (Lütz, 2006, p. 19)

This concept has also been transferred from the societal to the organizational level. Corporate governance means the overall framework for the guidance and control of a company in a relationship with multiple stakeholders (Tricker, 2009; Hopt, 1998). Van Kersbergen and van Waarden (2004) underline the importance of corporate governance by stating that the "relations between actors pose specific risks and uncertainties" and that there is a need for different mechanisms "to reduce these in order to make cooperation possible or easier" (p. 152).

This can be further split up into singular aspects that should be considered within the realm of corporate governance. For the purpose of this paper, the relevant relations are the communications between an organization and its stakeholders via social media. Hence, the resulting organizational framework shall be called Social Media Governance. Social Media Governance then refers to the formal or informal frameworks which regulate the actions of the members of an organization within the social web. With the development of Web 2.0, new constellations of actors in and around organizations have emerged, and this has resulted in changing institutional arrangements and regulatory structures. As a consequence, former borders between national and international, public and private and internal and external are dissolving. Hence, new concepts of legitimization are necessary (Donges, 2007, p. 12).

When considering the practice of Social Media Governance, two different understandings are relevant: a concept of governance focusing solely on social media policies and a wider understanding of governance based on broad regulatory frameworks.

Social Media Governance based on guidelines

Social media guidelines, sometimes also called blogging policies or social network guidelines, describe and provide advice on how social media communications shall be dealt

with by all of the members of an organization and how it can enable all of them to become communicators in participative online environments. Both practitioners and researchers have recently begun to discuss these issues (e.g. Bell, 2010; Turner, 2010; Wright & Hinson, 2009).

Even if a corporation does not want to actively engage in the social web, there is a need to educate employees and formulate clear guidelines on the use of social media both, on the job and for private activities. Often, juridical concerns about privacy issues and the spread of internal matters inspire such regulatory activities. The digital reputation of an organization is at stake when it is talked about on social media platforms. The efficiency of business processes are at risk when employees spend too much time on social networking sites. This has led to an increasing number of firms prohibiting all social media use in the workplace (ISACA, 2010). Marfleet (2008, p. 153) describes such a procedure as "short-sighted", as it "will inevitably backfire as individuals choose to work for those organizations that support them in working in a way they want to and which encourages creativity and experimentation". Put differently, prohibitions leave many employees unsatisfied and ignore the positive aspects of engagement with social media. Consequently, many organizations use social media guidelines instead. For younger employees using the social web in particular, smartphones or an iPad today represent a natural component of everyday life, and so banning them becomes impossible. Hence, when these activities offer the employer an advantage, the associated risks are commonly ignored. This way, many applications have been developed which have added value. However, such isolated solutions often undermine existing organizational arrangements. Only a minority of organizations tackle these new challenges with profound policies. Although training and certificates are mandatory for many aspects of an organization, similar aspects with regard to social media are supposed to evolve independently. According to a study based in the US, only one-third of the Inc. 500 companies have implemented formal guidelines concerning blogging etc. for their employees (Barnes & Mattson, 2009). In Europe, less than 30 per cent of all organizations had implemented such guidelines in 2010, according to reports from communications professionals (Zerfass et al., 2010, p. 79).

Organizations have be careful when constructing social media guidelines. Prohibitions in the form of abstract descriptions will not be able to encourage and guide employees, but might increase feelings of uncertainty. As such policies usually also address private usage of the social web, it is recommended to call them "recommendations", thus clearly expressing the organization's attitude towards social media. When creating such guidelines, employees or employee representatives should be involved in order to achieve high levels of acceptance. The demands placed on guidelines are high: they need to address different heterogeneous audiences and still be comprehensible, flexible and dynamically adaptable to a range of new situations. This final aspect in particular plays an important role, as not all of the possible scenarios involved in such a rapidly evolving field as Web 2.0 can be conceptualized in advance. Therefore, various scopes of action might be permitted (Ulbricht, 2010).

It should be acknowledged that the goal of control which is inherent in social media guidelines might clash with the desire of employees for autonomy. This is relevant because participative online platforms are often conceptualized as democratizing organizational communication.

Social Media Governance Based on A Broader Regulatory Framework

A different perspective acknowledges the fact that rules alone cannot succeed. The concept of Social Media Governance which is proposed here corresponds to the notion of an overall framework as implied by corporate governance theory. A strategic use of social media in communications requires resources such as trained employees, modern information technology and appropriate budgets, as well as favorable organizational cultures and structures. The latter require, among other things, the assignment of responsibilities, monitoring processes, and appropriate feedback and editorial routines. The importance of such structures can be explained using structuration theory (Giddens, 1984; Zerfass, 2008, 2010), in the sense that if structures are implemented in an organizational setting, they enable and limit the communicative actions of individuals working in these settings. At the same time, rules and resources are reproduced and modified in the course of communicative actions. Therefore, the establishment of a structural framework should be the first step for organizations when exploiting social media, even before training employees and finally developing and implementing online activities. It becomes necessary to attune staff to a learning process that exploits the opportunities provided by social media, reduces potential risks, and ensures the future growth of the organization. There is no easy solution to the question of assigning the responsibility for these tasks. A competence center, such as a social media board, could be the most effective way of dealing with overarching issues, collecting examples of best practices and enabling other departments through the provision of information and advice. However, as social media increasingly influence the everyday processes of different departments, social media skills must be part of the basic skills of all employees. Decentralized freedom of action concerning the choice of tools, communication style and content must be balanced with overall guidelines.

In spite of the theoretical basis for such an understanding of social media governance, it has not been empirically researched until now. This is where the study presented in this work comes in.

Research questions and hypotheses

This study attempts to depict the status quo of strategic social media communications in German corporations and political and non-governmental organizations. Therefore, the underlying research question is: how is social media communications strategically applied in German organizations? From this question, more specific questions have been derived:

RQ1: How common are social media activities in organizations?

RQ2: To what extent are social media skills and strategies developed by PR managers?

RQ3: What kinds of regulatory frameworks for social media exist today?

RQ4: Are there any correlations between structural frameworks for social media and the level of the corresponding communications activities within organizations?

Accordingly, the following hypotheses were generated after the literature review:

H1a: Social media applications are used within the field of PR by a minority of organizations;

H1b: The history of social media use in PR is very short, and no more than a quarter of all organizations have been active in this area for more than one year;

H2a: The social media skills of most PR professionals are at a medium or low level;

H2b: A lack of knowledge and experience in conceptual approaches to social media are the main obstacles within the range of competencies which are needed for social media;

H2c: Only a minority of organizations has already developed social media strategies;
H3a: The regulatory frameworks for social media are weak in most organizations;
H3b: The resources needed for social media communications are mostly lacking;
H4: The intensity of social media activities in organizations correlates positively with the existence of rules and resources for this field.

Methodology

In order to answer the research questions, the concept of Social Media Governance was used as an umbrella term. This study, entitled "Social Media Governance 2010", was one of the first studies to aim to analyze the broad concept of social media governance, by not only referring to specific guidelines but also the overall organizational framework. The focal areas of this research were therefore: strategies for the launch of social media communications; skills and responsibilities within the organization; tools and applications in corporate communications; the relevance, opportunities and risks of communications in the social web; and the existing regulatory frameworks for interactive communications.

An online survey was conducted across Germany, the largest country in Europe, in June 2010. The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions, each based on scientific hypotheses incorporating existing theories and previous empirical findings. The subjects received a personal invitation to participate as well as a reminder via a mailing list provided by the magazine "Pressesprecher" and the largest branch association of public relations professionals in Germany, the Bundesverband deutscher Pressesprecher (BdP). It can be assumed that the members of the organization and the magazine readership together represent a fairly good cross-section of the population of PR professionals in Germany, whose size and structure are not known. Descriptive and inferential statistics were computed with the help of SPSS software in order to describe the general frequencies of social media activities and to explore relationships. Group differences were tested with variance analyses, and dependencies with correlations. For this purpose, the correlation coefficient was determined, using either Pearson's correlation coefficient or Spearman's rho, depending on the data scale (Wilcox, 2010).

The response was 1007 fully completed questionnaires. This is, to our knowledge, the largest sample for a social media survey of the population of PR professionals in Germany until now. The respondent pool consisted of communications professionals in joint-stock companies (17.8 per cent) and private companies (44.7 per cent), public sector organizations and associations (23 per cent), as well as non-profit-organizations (14.5 per cent). A total of 37.1 per cent worked as heads of PR or corporate communications, 59.8 per cent as PR managers or spokespeople and 3.1 per cent as trainees. The average age of the respondents was 40 years old. The participants in the survey were divided into three groups. Filters in the questionnaire ensured that the sections which concerned the use of social media etc. were only answered by those engaged with the relevant issues.

An index of social media activities (I_{SMA}) was calculated as the sum of all social media tools, networks and applications employed by the PR department through the addition of three different questions in the questionnaire. The index values ranged from 0 to 27. Low activities were characterized as $0 \leq I_{SMA} \leq 3$ (average value), medium activities as $4 \leq I_{SMA} \leq 7$ and intensive activities as $8 \leq I_{SMA} \leq 27$.

Moreover, the respondents were asked "Are there specific strategies present in your organization for initiating and using social media in business processes?" The index of social media strategies (I_{SMS}) was then calculated as a dichotomous value (0 or 1) based on the

statements of the surveyed communications managers regarding the existence of specific strategies.

Another question in the survey required the participants to judge their social media skills on a scale from 1 (no experience) to 5 (professional). In order to gain a more detailed understanding, the following dimensions were required: knowledge of the social media landscape; knowledge of social web etiquette; skills in initiating web-based dialogs; knowledge of the technical requirements for setting up social media platforms; knowledge of the legal framework; information about the interplay between social media and traditional media (print, television, radio); experience in the management of web communities; knowledge of the prevalent means of expression; experience in the development of social media strategies; and experience in the evaluation of social media activities. A value for the index of social media skills (I_{SMK}) was calculated for each survey participant as the average rating of the 10 individual skills in the questionnaire. The index values ranged from 0 (no experience) to 5 (professional). A low skill level was indicated by $0 \leq I_{SMK} < 2.5$, a medium skill level by $2.5 \leq I_{SMK} \leq 3,5$, and a high skill level by $3.5 < I_{SMK} \leq 5$.

Regulatory frameworks were operationalized using a list of the following 12 items: participative corporate culture; commitment of top management; human resources; person in charge of social media in each department; monitoring tools; social media workshops; seminars or training; social media guidelines; strategy papers; key performance indicators for measuring success; specific budget; software and hardware; and a dedicated social media department. For each item, the participants were asked whether it already existed in their organization, was planned for the coming year or did not exist at all. The index of social media regulatory frameworks (I_{SMO}) was calculated as the sum of all of the structural elements governing social media which were present in the organization. The index values ranged from 0 to 12. A weak regulatory framework was defined as $0 \leq I_{SMO} \leq 4$, average as $5 \leq I_{SMO} \leq 8$ and sophisticated as $9 \leq I_{SMO} \leq 12$.

Results

The data showed that every second organization (54 per cent of the sample) utilized social media for their communications activities, while 26 per cent had only become active within the previous 12 months (from July 2009 onwards), a further 22 per cent more than one year ago, and 6 per cent had more than three years of practical experience in the area. In contrast, 83 per cent of the respondents reported that their organization had used websites for corporate communications for five years or more. Hypotheses 1a and 1b were therefore falsified – a small majority of German organizations use social media in PR and 28 per cent (slightly more than a quarter) have been active for more than one year, which nonetheless still hints at a short overall history within the profession.

Communications departments were most commonly in the lead with regard to using social media, followed by the advertising/marketing communications, sales and human resources departments. The most frequently applied tools were video sharing and micro blogging (Twitter), and the most popular communities were Facebook and Xing. With regard to all of the social media platforms and specialized PR activities, only one-third of the subjects revealed high levels of activity, as calculated using the (I_{SMA}) index. Organizations with more experience of using social media were more likely to assess these platforms as being beneficial for corporate communications. The respondents appreciated not only technical aspects but also the character of social media as drivers for strategic communications. Advantages were seen in the opportunity to disseminate information quickly
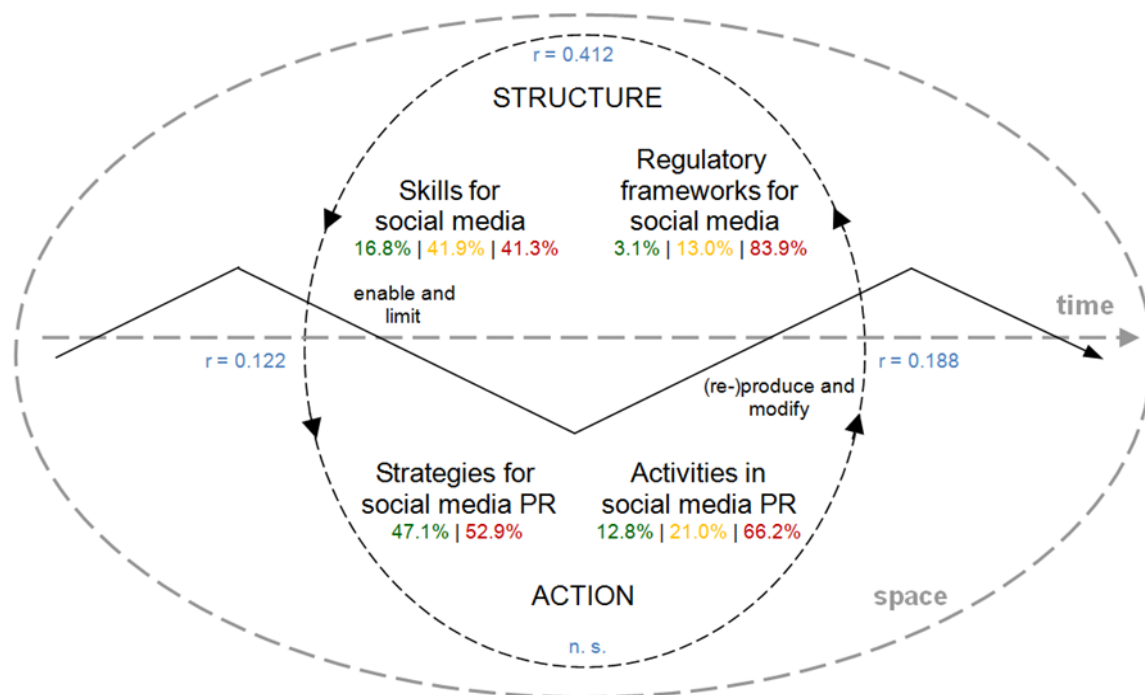
(82.3 per cent of participants) and to improve services and customer loyalty (45.7 per cent of participants).

TABLE 1
Regulatory frameworks for social media communications

	Proportion (per cent) of organizations		
	Present	Planned	Not considered
Commitment of top management	33.1	29.1	37.8
Human resources	28.4	25.8	37.8
Dedicated social media department	4.6	4.5	90.9
Software and hardware	46.2	18.1	35.7
Person in charge of social media in each department	27.2	21.3	51.5
Specific budget	11.7	19.1	69.2
Social media guidelines	19.1	36.3	44.6
Social media workshops, seminars or trainings	21.9	32.3	45.8
Monitoring tools	24.3	28.4	47.3
Key performance indicators for measuring success	12.7	32.0	55.3
Strategy papers	17.4	41.7	40.9
Participative corporate culture	35.2	27.1	37.7

Even though the incorporation rates of social media were quite high, the professionals evaluated their own social media skills (assessed using the index I_{SMK}) to be low (41.3 per cent) or medium (41.9 per cent), as expected according to hypothesis 2a. Most of the deficits were stated to be in the areas of technical expertise (mean score 2.21 on a five-point scale), evaluation (2.24), strategy development (2.35) and the management of web communities (2.38). This supports hypothesis 2b: the main obstacles within the range of competencies needed for effective social media communications are a lack of knowledge and experience of conceptual approaches to social media. This lack of expertise comes into play when evaluating the risks of social media. With regard to these risks, the majority (66.2 per cent) of the respondents mentioned the loss of control of communications processes and 64.1 per cent the need for quick reactions.

Shortfalls were found in terms of social media strategies in PR, as implied in hypothesis 2c. Only 47.1 per cent of all communications managers indicated the presence of strategies with a positive I_{SMS} value – the highest numbers were found within joint-stock companies. This correlated with the lack of structural prerequisites for strategic planning. At the time of the study, only 4.6 per cent of companies had established a specific social media department. If established, these departments had little authority: only one-third of the departments were responsible for the development of strategies and only 12.5 per cent had sovereignty over their budget.

Figure 2: Dynamics of social media in PR

Equally, the establishment of regulatory structures for social media was lacking. According to the I_{SMO} index, 3.1 per cent of the organizations had a sophisticated regulatory framework, 13.0 per cent had average structures and 83.9 per cent had structures which could be classified as weak. Thus, hypothesis 3a was confirmed. More specifically, there was a deficiency in terms of key performance indicators for social media (87 per cent of the organizations), specific budgets (88 per cent), social media guidelines (81 per cent), professional development opportunities such as seminars and training courses (78 per cent) and staff resources (72 per cent) (see table 1). Many essential factors, such as managerial commitment and a participative corporate culture, were only reported by one in three of those corporations which were surveyed. Hypothesis 3b was verified; the resources needed for social media communications were lacking in most organizations. The best conditions were found in stock companies and non-profit organizations.

Correlation analyses revealed the essential role of governance or regulatory frameworks in relation to the other aspects of social media use. Figure 2 shows that three of the four dimensions correlated positively, thereby supporting hypothesis 4. The intensity of social media activities in organizations is linked to the existence of rules and resources in this field. Astonishingly, strategies for social media PR and concrete activities were not significantly interlinked. Hence, the creation of plans does not necessarily support action and vice versa. The correlation between activities and regulatory frameworks was significant, but quite low (*r*

= 0.188). If a regulatory framework existed, it had a positive impact on social media skills (r = 0.412) and in turn on the development of strategy (r = 0.122). Social media skills themselves correlated positively with the level of activity (r = 0.225). Table 2 indicates the frequencies of the indices for social media activities, strategies, skills and frameworks and, therefore, the current status of strategically-applied social media communications in German organizations.

TABLE 2

The status quo of social media communications in German organizations

Index	Category	Proportion (per cent) of organizations	Category	Proportion (per cent) of organizations	Category	Proportion (per cent) of organizations
I_{SMA} (Activities)	Intensive	12.8	Medium	21.0	Low	66.2
I_{SMK} (Skills)	High	16.8	Medium	41.9	Low	41.3
I_{SMS} (Strategies)	Present	47.1		–	Not present	52.9
I_{SMO} (Regulatory framework)	Sophisticated	3.1	Average	13.0	Weak	83.9

Discussion

The results of this research show that one important factor with regard to the dynamics of social media use in PR is the regulatory frameworks which are applied in organizations. Pure activism, such as the implementation of Facebook and Youtube channels for corporations, their brands and relevant debates (corporate social responsibility, employer branding) is not enough, and neither is a focus on social media strategies. Wider organizational structures need to be considered, as has been stated in previous studies (Li & Bernoff, 2008; Dutta, 2007; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The current state of practice as attested by the "Social Media Governance Study 2010", however, is alarming: 80 per cent of organizations lack developed governance structures. The study presented here is a first attempt to develop an extensive understanding of the status quo of social media governance.

The results verified six out of the eight hypotheses which were derived from the literature. Previous studies have claimed that social media spread with immense speed (Barnes & Mattson, 2009; Nielsen, 2010; Postman, 2009). On the contrary, it was shown that only a small proportion of German organizations apply social media to their corporate communications. This underlines the argument by Wright and Hinson (2009, p. 19) that "meaningful gaps exist […] between what is happening and what should be happening in terms of all the social media options". While most organizations have well-established websites, they have only recently started using participative online platforms. This makes sense, as these platforms were created much later than websites. However, the differences in levels of experience are astonishing. Organizations' lack of experience was found to be

significantly related to the underdeveloped social media skills of most PR professionals. As stated in their self-assessments, these professionals have the most difficulties with the technical and conceptual aspects of the Web 2.0. Similarly, the regulatory frameworks within organizations are weakly developed. Apart from studies that focus on guidelines, little research has been conducted on this field of interest. Hence, little knowledge exists that might be used for guidance and examples of best practices. Similarly, resources and strategies for the use of social media are lacking in many cases. It appears that organizations do not establish the basic structures needed for the long-term establishment of social media, even if they are already actively communicating using these means. These shortfalls endanger the success of social media, as shown by the fact that this research found rules, resources and actions to be significantly correlated. In other words, this research offers additional support for the recently-formed argument that asks for more strategic and general considerations when actively communicating using social media.

According to these results, Social Media Governance, in line with a broad understanding of regulatory frameworks consisting of guidelines, key performance indicators, clear-cut responsibilities etc., acts as the key factor in successful social media activities. PR managers should start here. It can be concluded that those who want to avoid activism and the uncontrolled growth of social media communications should invest more in structural development because it correlates with all of the other aspects. This can be explained based on the theory of structuration by Anthony Giddens (1984): governance structures enable and limit individual actions, while their iterative process of updating reproduces and stabilizes them. Ideally, organizations should first develop a base consisting of a regulatory framework for social media, and then train their staff to develop strategies and measures.

In conclusion, in this paper, the concept of social media governance was derived from social science and transferred to the field of social media communication. The emergent extensive understanding of the term was used for an empirical survey, entitled the "Social Media Governance 2010" study. As shown by the results, the framework which is used to regulate the actions of the members of an organization in the social web has emerged as a key to success. Such findings provide an important path for the future application of social media for corporate communications. The status quo in German organizations, however, indicates that there is still a great deal of room for improvement.

Limitations and future research

As this study was carried out in Germany, the results cannot be considered as being representative of other countries, e. g. those countries with different amounts of social media use in society and by organizations. Although the general trends indicated here are not necessarily to be doubted in their applicability to other regions, this needs to be tested. It would be especially interesting to draw a comparison between countries with higher rates of social media use, such as the US, and those with lower levels of usage, such as developing countries.

Another limitation of this survey was that the invitations were sent out via e-mail. PR professionals who totally disapprove of this form of communication were therefore immediately excluded from the sample. This is rather unlikely, but may be crucial because such a group could consist of a significant proportion of individuals who are very inexperienced with regard to online communications. As a result, the level of experience of social media reported in this study could be even lower in the overall population of PR professionals. The results of this study are further limited by the fact that it was based on a

survey. Answers about the level of incorporation of social media might therefore be biased because of social desirability. Hence, all of the results should be looked at with this in mind, and should be compared with insights from studies which have used other approaches, e. g. content analyses of social media platforms. Furthermore, some general tendencies indicated by this questionnaire should be looked into. Qualitative research methods would help to gather further insights into the perception of Social Media Governance and specific implementation techniques.

One fact that should be analyzed in more detail is the understanding of social media strategies. The results of this study show that many communications professionals claim to have specific strategies, but that hardly any of the prerequisites for such strategies had been implemented. Hence, how effective such strategies could be is questionable. In addition, more research could be conducted concerning the differences between the best-equipped category of organizations – the stock market companies – and other companies. Are there any links to the juridical aspects of their special communications situation? Are there differences between industries? Do companies in business-to-business markets differ from those in business-to-consumer segments?

The study reported here has focused on a new dimension of research in online PR. The preliminary results have been presented, but this study must be replicated, and more research is needed to get a clearer picture of the connectivity between the different variables and general trends. More research is needed to advance the theoretical and practical discussion about social media to a more strategic level and to explore the possibilities for PR. This might help to cope with the frequently-addressed notion of the loss of control in social media environments. With appropriate structures and resources, this could be answered by establishing joint frameworks of reference for those who are representing the organization. Social governance frameworks support leaders in PR in organizing the activities of co-workers and other players involved in such a way as to optimally achieve organizational goals.

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