Ohio Communication Journal
A publication of the Ohio Communication Association

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- Manuscripts covering topics from every facet of the field
- Debut papers from undergraduate and graduate students
- Book reviews

The *Ohio Communication Journal* believes that research must be carried out in an ethical fashion, so we subscribe to the National Communication Association Code of Professional Ethics for Authors and we expect submissions to reflect these guidelines (see http://www.natcom.org/Default.aspx?id=135&terms=ethics). These guidelines enjoin authors to use inclusive and non-defamatory language.

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The *Ohio Communication Journal* publishes extended, complete studies that generally do not exceed 30 double-spaced pages (including references), except in cases where "thick description" of qualitative/ rhetorical data may require a slightly extended length. The *Ohio Communication Journal* is committed to an eclectic approach and to the publication of high quality articles from a variety of different areas within the field of communication including: critical studies, state of the art reviews, reports of topical interest, supported opinion papers, and other essays related to field of communication. Manuscripts may be philosophical, theoretical, methodological, critical, applied, pedagogical, or empirical in nature.

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The *Ohio Communication Journal* publishes brief articles (approximately 10 double spaced pages or less including references – 2500 words) on a wide variety of topics pertaining to human communication. Appropriate topics include studies of small group, relational, political, persuasive, organizational, nonverbal, mass, interpersonal, intercultural, instructional, health, aging/life span, family, and computer mediated communication. Authors should provide a sentence to a paragraph outlining the theoretical framework guiding the brief empirical report. In sum, theoretical rationale should receive modest coverage in the research report (1-2 paragraphs) along with a brief

review of the representative literature on the topic, with the main portion of the paper devoted to a thorough reporting and interpretation of the results.

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After removing all identifiers in the properties of the document (go file-properties-summary and delete your name and affiliation), authors should submit one electronic double-spaced copy of the manuscript and one separate title page in Microsoft Word (preferred). See the Ohio Communication Association website under "Journal" for specific submission guidelines.

All manuscripts should conform to the most recent edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) Style Manual. The cover page must contain: (1) the title of the manuscript; (2) the author's name, (3) author's institutional affiliation, (3) the mailing address, (4) the author's phone number, and (5) author's e-mail address. The second page of the manuscript must include the title and a 50-100 word abstract.

For more information about the *Ohio Communication Journal*, please visit the Ohio Communication Association website at https://ohiocomm.org/ohio-communication-journal/.

Ohio Communication Journal
Volume 57 – April 2019
Click the hyperlink to go directly to the article

Lessons Learned during a Life in the Academy
Raymie E. McKerrow, OCA 2018 Conference Keynote Speaker
pp. 1-5

Testing Relational Turbulence Theory in Friends with Benefits Relationships
James B. Stein, Colter D. Ray, Lisa J. van Raalte, & Paul A. Mongeau
pp. 6-18

I Knew College Was in the Cards for Me:" The Role of Memorable Messages in Foster Youths' Post-Secondary Education Decisions
LaShawnda Kilgore & Aimee E. Miller-Ott
pp. 19-32

A New Season for the Baylor Nation: Image Repair and Organizational Learning in Baylor's Title IX Crisis
Rachel Riggs
pp. 33-46

Student Veterans' Assimilation in Higher Education: The Role of Identity Complexity
Eric B. Meiners
pp. 47-57

An Epitaph in 140 Characters: TV Journalists' Twitter Use Following the Roanoke Shootings
Gretchen Hoak & Rekha Sharma
pp. 58-74

Health Information-Seeking Behaviors and Disparities Among Patients with Type 2 Diabetes: Testing Predictors of the Frequency of HISB with Doctors and Online
Nicole L. Johnson
pp. 75-90

Tweetkeeping NBC's Rio Olympics
Daniel Sipocz & Roxane Coche
pp. 91-104

"Who's Doing the Phubbing?": Exploring Individual Factors that Predict Phubbing Behaviors During Interpersonal Interactions
Tara Suwinyattichaiporn & Mark Alan Generous
pp. 105-114

Collective Communication within LGBT Leadership: Sharing the Vision
William Lucio Jr. & Sarah E. Riforgiate
pp. 115-131

Ohio Communication Journal
Volume 57 – April 2019, pp. 1-5

Lessons Learned during a Life in the Academy

Raymie E. McKerrow

This essay is adapted from a keynote presentation at the 2018 Ohio Communication Association conference in Orrville, Ohio.

My goal in this essay is to compress five decades of involvement in the academy into some observations that may be useful. Two caveats are important – first, while I don't think all of what I write here will be new (or even some of it), my hope is that it helps confirm the values and goals many faculty share. Second, I also hope that for those whose future is not directed at teaching in the academy, the 'lessons' will still have some resonance in work experiences in other contexts. I will focus first on the Ohio Communication Association 2018 conference theme, and then consider teaching, scholarship, and service respectively.

If we are to leverage the strengths of the discipline, we need to start with ourselves as educators. What we do individually and in collaboration with others will be the "difference that makes a difference" in the lives of our students. I believe that our major strength arises out of our conviction that what we teach in the classroom and our interactions with students outside it is critical in the advancement of student success. What we say, and how we say it in communicating with others, regardless of the context, reveals what our values and beliefs are – we are what we say. The discipline of communication is not the only portal, but it is a critical one in conveying to students the central importance of communicating well. When studies are done of success in moving up the corporate ladder, for example, a consistent finding is that how people communicate with others is a primary factor in their moving forward. Our efforts are at the center in improving student potential to achieve their goals.

With this as a preamble, have I learned anything of value since my first day teaching as a graduate student in the fall of 1966?

My first claim is that we should "value students as persons first." Taking the term student as a focus, as I suspect you know, not all students are students. What that means is they are not focused on our oftentimes narrow approach to how they may best learn. Tests and papers are common venues for assessing student learning—not every student is oriented toward a highly cognitive style of learning. That is one of the reasons many of us have moved toward getting students more engaged in community issues and activities; the more we engage students, the more we increase opportunities for different approaches to learning. What about their role as 'persons first?' What I intend to impart is that we need to engage students as whole people, not just as bodies in a class—they have lives outside our classroom that impact their performance within it. As one illustration, and many of you have seen this happen, a first-year student arrives on campus, and a few weeks later learns his parents are divorcing. What does that do to their focus on academics? We can't solve that issue, but we can be supportive as they work through this change in their personal life. As I noted in an earlier essay:

> One of the ways of elaborating on this orientation is to consider "students at risk"—these are the students who are classic "underachievers" when it comes to the heart of the academic enterprise—doing well enough on exams and papers to "make the grade." These are the students who find themselves in the bottom 10% or so of the academic ranks; they are truly "at risk" in the sense of not making it academically (a 90/10 principle seems to apply here, as the bottom 10% take 90% of one's time in working to ensure academic success. . .). In my experience, one never knows who they will be. Academic under-performance cuts across gender, ethnic, and socio-economic lines; such students may be from conditions of wealth as from poverty, from good educational backgrounds as from weak ones.[1]

[1] Raymie E. McKerrow (1998) Rhetoric and the construction of a deliberative community, *Southern Communication Journal,* 63:4, 350-356. Doi: 10.1080/10417949809373110

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What I want to underscore here is that students at risk is where the challenge, and from my perspective at least, the reward, lies. As most of have learned, some students are self-directed—they know why they are in class and what they want from it; they come to an advising session with a schedule already set in their notes—our job is made easier in suggesting they have a 'plan b' if a particular class is full, etc. Other students come in and have no clue what they should or could do the next term. That is where the work starts—asking them where they want to be in five-seven years, asking them what they enjoy outside the classroom—these are the simple ways in gaining a foothold from which to learn who the person is in front of you, and thereby be better able to provide assistance. Whether clueless or not, students are not 'dumb'; they may not be in the right program—I've had experiences where I helped students find a new academic home. They may have gotten by in high school without acquiring study habits that would be critical in more advanced studies. In rare cases, they may be better suited by interest and temperament in a more vocationally oriented institution—helping a student see that as a better option and being invited to their graduation is its own reward. Whatever the reason, valuing them (it doesn't mean we have to like them in all cases) as persons first expands the range of options in assisting them meet their goals. As a case in point, one of my favorite students, in his last semester, proclaimed "2.0 and go" – as long as he passed all his courses he would be a happy camper. He also had his own advertising company while in school, later worked with the NHL's first wave of Russian players as a translator and worked for a Fortune 500 company while also serving as a volunteer fireman. I was not worried about his future. Students who may not have the top gpa's in the department are not, in any sense, of less value.

Related to this is the common feeling, when working with first generation students or those from other cultures, that "they are here now as students, so let them study and learn—they don't need any further assistance." Nothing could be further from the truth. Students who arrive from less-wealthy neighborhood schools may not have had the same experiences as other more 'privileged' students. First generation students arrive on campus without the same supportive network as those with families who have already earned an advanced degree. Programs such as McNair Scholars focus on providing not only a support group, but also serve to introduce first generation and marginalized students to research that motivates their entry into more advanced studies. As a former Director of that program, I can attest to how it has generated far more Master's and Doctoral students than might otherwise have entered graduate programs. International students are familiar with how education works in their respective cultures, but that is not necessarily translatable to how our culture operates. This was brought home to me in teaching Chinese students in Hong Kong years ago and more recently in working with doctoral students in Thailand. Students might arrive late to class in Hong Kong—partly because of travel time from the Island to the campus on the mainland, but mostly because they could not leave work until their boss left. When asked if they understood what I was saying, they would smile and shake their head 'no.' Did they ask questions – no, that was not a comfortable thing for them to do. One of my international students put a personal face on the disparity between cultures with these remarks:

> "I cannot understand many expressions, I cannot follow jokes, and I cannot actively engage in exciting discussions. I have many experiences that I watch myself smiling and nodding, and pretending that I am understanding what the other person is saying even though I could not follow the conversation." . . . The feeling of 'being comfortable' . . . is not an issue solely with respect to our international students. We have other students of color who may not have the same barriers to cross as our international students, but for whom other barriers, equally invisible to many of us in our daily habits, also exist.[2]

Valuing them as 'persons first' means recognizing what they may be missing in their prior experience, and making sure actions are taken to fill in the gaps in their understanding of how things work.

One of the tasks students have that plays into our roles as teachers is to complete course evaluation forms. Over time, I've developed a better understanding of how we might best make use of the information students provide as we review our own teaching methods as well as when others review us in tenure and promotion recommendations. An evaluation of a single course is useful only in reference to that course—it may help the instructor with respect to what worked or didn't work as well, but for faculty review groups, it doesn't say much if anything about the

[2] Raymie E. McKerrow, (January, 2001) "Coloring Outside the Lines: The Limits of Civility," Spectra, 8.

quality of instruction. What does begin to tell both instructors and others something is seeing consistent remarks and or scores on specific indices across a series of courses, especially when that information is more negative than we might desire. That information, however, does not mean reviewers can unilaterally judge what happened. We were not there. What we can do is indicate "this is what we see—what do you, as the instructor, see in these remarks and/or scores across several classes? If you agree with us that these are problematic, what can we do to assist in responding to the issues?" That approach, as difficult as it may be to not simply say "you must be an ineffective teacher based on these results," is how we protect the sense that we are a community. There are those occasions, however, when a more negative judgement needs to be made. If several female students, as happened in one instance, come into your offices and consistently say "I don't want to take untenured faculty member 'x's course" it is time to consider their concerns and ask whether that individual should be reapppointed. Protecting the community sometimes does mean someone should leave.

To shift from students to our roles in the academy, I've been involved long enough to become jaded and cynical. One of the 'truths' I've learned is that "if an idea or action seems logical and reasonable, it is likely to violate university policy." No one would claim that academic institutions are 'fast-changing' entities—that they are hide-bound and resistant to doing things other than the way they've always done them seems a common malady. It is also the case that "If you owe the university money, they want it yesterday; if they owe you money, it will come when they find time to process the request and then wait until the day they've selected to transfer funds." Both of these claims have exceptions. There are progressive leaders who move faster than normal; there are systems that process work more quickly. I don't want to paint all institutions with the same brush. Nonetheless, across the decades from the mid 60's till now, there does appear to be some truth to these more jaded remarks.

What I do want to privilege here is something I learned years ago from a minister in talking about his role: "We are the congregation together." Taking that phrase metaphorically, if we are to get things done, it is not "I" as the progressive leader that is critical, or "us" as the compliant employees that is important. It is "WE"—all of us together who form the intellectual or deliberative community as a holistic body that constitutes the ground on which change can be contemplated and executed. I realize the downside of this, as evidenced in the expression "leading faculty toward action is a lot like herding cats." Be that as it may, we still have an obligation to not only ourselves but our students to work toward a sense of "we-ness"—of the congregation together that engages in deliberative and reasonable acts. I don't want to downplay the fact that some places are toxic environments, and that changing the culture may seem impossible. Change can happen over time, but in the meantime, there is one escape: I've found that walking into a classroom and, metaphorically if not actually, closing the classroom door and concentrating on delivering my best to the students is my salvation. That can be the place of freedom from an otherwise unhealthy environment. To do this well, it also means we cannot bring the issues that frustrate us into that room.

Adversity does exist in our experiences – we don't always get what we want when we want it. We have had failures amidst our successes. Recounting an experience from my past may be useful: In addressing new graduate students I often tell them about my early years at Wisconsin. I left my doctoral program at Iowa after two years, where I'd been on a Fellowship, hence took 5 graduate classes a term, with about half my dissertation written. I spent the first semester and a half finishing that project while teaching. I then taught a new class in the summer session and began my second year. Early in the Spring semester of that second year, I was asked to come to the Chair's office, where after a brief conversation, I was told I would not be re-appointed, but given the timing of their decision, I would have a third year. I left and stopped at my office to pick up materials and went to teach my next class. Though I can't say for certain, I heard later they were convinced I would not be as influential a scholar and leader as they desired. The point I want to make with this story is that while one needs to try, as hard as it is under those conditions, to learn something from it, it does not define you. The best advice I received, and I would not have learned this otherwise, was to take the next job and "act tenured." What this meant was 'do the things you would do if you were already promoted and tenured.' This is not an argument for 'publish or perish.' If you are not interested in doing research, then you need to be at a place that values you for what you are interested in and committed to—it doesn't mean you are any less valuable as a member of the congregation. It does mean your contribution is not the same as others. The phrase "it takes a village" applies here – even in research 1 institutions, some will do enough research early on to become an Associate Professor, and then slow down enough that the next promotion may be a longer time coming. Does that mean they are less valuable? Some will think so. I'm no saint,

but I learned early on not to use my standard of productivity as a measure of another's worthiness. Some faculty take on extra advising, some take on departmental and/or university committee work. Overall, the department functions on all cylinders without everyone having to do everything others do. Learning to see and appreciate the larger picture is essential if the congregation is to exist as a 'get it done' community.

For those interested in doing research, discipline is a key ingredient in making it work – there are sufficient pressures from teaching, advising, departmental and other meetings to attend, to say nothing of having a life outside the academy to make it difficult to read and write. In my own case, I was an early workaholic – I've slowed down considerably, especially in retirement. Being active meant working not only in the evenings but on weekends. I wasn't sure I wanted to leave the University of Maine, where I ended up teaching for 19 years after leaving Wisconsin. But I also wanted to keep the option alive – and doing research, especially if I wanted at some point to work with doctoral students, was an essential component of being able to move on. When I did leave Maine, I was surprised by the reaction of some colleagues—they indicated a desire to leave, but also realized they had not done the kinds of things that would demonstrate their potential to a new program; this was especially true with respect to a consistent research record. Now, as my last two advisees defend their dissertations later this month, I will have directed 31 dissertations and served on an additional 40 committees since 1995. That service has enriched my own work and helped keep me current as new research directions take form. The academic world is far different now than when I began. We are a far more vibrant discipline as a result of new directions in research; we still have the challenge of being more inclusive and diverse as a field.

What about getting published? One small piece of advice for those submitting to a journal – pay attention to the Editor's status – when new Editors begin, they are looking for manuscripts and are more likely to extend an R and R in the first months; when they hit the end of year 2, they are looking to minimize the number of manuscripts that are 'out there' being revised. They are thus more likely to reject a manuscript that is otherwise potentially publishable. A second piece of advice from my dissertation advisor: make a list of journals that seem to fit the essay – if it comes back rejected, take time to review and revise before sending to the next journal on the list. Our field is small, and a reviewer for one journal may well be the reviewer you get for the second journal selected. Finally, keep in mind that well-known scholars have been rejected. I have been rejected, even since retirement in 2015. I edited 4 journals over my career. My rejection rate across those journals varied; in the case of the Quarterly Journal of Speech, I reviewed around 450 essays and published 45 or so. 10% made it through the review process. The central lesson I learned in reviewing manuscripts was to look for the argument being presented – in more specific terms, what is the essay's central reason for being – why should I or anyone read it? Answering that question may be the most important task a writer can accomplish. Knowing something about the kind of essays being published in a specific journal, and paying attention to word restrictions, will also make it easier to create a list of potential venues for the work being submitted. The same applies to searching for a book publisher. If a specific press has published work similar to your research area, that bodes well for their possible interest in reviewing your work.

Service is perhaps under-rated as a potential strength of the discipline. A department that is integrated into the college and university through the service of its faculty on committees and task forces is often recognized and valued within the institution. In addition, faculty who have been pulled from the ranks to serve administrative roles provide clear evidence of a program's commitment to meeting the institution's mission. The work done also lessens any chance that people would question "what is it you do?" The tasks may seem thankless, and at times they are, but networking with faculty from other programs also has the advantage of creating a larger 'congregation.' Challenges can become opportunities for change when the connections are strong; otherwise they simply remain as challenges, with a sense of powerlessness to ever influence change. One of the most important service roles we have, and this returns us to where we started, is advising students. To do this task well, one needs to like students and also see this as an extension of their role as educators. Otherwise, the task becomes onerous and less likely to produce positive outcomes. In my own case, if I did anything in my career well, my role as an advisor may be that one thing. When I was at Maine, I worked for a while as the College "discipline" person – which meant I met with all students on probation or at risk of being suspended or expelled. I knew I was on the right track when students I'd met with would stop by the office with 1-2 other students and ask if I would talk with them. By and large, our students are smarter and more gifted in multiple ways than they give themselves credit for. Working with them as an advisor gives us a chance to push them out of their comfort zones and gain both new experiences and increased

confidence in their own innate abilities. This includes those on probation-and seeing most of them succeed is all the reward one needs.

One last issue: when should we quit? One response to this issue is: it is time to quit when we are no longer nervous when meeting a class on the first day. The sense of wonder and excitement in meeting a new group of students-even when several are either advisees or have been in earlier classes, energizes us as we embark on a new term. When that sense disappears, it is time to consider quitting. Although that sense did not leave me, I realized in my last semester of teaching that it was time for me to go. I was teaching an undergraduate class the last day before Spring Break. As I was showing a video, I noted students with their heads down, and hands below the table working their phones. I stopped the video and did something I'd never before done—I noted that if they had no more respect for their own education than they were showing, or respect for what we were trying to accomplish together in class, they should give up now. I then said that they should not bother showing up for class when they returned from Break. In fact, I preferred that they simply stay away. I assured them I'd figure out something to make sure they could still graduate (as most were seniors), and told them class was over. The first day of class after break came – and they all showed up. I started class by indicating the last time we were together I'd gone on a brief 'rant.' They seemed to agree; I further noted that I did not hold grudges, and while I hoped the reliance on cell phones would not occur during class, we could simply start as if this were a new beginning. At the end of the semester, I was pleasantly surprised by one of the better course evaluations I'd received in some time! One never knows for certain what actions will make a difference!

In bringing this review to a close, you might be able to see that I'm first and foremost student-oriented. We owe it to ourselves to revel in the fact that an email from a former student saying 'you told me I should go to graduate school-well, I'm ready; can you write a letter?' is what keeps us energized as we tackle yet another set of papers, a new class of students, a new advisee—the list goes on. And so should we.

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Testing Relational Turbulence Theory in Friends with Benefits Relationships

James B. Stein
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Lisa J. van Raalte
Paul A. Mongeau

This research applied the tenets of relational turbulence theory (RTT) to friends with benefits relationships (FWBRs). The first part of this study explored how RTT's generative mechanisms (relational uncertainty and perceptions of interdependence) differ between FWBRs and exclusive romantic relationships (ERRs). The second portion of this study tested the propositions of RTT in the unique context of FWBRs by using structural equation modeling (SEM). Results showed that FWB participants perceive significantly higher levels of relational uncertainty and significantly lower perceptions of interdependence, than people in ERRs. The SEM model revealed that, in FWBRs, only partner uncertainty significantly and negatively relates to relationship satisfaction. Similarly, perceptions of partner interference positively related to perceptions of turmoil. Both relationship satisfaction and turmoil negatively associated with avoiding relationship discussions. Results are discussed in terms of theoretical development.

Relational uncertainty (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999) and interdependence (Berscheid, 1983) have long interested communication scholars and represent integral components of relational turbulence theory (RTT: Solomon, Knobloch, Theiss, & McLaren, 2016). Researchers have applied the tenets of RTT to numerous relationship types and contexts (e.g., Knobloch & Theiss, 2010; Solomon & Theiss, 2008; Theiss & Knobloch, 2014), but scholarship has yet to explore RTT in friends with benefits relationships (FWBRs), which are noted for their particularly uncertain and transitional nature (Knight, 2014).

At its core, RTT assumes elevated relational uncertainty and perceptions of interdependence heighten the emotional and cognitive responses to otherwise mundane events (Knobloch, Miller, & Carpenter-Theune, 2007; Knobloch & Solomon, 2002). These heightened responses relate to the amount and valence of communication episodes (Solomon et al., 2016). FWBRs operate under highly uncertain conditions (Knight, 2014) in which interdependence is present (Green & Morman, 2011). Although, FWBRs are an increasingly popular relationship type (Afifi & Faulkner, 2000; Bogle, 2008) they have received little theoretical attention. Relational turbulence theory is an appropriate frame to uncover the nuances of turbulence in FWBRs as well as to differentiate turbulence in FWBRs from exclusive romantic relationships (ERRs).

Relational Turbulence Theory

Relational turbulence theory attempts to explain the ways that people think, emote, and communicate during negative relational conditions. Solomon et al. (2016) define turbulence as a "global and persistent evaluation of the relationship as tumultuous, unsteady, fragile, and chaotic that arises from the accumulation of specific episodes" (p. 12). Turbulence often emerges as a couple experiences relational or personal transitions, such as courtship (Knobloch et al., 2007), post-deployment in military couples (Theiss & Knobloch, 2014), or the transition to empty-nest parenthood (Nagy & Theiss, 2013). Two generative mechanisms contribute to couples' negative outcomes in RTT: *relational uncertainty* and *partner interdependence*. These mechanisms act in tandem, both directly and indirectly influencing cognitions and emotions (Knobloch & Theiss, 2010; Theiss, Knobloch, Checton, & Magsamen-Conrad, 2009).

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Relational Uncertainty

Relational uncertainty (i.e., "questions about the nature of involvement within a relationship" Solomon et al., 2016, p. 5) is composed of three elements: s*elf uncertainty* (the degree to which an individual is confident that he/she cares for, and is committed to, his/her partner), *partner uncertainty* (the extent to which someone believes that his/her partner is committed to and loves him/her), and *relationship uncertainty* (the degree to which an individual feels comfortable with and knowledgeable about the nature of his/her relationship; Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). Self, partner, and relationship uncertainty are proposed to negatively predict cognitive responses, such as relationship satisfaction (Knobloch & Theiss, 2011) and intimacy between partners (Knobloch & Donovan-Kicken, 2006). These cognitions then predict communication variables such as directness of communication (Theiss & Solomon, 2006a) and negatively related to enacted relational talk (Theiss & Nagy, 2013).

Importantly, turbulence scholars are unclear as to the exact relationships that self, partner, and relationship uncertainty have with cognitive outcomes. Turbulence theory asserts that relational uncertainty "undermines the comprehension of specific episodes" (Solomon et al., 2016, p. 7). However, specific relationships can vary based on culture, relationship type, and circumstance (Solomon et al., 2016). As such, it is important to test the functionality of relational uncertainty across a variety of relationship types, including FWBRs.

Interdependence

Interdependence can be understood as the degree to which two people interrupt each other's causal chain of events (Berscheid, 1983). This classification assumes that *partner interference* and *partner facilitation* are seen as influencing factors that contribute to perceptions of interdependence. Partner interference is the degree to which Partner A hinders Partner B in his/her everyday goals (Berscheid, 1983). Partner interference, according to RTT, positively relates to emotions such as jealousy (Theiss & Solomon, 2006b) and perceptions of relational turmoil (Knobloch & Theiss, 2010).

Partner facilitation, on the other hand, is the extent to which Partner A aids partner B in the accomplishment of his/her everyday goals (Berscheid, 1983). Partner facilitation negatively associates with negative emotions (Solomon et al., 2016), such as perceptions of anger, jealousy, and sadness (Knobloch et al., 2007). Thus, partner facilitation predicts emotional responses opposite of partner interference. Like the biased cognitions that arise from relational uncertainty, emotional evaluations are theorized to predict communication episodes as well (Solomon et al., 2016).

Relational turbulence theory argues that relational uncertainty and perceptions of interference are most likely to occur during times of transition or instability (Solomon et al., 2016). Additionally, the theory posits that highly uncertain relationships are the most likely to experience turbulence. One such type of highly uncertain relationship is the FWBR (Bisson & Levine, 2009; Knight, 2014), to be discussed below.

Friends with Benefits Relationships

Friends with benefits relationships involve repeated sexual interaction without the presence or expectation of romantic intentions (Hughes, Morrison, & Asada, 2005; Mongeau, Knight, Williams, Eden, & Shaw, 2013). Friends with benefits relationships are common for young adults, as between 49% and 62% of college students have participated in at least one (Afifi & Faulkner, 2000; Mongeau et al., 2013; Reeder, 2000). Moreover, the number of young adults participating in FWBRs has steadily increased over the last few decades (Perlman & Sprecher, 2012).

The FWBR label covers a wide swath of relational categories ranging from serial hookups, to close friends, and even former romantic partners (Mongeau et al., 2013). Importantly, FWBRs commonly transition across this spectrum, sometimes without the knowledge of either partner (Karlsen & Træen, 2013; Owen & Fincham, 2012). Moreover, FWBRs entail minimal relational talk (Bisson & Levine, 2009; Hughes et al., 2005) and heightened relational uncertainty (Knight, 2014). These relational parameters make FWBRs particularly susceptible to experiences of turbulence, compared to exclusive romantic relationships (ERRs).

FWBRs versus ERRs

The lay assumption is that FWBRs are more casual and less stressful than ERRs. Empirical data has refuted these claims (Hughes et al., 2005). Green and Morman (2011) found that partners in FWBRs desire both romantic and nonsexual interactions just as much as those in ERRs. Additionally, Jonason, Norman, and Richardson (2011) found that FWBRs and ERRs engage in nearly identical frequencies of sexual intercourse; however, ERRs experience more intimate behaviors such as hand holding and cuddling. Thus, FWBRs may desire connection without receiving it. Such an imbalance likely increases relational uncertainty in FWBRs (Knight, 2014) while lowering perceptions of interference facilitation (Hughes et al., 2005).

Although those in FWBRs experience lower levels of communication than those in ERRs (Bisson & Levine, 2009; Bogle, 2008), the mechanisms leading to this conclusion have yet to be uncovered. Relational turbulence theory provides a potential explanation by suggesting that increased levels of relational uncertainty and decreased perceptions of interdependence alter relational cognitions and emotions, ultimately reducing communication. The first two hypotheses of this manuscript test this assertion by comparing levels of relational uncertainty and interdependence between FWBRs and ERRs.

> H1: Individuals in FWBRs experience greater levels of relational uncertainty (self, partner, relationship) than individuals in ERRs.

> H2: Individuals in FWBRs experience lower levels of partner interference and partner facilitation than individuals in ERRs.

Applying RTT to FWBRs

In addition to testing how the generative mechanisms of RTT fluctuate in FWBRs, we also seek to apply those mechanisms to test the tenets of RTT. If FWBRs are as transitional as previous studies suggest (see Owen & Fincham, 2012), they should fit within the predictions of RTT. Specifically, relational uncertainty and perceptions of interference should relate to cognitions and emotions, respectively, which should then associate with frequency of communication.

Cognitions and Emotions

If the tenets of RTT hold true for FWBRs, levels of relational uncertainty should correlate with perceptions of relational quality, such as satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction has been linked to important individual health outcomes (Cohen et al., 1998; Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010) and is often used as a perceptional marker of relational quality. Research has suggested that FWBRs experience moderate to low levels of satisfaction (Green & Morman, 2011; Gusarova, Fraser, & Alderson, 2012). One reason for these modest levels may be due to increased relational uncertainty (Knobloch & Theiss, 2011). Thus, we consider relationship satisfaction as an important outcome of relational uncertainty for both conceptual and theoretical reasons.

Relational turbulence theory proposes that relational uncertainty likely influences relationship satisfaction in transitional relationships such as FWBRs. Such a finding would be important for two reasons. First, increased relational uncertainty may help explain why FWBRs are so dissatisfied (Green & Morman, 2011). Second, testing the association between relational uncertainty and relationship satisfaction in FWBRs would increase the scope and sustainability of RTT, a new theory in need of further testing and clarification. The third hypothesis specifies our theoretical proposal.

> H3: Relational uncertainty (self, partner, relationship) is negatively related to relationship satisfaction in FWBRs.

Similarly, levels of interference and facilitation in FWBRs should associate with emotional reactions, such as the negative emotions associated with perceptions of turmoil (Knobloch & Theiss, 2010). Specifically,

interference should increase negative emotions, whereas facilitation should assuage such emotions. Since interdependence is low in FWBRs (Green & Morman, 2011), a significant relationship between interference/facilitation and negative emotion in FWBRs would be very important for the predictive power of RTT. Although the theory predicts that *heightened* levels of interference/facilitation should increase emotional responses (Solomon et al., 2016), finding the same association in relationships with low perceptions of interdependence would illustrate the strength of the theory. The fourth hypothesis addresses this relationship.

H4a: Perceptions of partner interference are positively related to perceptions of turmoil in FWBRs.

H4b: Perceptions of partner facilitation are negatively related to perceptions of turmoil in FWBRs.

Topic Avoidance as a Communicative Outcome

Topic avoidance is a key communication variable in RTT research, because it pertains to the amount of communicative enactment occurring between couples (Solomon et al., 2016). Knobloch and Carpenter-Theune (2004) observed a positive correlation between relationship uncertainty and topic avoidance. The authors explain that this relationship is potentially due to partners favoring ambiguity over discussing potential relational threats (Afifi & Burgoon, 1998). Knobloch and Carpenter-Theune (2004), however, analyzed the *number* of topics avoided rather than the *type* of topics that are avoided. Our focus is the extent to which FWB partners avoid episodes of relational talk. Research indicates that FWBRs consider relational talk to be highly problematic, with over 80% intentionally avoiding such discussions (Bisson & Levine, 2009; Knight, 2014). Relational turbulence theory (Solomon et al., 2016) contends that such a lack of communication is due to the biased cognitions and heightened emotions experienced by partners.

If RTT can be used to explore the communicative gaps in FWBRs, it is likely that relationship satisfaction (or lack thereof) and perceptions of turmoil contribute to FWB partners' refusal to discuss the nature of their relationship. Satisfied FWBRs should be more likely to discuss their relationship, possibly desiring a transition to an ERR. Similarly, feelings of turmoil should force relational discussions in FWBRs, where partners often desire relational change (Green & Morman, 2011). In other words, we propose that the notably low levels of relational communication in FWBRs (Bisson & Levine, 2009; Knight, 2014) are, in part, due to the unsatisfying nature of FWBRs, and the mundane perceptions of turmoil that they experience.

H5a: Relationship satisfaction is negatively related to topic avoidance in FWBRs.

H5b: Perceptions of turmoil are negatively related to topic avoidance in FWBRs.

Method

Participants and Procedures

After IRB approval from the institution, participants were recruited from communication classes at a large Southwestern university and offered extra credit for participating. To qualify, students had to be in an ERR or an FWBR at the time of participating and at least 18 years old. The sample included 521 participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 21.10$, $SD = 3.44$) with 283 women, 236 men, and two participants reporting their sex as "other." Participants self-identified as White/Caucasian ($n = 339$), Asian ($n = 90$), Hispanic/Latino(a) ($n = 77$), Black/African American ($n = 25$), or Pacific Islander ($n = 11$).

To ensure that participants were clear on the nature of FWBRs, Mongeau and colleague's (2013) definition and descriptions of FWBRs was provided for reference. Respondents were in either an ERR ($n = 319$) or an FWBR ($n = 202$). Those who identified as being in an ERR described their relationship as casually dating ($n = 113$), seriously dating ($n = 193$), or married/engaged ($n = 13$). The average length of relationship for those in ERRs was 17.34 months ($SD = 4.32$). The average relationship length of FWBRs was 9.34 months ($SD = 5.21$).

Instrumentation and Measurement

Relational uncertainty. Knobloch and Solomon's (1999) 19-item scale measured perceptions of relational uncertainty. Each item was accompanied by a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *completely uncertain*; 7 = *completely certain*). The stem for each item ("how certain are you about…") was followed by items designed to measure self uncertainty (e.g., "how much you like your partner"), partner uncertainty (e.g., "how important the relationship is to your partner"), and relationship uncertainty (e.g., "whether or not the relationship will work out in the long run"). Items were coded such that higher scores reflected greater uncertainty. Measures of self uncertainty (α = .89), partner uncertainty (α = .89), and relationship uncertainty (α = .86) were reliable.

Partner interdependence. Participants indicated their agreement on the 10 items from Solomon and Knobloch's (2001) partner influence scale (e.g., "This person helps me to achieve my everyday goals; this person interferes with my school/work duties"). A six-point Likert scale accompanied each item (1 = *strongly disagree*; 6 = *strongly agree*). Both partner interference (α = .93) and facilitation (α = .91) measures were reliable.

Relationship satisfaction. Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew's (1998) measure of relationship satisfaction was used (e.g., "I feel satisfied with our relationship"). A nine-point Likert scale accompanied each of the five items (1 = *strongly disagree*; 9 = *strongly agree*). The measure was reliable (α = .91).

Negative emotions. Portions of Knobloch et al. (2007) measure of relational turmoil were used to assess perceptions of relational turbulence. Participants indicated their agreement with 11 items measured on a 7-point Likert-scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 7 = *strongly agree*) that followed the prompt "at the present time, my relationship is…" (e.g., overwhelming, stressful, frenzied). This measurement was deemed reliable (α = .93).

Topic avoidance. Six items from Baxter and Wilmot's (1985) topic avoidance scale that focused on the nature of the relationship were used for this study. Participants were asked how often they avoided or engaged in discussing the nature of their FWBRs (e.g., "…The state of your relationship"). A seven-point Likert scale accompanied each item (1 = *always avoid discussing*; 7 = *never avoid discussing*). The measure was reliable (α = .91).

Results

Prior to substantive analyses, sex, ethnicity, and relationship length were tested as possible covariates using multiple regression. Both sex and relationship length were significantly related to all five measured variables in this study (R^2 ranged between .02 and .05). Therefore, throughout the analyses, sex and relationship length were controlled for but not displayed in figures or tables. Means, standard deviations, and correlations for each measured variable can be viewed in Table 1.

A multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted to investigate the first two hypotheses. For this analysis, relationship type (ERR or FWBR) was the independent variable and relational uncertainty (self, partner, and relationship) and interdependence (interference and facilitation) were the two dependent variables. To answer H3-H5, structural equation modeling was performed to test the hypothesized relationships between relational uncertainty, interdependence, cognitions, emotions, and topic avoidance. To ensure that the proposed model was appropriate to test through path analysis an initial measurement model was run. This model demonstrated good-to-excellent fit, $\chi^2(830) = 1369.69$; $\chi^2/df = 1.65$; CFI = .92; RMSEA = .057 (95% CI: .053 - .061). Figure 1 illustrates the tested model. During SEM, only the 202 individuals who identified as being in an FWBR were included.

FWBRs versus ERRs

Hypothesis one predicted individuals in FWBRs report greater relational uncertainty (self, partner, relationship) than individuals in ERRs. Participants in FWBRs reported significantly more self uncertainty (M = 3.09, SD = 1.15) than individuals in ERRs (M = 1.74, SD = 0.91), $F(1, 520) = 218.94$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .30$. Similarly, FWBR partners reported significantly higher levels of partner uncertainty (M = 3.41, SD = 1.16) than individuals in ERRs (M = 1.77, SD = 0.95), $F(1, 520) = 303.35$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .37$. Finally, participants in FWBRs reported significantly more relationship uncertainty (M = 3.38, SD = 1.00) than those in ERRs (M = 1.94, SD = 1.17), $F(1, 520) = 243.35$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .35$. These results support H1 and can be viewed in Table 2.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Variables (N = 521)

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Self-uncertainty	---	.36***	.56***	-.17**	-.30***	-.14*	.16*	-.41***
2. Partner-uncertainty		---	.56***	-.08	-.27***	-.41***	.26***	-.27***
3. Relationship-uncertainty			---	-.15*	-.31***	-.33***	.34***	-.35***
4. Partner interference				---	.60***	.21**	-.19**	.47***
5. Partner facilitation					---	.40***	-.37***	.70***
6. Relational satisfaction						---	-.46***	.46***
7. Topic avoidance							---	-.46***
8. Turmoil								---
M	**3.09**	**3.41**	**3.38**	**2.44**	**3.00**	**4.91**	**4.20**	**3.62**
M	1.74	1.77	1.94	2.94	4.33	5.25	5.16	4.87
SD	**1.15**	**1.16**	**1.01**	**1.27**	**1.25**	**1.98**	**1.49**	**1.89**
SD	0.91	1.77	1.17	1.32	1.00	1.63	1.04	1.32

Note. Bolded number represent means and standard deviations for participants in FWBRs. Non-bolded numbers represent means and standard deviations for participants in ERRs. $*p < .05$ $**p < .01$ $***p < .001$

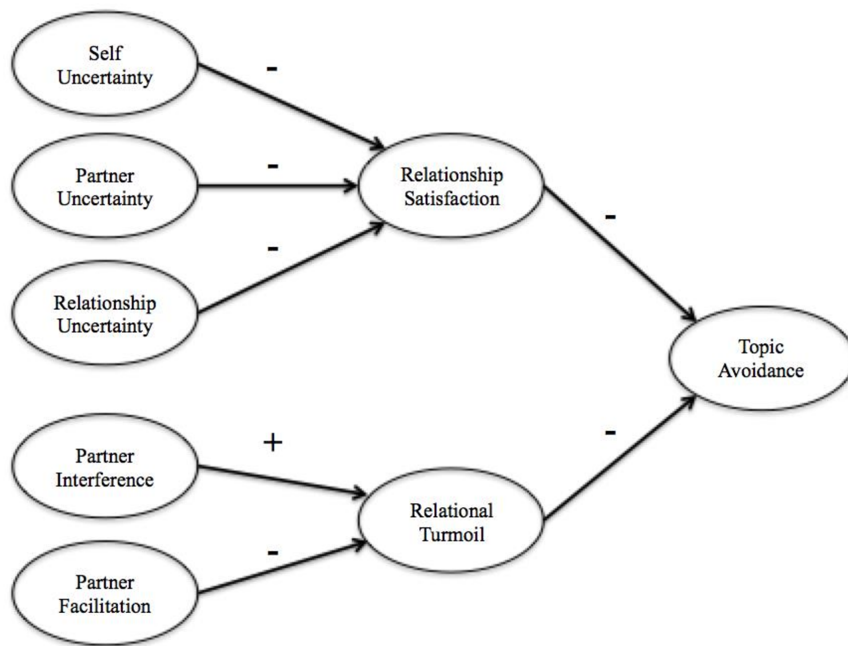

Figure 1. Proposed relationships between relational turbulence variables.

Hypothesis two predicted that participants in FWBRs report less partner interference and partner facilitation than participants in ERRs. For partner interference, FWBR participants reported significantly less interference (M = 2.44, SD = 1.27) than individuals in ERRs, (M = 2.94, SD = 1.32), $F(1, 520) = 31.64$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$. Additionally, participants in FWBRs reported significantly less facilitation (M = 3.00, SD = 1.25) than those in ERRs (M = 4.33, SD = 1.00), $F(1, 520) = 215.51$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .26$. Thus, H2 was supported (see Table 2).

Table 2
MANCOVA Results for FWBRs vs. Exclusive Romantic Relationships (*N = 521)*

Factor	FWBRs	Exclusive Rel.	F	p	η^2
Self- Uncertainty	3.09	1.74	51.31	***	.30
Partner-Uncertainty	3.41	1.77	69.20	***	.37
Relationship-Uncertainty	3.38	1.94	68.74	***	.35
Partner Interference	2.43	2.94	8.48	***	.04
Partner Facilitation	3.00	4.33	50.79	***	.26

Note. Sex and relationship length are controlled for, but not shown, in this table. ***$p < .001$.

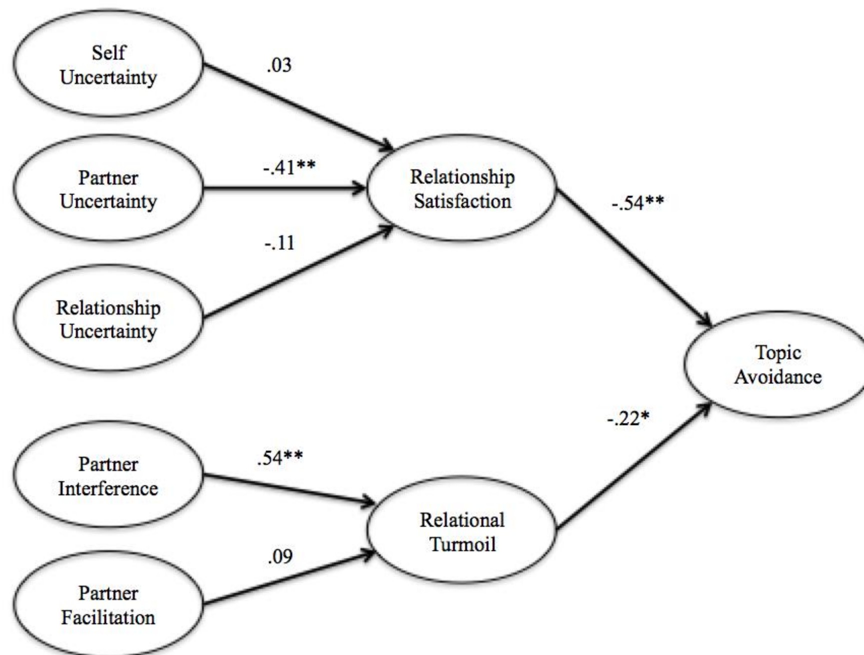

Figure 2. Results of path analysis using SEM (N = 202). **$p < .001$, *$p < .01$. Relationship length and participant sex are controlled for, but not shown in this model. Results represent standardized coefficients.

Testing RTT in FWBRs

To ensure acceptable model fit, several test of fit indices were implemented. First χ^2/df was assessed, with values under 5.0 indicating good fit and under 3.0 indicating excellent fit (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). Second the comparative fit index (CFI) was used, with values at or above .90 indicating adequate fit and .95 indicating excellent fit (Hu & Bentler, 1995; 1999). Third, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was evaluated; with values under .08 indicating good fit and values under .05 indicating excellent fit (Kline, 2005). To gauge R^2, the sum of squared correlations was observed for all endogenous variables.

For the model hypothesized in Figure 1, results demonstrated good-to-excellent fit, $\chi^2(846) = 1437.30$; χ^2/df = 1.70; CFI = .91; and RMSEA = .061 (95% CI: .054 - .064). Relating to H3, partner (but not self or relationship) uncertainty significantly and negatively related to relationship satisfaction (β = -.41). The three elements of

relational uncertainty resulted in a total R^2 of .22 (.18 due to partner uncertainty). For H4, partner interference (but not partner facilitation) significantly and positively related to perceptions of turmoil (β = .54). Interference and facilitation combined for an R^2 of .37 (.35 due to partner interference). Finally, for H5, both perceptions of turmoil (β = -.22) and relationship satisfaction (β = -.54) negatively and significantly related to levels of topic avoidance. Relationship satisfaction and perceptions of turmoil generated an R^2 value of .30 (.26 due to relationship satisfaction). Therefore, H3 and H4 were partially supported, whereas H5 was fully supported.

Discussion

The goal of this manuscript was to test the RTT in two ways. First, we aimed to demonstrate that FWBRs are an appropriate relational category to test RTT's suppositions. Second, we sought to apply RTT to a strictly FWBR sample. Results demonstrate that levels of relational uncertainty and interdependence are significantly different between FWBRs and ERRs. Moreover, the generative mechanisms of RTT (relational uncertainty and interdependence) appear to function in distinct ways when applied to FWBRs. These findings provide important implications for theory development and testing, to be discussed below.

FWBRs Versus ERRs

Considerable research indicates that FWBRs are flooded with relational ambiguities (Knight, 2014), transitional trajectories (Hughes et al., 2005), and differing motivations (Karlsen & Træen, 2013). As such, it is not surprising that individuals in FWBRs experienced significantly more self, partner, and relationship uncertainty than individuals in ERRs (H1). We cannot yet claim that these differences are *because* of relational type, as there was no random assignment. However, our results fit the axioms of RTT, which posit that less committed, implicit relationships are more likely to experience relational uncertainty than monogamous, highly interdependent relationships (Solomon et al., 2016).

Consistent with H2, FWBRs partners reported significantly less interference and facilitation from partners than did people in ERRs. Group differences were considerably smaller for interference (η^2 = .04) than facilitation (η^2 = .26), possibly because facilitating behaviors are viewed as more intentional than interfering behaviors (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989; Nagy & Theiss, 2013). Moreover, traditional relational maintenance behaviors in ERRs, such as public affection and shared activities (Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1993), might be considered interfering behaviors for FWBRs, who often opt for non-romantic, non-exclusive partnerships (Hughes et al., 2005). Thus, the source and nature of interfering behaviors may differ across relational typologies.

In sum, our results demonstrate that FWBRs experience considerably higher levels of uncertainty than ERRs. Similarly, FWB partners perceive less interdependence than those in ERRs. Thus, there is ample evidence to suggest that the propositions of RTT function differently in FWBRs compared to other relationship types, such as military couples (Theiss & Knobloch, 2014), couples grappling with depression (Knobloch & Knobloch-Fedders, 2010), or even empty nest couples (i.e., adjusting to fewer family members in the household; Nagy & Theiss, 2013). The next section articulates the distinct functionality of RTT in FWBRs.

Testing RTT in FWBRs

The creators of RTT articulate that although the turbulence process begins with heightened levels of relational uncertainty and interdependence, the exact relationships between these measured constructs and ensuing cognitions, emotions, and communicative outcomes, however, are unclear (Solomon et al., 2016). Testing the specific relationships among the measured variables in RTT across different relationships, cultures, and transitions is a necessary step toward developing and refining the theory. The crux of our study accomplished this by considering FWBRs as a distinct relational category in which the tenets of RTT ensue.

Relational uncertainty and cognitions. Together, self, partner, and relationship uncertainty explained a substantial amount of variance in relationship satisfaction (R^2 =.22); however, when examined individually, only partner uncertainty was a negative significant indicator of this cognition. This finding is particularly important for two reasons. First, it speaks to the ways in which RTT functions differently for different relationships. RTT's creators note that, typically, the effects of partner uncertainty on biased cognitions are mediated by relationship

uncertainty (see Solomon, Weber, & Steuber, 2010). In this case, no such associations were found. Solomon and colleagues (2016) concede that the intricacies of relational uncertainty require further probing and specification. Our results are a first step toward this goal.

Second, our results speak to the ways that FWB partners perceive their relationships. Specifically, satisfaction in FWBRs appears to hinge on how people perceive their partners feel, rather than how they themselves feel. Prior studies show that people in FWBRs desire relational closeness (Green & Morman, 2011) and are often motivated by emotional connection (Hughes et al., 2005); however, people often settle for FWBRs when they are unsure if their partners feel the same way (Karleson & Træen, 2013). Our results suggest that partner uncertainty is a major generative mechanism in the relational quality of FWBRs, although self and relationship uncertainty are not.

Interdependence and emotions. Relational turbulence theory predicts that perceptions of interference and facilitation spark intense emotional reactions, although in opposite directions (Solomon et al., 2016). In this study, interference was a significant and positive indicator of the negative emotions associated with feelings of turmoil (e.g., stress, frenzy, anger). Again, this finding highlights the importance of exploring the tenets of RTT in different types of relationships. Turbulence research often reports that partner interference more frequently and strongly relates to communicative outcomes, both directly (Theiss et al., 2009) and indirectly (Theiss & Solomon, 2006a). Although FWB partners experienced significantly less interference than people in ERRs, interference appears to be just as important in contributing to negative emotions in both relationships.

Facilitation, on the other hand, was not related to the negative emotions surrounding relational turmoil in this study. Theoretically, this does not necessarily run perpendicular to the axioms of RTT; however, it does draw attention to the inner workings of RTT's generative mechanisms. The FWB participants in this study perceived dramatically less facilitation than those in ERRs. It may be that FWBRs entail less facilitating behavior (e.g., Jonason et al., 2011) and therefore do not react negatively in its absence. In this way, the nature of a relationship, in part, dictates which of the generative mechanisms in RTT are most likely to influence cognitive and/or emotional outcomes.

Cognitions, emotions, and topic avoidance. Perhaps the most intriguing finding is that both satisfaction and turmoil negatively contributed to the avoidance of relational talk in FWBRs. Satisfaction and turmoil were both positively associated with increased relational talk. Previous research has demonstrated that FWBRs involve minimal relational communication (Bisson & Levine, 2009; Knight, 2014), but this manuscript offers a theoretical explanation as to why this is the case. It is particularly interesting that both positive cognitions (satisfaction) and negative emotions (turmoil) relate to decreased topic avoidance. Given that FWBRs are particularly dissatisfying relationships (Green & Morman, 2011; Hughes et al., 2005), the relationship between such (dis)satisfaction and the avoidance of relational talk is made clear.

Similarly, it appears that the lay-belief that FWBR partners operate on a no strings attached mentality (Bogle, 2008) can help explain their propensity to avoid relational talk, despite desiring relational outcomes (Green & Morman, 2011). It may be that the notably lower levels of turmoil in FWBRs (see Table 1) contribute to the topic avoidance that FWBR partners experience throughout their relationships (Bisson & Levine, 2009). It may be that FWB partners prioritize sex over platonic and romantic desires. As such, they avoid discussing the nature of their relationships, despite being dissatisfied and perceiving moderate levels of turmoil.

Most importantly, the findings of his study, as a whole, demonstrate the viability and falsifiability of RTT. By expanding the scope and displaying the nuanced relationships within RTT, this study increases the theory's explanatory power. The crux of RTT's suppositions centers on episodes of communication. That this portion of the theory received the most consistent support reaffirms the importance of cognitions and emotions as determinants of communication (in this case, lack thereof).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although the current findings shed light on a number of important theoretical developments, the study is not without limits. The sample in the current study was relatively homogeneous in terms of age and ethnicity. Future research should explore the ways in which other age groups besides 18-24-year-old college students engage in FWBRs. More importantly, future tests of RTT must explore different cultures and relationships. Such replications are essential for cementing the propositions of this new theory.

A second limitation is the cross-sectional nature of the study. Although the results are interesting and provide important contributions to the literature on RTT and FWBRs, the methodology of the study does not allow for tests of causality between RTT predictors and relational quality outcomes. Solomon and colleagues (2016) allude to the necessity for time-ordered studies of RTT's axioms ad propositions. Future studies should utilize longitudinal designs to examine these associations.

In sum, this study provides a unique relational category in which the tenets of RTT were tested. Results suggest that FWBR partners differ from ERR partners in their experiences of relational uncertainty, as well as perceptions of interference and facilitation. As a result, perhaps, FWBRs do not necessarily experience turbulence in the same ways that ERRs do. Our results call for a more nuanced approach to the study of turbulence and a more theoretical approach to the study of FWBRs.

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"I Knew College Was in the Cards for Me:" The Role of Memorable Messages in Foster Youths' Post-Secondary Education Decisions

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Foster youth attend college at a very low rate (3-11%) compared to those from the general population (Day, Dworsky, Fogarty & Domashek, 2011). This is unfortunate considering that college increases their earning potential and helps them to develop skills associated with being a successful adult (Okpych, 2012). This study was conducted to better understand the messages foster youth receive about college and the impact those messages have on their post-secondary education decisions. Through qualitative interviews, researchers investigated the memorable messages foster youth received that encouraged or discouraged them in their pursuit of a post-secondary degree. Specifically, interviews focused on messages foster youth received from their parents/caregivers, peers, school counselors, and social workers. Qualitative data analysis uncovered three message types: 1) supportive/motivational messages, 2) cautionary messages, and 3) discouraging messages. Findings suggest that supportive messages from foster parents and school counselors play a vital role in foster youths' educational decisions.

Keywords: foster youth, communicative messages, higher education, memorable messages

Foster Youth and College Success

In 2014, there were 415,129 children in foster care in the United States, a 4% increase since 2012 (AFCARS, 2015). Courtney, Piliavan, Grogan-Kaylor, and Nesmith (2001) found that 63% of former foster youth reported their desire to complete college, yet despite high aspirations, foster care youth do not attend college at a rate comparable to people outside of the foster system. High school graduation, advancement to a four-year college or university, securing steady employment and earning a living wage are all marks of successful achievement following emancipation from the foster care system (Merdinger, Hines, Osterling, & Wyatt, 2005; Naccoroto, Brophy, & Courtney, 2010). However, only 3-11% of foster youth will obtain a post-secondary degree (Casey Family Programs, 2010; Reilly, 2003). Foster youth are faced with many barriers that can hinder them in their pursuit of a college degree when compared to the "average" college student, including maltreatment and placement in restrictive settings (Sheehy et al., 2001), multiple placements and associated changes in schools attended (Courtney et al., 2001), inconsistent social support, low educational expectations from caregivers and the tracking of youth into vocational rather than college education (Collins, 2001), and lack of access to educational assistance or college preparation classes and advising (Glantz & Gushwa, 2013).

Unrau, Font, and Rawls (2012) found that foster care youth in college were less academically prepared and had lower high school and college GPAs than the general population of college students at a four-year university despite being more academically motivated and positive about the college experience. A review of the literature on high school completion rates of former foster youth indicates that they remain behind their peers in high school and GED graduation rates (Benedetto, 2005).

Foster youths' family environment, including a lack of family guidance, can create unique challenges that may impact the likelihood of college enrollment and completion among students from foster care (Hernandez & Naccarato, 2010; Unrau et al., 2012). Family instability, experienced by many foster youth due to changes in foster care placement, is strongly associated with many adolescent outcomes that negatively predict college enrollment and completion, including diminished academic trajectories and performance (Cavanagh & Fomby, 2012). Students from traumatic family environments may also face social and emotional difficulties such as anxiety, depression, stress, and lack of social support, which inhibit their ability to thrive academically (Casey Family Services, 2003).

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It is increasingly necessary to complete higher education to secure a satisfactory level of economic stability, which includes adequate benefits and a level of job security (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010; Porter, 2002). College graduates are likely to increase their lifetime earning potential by more than $480,000 on average (Peters, Dworsky, Courtney, & Pollack, 2009). College can affect nearly every aspect of an individual's life, including knowledge levels, health status, social relationships, and value systems (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). College students report growing in their personal and practical competence, cognitive complexity, academic skills, and altruism (Kuh, 1993) that can come from encountering challenges during college life. There is very little known about how communication about college may impact foster youths' college decisions. To explore this phenomenon, the researchers aimed to describe memorable messages that former foster youth receive about college that may have impacted their decision to attend, remain in, and graduate from college.

Former and current foster youth are faced with many barriers in their pursuit of a college degree; regardless of those barriers, many of them still want to pursue a college degree. However, there is limited research exploring why some foster youth decide to attend college and others do not. Memorable messages have been explored in a variety of contexts such as college success (Kranstuber, Carr, Hosek, 2012) and memorable messages first-generation college students receive from their mentors (Wang, 2012). Communication scholars have yet to explore the impact memorable messages have on the educational decisions of foster youth. Stohl (1986) posits that people can recall memorable messages for a long time and perceive these messages to have an impact on their life decisions. The purpose of this study is to explore the role of memorable messages about college in foster youths' post-secondary educational decisions.

Memorable Messages

The body of communication research focusing on important communicative messages people receive and remember centers on the idea of "memorable messages." Memorable messages are "verbal messages which may be remembered for extremely long periods of time and which people perceive as a major influence on the course of their lives" (Knapp, Stohl, & Reardon, 1981, p. 27). Memorable messages involve brief prescriptive oral commands (Knapp et al., 1981) that often come from an authority figure (Ellis & Smith, 2004). Memorable messages have two characteristics: the individual recalls the message for a long period of time, and the individual perceives the messages as having an important influence on his or her life (Knapp et al., 1981; Stohl, 1986). The literature on memorable messages provides a useful framework for studying the messages foster youth receive about post-secondary education because memorable messages have an impact on recipients and thus may represent the most influential message foster youth receive regarding education. Memorable messages help individuals maintain or enhance personal standards (Smith & Ellis, 2001). Nazione et al. (2011) argue that memorable messages can produce action. Memorable messages contribute to the process of socializing people into organizational and personal identities (Rubinky & Cooke-Jackson, 2016). Additionally, Heisler (2014) found that memorable messages influence identity development and beliefs.

Memorable messages are remembered specifically due to the impact they have on receivers. Messages that foster youth receive about post-secondary education may play a vital role in closing the gap of foster youth college enrollment. For instance, Wang (2014) found that memorable messages from parents and family play a major role in the college success of first- generation college students, who have often been compared to former foster youth (Batsche et al., 2014). Batsche and colleagues found that students' experiences in Know How 2GO, a program for first-generation college students (FGCS), are similar to experiences of youth who had been in foster care. Engle & Tinto (2008) reported that FGCS were nearly four times as likely to leave higher education institutions without a degree when compared to their counterparts. This report also discovered that FGCS also face more challenges to graduate from college than non-first-generation college students. These experiences are comparable to those of former foster youth, therefore it is likely that they receive similar memorable messages. First-generation college students often retain memorable messages about college, including talk about pursuing academic success, valuing school, increasing future potential, making decisions, accepting support and encouragement, counting on family, and recognizing the importance of family. Kranstuber et al. (2012) studied parent memorable messages on indicators of college success, themes identified included: work hard play hard, balance work, college is necessary, and my two cents. This study shed light on the importance of positive and negative memorable messages, it also highlights

the family as a significant source of memorable messages. Familial memorable messages have been found to impact both identity and sexual behavior. Kellas (2010) describes family as an important site for memorable messages that may impact behavior and self-concept.

Memorable messages can remain salient throughout students' college experiences and post-college careers. Thus, messages can help to support and socialize students (Wang, 2014). However, Batsche et al.'s (2014) study focused on positive messages youth received about college, but little is known about those messages from family that discourage and even dissuade potential college students. While memorable message can be negative, there is limited communication research exploring the negative messages that people receive and the impact those messages have on the receiver.

While there is no research that directly focuses on the memorable messages foster youth receive from their family, family dynamics can affect educational success. For instance, family instability is strongly associated with a host of adolescent outcomes that negatively predict college enrollment and completion, including diminished academic trajectories and performance (Cavanagh & Fomby, 2012). Foster youth are likely to experience instability within their families due to changes in foster care placement. As previously discussed, a family can play a major role in the educational decisions of youth. The messages from family to foster youth have not been studied, yet previous research has implications that those messages can be very important.

Messages from teachers and school counselors can also serve as determination and inspiration for students who decide to pursue their college degree (Wang, 2014). Ellis (2000) found that "the process by which teachers communicate to students that they are valuable, significant individuals motivated students to pursue a college education" (p. 265). Many first-generation college students, a population whose collegiate experiences are similar to former foster youth, mentioned that their high school teachers and counselors supported them in their college application (Gist, Wiley, & Erba, 2018). School counselors are the primary facilitators of college transition for many students. McDonough (2005) argued that there is no professional more important to improving college knowledge than the high school counselor. Prior research suggests that school counselors facilitate college participation by encouraging college aspirations (Holcomb-McCoy, 2010), aiding students' academic participation, guiding students through the college application process (Bryan, Holcomb, Moore, & Day, 2011), educating parents role in college planning, and ensuring that schools possess and pursue a college mission (McDonough, 1997). While school counselors play a vital role in the college planning of the typical high school student, there is no research on the role that counselors play in former foster youth's views and decisions about college.

Furthermore, of all messages teenagers may receive about college, the messages from their peers seem to have a large impact. Messages from peers can influence or deter students in their pursuit of a post-secondary education. Holland (2011) found that peers have a noteworthy impact on their friend's academic activities and their post-secondary education planning and experiences. Peers also have the potential to impact how students think about, value, and engage in academic activity. Students who have limited or sporadic access to college-educated adults may heavily rely on thoughts, opinions, and actions of their peers (Griffin, Allen, Kimra-Walsh & Yamura, 2007). Students are more likely to mirror the choices of their peers when it comes to social and academic activities. In fact, students are more likely to enroll in a four-year college or university if their friends have done the same and have similarly encouraged them (Sokatch, 2006).

Foster parents and family, peers, and school counselors all serve an important role in foster youth lives and their educational decisions. To capture the memorable messages foster youth receive about post-secondary education, we posed the following question:

> **RQ1**: What, if any, memorable messages have former and current foster youth received from their family members/caregivers, peers, and school counselors that encouraged or discouraged them in pursuing a post-secondary degree?

Taken holistically, these messages likely play a role in foster youths' views toward college, the decisions they make about attending college, and the likelihood they are to stay in and graduate from college, to some degree. Thus, to understand the overall role that former foster youth believe these messages play in their decisions about post-secondary education, we asked the following:

RQ2: How impactful did former foster youth believe that the memorable messages were on their decisions about pursuing post-secondary education?

Method

The researchers used a qualitative research design to answer the two questions. Qualitative research is the collection of extensive narrative data in a naturalistic setting (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). Qualitative research is ideal for discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships and communication styles (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Collecting and analyzing qualitative data allowed us to give voice to the foster youths' experiences, which often just appear as aggregate statistical data in various reports.

Participants

The targeted population was adults between the ages of 18 and 28 who had grown up in the foster care system. After receiving university IRB approval, participants were recruited through convenience (Dörnyei, 2007) and snowball sampling (Babbie, 2013). Participants were recruited initially through various social and networking events sponsored by local universities geared towards creating a community for foster youth. After some participants were initially identified, they were encouraged to share the information about the study with any acquaintances who were former or current foster youth.

Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted, five with former foster youth who attended college and three with former foster youth who decided not to attend college. Of the five participants who attended college, all attended a four-year institution. Two of the participants attended the same university and the other three attended different institutions. Therefore, participants were from four different institutions. The mean age of the participants was 24 (between 18 and 25 years old), and one participant was male and the other seven were female. Of the eight participants, six were African American, one was biracial (African American and Caucasian), and one was Caucasian. Institution board review granted approval to conduct more interviews, but due to the population of study, the researchers were presented with many challenges in reaching those who had not attended college and spent time in foster care. Due to certain policies, these individuals and their information are protected, making it almost impossible to reach without the help of social service agencies.

Procedures

Using Rubin and Rubin's (2012) guidelines for producing an interview protocol, we created a semi-structured protocol of open-ended questions. Participants were questioned about their decision-making process of whether to pursue a college degree and asked them to identify the encouraging and discouraging messages they received from parents/caregivers, school counselors, peers, and social workers when deciding if they would pursue a post-secondary degree. In determining if the message was encouraging or discouraging, researchers specifically asked participants their perception of the message (whether it was encouraging or discouraging them to them).

Participants were required to consent to the study prior to the interview. Interviews ranged in time from 30 to 45 minutes. Interviews were recorded using digital recorders and later transcribed, yielding 62 double-spaced pages of transcripts. All names and references to schools or cities were changed to protect confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) define qualitative data analysis as "working with data, organizing them, and breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (p. 153). Thematic analysis was the most appropriate method for making sense of the data, as the "coherence of ideas rests with the analyst who has rigorously studied how different ideas or components fit together in a meaningful way when linked together" (Leininger, 1985, p. 60). Themes bring together "components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone" (Leininger, 1985, p. 60). Furthermore, thematic analysis allowed us to form a comprehensive picture of participants' collective experiences.

The researchers used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide for conducting a thematic analysis. Phase one consists of familiarizing oneself with the data. Following this process, the first researcher transcribed the recorded interviews and read them twice, making notes in the margins on similarities and ideas that stood out. Phase

two of the guide is to generate initial codes, meaning that the researcher codes interesting features of the data. To follow this step, the researchers highlighted encouraging and discouraging messages from parents, peers, school counselors, and social workers and looked for patterns in the data. The third phase is to search for and create a list of potential themes. Phase four requires researchers to review and refine the list of themes by examining patterns within each theme and considering the importance of the theme in relation to the entire set of data. In the next phase, the researchers defined and named themes (in this phase, six initial themes were refined into three themes). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that when defining and naming, one should identify the story that each theme tells and determine how it fits in the overall story of the data. We selected excerpts and wrote the final scholarly report in the sixth phase.

Findings

In response to the first research question, three specific memorable message types emerged from the data: supportive/motivational, cautionary, and discouraging messages.

Supportive/Motivational Messages

Supportive/motivational messages were messages that provided encouragement and emotional support as well as stimulated interest or enthusiasm for attending college. These messages also provided foster youth with information about college. Foster youth who did not attend college also received supportive/motivational messages; these messages offered support of their decision to pursue other routes beside college. Parents/caregivers, counselors, and peers were most likely to share supportive/motivational messages. There were two types of supportive/motivational messages: encouraging and informational messages.

Encouraging messages. The first type, encouraging messages, explicitly stated support and encouragement for whichever decision participants (i.e., college or no college) made. For example, Laura, a 20-year-old African American woman who attends college, shared the following encouraging message given to her by her peers “Go to college and get the substance you need, use that and go into the world and do great things” (2, 81-83 – *please note: numerical notations after each excerpt reflects interview number and transcript line numbers*). Kathryn, a 19-year-old Caucasian foster youth who is currently a college student at a mid-western university, shared an encouraging message from her foster parents: “You can do it, it will be a big step. It’s a huge transition but we’re not going anywhere” (3, 41-42). This message reassured Kathryn that she will succeed during this transition. This message from her foster parents also explicitly stated their support by telling her that they would be there for her during college.

Participants who did not go to college also received encouraging messages from their parents/caregivers. Although she decided not to attend college, Rae, a 19-year-old former foster youth, shared an encouraging message about college she received from her foster parents.

> “Follow my heart and do what makes me happy.” Because I already told them I don’t think college is what I want to do and they just encouraged me to “find another path” and that’s when I found beauty school and they just supported me with that. (6, 36-39)

While she did not decide to attend college, Rae felt supported in her decision by her parents because they encouraged her to follow her heart and do what makes her happy. Although this message did not encourage Rae to pursue college, it expressed support of her decision not to attend and encouraged her to find a path that would make her happy.

Informational messages. The second type of supportive/motivational message was informational messages, which provided foster youth with information about college such as applying for financial aid and completing college applications. Parents and school counselors were most likely to send these messages to former foster youth. Kayla, a 24-year-old former foster youth who attended college, shared informational support from her school counselor. She explained that “She would actually have us sit on our computer, type in the colleges that we were thinking about and look at different resources and financial aid and what type of classes they were offering

and what we would major in" (4, 96-99). Kayla's school counselor not only provided her with information about college, but she also guided her through the process of finding a major and picking classes.

Beyond explaining how to apply for financial aid and other college-readiness behaviors, four participants gave examples of informational support related to how college would improve their lives. For instance, Sarah, a 25-year-old African American foster youth who attended college and is now pursuing her Master's degree, discussed some of the information she received about college from her aunt/caregiver. "She shared with me that she felt like by me going to college, I would have more options and it would just be best for me to continue my education" (7, 38-39). Another participant, Mario, an 18-year-old former foster youth who decided not to attend college shared an informational message he received from his peers. "You make more money once you go to college and life changes for the better" (8, 47-48). Both messages provided participants with information on opportunities they would gain through college.

All five participants who attended college mentioned that they had to go to college, that they were always expected to attend college, and that they always knew that college was "in the cards" (5, 156) for them. These types of messages typically came from parents/caregivers. Not only do these messages serve as support and motivation to attend college for foster youth, but they also have provided information about college and encouragement for other alternatives besides college.

Cautionary Messages

The second type of memorable message that foster youth received was cautionary messages that warned foster youth about the repercussions of not attending college. Participants reported that these messages were forcibly delivered and very convincing. Participants often saw these messages as negative because the messages seemed to convey that they had no choice – going to college was what they *had* to do. Kayla, for instance, recalled school counselors who warned her about school loans and debt. She recalled that "that they were just sticklers about being sure of what you wanted to do in a sense. Yea, I think it was kind of a little bit of too much pressure" (4, 113-116).

Most cautionary messages came from parents/caregivers. Participants did not recall any cautionary messages from peers or social workers. Crystal, a 22-year-old former foster youth who currently attends college shared a cautionary message from her dad: "If you don't work hard and do all you can, you're going to be a failure in life, you're not going to go anywhere, and end up working at McDonalds" (5, 53-55). She believed the purpose of his message was to warn her that she needed to attend college if she wanted to be successful in life (using "working at McDonalds" as a sign of failure). In addition, Kayla shared some cautionary messages she received from her parents as she was making the decision to pursue college. She recalled messages like "Go to school so you don't struggle. Go to school so you don't end up like me [her mom]. You will have better opportunities" (4, 27-28). Sarah also received cautionary messages from both her grandmother and her school counselors about her school choice. She recalled:

> I want to say for a couple of schools that I chose, I know they were kind of looking at them like "Oh well that's kind of known as a party school." They were trying to sway my choice. But I think they were just being cautious. (7, 112-114)

Although this message seemed to express concern for her school choice, their cautionary message interfered with Sarah's personal decision-making.

Cautionary messages were almost just as common as supportive/motivational messages. These messages warned foster youth about the consequences of not attending college, the responsibilities of attending college, and the outcomes of their school choice. Participants perceived these messages to be extremely convincing in their decision-making about college. Participants viewed cautionary messages as negative because the choice to attend college was presented as more of a demand and their only option.

Discouraging Messages

Discouraging messages was the third type of message that emerged from the data. Participants viewed these messages as unsupportive as they were deciding if they would pursue a post-secondary education. There were two

types of discouraging messages: adverse and dissuading. Participants shared adverse and dissuading messages from their parents/caregivers, peers, and their school counselors.

Adverse messages. Foster youth perceived adverse messages to be blatantly negative, mean-spirited, and emotionally harmful. These messages lacked support and encouragement during their decision-making process. For instance, Sarah's grandmother who fostered and then adopted her conveyed this adverse message because of Sarah's choice to major in Social Work:

> My grandma would say stuff like "you're just like your momma, you're going to end up like her." I was just like "Ok, you don't think I'm going to finish college or something is going to happen because we both choose the same major, but she didn't finish." (7, 53-59)

Marie, a 25-year-old former foster youth, who did not attend college, recalled an adverse message from her caregiver that directly impacted her decision to not attend college. She recalled that on multiple occasions, her foster mother would tell her "you're too dumb and too stupid for college" (1, 43). Marie reflected that, "she just messed me up so bad that I started to believe that I wasn't smart enough for anything, especially college and soon I dropped out of high school" (1, 121-122). Participants perceived these messages to be mean-spirited and emotionally harmful as they made decisions about college.

Dissuading messages. Dissuading messages were not as harmful as adverse message and did not always explicitly include statements about foster youths' inabilities, but overall, they did not motivate participants. The messages seemed to result in foster youths' loss of confidence and enthusiasm for pursuing a college degree. For instance, when deciding if he should take a year off after high school, Mario's dad said: "You're not going to have any money if you go to college" (8, 37). Mario's dad did not tell him to skip college but his message did not motivate him to attend college either. Crystal received a similar message from one of her peers and her school counselor as she was deciding whether and where to attend college. "Maybe college isn't for you" (5, 101) is what one of her peers shared with her when she was struggling in a class. Her school counselors told her that she should "Be a little more realistic with your goals, come down a couple of notches" (5, 138). Although Crystal did not believe that these people were trying to hurt her by providing these messages, and these messages did not interfere with Crystal's decision to attend college, they were not encouraging. Participants considered these messages to be dissuading because they were not supportive of attending college. While both adverse and dissuading messages were different in form, they both overall discouraged foster youth from pursuing a college degree.

Impact of Messages

In response to the second research question, data analysis revealed that messages impacted participants differently depending on their post-secondary education decisions. Discouraging messages appeared to impact most strongly foster youth who did not attend college. Marie, who did not attend college, shared that the adverse messages she received from her foster mom had the biggest impact on her decision not to attend college:

> I guess it just led me to believe that I wasn't ever going to be good for nothing. Um, the way I was treated, the way I was talked about. The way I was embarrassed, it was a lot. Um, I'd say I take part in some of it. But I say living in a place where you get belittled all the time had an impact on what I did with my life. (1, 86-89)

Mario, who did not attend college, also shared how a discouraging message from his foster dad about money impacted his decision not to attend college. "I didn't want to go to college if I wasn't going to have any money, I was going to make money first then go to college. That's why I didn't go" (8, 84-85).

Supportive/motivational and cautionary messages seemed to be most impactful for foster youth who attended college. Demonstrating the power of supportive/motivational messages, Crystal shared a message she received from school officials and how that encouraged her to pursue a college degree:

> One of the messages that teachers who knew me would tell me was to "put it to use, make something of it." So, I can argue in a classroom all day long but until I get a degree in that field or work in that field, it's

> really not going to do a whole lot. Them knowing me as the person I am and the things I'm interested in and then telling me and encouraging me to do something with it is one of the most positive things and that's what really pushed me to go into my major and minor. Definitely putting my skills to use and using what I got, teachers telling me that. (5, 162-167)

This message not only impacted her decision to attend college, but it also impacted what major she would pursue in college. Kayla, who attended college, shared that the cautionary messages from her foster parents about the likelihood of her struggling if she did not attend college impacted her decision to attend college. "I guess I probably got hung up on the 'You don't want to be struggling' type of messages. 'You don't want, I guess you don't want to have less opportunities'" (4, 122-124).

While supportive/motivational messages from foster parents seem to be most influential on participants that did attend college, one participant who did not attend college reflected on the influence her foster parents' supportive message had on her decision to not attend college. Rae said that the message from her foster parents to "follow your heart and do what makes you happy" (6, 36-37) had the biggest impact on her decision to not attend college. Rae further explained why these messages impacted her decision not to attend college and states the importance of the supportive message:

> I guess it would the messages from my parents because they were the biggest influences in my life. Them supporting me in doing what I wanted to do. I feel like if they weren't supportive of that it would definitely be a lot harder and maybe I would've thought about going to college more, if they weren't as encouraging. (119-123)

Most participants who attended college shared that discouraging messages had the least impact on their decision to attend college. However, some shared that these discouraging messages actually gave them more determination to attend college. Crystal recalled gaining motivation from her school counselor's discouraging message: "And what my school counselor said as far as college not being for me. That didn't really have an impact on me not going, it made me more determined to go" (5, 172-173). Despite the discouragement she may have received from her school counselor, Crystal was determined to attend college.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to capture the memorable messages foster youth received from parents/caregivers, peers, school counselors, and social workers about pursuing a post-secondary education and to understand the impact of these messages on college decisions. Three message types emerged from the data: supportive/motivational, cautionary, and discouraging. Messages from parents/caregivers and school counselors had the biggest impact on whether to pursue a post-secondary education. Peers seemed to provide the least number of memorable messages.

Implications

The findings lead to three important implications for communication and for specific members of the foster system.

Influence of memorable messages. This study highlights the importance of memorable messages in foster youths' lives. The literature on memorable messages states that these messages "may be remembered for extremely long periods of time" and "people perceive [these messages] as a major influencer on the course of their lives" (Knapp et al., 1981, p. 27). All participants in this study had already transitioned from high school and had either pursued college or joined the work force. Regardless of whether they attended college, all participants vividly remembered messages that they received particularly from parents/caregivers and school counselors as they were making decisions on whether to attend college, and these messages seemed to play in their post-secondary education decisions. In addition, data revealed both positive and negative types of memorable messages. Possibly expanding the memorable messages literature to examine the negative messages could make the memorable message framework more applicable to a variety of communication contexts. Specifically, using the memorable message

framework in more interpersonal and family communication research could allow communication scholars to understand the outcomes related to these messages.

Nazione et al. (2011) argue that memorable messages can produce action in individuals; in the case of this study, the action was attending college or not, and regardless of whether participants attended college, these messages impacted them. Those who decided not to attend college shared that discouraging messages impacted their decision the most. For example, Mario, a foster youth who did not attend college shared how the message "you're not going make any money if you go to college" (8, 37) from his foster dad had the greatest impact on his decision not to attend college. He did not attend college because pursuing a job that would guarantee him money was more appealing to him than a college education at the time. However, research does support that people make more money after attending college than if they do not attend college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), thus it was clear from Mario's example that the message from his father favored the short-term benefits of working (i.e., making money now as opposed to after college), and this influenced his decision to work after high school. On the other hand, foster youth who attended college shared that supportive/motivational and cautionary messages highly motivated their decision to attend.

Only one participant recalled receiving messages from their social worker, and the only messages participants recalled receiving from peers tended to focus on college locations and whether their selected college was a "party school." Research states that students are more likely to mirror the social and academic activities of their peers (Griffin et al., 2007), and that peers have a great impact on their friend's educational planning (Holland, 2011). The data in this study do not support these findings, perhaps implying that foster youth do not receive memorable messages from peers and/or that these messages do not have much impact on their college decisions. This may also be attributed to the fact that many foster youth are often moving around from different homes, which does not allow them the opportunity to develop strong ties with peers who might have a big influence on their educational decisions.

Support from foster parents. The findings also suggest that there is a difference in the support that foster youth who attend college and do not attend college receive, or at least that they remember receiving, from foster parents/caregivers. Foster youth who attended college recalled more supportive and encouraging messages from their foster parents/caregivers. On the other hand, those who did not pursue college recalled more discouraging messages from foster parents/caregivers. Thus, it appears that perceived support does in fact play a role in the foster youths' educational decisions. Pecora et al. (2005) state that one of the many reasons foster youth do not attend college is because of the obstacles they face; therefore, support is necessary when making such an important decision. These findings can help foster parents understand the role they play in supporting foster youths' decisions about their future.

Hernandez and Naccarato (2010) discovered that a high number of foster home placements contribute to low educational outcomes of foster youth. Combined with the findings of the present study, it seems that not only more stable foster family placements but also positive messages from family about their futures play a role on foster youths' decisions to attend college. Participants did not explicitly state that their familial stability led to collegiate success, and we did not specifically ask about the number of placements or why their moved between foster homes; however, it is likely that the reason foster youth transition from many homes could shed light on their educational decisions and success. Permanency may not guarantee educational success, but it does provide foster youth with familial stability that could influence support they receive from foster parents in their educational endeavors. Without permanency, foster youth often move from foster home to foster home, creating a variety of developmental, social, and educational impediments (Lockwood, Friedman, & Christian, 2015). Foster care placement policies could use some investigation and possibly improvements. These findings can assist social service agencies as they are placing teenagers in foster homes and working to provide them with permanency, which could guarantee foster youth some stability (Lenz-Rashid, 2006) and perhaps a more likely trajectory toward college.

Expectations from parents/caregivers can also contribute to the educational decisions of foster youth. The five participants who attended college mentioned that they felt they had to go to college because they were expected to attend and that they always knew that college was, as one participant explained, "in the cards." The data shows that having high expectations from parents/caregivers can impact a foster youth's decision to attend college. On the contrary, a former youth in care received negative messages from her caregiver that she was not good or smart enough for college, and she stated that she believed what she heard and these messages influenced her decision not

to attend college. This finding supports Collins (2001), who argues that low expectations from caregivers is a reason many foster youth do not pursue a post-secondary degree. This finding reiterates the impact foster parents have on their foster youths' educational decisions.

Support of school counselors. Participants had varied experiences with school counselors and received different types of messages from them. Out of eight participants who talked about school counselors, only three shared positive views of them. Comments about school counselors included: "Oh I couldn't stand them," "I really didn't like my counselors," "They were not helpful at all," "They were not helpful, and it was pretty bad. I hated them," "They weren't super encouraging from what I remember," "No support at all from my school counselors," and "There was no communication, it was not good." These insights were interesting and problematic because school counselors are the primary facilitators of a college transition for college students (Holcomb-McCoy, 2010). Furthermore, Bryan et al. (2011) uncovered a positive relationship between school counseling and applying for college, a necessary and important precursor to college enrollment. School counselors are important in the transition to college, and the messages they share to foster youth could impact their post-secondary education decisions.

This study suggests that counselors serve an important purpose in the lives of prospective college students, especially foster youth. School counselors have direct contact with students and the ability to offer support in ways that no other professional does. The findings indicate that relations between school counselors and foster youth should be strengthened, which could mean reevaluating the training and policies for school counselors. School counselors may not have adequate training for serving special populations such as foster youth; therefore, they may not be aware of the different experiences foster youth have from those in the general population. Understanding these differences could mean that school counselors can provide specialized support to youth in care. Training school counselors on servicing special populations such as foster youth could have an impact on the messages school counselors share with foster youth as they are making post-secondary educational decisions.

Overall, these findings can be implemented in college support programs for foster youth. Programs such as First Star Academy, Foster Care to Success (Pecora, 2012), and Guardian Scholars (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010) are all geared towards success for foster youth as they navigate the transition from high school. These findings may help contribute to the development of new policies for their programs to better support foster youth. These findings may also inform program staff of messages that are most and least helpful to foster youth in their educational decisions.

Limitations and Future Research

There were a few limitations to this study that should be noted. First, the researchers did not make any distinctions between participants who were adopted from foster care and those who aged out of care. Their differences in family upbringing may impact the types of messages they received about college. The findings also disproportionately represent experiences of foster youth who chose to attend college. Including an equal number of participants from both groups could have helped tell a more representative story of the experiences of foster youth. The sample for this study was not representative of the whole youth in care population. The final limitation of this study is that participants were asked to *recall* important messages they *remembered* receiving, which suggests that these messages were most memorable to them; however, there may have been other messages they received but did not recall during interviews. Thus, it is important to find ways to capture, perhaps through a diary study or longitudinal research, the *actual* number and types of messages foster youth receive, and from whom, to gain a more complete picture of the role that messages play in their post-secondary education decisions. Scholars should also explore experiences of foster youth in junior and high school because they are currently receiving messages about college. It would also be important for scholars to explore the influence that being in contact with biological family members has on foster youths' educational decisions. Also exploring messages from teachers, mentors, religious figures (e.g., pastors, priests), and siblings would help provide a more in-depth picture of foster youths' experiences.

There is much work to be done in area of family communication focused on people in the foster care system. Scholars need to continue researching the role that communication plays in the overall lives of foster youth – not just their educational decisions but also their physical and emotional well-being, development, and success. Programs like First Star Academy and Foster Care to Success provide valuable assistance to foster youth, and

studies like the present one can contribute to a more complete understanding of how to best help foster youth in their decisions to attend college and reap the benefits that a college education can provide to them.

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A New Season for the Baylor Nation: Image Repair and Organizational Learning in Baylor's Title IX Crisis

Rachel Riggs

In May 2016, Baylor University released a comprehensive report to the public detailing the university's inaction and mishandling of Title IX cases, causing Baylor to be the subject of local and national media scrutiny. At the peak of Baylor's Title IX crisis in the summer of 2016, many Baylor stakeholders felt an immense distrust of how Baylor administration and the Baylor Board of Regents were sharing information, protecting students, and staying true to the university's vision, Pro Ecclesia, Pro Texana. Interim University President Dr. David Garland issued a letter titled "A New Season in the Life of Baylor University" to Baylor stakeholders in June 2016 that offered guidance and addressed the crisis. This letter was analyzed using Benoit's (1997) Image Repair Theory. Garland engaged in the following strategies outlined by Benoit: corrective action, mortification, and reducing offensiveness through bolstering. Further analysis found that the university engaged in organizational learning by implementing two task forces and allowing alumni to elect a regent for the board of regents.

Introduction

Baylor University is a private, Baptist-affiliated university located in Waco, Texas. Baylor, founded in 1845, is also the oldest continuously operating institution of higher education in Texas. In recent years, Baylor saw increased positive media attention surrounding its winning athletic department, which begat increased admissions and revenue coming into the university. Under the leadership of Athletic Director Ian McCaw and Head Football Coach Art Briles, Baylor experienced winning seasons, ranked nationally, won bowl games, and even had the first ever Baylor player to win the Heisman trophy (Hill, 2012). The board of regents, administration, and fans all appreciated being respected in the world of collegiate sports and being competitive in the Big Ten Conference. In 2016, the legacy of Briles and the reputation of Baylor University came under intense scrutiny in the media and by stakeholders when it was revealed that sexual assault allegations were grossly mishandled and covered up by the university. Baylor saw its prized reputation change to being considered secretive, shady, and unprepared to handle this crisis as many administrators and coaches resigned under pressure.

In this paper, I will analyze Interim University President Dr. Joseph Garland's response to Baylor's Title IX crisis using Benoit's (1997) Image Repair Theory. The crisis response of universities provides a unique area for research because stakeholders find a strong sense of identity in being a member of the university. In addition, universities rely on existing norms and hierarchy to achieve university goals, slowing the process of organizational learning. Private, faith-based schools further complicate how universities respond to crises because, as institutions, they hold themselves to a standard of ethics rooted in religion and theology. These schools can be resistant to adapting university policy along with changing student culture thus leaving the institution unprepared to handle crises that threaten their standard of ethics.

Analysis of how public and private, faith-based universities respond to crises and engage in image repair and organizational learning adds to the larger discussion of organizational communication and public relations crisis management strategies. Baylor's Title IX crisis is important in this area of research for three reasons. First, the scope of the crisis reached national significance and dominated local and national news cycles. Second, the allegations that surfaced in the media directly contradicted Baylor's core values as a faith-based institution, causing Baylor's reputation among stakeholders to diminish overnight. There are distinct differences in the image repair process for private, faith-based universities due to their higher standard of ethics rooted in their faith, but all universities strive to cultivate a strong sense of identity among stakeholders. Third, as Title IX policy continues to change under new federal administration at the Department of Education, it is important for university administration and leadership to learn from peer institutions and to engage continuously in organizational learning so that universities can continue to provide safe and equal learning environments for students.

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The Baylor Crisis

The Baylor crisis came to a peak in late May 2016, when the Findings of Fact, a document written as a result of a presentation by Pepper Hamilton, LPP, a law firm, to the board of regents in early May 2016, was published online by Baylor. Media outlets nationwide scoured through the document and put Baylor in the spotlight for all the wrong reasons. Baylor stakeholders including alumni, students, parents, peer institutions, and the Waco community read through the document and tuned in to the news to watch the suspected demise of their beloved Baylor University, especially the Baylor Bears football team. In 2012, otherwise known as The Year of the Bear, they won the Big 12 championship and had winning sports teams almost across the board. Briles was considered by many fans to be the savior of Baylor athletics, much like famous Coach Joe Paterno from Penn State University. University President Ken Starr was at first a controversial figure on the Baylor campus due to his independent investigation of President Bill Clinton, and because he was the first non-Baptist president of the university. Starr's reputation among Baylor stakeholders improved when Starr proved himself to be an excellent fundraiser (Boorstein, 2016). After the crisis surfaced, Starr, Briles, and McCaw resigned, and many recruits backed out of their commitment to come to Baylor. Without Starr and Briles, many assumed Baylor's few years of athletic success and university growth through fundraising were over.

Pepper Hamilton, with full access to speak to students, faculty, and staff and look at all pertinent documents, analyzed relevant documentation and interviewed over 65 Baylor-affiliated individuals for a full academic year. The lack of administrative support for Title IX implication and supervision of athletic staff as identified by Pepper Hamilton was a main source of concern for stakeholders in the Baylor community. While the Findings of Fact did not name names, it certainly pointed fingers at administration and coaching staff for failing to implement university policies that complied with Title IX. In some cases, administration or coaching staff "directly discouraged complainants from reporting" and "contributed to or accommodated a hostile environment" (Baylor University, 2016a, p. 2). Baylor should not have been caught off-guard by Title IX; as the report outlines, administration "failed to recognize the significance of the national context" and learn from other "high profile examples of institutional failures at peer institutions" (Baylor University, 2016a, p. 4). The report directly called out leadership in the athletics department and football staff at Baylor for handling most all conduct issues involving its players internally without following university protocol, which lead to a culture on campus where football players were viewed as above reproach.

Throughout the 2016 football season, many Baylor alumni and stakeholders felt betrayed by the board of regents for pressuring Briles to resign. The mood amongst Baylor stakeholders remained uneasy throughout the season, and Baylor stakeholders began to purchase and wear black CAB shirts, which stood for Coach Art Briles, to football games (Martinez, 2016). Unrest reached a new peak when "60 Minutes Sports" learned that 17 female students reported sexual or domestic assault charges against 19 football players, including at least four alleged gang rapes (Axon, 2016). Many Baylor stakeholders and the media pointed fingers at the board of regents for not being transparent about the scandal. The board of regents were viewed by stakeholders as out-of-touch individuals who helped create an environment where pennants of the Baptist faith – total abstinence from alcohol and from premarital sex – were ignorantly thought to be still relevant in student culture and in university policy (Baylor University, 2015; Baylor University, 2018b). Many stakeholders believed that the board of regents' lack of understanding of student culture caught them off guard, and they responded inappropriately by pushing out Briles and other respected Baylor administration.

The Baylor Title IX crisis caused stakeholders to question Baylor's commitment to its vision: Pro Ecclesia, Pro Texana, which stands for For Church, For Texas. Baylor's mission, "to provide an environment that fosters spiritual maturity, strength of character, and moral virtue," contradicts the actions of administration that made the campus less safe for victims of sexual assault (Baylor University, n. d.). This contradiction caused many stakeholders to wonder how their university skewed so far from their vision, and since most administration who could answer that question either resigned or were let go, the blame fell mostly on the board of regents. According to Benoit's (1997) Image Repair Theory, "image is essential to organizations" (p. 177). While universities provide their students with an education that will prepare them for a successful career, universities are also selling a sense of identity and group membership. When universities do not hold true to their vision or act in a way that is detrimental to its stakeholders, universities must regain stakeholder trust and realign with the core values of the institution. Also, change moves more slowly at universities because of existing reporting structures and chains of

command. Even still, universities, just like more traditional organizations, must repair their image after a crisis using Benoit's strategies.

In this paper, I will detail a crisis outline, review the existing literature, pose three research questions, analyze a letter written by the interim president, Dr. David Garland, and lastly, I will analyze whether Baylor's attempts regain their image as a university were successful and if Baylor engaged in organizational learning.

Crisis Timeline

Pre-crisis

2013 April

- Student athletes Tre'Von Armstead and Myke Chatman are involved in a sexual assault incident off campus involving another student; neither was charged with a crime.

2015 August

- Student athlete Sam Ukwuachu is found guilty of sexually assaulting another student athlete at Baylor. Ukwuachu was dismissed from Boise State because of alleged domestic violence.

2015 September

- Baylor finally starts to investigate the allegations against Armstead and Chatman. Baylor knew about the incident when it occurred.
- Pepper Hamilton conducts an extensive, year-long investigation into Baylor's response to Title IX cases.

Crisis

2016 May

- Baylor releases a partial report from Pepper Hamilton, LLP.
- University President Ken Starr is let go.
- Interim President David Garland is announced.
- Head football coach, Art Briles is suspended indefinitely.
- Acting head football coach, Jim Grobe, is announced.
- Director of Athletics Ian McCaw resigns.

Post Crisis

2016 June

- Interim President David Garland releases a letter addressed to the Baylor Nation to clarify the Pepper Hamilton report.
- Former head football coach Briles and Baylor release joint statement regarding Briles' termination.

2016 July

- Additional administration and leadership changes take place.

2016 November

- "60 Minutes Sports" broadcasts expose into the Baylor crisis
- Baylor launches website titled "The Facts" to appear more transparent

*This timeline was adapted from a *Sports Illustrated* timeline (Ellis, 2016) and Baylor University press releases (Baylor University, 2016b; Baylor University, 2016c; Baylor University, 2016d; Baylor University, 2016e; Baylor University, 2016f).

Literature Review

Crises threaten both an organization's relationship with its stakeholders and an organization's reputation or image (Benoit, 1997; Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2002. An organization's image is essential, especially

for universities. Universities have realized that a “positive reputation is a valuable commodity for a university, enabling it to attract high caliber as news sources, lure a greater number of quality job recruiters, and strengthen alumni loyalty” (Len-Ríos, 2010, p. 268). Crises for universities can not only affect “current students, alumni, parents, prospective students, donors, staff, faculty, residents of the local community, sports team fans, and advisory boards,” but they can also affect “funding and support from taxpayers, the state legislators, and the government” (Len-Ríos, 2010, p. 269). Universities must have buy-in from diverse groups of stakeholders if they are to continue operating, especially after a crisis.

Stakeholder relationships and image are irrevocably tied together, and in times of crisis, universities must engage in image repair strategies to mend these relationships. Benoit (1997) lists five general strategies for image restoration – denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness of an event, corrective action, and mortification – along with several variants for each strategy. For example, the strategy to reduce the offensiveness of an event has six variants, including bolstering, minimization, differentiation, transcendence, attacking the accuser, and compensation (Benoit, 1997). These strategies “work together,” (p. 184) and an organization may be better off if it strategically implements multiple strategies at once to address a crisis (Benoit, 1997). Coombs (2007) continued Benoit’s work in crisis and risk communication by developing Situational Crisis Communication Theory, which also looked at image, or, as Coombs called it, “reputation” (p. 163). An organization’s reputation is a “valued resource that is threatened by crises” (p. 167), especially when the crises involve victims who have been adversely affected by the crisis (Coombs, 2002). Both Benoit and Coombs stress the importance of organizations choosing the right strategies for each crisis.

Researchers in crisis and risk communication have applied Benoit’s theory of image repair and Coombs’ theory of situational crisis communication to situations to analyze whether the strategies were successful. This research consists in part of case studies ranging from Australian rugby teams (Bruce & Tini, 2008), universities (Brown & Geddes, 2006), the military (Holtzhausen & Roberts, 2009), and collegiate athletic teams (Brown & Billings, 2013; Brown, Billings, & Delvin, 2016; Fortunato, 2008; Len-Ríos, 2010). The case studies for collegiate athletic teams range from sexual assault allegations to National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) violations.

University crises involving student athletes and sexual assault allegations generate media attention, as seen in the Duke lacrosse team scandal in 2006. Two exotic dancers were paid to attend an event for the lacrosse team off campus, and one of the women later claimed that three of the men raped her. The charges against the team members “drew national and international media attention, sparked intense local debates, and highlighted issues of gender, race, and class” (Barnett, 2008, p. 180). Dr. Richard Brodhead, president of Duke University, wrote a letter to the Duke community following the scandal outlining what corrective action would take place, and indicating that “the incident was an indication of larger cultural problems that needed to be addressed at the university level” (Fortunato, 2008, p. 120). Duke also responded to the crisis by acknowledging that an emotional response had been triggered on campus, reminding the public that there was a difference between an allegation and a conviction, and emphasizing the seriousness of rape and sexual assault charges (Barnett, 2008). Through the use of Benoit’s image repair strategies, Len-Ríos (2010) found that Duke “addressed its image by focusing on reducing offensiveness through the use of corrective action/separation, bolstering, and attacking one’s accuser” (p. 277) along with denial and mortification. Brodhead continued to communicate with the public via statements as new information about the case was released, and he also talked about positive things happening at the university. Duke was able to take control of the situation and minimize the damage to their image through accepting responsibility and taking corrective action.

Institutional cover-ups involving university staff and administration involving sexual assault cases have also become a hot topic issue in the media. Worthington (2005) analyzed a sexual assault scandal at a private Catholic university where female assault victims left the university because the vice-president would not expel the male perpetrators until the scandal gained media attention, and the vice president resigned. Sexual assaults are underreported, and “unpunished sexual assault against female students was, to some extent, institutionalized” on college campuses (Worthington, 2005, p. 8). University administration should be aware of how their reputation can be damaged in the media if they fail to be transparent about a crisis. Athletic programs and student athletes are often viewed under this “rape culture” view as being privileged because they bring in revenue and encourage alumni and student buy-in with the university. A winning season can help increase alumni donations and new student applications, which are both necessary for the long-term success of a university. Proffitt and Corrigan (2012) stated:

> The stakes of athletic success and image, in other words, are extremely high--and it is a competitive marketplace. To the extent that the branding of athletics programs has become a structural imperative, we should not be terribly surprised when rules are bent or broken in the hopes of on-field success or when the image-damaging offenses of players, coaches, or staff are covered up by university officials. (p. 323)

This structural barrier for information is evident in the Penn State crisis, where coaching staff and administration decided that the possible sexual abuse of children should be handled internally instead of involving law enforcement. This crisis created media buzz because university officials covered up Sandusky's sexual assault against children for over a decade to protect the "football program from bad publicity instead of protecting innocent and vulnerable children from further sexual abuse" (Lucas & Fyke, 2014, p. 551). Lucas and Fyke (2014) also discuss how negative upward communication can be stifled because it is "antithetical to organizational goals," (p. 552) and how subordinates fear repercussions from their supervisor for speaking out. In the Penn State crisis, many referred to Coach Joe Paterno as legendary or revered because of his successful career, and this sort of sainthood further prevented the flow of upward communication.

Most of the pressure to win falls on the coaches because their careers are determined by records of wins and losses. These coaches are faced with either losing their jobs and having to uproot their families or violating an NCAA rule. Head coaches play a crucial role on whether or not the team engages in ethical practices. Head coaches admitted that their programs were lacking integrity and thought that more strict sanctions were needed in order to see reform (Cullen, Latessa & Bryne, 1990). According to Cullen et al. (1990), "the prevalence of corruption is not due simply to individual ethical failings but to the structural pressures that erode moral mandates and lead coaches to tolerate minor, if not major, abuses" (p. 62). Student athletes look to leaders on the team, both upperclassmen and the coaching staff, to form their own ethical decisions. If these student athletes feel like they are on a team that doesn't care about one's integrity both inside and outside of the classroom, it becomes much easier for them to rationalize engaging in unethical behavior.

Head coaches are not the only ones feeling the pressure; university presidents feel immense pressure to have winning athletic programs as well. University presidents are able to use athletics to help fundraise for the university by capitalizing on alumni buy-in and alumni support of collegiate sports teams. According to Turner (2015), "[p]residents will do almost anything to make a potential donor feel like an insider" (p. 3). University presidents have an incentive to operate within the existing structure and give privileges to players and coaches because "if a winning team makes a donor more likely to cut a check for a new library, then firing or disciplining a coach can be that much tougher" (Turner, 2015, p. 3). University presidents must "stand strong against the activities and individuals who would usurp those higher values, versus, on the other hand, the allure of the trappings of success that come along with a winning athletic program" (Turner, 2015, p. 5). Between head coaches, university presidents, and other administration, there is a clear lack of accountability for unethical behavior due to a structure that promotes winning at all costs.

This review of literature illustrates a dangerous structural problem for universities, coaching staff, and university administration, prompting otherwise ethical individuals to compromise their own ethical code for the sake of the athletic program and the university at large. The vast corruption and scandal surrounding collegiate athletic programs and the media coverage promote a narrative that if one scratched the surface of most all major athletic programs, "rampant rule infractions" (p. 669) would be revealed (Cullen, Latessa, & Jonson, 2012). These scandal-invoking infractions include anything from sexual misconduct, academic cheating, financial-oriented fraud, and other criminal activity. Long gone is the perception that the ivory tower is exempt from "problems of the larger society but rather are domains marked by such waywardness as binge drinking, sexual victimization, and predatory crime" (Cullen et al., 2012, p. 668). It is up to university administration and head football coaches to set the tone for what is acceptable at their university. Without strong ethical guidance, these structural problems will continue to plague universities and taint the image of collegiate athletic programs. The need for research using Benoit's (1997) image repair strategies for university crises increases with each university scandal.

Research Questions

When the Baylor Title IX crisis reached its peak in late May, 2016, Garland's letter had to cut through the daily drip of negative press in the media and offer guidance to stakeholders. Though the crisis has lasted much

longer than intended by the board of regents and Baylor administration, I will focus my analysis on Garland's first letter addressed to the Baylor Nation. My analysis of Baylor's response to the crisis was directed by the following research questions:

> RQ1: Which of Benoit's image repair strategies did Baylor use to repair their image as a private, Baptist university?
>
> RQ2: Were the selected strategies successful in helping Baylor repair their image as a private, Baptist university?
>
> RQ3: In what ways does Baylor show organizational learning in its approach to handling sexual assault allegations and reestablishing trust with stakeholders?

Method

Like in the Duke crisis, Garland, Baylor's newly appointed interim president, released a letter on June 3, 2016, addressed to the Baylor Nation titled, "A New Season in the Life of Baylor University." This letter served as an appeal to many of Baylor's stakeholders, from alumni to current students, during a period of great uncertainty for their university. It was also the first chance for some stakeholders to meet their spokesperson and representative, as Garland assumed the role of interim president from Starr. Garland served as interim president of the university once before from 2008 to 2010 and was a well-known, esteemed member of Baylor administration along with his late wife Dr. Diana Garland who is the namesake for the Diana R. Garland School of Social Work (Woods, 2010). Even though Garland and his late wife were well known to many stakeholders, Garland still had to appeal to new stakeholders who were not familiar with his credentials and reputation, including new students and parents, new local media, and national media.

In order to answer RQ1, I analyzed the letter to find broad themes and strategies used by Garland to repair Baylor's image. In order to answer RQ2, I looked to Garland's letter along with other press releases and outside resources to get a better understanding if Baylor was successful in repairing their image. For RQ3, I looked at the opportunities for Baylor to learn from this crisis and become a more ethical, transparent institution because of the crisis. Through analysis of this artifact, I have a much better understanding of the crisis and the crisis plan that Baylor used to gain control of the narrative and repair their image during the pre-crisis, crisis, and post crisis phase.

Analysis

Although Baylor intended to be transparent by publishing the Findings of Fact online, the dense document, 13 pages in length and full of legal jargon, was difficult for the general public to comprehend. Garland's letter had to respond to both the Findings of Fact and the interpretations of the document and rumors that were circulating through the media. Garland had to offer guidance and clarification to the stakeholders as they themselves read through the scathing report. Garland also had to justify that Baylor was being as transparent as they could while protecting the identities of the victims. The letter is broken into four subheadings: Clarifying Matters; An Enhanced Title IX Office; Improvements Being Pursued; and The Path Forward.

Garland's letter relied heavily on the use of Benoit's (1997) corrective action strategy, mortification strategy, and reducing offensiveness strategy. Garland's letter did not use Benoit's (1997) denial strategy or the evasion of responsibility strategy. Out of the reducing offensiveness strategy, Baylor used the bolstering version to capitalize on all remaining feelings of goodwill amongst its stakeholders. In the following sections, I analyzed Garland's letter through each of these strategies.

Corrective Action

The corrective action strategy, as described by Benoit (1997), consists of the organization promising to stakeholders that they will correct a problem or promising to stakeholders to prevent it from happening again. Presence of this strategy is evident throughout Garland's letter and in his theme of "a new season" for Baylor

(Garland, 2016, p. 1). Garland (2016) recognized "the work lying ahead" and calls on members to come together in "honest action" (p. 1). Garland (2016) acknowledged that "we have taken steps to ensure that we are in compliance with Title IX, the Jeanne Clery Act, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 and other state and federal obligations" (p. 1). Garland (2016) then detailed Baylor's course of action to act on the recommendations of Pepper Hamilton, including the creation of two task forces to address and implement recommendations and to address spiritual life and character in the Baylor community.

Garland (2016) created a new narrative for Baylor when he referred to Pepper Hamilton's findings as "a roadmap" (p. 2) rather than a roadblock. Baylor administrators went from having limited understanding of how to implement Title IX to wanting to "set the highest standards in this area" (p. 1) as a result of the Pepper Hamilton report (Garland, 2016). In a time when many Baylor stakeholders were thinking that the Baylor University they knew and loved was coming to an end, Garland set a precedent for Baylor stakeholders to think of the positive outcomes already in motion.

Mortification

Benoit (1997) described the mortification strategy as the act of confessing and begging forgiveness. Garland (2016) implemented this strategy when he repeated Board Chair Ron Murff's words: "We are deeply sorry for the harm that survivors have endured. We, as the governing Board of this University, offer our apologies to the many who sought help from the University" (p. 1). This strategy was also implemented in a less direct way when Garland asked the Baylor nation to "come together in prayerful reflection" (p. 1). Garland used the mortification strategy to help the Baylor community heal from their harmful actions in the years where Baylor administration did not support students who were victims of sexual assault.

Reducing Offensiveness/Bolstering

Bolstering, or supporting and strengthening, is a version of the reducing offensiveness strategy and can be used to "offset damage" for an organization (Benoit, 1997, p. 180). Garland engaged in this version of the strategy, but not any of the other versions. If Baylor had tried to debate the total number of victims that were harmed through their inaction or misdirection, as described in the minimizing version, they would have brought attention to the number of victims and may have compromised the privacy of the victims. One victim of sexual assault who did not receive proper support or who was discouraged from reporting sexual assault is too many. It appears through the Findings of Fact that during the pre-crisis phase, Baylor wrongfully and ignorantly engaged in the differentiation version when Baylor students were involved in a sexual assault case that happened off campus. Since there are no real benefits of sexual assault on college campuses, the transcendence version was not and should not be implemented by Garland in his letter. Attacking the accusers, another version of this strategy, would increase the offensiveness of the whole situation. Compensation, the last version of the strategy, was not utilized in Garland's letter but has the capability to go over well and help the university repair its image.

There is evidence of the bolstering version of the strategy in Garland's letter when he praised the board of regents. Garland (2016) said: "I am grateful to the Regents for openly addressing the findings. It demonstrates their unwavering dedication to do what is right for our students, both today and in the future" (p. 2). Through the bolstering version of the reducing offensiveness strategy, Garland highlighted a positive aspect about the university by showcasing the progressiveness of the board of regents. In addition, Garland (2016) bolstered the Title IX office by referring to the office and its employees as a "vital area of University operations" (p. 2). Garland (2016) calls the Title IX office "capable, compassionate, professional, and working hard to care for the needs of students" and mentions how the office has "worked to assist many students in times of need, walking alongside them to a complex and trying process" (p. 2). Through offering praise to the board of regents and the Title IX office, Garland attempted to frame the crisis as an unfortunate series of mistakes instead of a sinister campaign to minimize or cover up sexual assault allegations.

Lastly, there is evidence of bolstering when Garland (2016) referred to his previous tenure as interim president from 2008 to 2010, and to his one goal for that time period: "to strengthen Baylor's mission of educating men and women for worldwide leadership and service by integrating academic excellence and Christian commitment within a caring community" (p. 2). Garland then reiterated that his goal remains the same today. Garland reminded stakeholders of his long history with the university and previous tenure as interim president to

further strengthen his credibility and set himself apart as someone with the credentials and skills to unite Baylor and overcome this crisis.

Discussion

Just as Brodhead led Duke University through its crisis, Garland stepped up and filled an important role as interim president and university spokesperson for the Baylor Nation in both 2016 and in 2008. The choice to select Garland for this role two times in less than a decade speaks highly of Garland's perceived character and credibility with stakeholders and administration. In 2008, Dr. John Lilley was fired by the Baylor Board of Regents after serving as university president for only two years (Woods, 2010). During Garland's first two-year tenure as interim university president, many stakeholders were satisfied with his leadership, with some stakeholders referring to him as "humble," "a servant leader," and a person who brought "a peace to the campus" that was lacking under Lilley's leadership (Woods, 2010, p. 2). Garland's history and reputation has persisted through the decades of his career, and set him apart to be a trusted, successful spokesperson.

Garland even helped Baylor navigate a crisis in 2008, just months after he was appointed interim university president. On November 13, 2008, shortly after the national election of President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden, Garland released a letter titled "Update from Interim Baylor President David Garland" regarding tensions between student groups and an incident on the Baylor campus where a hanging rope was found on campus. As Garland (2008) reveals in the letter, it was determined after an investigation that the rope was an abandoned rope swing and not intended to "mimic a noose or to convey a message of any sort" (p. 1). Garland's (2008) letter showcased his ability to unite stakeholders, as he said: "Relentless pursuit of campus unity is a work to which we must continue to commit ourselves if we are to truly embody our unique calling as a Christian university in the Baptist tradition" (p. 2). Garland's letter brought students from differing backgrounds and political ideologies together as one and celebrate being members of a unified and diverse university.

Garland's character and leadership helped Baylor navigate through the 2008 crisis with success, but his task in 2016 was a greater challenge. The lessons that Garland learned in 2008 were evident in his handling of the 2016 crisis, especially in the image repair strategies he utilized. Garland was able move the focus to organizational learning taking place as a result of the crisis and aimed to give stakeholders the ability to see a new future for their university after the crisis was over through his use of image repair strategies.

Strategies

In order to repair the image of Baylor, Garland used Benoit's (1997) corrective action strategy, the mortification strategy, and the reducing offensiveness strategy in his letter. Through these techniques, Garland was able to remind Baylor of their vision, Pro Ecclesia, Pro Texana. Garland's letter signaled a return to the university's core values and mission to educate "men and women for worldwide leadership and service by integrating academic excellence and Christian commitment within a caring community" (p. 3), language in which Garland borrowed heavily from Baylor's mission statement (Garland, 2016). Garland's appeal to shared values and a shared love of Baylor helped unite the stakeholders by reminding them of why they chose to attend Baylor University and be a member of the Baylor Nation in the first place.

Garland's use of corrective action was especially helpful in the process of repairing Baylor's image because he gave stakeholders a detailed picture of exactly how Baylor was going to navigate through the crisis and be a better university in the future. Garland highlighted the two task forces made up of Baylor administration, faculty, and staff that were going to work immediately; one task force would implement the Pepper Hamilton's recommendations, and the second task force would address spiritual life and student character (Garland, 2016). The second task force is especially important to this discussion of corrective action because the alleged activity detailed in the Pepper Hamilton report went against the student code of conduct and Baylor's vision for a student culture guided by the Baptist faith. For example, Baylor's policy on sexual conduct has not changed as a result of the Pepper Hamilton report. Baylor still uses a biblical understanding of human sexuality where physical sexual intimacy is saved for marriage, and Baylor still expects all students, faculty, and staff to refrain from physical sexual intimacy outside of marriage (Baylor University, 2015). Baylor is not changing its policies to reflect the beliefs of a more secular student culture. Instead, they are challenging their students to consider Baylor's policies as an important

part of the Baylor identity. The goal of this task force is to address Baylor student culture and reestablish the importance of existing student policies that reflect the Baptist faith, but the work of this task force will also help Baylor repair its image.

The use of the mortification strategy helped Garland acknowledge the damage caused by Baylor and offer an apology to stakeholders. Garland could not in any way minimize the allegations of misconduct listed in the document due to the Findings of Fact document released online by Baylor, nor would Garland aspire to do that. Instead, Garland (2016) acknowledged past failures and took responsibility for them. Part of Pepper Hamilton's recommendations to Baylor were to reach out to students who reported Title IX cases that were not adjudicated even if those students withdrew or graduated to offer support and resources (Baylor University, 2016a). A large portion of a Title IX department's job is to adjudicate and to offer support to students in the form of directing them to outside resources and counseling. Although Baylor cannot take back their inaction or misdirection concerning Title IX cases, they can offer a sincere apology and resources to the victims who either had to withdraw or endure a hostile learning environment.

Garland's use of bolstering helped ease some of the tension between the board of regents and stakeholders. Garland aimed to frame the board of regents as an entity that was making tough decisions for the greater good of Baylor, and he did this by echoing the sentiments of the board of regents and praising the way that the board of regents were handling of the crisis. Also, Garland used bolstering by referring to his own legacy at Baylor. Garland's reputation and history with the university and credentials set Garland apart as a great choice to be spokesperson for Baylor. He represents the ideal Baylor scholar and administrator, and his alignment with Baylor during the crisis helps stakeholders see Baylor in the same light that they see Garland.

Were the Strategies Successful?

Garland (2016) was able to successfully frame the Pepper Hamilton report as an "excellent roadmap for the work ahead" (p. 2) through his use of Benoit's (1997) image repair strategies, including corrective action, mortification, and reducing offensiveness, specifically bolstering. Garland's letter helped Baylor manage the crisis through the summer and the following year. Due to Garland's credibility amongst stakeholders, his letter served as a clarifying, trusted voice that helped frame the Findings of Fact for stakeholders who cared so deeply about Baylor.

Baylor's enrollment numbers before, during, and after the crisis show no signs of a university in crisis, and Baylor has seen growth in both undergraduate and graduate programs. In 2016, according to the Fall Enrollment Report (Baylor University, 2016g), Baylor had 14,348 students enrolled in undergraduate programs and a total of 16,959 students attending the university. The number of first-time freshmen attending the university in 2016 also increased by 109 students, from 3,394 first-time freshmen in 2015 to 3,503 first-time freshmen (Baylor University, 2016g). The data from 2017 shows 14,316 undergraduate students and a total of 17,059 total students enrolled in academic programs at Baylor (Baylor University, 2017). Lastly, in 2018, Baylor saw a minor dip undergraduate enrollment with 14,188 students, but still had a total of 17217 students enrolled in academic programs at Baylor (Baylor University, 2018a). Through the enrollment reports, it seems as if Baylor is on track to continue growing its undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

Although Baylor athletics was not solely at fault for the crisis because they were enabled administration and an inadequate Title IX office, they received significant criticism in the Pepper Hamilton report. Garland (2016) lends his voice to speak for the board of regents and the Title IX office, but not the Baylor athletics department. There seems to be little effort on the part of Garland and Baylor administration to repair the image of Baylor athletics separately from Baylor in press releases. In fact, Garland's letter makes no mention of Baylor athletics. Instead, Garland's letter focuses on an institution-wide recommitment to Baylor's mission and values.

It is difficult to determine the scope of damage caused by Baylor's crisis on athletic teams. Morale within Baylor stakeholders, especially fans of the football team, was low during the summer of 2016 as recruits requested to be released from their letters of intent to play at Baylor. This recruiting class, arguably the "best recruiting class in school history," was gone, along with the coaching staff that helped mold Baylor into a powerhouse football team seemingly overnight (Hutchins & Elliot, 2016, p. 2). Baylor stakeholders would feel this uncertainty until they saw the leadership of both Garland and Grobe in action, and again when Matt Rhule took over as head football coach in 2017.

Even though many Baylor alumni and fans remained loyal to Briles and thought he should have been able to stay head coach, they weren't quite ready to give up on their team. This uncertainty continued to settle though as the football season progressed. Under the leadership of head coach Jim Grobe in 2016, Baylor finished with a 7-6 season, and alumni and fans were still filling McLane Stadium each game to see their Baylor Bears. In fact, in early September of 2016, there were 8,000 people on the waiting list for season tickets (Ubben, 2016). The 2016 success of the Baylor Bears, even without the leadership of Briles and recruits who left over the summer, has helped ease the uncertainty among Baylor stakeholders. The 2017 season saw 1-11 record under Rhule, but in a recent teleconference, Rhule said he feels "really good about [the team's] opportunities to develop over the summer and in [August] training camp to maybe have a good football team in the fall" (Stevenson, 2018, p. 1). According to the website, there is a waitlist for season tickets for the 2018 season, and it appears Baylor fans are in it for the long-haul.

Organizational Learning

Although crises are never expected or wanted in an organization, many positive changes can come because of a crisis. Garland (2016) refers to this positive change as a "new season" when he says:

> It is a season that calls for clarity, compassion, and collective action as a Christian academic community and as a body of Baylor alumni that spans multiple generations, often within individual families. It is a season that calls for Baylor to stand together and speak as one voice, resolute in our shared commitment to student welfare and safety and to our institutional values. (p. 1)

While Garland no longer serves in the capacity as interim president, his guidance paved the way for the university to move forward, and on June 1, 2017, new University President Linda Livingstone took the reins and continued Garland's mission (Fogleman, 2017). Baylor is a better institution now because of the recommendations from Pepper Hamilton that they have implemented on their campus and the lessons that they learned from handling the crisis. Before the crisis, Baylor administration did not understand the importance of Title IX correspondence, and as a result, they created a hostile and dangerous campus for many victims of sexual assault. Baylor administration also created a culture where their football team was believed to be untouchable and exempt from university policies. If the two task forces are successful in their implementation of Pepper Hamilton's recommendations, then Baylor will reap the benefits of a safer, more ethical campus.

Though it took some time and an exposé on "60 Minute Sports", the board of regents and Baylor administration have learned some important lessons about transparency and about student culture. In order to seem more transparent, Baylor launched a website titled "The Facts" in November 2016 where stakeholders could go to receive information about the crisis, and this website is still live today. The website now features a timeline of Baylor's response both during the crisis and in the post crisis stage. This website addresses lingering issues from the crisis and includes positive news about how Baylor has handled the crisis. For example, Baylor used the website to post Livingstone's (2017) announcement that the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges had lifted Baylor's warning. Now anyone who is interested in learning about the Baylor crisis can seek the information straight from the source, and Baylor can frame the crisis and provide positive news all in one place.

The board of regents created a new regent position and allowed alumni to nominate and elect their own regent, with alumni Gordon Wilkerson of Lubbock, Texas, accepting the nomination for the 2017 term (Fogleman, 2017). This new position helped the board of regents seem more open to considering the voices of stakeholders. Stakeholders now have representation and can help make sure that the board of regents is acting in the best interest of Baylor's stakeholders. This position can also help with identification amongst alumni because alumni will now have a say in future decisions of the institution.

Baylor administration and the board of regents also learned from this crisis that they could no longer turn a blind eye to a shifting student culture that has more open views about alcohol and premarital sex. The implementation of the task force to address spiritual life on campus will help the board of regents understand student culture and address problem areas while staying true to Baylor's mission and values. While the board of regents cannot go back to May and undo the damage that they have caused to their relationships with stakeholders,

they have taken corrective action to help Baylor become an ethical, Title IX-compliant campus, both in Baylor administration and in the student population.

Conclusion

The newness of the Baylor crisis limited the research in terms of access to the results of the two task forces implemented by Baylor. Due to this limitation, an area for future research would be an analysis of Baylor's continued journey to repair their image after one-to-five years.

With the purge of administrators who were involved in the scandal, the expanded and functioning Title IX office, and the task forces – especially the task force focusing on spiritual life and character – Baylor aligned itself once again with its vision, Pro Ecclesia, Pro Texana, and their mission statement. Baylor still has work to do. Many stakeholders are still unhappy with how little information they were given about the decision to let go Briles or other administration (Ubben, 2016), and football coaches may have a much more difficult time recruiting players for the next few years as the fallout ebbs and alumni learn to trust and support Rhule and the Bears. Under the leadership of Livingstone and Rhule and with the input of the new regent elected by alumni, Baylor may be able to address these problems in the future.

Through Garland's successful use of image repair strategies, he helped stakeholders see the positive outcomes and organizational learning that could come as a result of the crisis. Even though Baylor could not release all information like the stakeholders wanted in order to protect the victims, Garland's letter helped guide stakeholders as they read through the Findings of Fact for themselves. Garland's letter helped establish himself as the spokesperson for the university in the absence of Starr and Briles, and his credibility helped stakeholders to trust him and his framing of the Findings of Fact report.

Baylor can take refuge in the fact that they as a private, Baptist university are in a much better place thanks to the recommendations of Pepper Hamilton. Through Garland's leadership, Baylor may continue to be the oldest continually operating institution of higher learning in Texas.

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Student Veterans' Assimilation in Higher Education: The Role of Identity Complexity

Eric B. Meiners

Although large numbers of military veterans are currently entering institutions of higher education, veterans often feel out of place in the college setting, identifying more strongly with their military role than that of student. Drawing from the topics of organizational assimilation and social identity complexity, this study examines the communication processes as student veterans adjust to college life. A sample of current student veterans (N = 85) completed measures of assimilation, organizational commitment, and social identity complexity. General acculturation and peer assimilation were positively related to affective commitment to college, while higher identity complexity was related to commitment to program completion and faculty assimilation. Implications of the present findings and areas for future research are presented.

Keywords: student veterans, organizational assimilation, social identity

Institutions of higher learning in America are currently experiencing the largest influx of student veterans since the end of World War II (Elliott, Gonzalez & Larsen, 2011). Since 2001, 2.5 million U.S. men and women have served in military conflicts overseas, and many will take advantage of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, providing educational benefits for those with at least 90 days military service on or after September 11, 2001. The transition from military to college life presents a unique set of challenges for service men and women (Livingston, Havice, Cawthon, & Fleming, 2011). Veterans frequently experience health problems such as hearing and vision loss, and more complex issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, alcoholism, strained family relationships and financial and legal problems (Demers, 2011; Elliott et al., 2011; O'Herrin, 2011). In addition to these challenges, veterans often have less academic self-confidence than civilian peers and frequently feel out of place at colleges and universities where individualistic and hedonistic values are common among students and faculty (Livingston et al., 2011).

Communication researchers have begun to explore some of the key issues for veterans' assimilating to civilian life following their deployment. Many of these studies focus on issues related to veterans' health, such as preventative health care behaviors (Villagran, Ledford, & Canzona, 2015) or communication with family members about mental health issues (Wilson, Gettings, Hall, & Pastor, 2015). Despite growing interest and scholarship on the veteran experience, little empirical research has examined communication factors as members of the armed forces make the transition from the military to college (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; Schiavone & Gentry, 2014). Furthermore, few studies have examined the impact of student veterans' social identity on their adjustment and their commitment to completing their academic goals.

Given the growing number of military personnel attending colleges and universities, veterans' assimilation in higher education is a vital issue. For veterans and nonveterans alike, adjustment to college is a complex process of social adaptation (Orrego & Rodriguez, 2001; Zorn & Gregory, 2005). Since student veterans often bring with them a well-ingrained set of values and expectations which do not always converge with those of the roles of student and learner, their assimilation to the college system can be problematic and many veterans are vulnerable to failure and attrition (Normandin, 2010; Whiteman, Barry, Mroczek & MacDermid Wadsworth, 2013; Wilson, Devereux & Tranter, 2015).

With the present gap in the literature, the current study calls for heightened attention to how communication processes are enmeshed within the experiences of veterans on college campuses. By considering the role of social

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identity complexity, this study seeks to yield insights into how the communication processes of assimilation to college for military veterans are similar to, yet different from, that of their civilian peers. Drawing from theories of organizational assimilation (Jablin, 2001) and social identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), the present research examines three dimensions of student assimilation, along with four dimensions of identity complexity, as predictors of affective organizational commitment, goal commitment, and intention to persist (Livingston, Havice, Scott, & Cawthon, 2012). The following sections provide an overview of the organizational assimilation approach and its key dimensions.

Organizational Assimilation

Organizational assimilation can be defined as "the processes by which individuals become integrated into the culture of an organization" (Jablin, 2001, p. 755). This approach highlights the unfolding communicative exchanges as individuals join, move through, and exit complex organizations. Early models of assimilation described a fairly linear progression through which newcomers: anticipate entry into the organization, experience surprise and sensemaking during an encounter phase, and finally undergo a metamorphosis. Through this process, newcomers will have successfully learned the rules, norms and expectations for performance in a given role (Jablin, 2001; Jablin & Krone, 1987).

More recent models recognize that the assimilation process involves multiple interrelated contexts, including both instrumental and social dimensions (Myers & Oetzel, 2003). Instrumental dimensions reflect changes to newcomers' task-related behaviors as they learn the organizational culture, develop job competency, negotiate their roles, and create extra-role contributions (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994). The interpersonal dimensions of socialization involve the development and maintenance of relationships with key individuals such as peers and supervisors (Morrison, 2002).

A key assumption of the assimilation approach is that as the psychological distance between the newcomer and others in the organization is reduced, the newcomer should feel more of a part of the organization and better identify with its core values and mission (Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998). Effective assimilation processes also help newcomers develop greater organizational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Simosi, 2010). One essential form of commitment is affective commitment, which involves "an affective or emotional attachment to the organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in, the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1990, p. 2).

Although research in assimilation often focuses on the learning of professional roles in business organizations (e.g., Hart, 2012), scholars in higher education recognize that college students undertake a similar communication process, learning the formal systems of academia, and negotiating relationships and group boundaries with peers and faculty (Zorn & Gregory, 2005). General acculturation occurs as students interact with others to learn the cultural norms and standards of college, and how to successfully operate within them (Myers & Oetzel, 2003). Students also assimilate as they form and sustain working connections with student peers, faculty, and support staff as well. These interpersonal dimensions of assimilation are particularly vital for student veterans, as positive interactions with other students and faculty have been suggested as key components in students' commitment to the collegiate experience (Elliott et al., 2011).

First, peer assimilation can serve several valuable functions. High quality friendships for veterans can be a critical factor in their academic persistence and success (Antonio, 2004; Astin, 1984). College peers can serve as role models, influence their degree aspirations, and assist in navigating the bureaucracy of higher education as well (Pittman & Richmond, 2008). For veterans, student peers can also be a valuable source of emotional support, guidance and validation, and can help ease the anxiety that typically accompanies the transition to college (Whiteman et al., 2013).

In addition to interaction with peers, connections with faculty are an important dimensions of assimilation to college life (Evans, Pellegrino, & Hoggan, 2015). Professors are perhaps the most visible day-to-day authority figures on campus, symbolically representing the university and its policies, rules, and structure. Faculty members can serve as role models, mentors, and advocates for students (Macfarlane, 2011), and can help veterans acclimate to norms regarding classroom and academic performance. Pedagogical relationships with instructors can also evolve into rewarding interpersonal relationships, from which students receive valuable social support as well (Wang, 2014; Witt, Schrodt, Wheeless, & Bryand, 2014).

The assimilation approach is consistent with prominent models of academic persistence, which suggest that academic and social integration for students will not only lead to greater affective commitment, but also increase learners' intention to complete their academic programs and persist at school (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993; Chaves, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980). For these reasons, the following predictions are offered:

> H1-3: The acculturation, peer, and faculty dimensions of organizational assimilation will predict student veterans' (1) affective commitment, (2) commitment to degree completion, and (3) intention to persist at their institution.

Group Identity and Assimilation

Organizational assimilation does not merely happen to organizational newcomers, but is an active process, through which individuals work to configure group memberships and manage multiple identities (Bullis & Bach, 1989; Kramer & Noland, 1999; Scott & Myers, 2010). Social identity theory suggests that social actors, at any given time, hold memberships across different groups, each providing a unique lens through which they process information and interact with others (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Grice, Gallois, Jones, Paulsen, & Callan, 2006). Research in higher education has acknowledged the importance of social identity in academic engagement. As undergraduates assimilate to college, their group identity affects how they form relationships with others and pursue academic goals (Dean & Jolly, 2012; Orbe, 2004).

The implication of social identity for student veterans is significant. Military institutions are typically strong cultures, inculcating members with lasting values of pride, self-reliance, discipline, and deference to authority (Astin, 2011; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). With values and life experiences different from many traditional millennial students, student veterans often find little common ground with nonveteran peers and faculty (Evans et al., 2015; Livingston et al., 2012; Schiavone & Gentry, 2014). Many student veterans may identify more strongly with their military roles and less with the norms or expectations of the student role (Wilson et al., 2015).

Since the soldier and student roles can sometimes come into conflict, the concept of social identity complexity can be a useful frame to understand veterans' assimilation experiences. Social identity complexity refers to a person's subjective representation of the degree of overlap between his or her various in-group identities and reflects how broadly or narrowly they define their in-groups (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Roccas and Brewer describe four alternate identity structures, each reflecting different subjective configurations of an individual's multiple ingroups: Intersection, Dominance, Compartmentalization, and Merger. With the Intersection category, the individual identifies with "the intersection of all of his or her group identities, creating a single highly exclusive identity category" (Brewer & Pierce, 2005, p. 428). With Dominance, the individual embraces one primary social identity (e.g., soldier) and minimizes emphasis on the others (e.g., student). With Compartmentalization, the individual separates his or her social identities and activates them mostly in specific contexts or situations (e.g., "I'm a soldier at home, a student at school"). Finally, the Merger structure is more inclusive structure in which all one's non-convergent social identities are recognized and embraced.

Intersection and dominance can both be considered relatively low complexity identity structures since, in these structures, multiple identities are embedded within a single ingroup. Compartmentalization and merger are more complex identity structures in which the differences among multiple ingroups are recognized and processed mentally. Identity complexity holds implications for how people interact with those in outgroups. Higher identity complexity has been found related to greater acceptance of cultural diversity and outgroup tolerance, and negatively related to pro-ingroup bias (Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Schmid, Hewstone, Tausch, Cairns & Hughes, 2009).

Student veterans' identity complexity can therefore affect the ways they assimilate to the academic environment. Veterans with less complex identities may be less likely to learn about the organization and its norms, seek out supporting institutional programs, or disclose their veteran status to others (Livingston et al., 2012). They may also resist forming connections with nonveteran peers, and prefer socializing with other student veterans. Given the hierarchy and formal lines of authority prevalent in the military, student veterans may not be comfortable seeking out informal, personalized contact with professors, whom they may view as similar to commanding officers.

As student veterans' identities become more complex, they become more facile balancing and integrating military and student roles (Livingston et al., 2012). Veterans with this orientation may value their military past, but engage their civilian student role with equal enthusiasm and anticipate assuming non-military professional roles

following graduation. These individuals may invest more energy into gaining knowledge of the norms and values of the collegiate system and are more likely to engage with nonveteran peers and faculty. For these reasons, the following predictions are offered:

> H4-6: Student veterans' social identity complexity will predict the (4) acculturation, (5) peer, and (6) faculty dimensions of organizational assimilation.

Social identity complexity can not only affect students' interaction with different social groups within the college system (Ruvolo, 2004), but can also affect their commitment to higher education and academic persistence as well. Students perceiving high compatibility between key ingroups (e.g., their gender and academic major) have reported greater identification with, and motivation to complete, their academic programs (London, Rosenthal, Levy, & Lobel, 2011). Since the goals of degree completion and academic success are at least partially embedded within the student role, veterans with higher identity complexity may be more likely to adhere to these goals, independently of the assimilation processes they may have experienced. Older, more seasoned student veterans, many with underage dependents, aging parents, and work obligations, may rely less on non-veteran peers and faculty to shape their academic goals. Compared with nonveteran peers, many veterans may view a college degree simply as a "mission" with clearly defined set of objectives and strategies (O'Herrin, 2011; Schiavone & Gentry, 2014). It is therefore possible that identity complexity is a stronger predictor of goal commitment and intention to persist in college than conventional modes of assimilation. This study's research question is:

> RQ: Does student veteran identity complexity predict commitment to degree completion or intention to persist over the effects of the three dimensions of assimilation?

Methods

Participants

This study was conducted in conjunction with a mid-sized university's Veterans Affairs office. Participants were recruited using a national academic email listserv and on-line survey software. Individuals were eligible to participate in this study if they were currently enrolled at a college or university and had been a member of the armed forces at any time ($N = 85$).

The final sample was 80% male with an average age of 32.5 years ($SD = 9.94$, range= 18-62 years). In terms of academic class, the sample was 18% graduate student, 33% senior, 19% junior, 17% sophomore, and 11% freshman. Respondents' military affiliations included Army (34%), Navy (16%), Marines (16%), Air Force (14%), Army National Guard (12%), Coast Guard (6%) and Air National Guard (2%). Respondents' military statuses included discharged (63%), reserves (18%), retired (15%), and active duty (4%). Respondents described the format of their academic courses as "Entirely face-to-face" (49%), "Mostly Face-to-face, some on-line" (32%), "Entirely on-line" (11%), and "Mostly on-line, some face-to-face" (8%).

Measures

All constructs were measured using 5-point Likert scale anchored by the response options "Strongly Agree" and "Strongly Disagree." Higher scores indicated higher levels of agreement with the item. Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations and bivariate correlations among the variables included in this study.

Assimilation. To assess college assimilation, three subscales from the Organizational Assimilation Index (OAI; Gailliard, Myers, & Seibold, 2010) were adapted: Acculturation (4 items), Familiarity with coworkers (3 items), and Familiarity with supervisors (3 items). Items from each subscale were reworded to reflect acculturation to the university (e.g., "I understand the standards of my University"), familiarity with fellow students (e.g., "I consider my non-veteran classmates to be my friends"), and familiarity with faculty and instructors (e.g., "I feel like I know my professors and instructors pretty well").

Organizational Commitment. Eight items from Allen and Meyer's (1990) Affective Commitment Scale were modified to measure affective commitment to the university (e.g., "I enjoy discussing my University with people outside it"). Four items from Pascarella and Terenzini's (1980) Institutional and Goal Commitment Scale

were used to assess academic goal commitment (e.g., "It is important for me to earn my college degree") and institutional commitment (e.g., "It is important for me to graduate from this University").

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Acculturation	4.12	.62	(.87)								
2. Peer Assim.	3.71	.75	.13	(.79)							
3. Faculty Assim.	3.33	.83	.20	.23*	(.81)						
4. Dominance	3.35	1.16	.02	-.25*	-.01	(.92)					
5. Merger	3.77	1.04	.07	0.30	*.38	-.20	(.85)				
6. Intersection	2.55	1.06	-.15	-.58**	.10	**.47	-.17	(.77)			
7. Affect comm.	3.37	.73	.50**	.46**	.26*	-.18	.34	-.22*	(.88)		
8. Goal comm.	4.72	.49	.12	.15	.23*	-.06	.61**	-.09	.17	(.96)	
9. Int. to persist[1]	4.31	.77	.17	.28**	.21	-.15	.26	-.03	.50**	.45**	---

[1] One-item measure. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Reliability coefficients are on the diagonal.

Table 2

Rotated Factor Structure of Student Veteran Identity Complexity Items

Item	Dominance	Merger	Intersect
I consider myself more a veteran than a college student.	.89		
I identify more with the role of veteran than the role of college student.	.87		
Being a veteran is a bigger part of who I am than being a college student.	.85		
My student and veteran roles are both equally important to my identity.		.90	
I am just as proud to be a student as I am being a veteran.		.87	
I fully embrace both the military and academic life.		.78	
Other student veterans are really the only ones who understand me here at college.			.91
I can only really relate to other student veterans on this campus.			.81
Eigenvalue	3.49	2.03	1.06
Variance	32.38	29.18	20.74

Identity Complexity. To assess student veteran identity complexity, an exploratory scale was designed for this study following Roccas and Brewer's (2002) conceptualized dimensions (See Table 2). Based on qualitative descriptions of these dimensions by Wilson et al. (2015), a pool of items was first generated to assess veterans' levels of agreement with each. To pre-test this measure, the initial set of items was provided in random order to students in an undergraduate communication research course. Students were asked to sort the items according to face similarity. Items that were consistently sorted together to form groups consistent with the proposed categories were retained for use with the current sample. Items not consistently placed in the expected groups were either discarded or revised.

To aid in data reduction and simplify the statistical analysis, a principal components factor analysis was performed on the identity complexity items. A varimax rotation was employed to account for the maximum amount of variance with as few interpretable factors as necessary. Factors were retained for the scale when they consisted of at least two items that reflected a reliable, conceptually sound construct with an eigenvalue greater than 1.0. Items were considered to load on a construct when their factor loadings exceeded .50.

According to these criteria for inclusion, three components were extracted, accounting for 82% of the total variance (see Table 2). The factor accounting for the most variance consisted of 3 items reflecting an identity in which the military role was dominant over the student role (e.g., "I consider myself more a veteran than a college student"). Consistent with Roccas and Brewer (2002), this factor was labeled "Dominance." The second factor contained 3 items reflecting an identity structure in which both the military and student roles were valued (e.g., "My student and veteran identities are both equally important to my identity"). This factor was labeled "Merger." The third factor consisted of 3 items reflecting strongest identification with other student veterans (e.g., "Other student veterans are really the only ones who understand me here at college"). This factor was labeled "Intersection."

Since the deletion of one item from the Intersection factor increased its reliability, this factor was reduced to two items. The factors for "Dominance," "Merger," and "Intersection" each exhibited acceptable reliability coefficients.

Results

A series of multiple regressions was performed to test the study's hypotheses and research question. Hypotheses 1 through 3 predicted that the dimensions of assimilation would predict veterans' (1) affective commitment, (2) commitment to degree completion, and (3) intention to persist at the institution. As shown in Table 3, hypothesis 1 was consistent with the data. The block of assimilation variables was a significant predictor of affective commitment, and acculturation and peer assimilation were both significant individual predictors. Neither hypothesis 2 nor 3 was consistent with the data, as the block of assimilation variables did not predict goal commitment nor intention to persist.

Hypotheses 4 through 6 predicted that the dimensions of student veterans' social identity complexity would predict the (4) acculturation, (5) peer, and (6) faculty dimensions of assimilation. To test these predictions, the three dimensions of identity complexity were entered into a regression model for each dimension of assimilation (See Table 4). Hypothesis 4 was not consistent with the data, as the block of identity complexity variables did not predict general acculturation. Hypothesis 5 was consistent with the data. This block was a strong predictor of peer assimilation, with the Intersection dimension having a strong negative association. Finally, hypothesis 6 was partially consistent with the data. Although the block of predictors was not a significant predictor, the Merger dimension of identity complexity was positively associated with faculty assimilation.

The study's research question asked if student veteran identity complexity predicted veterans' commitment to degree completion and intention to persist over the three dimensions of assimilation. To address this question, each dimension of identity complexity was entered in to the second step of a hierarchical regression model in which the assimilation factors were entered in step one. As shown in Table 3, the three factors of identity complexity accounted for variance above the effects of assimilation for goal commitment. Within this block, the Merger dimension of identity had the strongest positive association. None of the dimensions of identity complexity accounted for variance in intention to persist.

Discussion

This research sought to explore some of the complexities of veterans' assimilation to college life. This study has also examined the role of social identity complexity to further understand veterans' adjustment to academia. This line of research is timely, as many colleges and universities have initiated formal, veteran-friendly programs (e.g., veteran orientations, veteran specific courses, and student veteran organizations), in attempts to better meet the needs of the growing veteran population (Evans et al., 2015; Lokken, Pfeffer, McAuley, & Strong, 2009). This study offers some practical findings for both formal and informal veteran outreach on college campuses.

First, general acculturation and peer familiarity were prominent predictors of affective commitment to the university for student veterans. Although veterans' experiences and worldviews may differ from those of their nonveteran peers, faculty, and university administration as a whole, veteran programs might seek to help incoming students become immersed in the culture of the institution and develop connections with non-veteran peers. Programs and interventions designed to facilitate collegiate and peer-based assimilation for veterans seem likely to foster affective commitment toward college itself.

This study has also yielded notable findings regarding the role of social identity complexity for student veterans. Those reporting a higher identity complexity (merger) reported higher commitment to degree completion, over the effects of assimilation, and higher engagement with faculty as well. Conversely, the intersection orientation, in which student veterans relate more strongly to other student veterans, was found to have a strong negative association with peer familiarity. Although veteran-friendly programs often help veterans connect with others with military backgrounds on campus, those who identify solely with fellow veterans may be less likely to assimilate with civilian peers. This lack of peer assimilation could further inhibit affective commitment to the school.

Taken together, these findings support the notion that the degree to which veteran learners integrate their student and military roles may also play a key role in their academic success. Collegiate advisors, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders would benefit from developing formal and informal ways to encourage student veterans to embrace both of these critical life roles, as those who remain distant from the student role risk becoming alienated from the social system of college. Although it would be difficult to completely alter a student veteran's identity structure, encouraging veterans to reflect on what it means to be a successful college student and how the student identity fits with his or her current self-concept may be helpful as they form their academic goals. Collegiate personnel should also recognize that psychological factors for veterans, such as PTSD, are likely to inhibit the merger of the student and soldier roles, and can further exacerbate feelings of alienation for veterans at college (Elliott et al., 2011).

Notably, none of the predictors in this study were related to intention to persist at the specific university. Given the highly mobile and transitory lifestyles common for military personnel, it appears that the goal of degree completion may be more prominent for student veterans than the goal of graduating from one specific institution. It is also plausible that intention to persist at any given institution is linked with a variety of external situational factors, removed from actual campus interaction, such as financial issues, family situations, and health issues as well. For these reasons, information and services designed to facilitate the processes of transferring existing credits between schools for veteran students are particularly valuable.

Limitations

A number of limitations should be considered in interpreting this study's findings. First, the cross-sectional design of the current study provides only a snapshot of assimilation and social identity processes. Future studies would benefit from a longitudinal design to trace changes in the assimilation processes as they evolve and develop. Cohort studies beginning with the initial term in college could also shed light on critical incidents or phases during which veterans may restructure perceptions of their ingroups and reconcile the non-convergent aspects of the soldier and student role (Roccas & Brewer, 2002).

A second limitation involves the average age and class for the current sample. Over 50% of the current study's participants were either seniors or graduate students. Students who have progressed this far in college have likely already achieved a requisite level of acculturation and goal commitment. Assimilation processes for these upper-division students may be less salient and peer relationships may factor less in their motivation for higher

education in general. A sample composed of a greater number of first year students may yield even more insights into this critical time in an undergraduate's career in which attitudes toward higher education as a whole are being formed.

The gender composition of the current study (80% male) also provides another limitation. Having developed greater self-confidence and self-reliance in the service, many female veterans are alienated upon returning to traditional gendered roles and expectations common in civilian life (Demers, 2013). For this reason, the assimilation of female veterans to college campuses may be different, and perhaps even more complex, than that of their male counterparts. Further investigation into the collegiate assimilation of female service members is certainly warranted.

Future Directions

This issues broached in this study point toward promising future areas of inquiry. The interactionist approach to assimilation recognizes that instrumental and social processes do not take place independently, but are rather intertwined and mutually influential (Gailliard et al., 2010; Zorn & Gregory, 2005). Different phases of assimilation may therefore occur at different times, and earlier phases may help set the stage for subsequent phases. As veterans form relationships with college faculty, staff and peers, for instance, it could facilitate gaining instrumental knowledge of the college system as a whole. Conversely, as veterans gain technical competence and institutional knowledge, they may become more confident establishing and maintaining working relationships, especially with those in their academic majors. Future investigations utilizing longitudinal designs will be able to better examine the interconnections between the dimensions of veteran assimilation.

Social identity complexity can also affect student veterans' collegiate success in other interesting ways. Complex identities can help foster creativity and innovation, as those identifying with multiple groups can better alternate between knowledge systems, integrate inconsistent information, and approach problems from a variety of perspectives (Crisp & Turner, 2011; Gocłowska & Crisp, 2014). Thus, student veterans with high identity complexity should be able to capitalize on their military experiences with problem-solving and teamwork to bring valuable cognitive advantages to college (Ford & Vignare, 2015). The relationship between veterans' identity complexity and the divergent thinking they might apply in day-to-day collegiate situations holds rich potential for future research.

Conclusion

The military-civilian divide has been a prominent theme in research on veterans in higher education. Much of the narrative surrounding student veterans on college campuses casts them as disadvantaged, marginalized members of the academic community (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017). Rather than focusing solely on the barriers to higher education, this study recognizes student veteran agency. By adopting a communication-centered approach, this study recognizes that veterans can play an active role in their assimilation and integration to institutions of higher learning. This study further recognizes that social identity plays a prominent role in veterans' integration and commitment as well. Given current trends in higher education, student veterans' assimilation to college and the myriad of communication issues involved should remain a vital and important area for continued investigation.

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An Epitaph in 140 Characters: TV Journalists' Twitter Use Following the Roanoke Shootings

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This study uses qualitative methods to analyze the use of the #WeStandWithWDBJ hashtag following the deaths of two journalists in Roanoke, Virginia. The hashtag emerged on Twitter as a rallying point for broadcast journalists as they attempted to process the murders of Alison Parker and Adam Ward in August of 2015. Using the Uses and Gratifications Perspective and Terror Management Theory, 330 tweets with the hashtag were analyzed. Four distinct themes emerged, which explained how broadcast journalists used the hashtag to fulfill their eudaimonic need for solidarity in the wake of the tragedy. By focusing on memorializing and grief, support for WDBJ, their profession, and in-group boundaries, broadcast journalists found meaning and managed their fear through solidarity with their fellow television professionals.

On Wednesday, August 26, 2015, television journalists Alison Parker and Adam Ward were shot to death live on the air while on assignment for WDBJ in Roanoke, Virginia. A third victim, Vicki Gardner, was also shot, but survived. It was the first time any journalist had been killed on assignment in the United States in more than a decade (CNN Money, 2015). Following the murder, the killer, Vester Flanagan, posted video he had taken of the shootings on his Twitter feed. Flanagan later died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound after fleeing from police (Castillo, 2015).

Within 24 hours of the incident, television journalists from around the world were tweeting their support, changing their profile photos to television test patterns and hashtagging their comments with #WeStandWithWDBJ. An investigative reporter from Austin, Texas, Vicki Chen, is credited with initiating what became a long stream of digital eulogies by posting a photo of herself and her photographer using the hashtag just a few hours after the shooting (Pelletiere, 2015). The hashtag became an online memorial to the two slain journalists filled with posts by people who had never known them and a rallying call for solidarity among television news workers everywhere tied together only by their shared profession.

In this paper, we will examine the social-media-based mourning rituals that united those in the television news community to express both grief for and solidarity with the murdered journalists. We will bridge the uses and gratifications perspective with elements of terror management theory to explicate the eudaimonic (i.e., a type of enjoyment associated with meaning or self-actualization) motivations for communication following this highly mediated tragedy, focusing on TV journalists' Twitter use via the #WeStandWithWDBJ hashtag. Ultimately, we hope to expand the use of the uses and gratifications perspective by providing insight into how groups utilize social media during times of crisis and trauma and the specific ways in which social media serve their needs.

Social Media and Grief

The explosion of social media platforms has created new and easy ways for people to grieve and memorialize the dead (Brubaker, Hayes, & Dourish, 2013; Falconer, Sachsenweger, Gibson, & Norman, 2011). The shared spaces created by social media platforms allow people to come together in a process of shared grief and mourning of both loved ones and public figures (Bailey, Bell, & Kennedy, 2014; Harju, 2014).

Klastrup (2015) argued that social media profiles are an immediate go-to place for those affected by a sudden loss or tragic death. These profiles are usually public, giving anyone the right to mourn. As a result, social media platforms are a diverse hub of social interaction that allow for all forms of expressions of grief, even those that are anonymous and less structured (Harju, 2014).

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Additionally, social media provide much the same benefit as more traditional expressions of grief such as erecting roadside shrines. Comments on memorial social media pages and memorial Twitter feeds are the verbal and virtual equivalent of leaving flowers or candles at the site of an accident or tragedy (Harju, 2014; Klastrup, 2015). These virtual shrines have the advantage over their real-world equivalents in that anyone with an Internet connection can contribute. This not only allows people who are far away to share their condolences but also brings the once-private mourning space very much into the public sphere (Carroll & Landry, 2010; Kern, Forman, & Gil-Egui, 2013; Klastrup, 2015).

This process of public grief is unique to the social media platform (Brubaker et al., 2013; Kern et al., 2013), and is a new and important form of grief expression (Carroll & Landry; 2010). That is, grief online turns the highly private matter of death into a highly mediated and public event (Klastrup, 2015). On social media, anyone (and everyone) can grieve someone's death, even if he or she did not know them personally (Marwick & Ellison, 2012). Additionally, memorial pages or feeds allow for the formation of communities or subcultures tied together by feelings of grief over the deceased. The page serves as a hub of communication for the group (Carroll & Landry, 2010).

Hjorth and Kim (2011) argued that the "intimate publics" that emerge on social media following a crisis reflect a greater capacity for personalization than traditional modes of communication, creating a deeper feeling of connectedness. As a result, social media and virtual grief are altering our rituals of mourning by creating an ever-changing practice of collective grief that is not possible in real contexts (Morehouse & Crandall, 2014).

It is not uncommon for people to share reflections and reactions following a tragedy (Kitch & Hume, 2008). However, the advent of social media has made it possible for the public to do so in a user-structured space (Gloviczki, 2012; Smith & McDonald, 2011). In other words, social media platforms allow for collective grief to be structured in a way that suits the needs of those who are participating. This study suggests that the #WeStandwithWDBJ hashtag served such a purpose. The hashtag served as a user-structured space for television news workers to congregate and take part in the collective grief for someone they did not know and were only connected with through their shared profession. The hashtag allowed for a community of grief to form around the deaths of Parker and Ward that was exclusive to those working in local TV news. Despite the fact that they were geographically separated from each other and the deceased, the hashtag allowed for grief and mourning to be expressed as if the users were there or had personally known the victims.

Given that social media channels have become a place where the public can go to discuss the implications of tragic and traumatic events (Robinson, 2011), an analysis of the outpouring on Twitter regarding the WDBJ shootings can shed light on how one specific group—broadcast journalists—chose to structure that space to meet their needs. Broadly, this study attempts to answer two primary research questions:

RQ1: How did professional broadcast journalists use Twitter to respond to the WDBJ shootings?

RQ2: To what extent does broadcast journalists' use of #WeStandWithWDBJ indicate conceptual linkages between the uses and gratifications theoretical perspective and terror management theory?

Uses and gratifications

The uses and gratifications (U&G) perspective assumes that people use communication content and/or channels purposefully to gratify individual needs determined by psychological and social factors (Klapper, 1963). Psychological needs and motives guide individuals' selection of communication channels and active consumption of media content (Rubin & Martin, 1998). Thus, the theoretical perspective is valuable for identifying motives for use of specific media or interpersonal communication channels to help interpret patterns of exposure, predict relevant outcomes, and contextualize unintended effects (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974).

In the modern media environment, people are not only active consumers but also engage in content creation and collaboration (Cotrău, 2015; Lee & Ma, 2012). Platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube allow for gratification of various motives, as well as the potential for innovating diverse uses of each channel. This is because in contrast to traditional media, newer communication channels hold the capacity for interactivity, demassified control, and asynchronous communication (Ruggiero, 2000).

Studies have shown social media users can experience a variety of gratifications including obtaining information or entertainment (Cotrău, 2015), socializing and status-seeking (LaRose & Eastin, 2004), or sharing news (Lee & Ma, 2012). Social media users may also experience pleasure from socializing openly with other users or even by observing their communicative acts voyeuristically (Cotrău, 2015). In her analysis of Twitter use, Chen (2011) found that extended use (i.e., tweeting and sending @replies) gratified an essential human need to connect with other people.

Perloff (2015) argued that the U&G perspective is uniquely positioned for the study of new media because of its focus on active audience members who are both senders and receivers of messages. Related to the present study, the U&G perspective is applicable because broadcast journalists (i.e., the audience) actively chose Twitter and the hashtag as the platform necessary to meet their specific needs. In other words, the self-agency of a platform like Twitter tends to draw users who are motivated by the need to build community (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). Therefore, we argue that broadcast journalists, who are essentially professional content creators, were motivated to choose Twitter as an appropriate platform to meet their needs for reflection and community following the WDBJ tragedy.

Terror Management Theory and Mortality Salience

Psychological literature also provides a useful framework for understanding the use of social media during tragedy. Terror Management Theory, and specifically the concept of mortality salience, can be useful to help explain broadcast journalists' motivations following the WDBJ shootings and the phenomenon of the #WeStand… hashtag.

Terror Management Theory argues that as humans, we are uniquely aware of our own vulnerability and mortality (Pyszczyski, Greenberg, Solomon, & Hamilton, 1990). This awareness creates the potential for ever-present anxiety surrounding thoughts of our own deaths (Greenberg, Pyszcynski, & Solomon, 1990). To survive the weight of this knowledge, we turn to culture and shared symbolic conceptions of reality (Pyszczyski et al., 1990). This becomes especially evident during times of tragedy, when people cling to the values of their in-groups and gain a sense of symbolic immortality by feeling part of something that is more meaningful than their own daily lives (Goldenberg, Pyszczynski, & Johnson, 1999).

Specifically, the concept of mortality salience suggests that the more we become aware of the possibility of our own death, the more we feel the need for identification with an in-group (Routledge, Juhl, Vess, Cathey, & Liao, 2012). The in-group serves as a temporarily enduring system that can be used as a self-defense mechanism against the terror of our own mortality by symbolizing immortality (Herrera & Sani, 2013). In other words, individuals may die, but a group lives on. Therefore, connecting to a broader group allows members to maintain a sense that they can (symbolically, at least) transcend death (Routledge et al., 2012). This provides a buffer for the anxiety caused when people are confronted with their own mortality (Fritsche, Jonas, & Fankhänel, 2008; Pyszczynski et al., 1996).

Motivation and Mortality Salience

Professional journalism is often a high-risk occupation. Internationally, 42 journalists, nine citizen journalists, and two media assistants were killed in connection with their work in the first half of 2018 (Reporters Without Borders, 2018). The Committee to Protect Journalists (2018) reported deaths with confirmed motives for 1,418 journalists and media workers, all of whom had either been murdered or killed in crossfire/combat or while on dangerous assignment between 1992 and 2018. The International Press Institute (2018) reported that 1,830 journalists and media staff were killed between 1997 and 2018, either while on assignment or because they were targeted due to their profession.

Hohman and Hogg (2015) argued that when people are made to fear death, they are motivated to identify with their in-groups in order to assuage that fear. Therefore, combining U&G with the concept of mortality salience provides an opportunity to study the motivations for use of social media during tragedy, specifically within a given group. It stands to reason that the #WeStand… hashtag became a means through which to gratify the need to manage fear and anxiety associated with mortality salience amongst broadcast journalism professionals after two of their own group members were shot and killed on the air.

This motivation to cope with tragedy is a eudaimonic motivation, as suggested by Oliver and Raney (2011), who argued that media can be consumed, not just for pleasure, but to find meaning in tragic or somber times. Eudaimonic motivations reflect a broader need for insight into the human condition. Additionally, Oliver and Raney (2011) added that eudaimonic motivations are born from wistful, nostalgic, or brooding affective states that trigger awareness about vulnerability and the fleeting nature of one's life. This is similar to assertions regarding terror management theory and mortality salience by Goldenberg et al. (1999). They argued that tragedy is an appealing form of entertainment because it helps people assuage fears of their own vulnerability while contemplating the death of someone other than themselves. Additionally, Kim and Oliver (2013) argued that discrete affects, such as sadness or anxiety, can drive people to seek general media messages or value information that focuses on meaningfulness rather than engaging in distracting messages. In other words, people seek out messages that remind them of their negative experience in order to better contemplate the meaning of it.

It can be argued, then, that the #WeStandWithWDBJ hashtag was attractive to those experiencing sadness and fear over the Roanoke shootings because it allowed them to find meaning in a tragic event over which they had no personal control. As Fritsche et al. (2008) suggested, seeking out connections with in-groups serves as a way to restore control in the face of mortality salience. Also, consuming media messages related to tragedy or sadness allows individuals to acknowledge and cope with the fragility of human life (Kim & Oliver, 2013), an assumption that is supported by terror management theory (Goldenberg et al., 1999). Thus, this study argues that eudaimonic motivations drove broadcast journalists to communicate with their in-group via the #WeStandwithWDBJ hashtag to alleviate the fear and anxiety associated with mortality salience following the WDBJ shootings.

Both U&G and mortality salience are most often studied with quantitative survey methods. However, given the immediacy of social media posts, a qualitative analysis of the tweets associated with the hashtag #WeStandwithWDBJ provides an opportunity to add to the body of research in both areas by revealing insights from the moment the sentiment was expressed, rather than asking participants to recall their thoughts after the fact in a survey (Gloviczki, 2012; Riffe & Stovall, 1989). By explicating the themes among the messages communicated in the moment, this study will attempt to shed light on how in-groups use social media to alleviate fear and anxiety associated with the death of one of their own.

Method

While the Roanoke shootings were discussed on multiple social media platforms, this study focuses specifically on Twitter and the hashtag #WeStandwithWDBJ. Twitter stands apart from other popular social networks because it has emerged as a valid news source (Moon & Hadley, 2014) and a constant information stream (Bruns & Burgess, 2012). Journalists are notably more active on Twitter versus other social media sites (Larrson & Moe, 2011), with television journalists being the most avid Twitter users (Moon & Hadley, 2014). Additionally, the use of hashtags on Twitter has become a common practice for disseminating and generating sentiment about an event (Wexler, 2014). Hashtags, like #WeStandWithWDBJ, develop organically and provide an interesting combination of news and opinion (Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2012), and they allow for the rapid creation of discursive communities around a given event (Bruns & Burgess, 2012).

To understand how TV journalists used Twitter in the days following the Roanoke tragedy, Tweets using the hashtag #WeStandWithWDBJ were stored for analysis with the website Storify. Storify allows users to search specific social media sites based on hashtags or other terms and topics, and then store them for later use. Twitter was searched using the hashtag #WeStandWithWDBJ, and also the same wording without the hashtag symbol. Some tweets included images portraying the "WeStand…." phrase, but were not specifically hashtagged with it. These tweets were still included in the analysis because they used the key phrase being investigated and served the same purpose of grief expression as those tweets that were specifically hashtagged. For this analysis, only tweets by broadcast news workers were used. The Twitter account for each tweet was checked to verify that the user was a member of a broadcast news organization based on their profile picture and description. Any tweets from non-broadcast workers were not included in the analysis. Any user with an ambiguous profile that did not clearly indicate a job in broadcast news was also excluded.

Tweets were gathered from the week between August 26, 2015, and September 4, 2015. The tweets expressing grief were concentrated in the first seven days following the shooting, with a dramatic drop off after

September 2. Therefore, the period of analysis was confined to the first seven days following the shooting. After deleting retweets and duplicates, this process yielded 330 unique tweets, 278 of which included images.

A directed discourse analysis was conducted on the data. This analysis involved constant comparison of data to identify categories and over-arching themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), using the lenses of terror management and eudaimonic motivations. This approach is useful for refining, supporting, validating, enriching, or extending a theory/theoretical framework, particularly when descriptive evidence would enhance existing research of a particular phenomenon (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The researchers did not begin the study with existing themes; rather, the themes emerged from the coding of the content contained in the tweets (Carroll & Landry, 2010; Sanderson & Cheong, 2010). The goal of this type of analysis is to take apart the data, conceptualize it, and develop concepts and themes based on their properties in order to determine what those parts can reveal about the whole (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Discourse analysis was appropriate for this study because it allowed the authors to explore the situational meanings being developed around the murders and the relationships being developed and communicated among the social group using the hashtag (Gee, 2018). Additionally, as Gee (2014) noted, discourse analysis can be used to discover how members of a group use language and values associated with their group to enact their specific socially recognizable identity as well as engage in a common activity within the group. Therefore, this approach fit the goal of the study to investigate how broadcast journalists used language through Twitter to communicate grief regarding the tragedy amongst their peers.

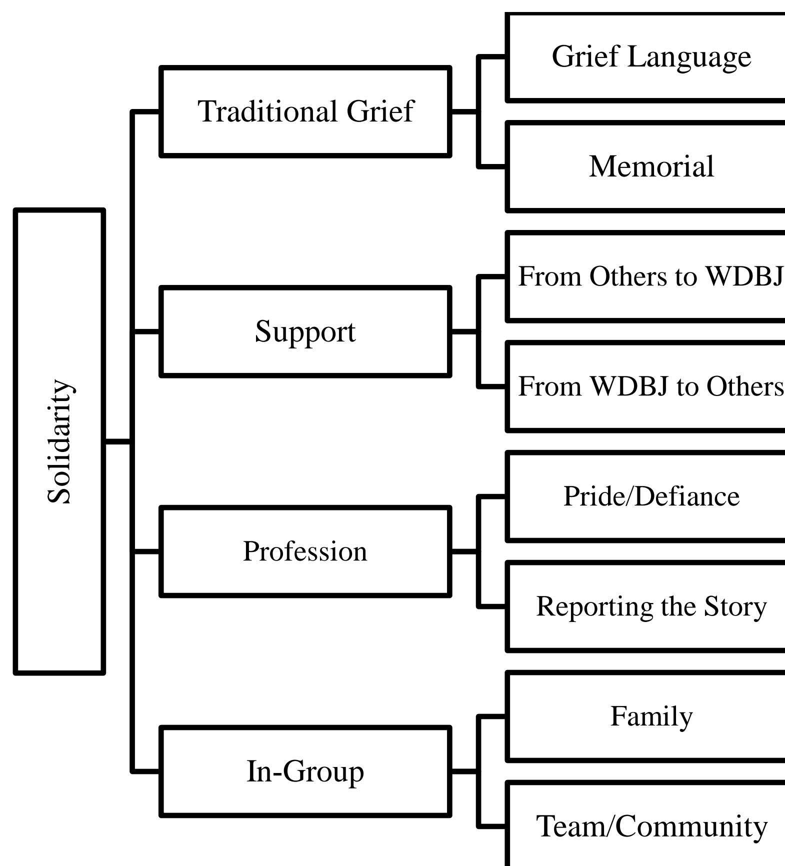

Figure 1. Hierarchy of themes derived from directed approach to qualitative discourse analysis of broadcast journalists' tweets using #WeStandWithWDBJ

The themes emerged from the analysis of the content contained in the tweets (Carroll & Landry, 2010; Sanderson & Cheong, 2010). Given the complexity of analyzing myriad forms of expression presented in each tweet and the need to consider manifest and latent meanings in this exploratory study, we used a negotiated agreement approach to enhance intercoder agreement (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen, 2013). The authors hand-coded the data separately, then compared findings, such that a shared perspective emerged that was informed by the literature (Brubaker et al., 2013). An independent coder was then given a sample of tweets (*n = 54,* 16%) and asked to code them based on the existing categories that had emerged from the analysis. The independent coder's categorizations matched the researchers' categorizations at a rate of 81%, which suggests strong intercoder agreement for this analysis, based on the standards established in other qualitative studies utilizing similar methods (Campbell et al., 2013). The analysis revealed an overarching theme of solidarity, which manifested through four secondary themes and eight sub-themes. Figure 1 illustrates the hierarchy of themes identified in this analysis.

Results

Primary Theme: Solidarity

At the time of the shooting, a small group of hashtags began to emerge in connection with the event such as #WDBJ, #WeAreWDBJ and #WDBJStrong. However, the one that took hold and served as the primary rallying point was #WeStandwithWDBJ. The fact that this particular wording emerged as the preferred avenue for expression regarding the shooting supports the overarching theme of solidarity that emerged from the analysis. As Fritsche et al. (2008) argued, when a person feels a threat to their existence or is reminded of their mortality, they turn to their in-group to reestablish a feeling of control. In this way, congregating around the #WeStand... hashtag served as a rallying point for in-group members to gather, feel solidarity, and circle the wagons against an existential outside threat that reminded them of the possibility that they could die on the job (Robinson, 2011).

Analysis of the text and images in each tweet revealed four secondary themes that supported the primary theme of solidarity (see Figure 1). These themes included: traditional grief, support, profession, and in-group. Within each of these thematic categories, messages were further codified into sub-themes (see Figure 1) that more specifically illustrate how each need was expressed and gratified communicatively in response to this traumatic event. Tables 1-4 provide examples of tweets in each secondary theme, specified by subtheme. In some cases, a tweet could express numerous sentiments in various ways. Therefore, the thematic categories these brief yet complex messages yielded should not be construed as mutually exclusive. Collectively, these themes suggested several needs that use of the #WeStand… hashtag fulfilled for journalists as they attempted to connect to their fellow broadcasters and make sense of the unexpected deaths (Wisman & Koole, 2003).

Secondary Theme 1: Traditional grief

Broadcast journalists used the hashtag to express their grief, sympathy, or anxiety, and they engaged in communicative practices that bore resemblance to mourning rituals in offline contexts. A motif of color bars predominated the visual imagery in this category. The color bars, or TV test pattern, are a universally recognized symbol among TV broadcast workers because it is unique to the television industry. Using this as a profile picture served as the first step toward forming a community of grief built around a shared occupation. Vicary and Fraley (2010) found similar behavior among students who changed their Facebook profile pictures to an image of Virginia Tech or the Northern Illinois memorial ribbon in the wake of shootings on those campuses.

Many of the photographs also displayed #WeStandWithWDBJ, either as part of the photo or in a caption beneath it. This secondary theme included 137 tweets, or 47% of the tweet total. It was the largest group of tweets among all four secondary themes, suggesting a strong need among the users to grieve the loss of the two victims. See Table 1 for examples of tweets in this thematic category, specified by subtheme.

Sub-theme: Grief language. Within the theme of traditional grief, messages revealed use of traditional grief language to express sorrow for the loss of Parker and Ward and recognition of the tragic circumstances surrounding their deaths. This language appeared in images as well as in accompanying captions. For example, many users offered "condolences" or included "RIP" ("rest in peace") in a hashtag or as part of their message. Phrases such as "praying for…," "thinking of…," or "heavy hearts" allowed users to express sympathy or sorrow in much the same fashion as a mourner would write in a sympathy card or guest book at a funeral (Harju, 2014;

Klastrup, 2015). Images included ribbons in the favorite colors of the deceased or black ribbons juxtaposed against a screen of color bars and accompanied by the station's call letters. Other images showed the victims either alone or together. The majority of images consisted of group photos of staffers in the newsroom (often holding signs displaying the hashtag) or posed images of reporters and videographers in the field, again often holding signs displaying the hashtag. In these images, journalists literally stood with WDBJ and used traditional grief language to underscore the symbolic meaning of their actions as well. A total of 37 tweets fit this theme. Twenty-six of those included images. Almost half (n = 11) of those images were posed station shots featuring the hashtag and including messages of grief.

Table 1

Traditional Grief: Subthemes with Explanations and Exemplars

Traditional Grief	
Grief Language	**Memorial**
Traditional language used to express grief and/or sorrow. Much the same as what would be expressed in person. • Condolences • Thinking of • Praying for • RIP • Heavy Hearts	Language used to memorialize or honor the victims. Images served the same purpose as a teddy bear at a roadside memorial. A way to say, "I was affected by this." • In honor of • In memory • Never forget • Hashtag only • Ribbons and color bars
Examples	
[Image of field reporter and camera operator] MT @ShannelDouglas: Today was really hard getting through live shots! Our hearts are heavy! pic.twitter.com/wKystuqdlZ #WeStandWithWDBJ #PJNET	*[Image of broadcaster wearing memorial ribbons]* The @WTKR3 team is wearing these in honor of Alison and Adam. #WeStandWithWDBJ pic.twitter.com/iUj24JyCHY
[Still shot of hearse linking to short video of funeral procession] Rest in Peace Adam Ward… Your shift is over. #WDBJ #WeStandWithWDBJ #NEWSFAMILY pic.twitter.com/gVQ42YMQXq	*[Image of camera operator, news van, and field reporter looking into camera]* #WeStandWithWDBJ @WDBJ7 pic.twitter.com/eZMstcpdT3
Donna Harris @DonnaABC7 Rest in Peace Adam #WeStandWithWDBJ	*[Replaced profile picture with image of color bars superimposed with black memorial ribbon]* Susan Phillips @Starbuck 1004 #WeStandWithWDBJ

Note: For tweets that included images or videos, brief descriptions of visual content are noted to help contextualize the written text of each message.

Sub-theme: Memorial. In a similar vein, users employed memorializing language and images to honor Ward and Parker and their memory. The images and words posted on Twitter allowed mourners to participate in group grieving without requiring intimate interaction. It was a way to connect with the tragedy in the absence of any real and tangible connection. Journalists were able to convey the sentiment that they had been affected by the deaths of Parker and Ward, despite not having known them personally. Harju (2014) found similar behavior among online mourners of Apple founder Steve Jobs. Social media allowed these mourners to recognize each other as belonging to the same community, thus legitimizing their feelings of loss for someone they never knew.

Posts included phrases such as "in honor of" or "in memory of," as well as references to remembering/never forgetting the victims, moments of silence, and acknowledgements of the one-week anniversary of the deaths. Images included pictures of actual memorials erected in honor of the victims in Roanoke, ribbons and/or color bars, and posed field or station shots accompanied by memorial messages or solely by the hashtag.

Of the 330 total tweets, 100 of them fit into this theme, with 90 of those including images. Sixty-one of those tweets including images were posed field or station shots of broadcast journalists accompanied only by the hashtag and no other words. This combination of posed field shot and hashtag with no other message seemed to serve as the most significant way for the journalists to not only memorialize the victims, but also to gratify the need for identification with fellow broadcasters. The need for strong connection with an in-group is often increased with mortality salience (Castano, Yzerbyt, & Bourguignon, 2003), which may have motivated the journalists to participate in this particular way, versus tweeting the more "traditional" memorial images of ribbons, colors bars, or the victims themselves, which comprised only 14 of the images in this theme.

Secondary Theme 2: Support

In-group support is an important means of restoring a sense of control following morality salience (Fritsche et al., 2008), so it makes sense that the next largest secondary theme was Support. A total of 115 tweets (35%) included elements of this theme. The wording of these tweets seemed to offer and acknowledge support during the grieving process. This type of communication reflects the messages that one would typically express to someone experiencing a loss. This theme also highlights respect for the mourners' need to withdraw from interaction during the bereavement process, with the recipients of support politely recognizing the condolences of others while still requiring a certain degree of solitude to grieve. As a result, this theme allowed local broadcast journalists to satisfy their need to offer support and feel connected with WDBJ and each other, transcending geographical boundaries, but without invading the private mourning space of those who were actually involved in the incident. This theme was especially important to the feeling of overall solidarity that the use of the hashtag embodied. Pervasive throughout the messages in this theme was a feeling of "oneness" and the idea that only other television journalists could truly understand the emotions those at WDBJ were going through. See Table 2 for examples of tweets in this thematic category, specified by subtheme.

Sub-theme: From others to WDBJ. Messages in this sub-theme involved sending thoughts, love, prayers, and other expressions of emotional support to WDBJ. The use of words such as "sending," "to you," "with you," "from ours to yours," "we are with you," or "we're all with you," allowed journalists from across the country to express support when they were unable to take any other tangible action. Group photos of staffers at other stations seemed to solidify the notion that journalists in other markets shared in the grief of those who worked at WDBJ. Of the 115 tweets sent in support, 106 of them fell into this sub-theme. Roughly 77% (n = 86) of those included images, and the majority of those images (n = 62) were of posed station groups with a message sending support. Much like within the Memorial sub-theme, these station images seemed to emerge as the most effective way to express solidarity and to say "we are one" and "we are with you."

Sub-theme: From WDBJ to others. While WDBJ did not use the #WeStand… hashtag often, it was clear from images included in the few tweets they did send that they were monitoring the string. They posted photos of a memorial wall in the WDBJ newsroom exhibiting printed pages of the tweets they had received. They also shared photos of journalists from other stations who came to WDBJ to help with day-to-day operations during the crisis. Posts from WDBJ staffers acknowledged that they had seen the outpouring of support from other journalists and were grateful. There were only nine tweets in this sub-theme, supporting the assertion that WDBJ was not participating actively in the outpouring of support and solidarity being shared amongst other local TV markets. However, these few tweets did seem to serve as an acknowledgement of the feelings of solidarity and oneness being expressed.

Table 2

Support: Subthemes with Explanations and Exemplars

Support	
From Others to WDBJ	**From WDBJ to Others**
Sending of prayers, thoughts, and feelings directly to WDBJ. Solidifying the feelings of "oneness." Mentions of other stations going to help WDBJ. • To you • With you • Sending thoughts, love or prayers	WDBJ using hashtag to acknowledge outpouring of support. Expressed thanks but asked to be left alone to grieve. Typically language of someone experiencing a loss. • Shots of memorial wall at WDBJ • Expressions of thanks
Examples	
[Image of Ward and Parker accompanied by WDBJ station logo, with FOX 46 Charlotte station logo beneath hashtag] MT @FOX46News: Our thoughts and prayers are with @WDBJ7. pic.twitter.com/MzcON705lP #WeStandWithWDBJ #PJNET	*[Image of printed tweets from the hashtag pinned to the wall inside the WDBJ newsroom]* So beautiful…our wall of tributes to Adam and Alison. Thank you. #WeStandWith WDBJ pic.twitter.com/XcSX6Vc8mh
[Image of News12 New Jersey crew in studio standing at news desk, holding a white board bearing the handwritten hashtag] MT@News12NJ: The @News12NJ evening staff offers our support to the staff at @WDBJ7. pic.twitter.com/Amil5dhBpQ #WeStandWithWDBJ #PJNET	*[Image of member of a rival news team helping to edit the WDBJ broadcast]* THANK YOU Andrew Freiden NBC12! This means a lot to us all. #WeStandWithWDBJ facebook.com/RachelDePompaN… pic.twitter.com/UuogjloRz2
Margaret Kreger @margaretk22 @KimberlyWDBJ we're thinking about you guys this week at @myfox8. Proud of all the strength you are showing. #WeStandWithWDBJ	Kimberly McBroom @KimberlyWDBJ So grateful for the kindness and encouragement you have given me this week. It means more than you know. #WeStandWithWDBJ #WeAreWDBJ7

Note: For tweets that included images or videos, brief descriptions of visual content are noted to help contextualize the written text of each message.

Secondary Theme 3: Profession

The next largest secondary theme following Support was Profession. Ninety tweets (27%) embodied elements of this theme, which diverged widely from the two previous themes by focusing less on grief and more on identification as journalists. In times of tragedy members cling to the values of their in-group in order to alleviate mortality salience (Goldberg et al., 1990), especially those members who define themselves based on that group membership (Routledge et al., 2012). Tweets in this theme seemed to embody that.

The tweets highlighted a spirit of tenacity and duty in carrying out their work in the face of danger, fear, or other stressful conditions. Journalists typically strive to keep themselves out of the story, but through their messages on #WeStandWithWDBJ, journalists were able to show and tell their own stories about their guiding principles and sense of service to their communities.

While the two previous themes seemed to express a feeling of solidarity through oneness, with this theme, journalists seemed to be fulfilling a need to assert exactly "who" they were "one" with. As terror management theory suggests, those experiencing fear over tragedy find solace in the norms and values of their own groups (Pyszczynski et al., 1996). These tweets seemed to establish the boundaries of who they are and what it means to be a part of this group. See Table 3 for examples of tweets in this thematic category, specified by subtheme.

Table 3

Profession: Subthemes with Explanations and Exemplars

Profession	
Pride/Defiance	**Reporting the Story**
Expressions of pride for their profession. A need to work through fear and/or sorrow. A way to establish that this is who they are and this is what they do. • Candid and posted field images. • Working ”for” victims • Working while “thinking of” victims	Use of hashtag to report information about the story. • Standard broadcast style language • Links to articles • Links to articles with commentary
Examples	
[Image of reporter getting ready to go on camera in the field] We do this for Alison and Adam. #WeStandWithWDBJ pic.twitter.com/rbqVAjet5j	Stephanie Susskind @StephanieWINK Funeral today for cameraman #AdamWard, gunned down in Virginia last week. More than 1,000 mourners paid respects Monday. #WeStandWithWDBJ
[Image of reporter outside the newsroom with news vehicle in background] Headed out on my assignment for the day. Thinking of Alison and Adam. #WeStandWithWDBJ pic.twitter.com/pOZV3TFHAL	*[Portrait photos of Parker and Ward]* Officials say both journalists were shot in head in on-air shooting. #WeStandWithWDBJ bit.ly/1lp15DX pic.twitter.com/wHpwXOWRY9
Tonight was my first outdoor LIVE shot since last week’s shooting…I don’t know if I’ll ever look at this aspect of my responsibilities the same way…but I refuse to let the tragedy dictate how I do my job and get information to our viewers. Some of my best friends stand in front of the camera, and behind them on a daily basis…It’s a labor of love for us…but tonight I have a heavy heart for Alison and Adam from WDBJ… *[Image of microphone with station logo in foreground, camera and light in background]* Feeling a little uneasy tonight, but filled with confidence. This is what we do. #WeStandWithWDBJ #AlisonAndAdam Ben Hutchison @BennyHutch	*[Image of church exterior, taken from street]* The funeral for Adam Ward has started at First Baptist Church in Roanoke. #WDBJ #WeStandWithWDBJ #NEWSFAMILY pic.twitter.com/YsHDxTrKCk

Note: For tweets that included images or videos, brief descriptions of visual content are noted to help contextualize the written text of each message.

Sub-theme: Pride/Defiance. The tweets in this category included language that defined who they are and expressed pride for what they do. This seemed to echo Hohman and Hogg’s (2015) assertion that when faced with mortality salience, group members will feel the need to defend their group, or as Vaes, Heflick, and Goldberg (2010) suggested, maintain the perception of their group as meaningful. To do this, they posted images of themselves working in the field, with or without accompanying text. When text was used, journalists made references to working “for” the victims (i.e., in their honor), while “thinking of” the victims, or expressing admiration for WDBJ, whose staffers were working under emotionally draining conditions. Even journalists who were not affiliated with WDBJ described their commitment to carrying out their professional responsibilities despite feeling fear or sorrow. In other words, they seemed to be saying, “We will go on because this is who we are and what we do.”

There were 42 tweets in this category, and 41 of them included images. The majority (n = 24, 58%) were posed images of reporters in the field with accompanying messages most often expressing that they were working for the victims or thinking of them as they worked. Thirteen (32%) were candid images taken of reporters working in the field (e.g., doing interviews or preparing for live shots). These were most often accompanied by messages expressing the need to work despite fear.

Sub-theme: Reporting the Story. Part of demonstrating their commitment to journalism meant covering the shootings and subsequent newsworthy events, just as they would any other story. So journalists also used #WeStandWithWDBJ to disseminate information about this tragedy even though it affected their own industry. Because the hashtag originated after the shootings, there was no breaking news coverage or retweets of stories related to the shootings themselves. Topics included Ward's funeral and Parker's vigil, the growth of public memorials as news viewers and community members reacted to the incident, and reports of journalists from other stations helping WDBJ. Another prominent angle to this coverage included stories about the Virginia Tech football players wearing stickers with teal and maroon ribbons on their helmets to honor Ward (a Virginia Tech alum) and his colleague.

Because Ward had a public funeral and Parker's family held a private service, there were more references and images related to Ward's death. In covering his funeral via #WeStandWithWDBJ, journalists showed restraint. They posted photos of the exterior of the church from a distance, with no images of the interior of the building and very few images of the mourners in attendance. Furthermore, coverage of the incident and its aftermath on this hashtag was restricted to public expressions of grief and official displays of tribute.

Unlike coverage of other violent crimes, any reporting using #WeStandWithWDBJ was decidedly positive or commemorative. The platform allowed journalists to exercise their commitment to journalism and their need to spread information as they are trained to do; however, the reports did not illustrate traditional news reporting practices in covering similar crimes, such as identifying the killer and his or her motivations or capturing emotional reactions of family and friends of the victims, which suggests the motive of preserving this hashtag as a safe space for remembrance and solidarity. Additionally, the lack of tweets about the killer, Vester Flanagan, or the other non-journalist victim, Vicki Gardner, suggests a preference for the in-group versus the out-group that is amplified by mortality salience (Harmon-Jones, Simon, Pyszczynski, Solomon, & McGregor, 1997).

These tweets were written in standard broadcast news language and conveyed details of whatever latest development was being communicated. As would be expected, the images used corresponded with the news item being tweeted. Forty-eight tweets fit this theme. Twenty-eight (58%) included images.

Secondary Theme 4: In-group

The final secondary theme, In-group, serves some of the same purposes as the Profession theme, such as helping to establish the boundaries of their community and delineating the shared unique experiences among its group members. However, this theme also shares some of the same purposes as the Traditional Grief and Support themes. Tweets in this theme continued to help establish a connection with WDBJ and unite the group in a shared space of mourning by the repeated use of words such as "family," "team," and "community."

In this case, references to family, team, and community all helped establish the "one big happy family" narrative that transcended the often fierce competition amongst local TV stations. This difference seems to reflect the need for pro-social behavior toward the in-group (Jonas, Schimel, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2002) and the desire for the group to be "one" and very much "real" (Vaes et al., 2010) often enhanced during times of mortality salience. The "we are one" message was pervasive throughout tweets in this category. There were 72 tweets in this theme, which amounted to 22% of all tweets studied. See Table 4 for examples of tweets in this thematic category, specified by subtheme.

Sub-theme: Family. Tweets to #WeStandWithWDBJ established an emotional connection between journalists at other newsrooms and the staff at WDBJ, satisfying a need to be bound together in grief and a shared experience at having witnessed the tragedy itself from the unique vantage point of being professional journalists. This sense of unity was apparent in the repeated use of the word "family" as well as other familial terms such as "brother" or "sister" to describe co-workers in the news industry. Messages also included references to a sameness with the victims or WDBJ and references to personal and/or actual connections to WDBJ. Some messages expressed caring and appreciation for co-workers—suggesting journalists who posted to the hashtag looked at the people in

their own newsrooms in a new light because they empathized with staffers at WDBJ who had lost their co-workers, or with Parker and Ward, who worked and died together.

Thirty-five tweets fit this sub-theme, and all of them included images. The majority (n = 18) were posed images of station staff accompanied by messages expressing a feeling of family or gratitude. Other images included shots of reporters in the field, color bars, and the staff of WDBJ. Unlike other themes, images in this theme (n = 6) also included personal photographs of reporters when they were young, reporters' children, and photographs from when users had actually worked at WDBJ earlier in their careers. These types of images further supported the family theme and suggested an element of self-reflection that often accompanies tragedy (Kitch & Hume, 2008).

Table 4

In-Group: Subthemes with Explanations and Exemplars

In-Group	
Family	**Team/Community**
Tweets establishing a connection with WDBJ. Establishing an in-group and creating an emotional tie. They are one despite competition. Using the familial terms to reference: • The industry • Coworkers • WDBJ • Fellow journalists	Further establishes the in-group by suggesting they can all work together. Suggests unification based on common characteristics. • Team • Community • Crew • Colleagues • References to competing stations working together
Examples	
[Black and white image of broadcaster during previous employment at WDBJ] MT @CecilyTynan: Proud to start my career @WDBJ a newsroom where coworkers are like family. pic.twitter.com/16MpR62rKi #WeStandWithWDBJ #PJNET	*[Image of microphones with station logos from competing networks in the same community]* MT @SBarrettWFTV: From Orlando. pic.twitter.com/qWzwnnjXdz #WeStandWithWDBJ. #PJNET
[Image of on-air talent and crew standing in studio for posed group photo] MT @thetopstoryWYFF: We are all one family. pic.twitter.com/rJBl0b9mYZ #WeStandWithWDBJ #PJNET	*[Image of field reporter and camera operator]* I relate to the teamwork between Alison & Adam as Tim and I rely on each other every night, #WeStandWithWDBJ @WDBJ7 pic.twitter.com/1JNj060lJM
Derek Petersen @Derek_Photog RIP Adam, please watch over your brothers in photography from heaven #WeStandWithWDBJ	Floyd Hillman @FloydHillman While this industry may seem massive, it is a tight, TIGHT community! #WeStandWithWDBJ #Roanoke #media

Note: For tweets that included images or videos, brief descriptions of visual content are noted to help contextualize the written text of each message.

Sub-theme: Team/Community. Group identification was also expressed through references to teamwork and community. In these messages, users seemed to put aside competition in favor of collaboration and connection through the television news profession as a whole. The word "team" was expressed 24 times in reference to station staff such as "From one news team to another," or "The Newschannel 6 morning team is keeping the #WDBJ morning team in their thoughts and prayers." The words "community" and "colleagues" were used five times each, mostly in reference to their own station or working with other stations. For example, "While this industry may seem massive, it is a tight, TIGHT community!" and "Thinking of our colleagues @WDBJ7 in Roanoke."

There were 37 tweets in this category, and 36 included images. The majority (*n*=26) were of posed station shots accompanied by messages referencing news team, colleagues, and news crews. Ten images were posed field shots, three of which showed multiple stations working together. There was one personal image—an old photo from when the user previously worked at WDBJ.

Discussion

This study attempted to shed light on how professional broadcast journalists used Twitter to respond to the WDBJ shootings and the extent to which analysis of their tweets using the #WeStandWithWDBJ hashtag might indicate conceptual linkages between the uses and gratifications theoretical perspective and terror management theory. In the wake of a senseless and tragic event that resonated solidly within their profession, television journalists flocked to Twitter in an effort to connect with each other and manage the fear of death ignited by the murders of two of their own.

The growing collection of photos and words associated with the hashtag served to collectively memorialize the two fallen journalists in a relatively disparate community, similar to what Kern et al. (2013) found in their study of Facebook memorial pages. They argued that this collective memorialization satisfies the needs of remembrance for both the group and the individual. Similar to what Harju (2014) and Kern et al. (2013) found, solidarity was clearly evident among those using the hashtag, despite the fact that none had met the deceased. As Caroll and Landry (2010) suggested, the comments associated with the hashtag served as virtual black armbands, veils, or flowers left at a gravesite. They were symbolic expressions of solidarity in the face of loss.

The tweets fell into four distinct themes, all supporting the overarching idea of solidarity in the face of crisis. By expressing feelings of traditional grief and support, by reiterating the values of their profession, and by establishing the boundaries and values of their in-group, the broadcast journalists actively chose Twitter as the platform through which they could connect with each other and satisfy their need to make sense of what happened and reestablish a sense of control, in order to alleviate the very real fear that it could happen to them as well (Fritsche et al., 2008). This affirms previous research (Dworznik, 2006) suggesting that despite many journalists' outward displays of detachment and veneration of stoicism as a professional norm, honest communication about their emotions might allow them to make sense of traumatic experiences.

Given this, the #WeStandWithWDBJ hashtag served as an online gathering place where television journalists could unite in solidarity with others like them who felt the need to find solace and comfort in the face of the death of someone they knew only as a fellow reporter. The repetition of photos and captions reflected a quickly formed sense of community among television news workers who used social media to satisfy their need for in-group structure and values as a way to alleviate their feelings of mortality ignited by the murders of Parker and Ward (Goldberg et al., 1990).

As Terror Management Theory suggests, the hashtag #WeStandwithWDBJ allowed TV journalists to manage their feelings of mortality salience by focusing on solidarity and connecting with others from their in-group who would understand their fear of death (Pyszczyski et al., 1990). The community formed around this hashtag allowed for a safe discussion of the tragedy that served to reduce the anxiety caused by knowing that they, too, could die on the job (Goldenberg et al., 1999). As Oliver and Raney (2011) suggested, the hashtag in this case became a useful platform for TV journalists to satisfy their eudaimonic need for meaning. It can be argued that the focus on solidarity through grief, support, and established boundaries was based on a eudaimonic desire for meaning and truth motivated by mortality salience. The poignant comments and emotional reflection allowed these journalists to be introspective and outwardly empathetic at the same time, all while working to satisfy the need to understand what had happened and what it meant for their own longevity.

This study contributes to the literature on U&G in new media environments by bridging the theoretical perspective with research on terror management and eudaimonic motivation. Ruggiero (2000) argued that scholars "must be prepared to expand our current theoretical models of U&G" for more modern and illuminating applications to research (p. 29). To that end, the present study provides needed insight into social media use in a way that considers this admonition. Qualitative methods may be used to expand and refine theories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and are particularly valuable for providing insight into newer areas of inquiry (Sutu, 2017). In this study, the qualitative discourse analysis of the language and imagery used in the #WeStandWithWDBJ tweets allowed for

interpretations of motives and reactions based on how users were feeling in the moment, which provided insight into how a given in-group can use a platform like Twitter to satisfy their needs related to a tragedy or disaster. Analyzing Twitter posts to #WeStandWithWDBJ not only addressed the common criticism of U&G researchers' overreliance on self-report data (see Ruggiero, 2000) but also provided a wealth of descriptive detail based on immediate reactions to tragedy, not reactions recalled later (Gloviczki, 2012; Riffe & Stovall, 1989). Furthermore, the findings of this study might allow researchers to generate survey items (e.g., evaluative interval scales tied to motive statements) for quantitative studies of eudaimonic motivation or empirical investigations of trauma-related communication in a range of different contexts.

This research also contributes to the study of journalism by focusing on reporter reactions to tragedy versus the typical focus on viewer or media user reactions. The analysis opens the door for further discussion about reporter safety, journalistic norms, and how reporters respond to stories directly tied to themselves and their profession. Aside from the murder of Parker and Ward, other recent examples of violence directly impacting journalists include the terrorist attack on the Charlie Hebdo magazine offices in Paris, France (Rayner, Samuel, & Evans, 2015), and the targeted shooting of staff at the Capital Gazette, a daily newspaper in Annapolis, Maryland (Rector & Bogel-Burroughs, 2018). However, journalists are routinely exposed to dangerous and/or traumatic events during the course of their reporting (e.g., covering stories related to violent crime, fatal accidents, natural disasters, war, terrorism) (Dworznik, 2006). As a result, they often suffer symptoms of emotional distress, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, or compassion fatigue (Dworznik, 2006). Considering these professional hazards, this study informs and affirms efforts to enhance trauma training initiatives in journalism education (Dworznik & Grubb, 2007).

Ultimately, this study contributes to scholarship regarding social media's impact on society by illuminating how a platform like Twitter can function as a virtual gathering place during unusual or tragic events beyond its typical daily functions of news and information sharing. As Marwick and Ellison (2012) pointed out, social media are unique public memorial spaces that allow individuals to share information, express positive and negative sentiments, and commiserate with one another. While particular messages following a tragedy may showcase a variety of emotions and communicative styles, collectively, they underscore the human need to make sense of death and in doing so, assign meaning to life.

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Health Information-Seeking Behaviors and Disparities Among Patients with Type 2 Diabetes: Testing Predictors of the Frequency of HISB with Doctors and Online

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Successfully managing chronic illness warrants ongoing education and health information access in order for patients to continue to engage in health behaviors. The chronic nature of type 2 diabetes presents a unique burden for patients self-managing their health on a daily basis. Data from the Annenberg National Health Communication Survey was analyzed to discover possible motivators for health information-seeking behaviors online and with health care providers, the two most popular sources for health information. Two separate multinomial logistic regression models tested health status, trust for health information, health locus of control as predictors of health information-seeking behaviors online and with a health care provider. Gender, race, age, education and marital status were included as control variables. The results demonstrate that health status, and an external health locus of control focused on powerful others predicted the frequency of HISB with a health care provider. Trust and age were significant predictors of HISB online. Practical and theoretical implications and future directions for research are discussed.

Keywords: health information-seeking behaviors; trust; health locus of control; Comprehensive Model of Information Seeking; chronic illness management

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2014b), 11% of Americans are living with diabetes. Among adults, about 1.7 million new cases of diabetes are diagnosed each year (CDC, 2014a). Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes, accounting for up to 95% of newly diagnosed adults each year (CDC, 2014a). When diabetes is not controlled, fat and glucose stay in the patient's blood, causing long-term harm to vital organs and an array of complications, thus increasing the cost of health care (CDC, 2011; 2014b). In 2012, the cost of diabetes in the US reached $245 billion in direct medical costs and lost productivity (CDC, 2014b).

Since there is no cure for diabetes, self-management as a critical element of care that is often seen as a lifestyle condition and must be supported by information access and lifelong education (Longo et al., 2010). People's decisions to manage their chronic illness(es) are influenced by multiple, interacting individual, social and structural factors (Johnson, Donohue, Atkin, & Johnson, 1995; Sallis, Owen, & Fisher, 2008), and communication plays an integral, constitutive role in the way those factors influence decision-making. According to a recent systematic review, only about one-fourth of scholarly literature on HISB includes patient populations, and the current study's inclusion of a type 2 diabetic study sample contributes to understanding more about illness-oriented HISB (Anker, Reinhart, & Feeley, 2011). The primary aim of the current research was to understand the factors that influence health information-seeking behaviors (HISB) online and with health care providers, since communication such as HISB facilitate the healthy behaviors needed in order to manage diabetes (Bigsby & Hovick, 2018; Longo et al., 2010).

Health Information Seeking Behaviors

Historically, the most used and trusted source of health information has been a patient's physician. HISB, as an action-oriented construct, takes into account the frequency of accessing and sources of health information (Lambert & Loiselle, 2007). It is important for patients managing chronic illnesses to have regular access to information. There are obvious benefits of HISB for diabetic patients, especially as a result of HISB directed toward learning about nutrition, exercise and blood glucose tracking (Longo et al., 2010). Forty-five percent of Americans living with two or more chronic conditions also have diabetes, which demonstrates the compounding influence one's health has on the need to seek information for proper health management (Pew Research Center, 2016). Years after their diabetes diagnosis, participants in nine focus groups held in the Midwest expressed the need for periodic re-education as they, 1) realized the magnitude of information to learn, 2) encountered confusing or conflicting information, or 3) discovered updated information (Longo et al., 2010).

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HISB is a critical step in the enactment of discretionary health-related behaviors for diabetes self-management. The Comprehensive Model of Information Seeking (CMIS) (Johnson & Meischke, 1993) highlights the multidimensional forces that shape an individual's health information-seeking behaviors. Stemming from several behavior change and media use theories, the CMIS more holistically describes the psychosocial processes and structural influences related to HISB in context. The CMIS identifies three primary classes of variables: Antecedents, Information Carrier Characteristics, and Information Seeking Actions (Johnson et al., 1995). Antecedents (e.g., sociodemographics) featured in the CMIS representing the "underlying imperatives to seek information" (Johnson et al., 1995, p. 277) are similar to the tenets of the Health Belief Model, which has been criticized for its limited inclusion of communication variables. In turn, the CMIS' Information Carrier Characteristics (e.g., accessibility and credibility) draw from the Model of Media Exposure and Appraisal and represent the intention to seek information from certain sources. Lastly, Information Seeking Actions (e.g., channel selected, frequency) reflect the nature of information seeking as the communication outcome, and its assumption – that HISB is goal oriented wherein individuals choose among information sources based on their immediate needs – draws from the framework of Uses and Gratifications (Johnson et al., 1995).

Longo and colleagues (2010) found that patients with diabetes sought out sources they trusted and cross-referenced information using both online sources and health care providers. Health information can be found through a myriad of sources, and research indicates that health care providers and online sources are among the most used sources for health information (e.g., Brashers, Goldsmith, & Hseih, 2002; Dutta-Bergman, 2004; Rains & Ruppel, 2016). The current study examined sociocultural predictors of HISB online and with a health care provider.

HISB online. Searching for health information has been consistently reported as one of the most prevalent online activities among adults in the US (Weaver et al., 2010). As of 2014, 87% of Americans used the internet, and 72% of users said they looked online for health information in the past year (Pew Research Center, 2016). Longo and colleagues (2010) found that participants with type 2 diabetes reported accessing health information primarily online. Diabetes and health-related sites such as diabetes.com, WebMD, American Diabetes Association and Mayo Clinic as well as various sites devoted to cooking, exercise and stress reduction were identified as popular sources of health information (Longo et al., 2010). Using the internet increases patients' participation in their management of chronic conditions and increases their ability to make informed decisions about their health. Furthermore, Bounsanga, Voss, Crum, and Hung (2016) found that HISB online was significantly associated with positive health status.

The increasing accessibility of health information decentralizes responsibility for health maintenance and re-positions the patient as the primary decision-maker for treatment, and HISB are key facilitators for managing diabetes (Longo et al., 2010). Despite the power of the internet with its convenience and relatively minimal cost, diabetes patients reported relying *more* on health care providers for their health information (Longo et al., 2010). Patients may still have challenges making use of the online information or be left with unanswered questions (Lee, 2008). As a result, this may be why health care providers remain among the most used sources for health information.

HISB with health care provider. Patients must understand their illness, and the risks and benefits of their options before making informed decisions, and information from health care providers plays an important role in empowering patients to make those health decisions (Street, Makoul, Arora, & Epstein, 2008). Generally, health professionals have long been considered the most widely used source of information among diabetics, both immediately after diagnosis and over a lifetime of treatment (Longo et al., 2010; Pew Research Center, 2016). Street and colleagues have argued for continued examination of how patient-provider communication either directly or indirectly affects health outcomes, and the current study examined predictors of HISB with a health care provider as an important health communication outcome and indirect predictor of improved health and diabetes management.

Health Status

Ayers and Kronenfeld (2007) noted that while research should continue examining behaviors of individuals with specific diseases, it may not necessarily be the presence of any particular illness that determines HISB, but rather the uncertainty stemming from an individual's entire health status that motivates one to engage in HISB. The CMIS characterizes health status as a dimension of Antecedents of HISB described as personal experience,

explaining that the potential efficacy of information seeking to yield benefits plays a role in an individual's decision to seek information (Johnson et al., 1995). In addition to expert diagnoses, one's perception of their health status, as an indicator of health burden, may also predict HISB.

Current health status has been shown to precede the relationship between HISB online and with health care providers (Grilli, Ramsay, & Minozzi, 2009). However, there have been conflicting findings when testing self-rated health status as a predictor of online HISB. Some research finds that people who report poor or fair health status are more likely to engage in HISB online (Baker, Wagner, Singer, & Bundorf, 2003; Houston & Allison, 2002) while other researchers report the opposite relationship (Cotten & Gupta, 2004) or no significant relationship (Atkinson, Saperstein, & Pleis, 2009; Goldner, 2006a). Individuals' perceptions of their health status may be related to generational differences, diagnoses, social comparisons, and cultural values, all of which may also play a role in HISB patterns.

Trust for Health Information

Evidence suggests that trust strongly influences HISB as described in the CMIS (Johnson et al., 1995; Lambert & Loiselle, 2007; Smith, 2011). In response to lack of knowledge concerning health decisions, previous findings (e.g., Lee, Scheufele, & Lewenstein, 2005) demonstrate that patients will rely on trust of health information – as a cognitive shortcut – to help guide their decisions. Quality of health information, especially with the lack of oversight on accuracy of online information, remains a prominent concern (Lee, 2008).

People's level of trust of the Internet, versus other information sources, is an important factor related to seeking health information online (Lemire, Paré, Sicotte, & Harvey, 2008; Zulman, Kirch, Zheng, & An, 2011). While a convenient source of health information, the internet can be overwhelming for many people, and it is difficult to know which online information to trust. Lee and Hornik (2009) argue that HISB online and trust have a synergistic relationship in terms of HISB with a health care provider. As individuals learn more about their health online, they may be more motivated to visit a physician to the extent they trust the provider. Furthermore, "the more individuals trust the health information provided by a source, the more likely they are to seek health information from that source" (Yang, Chen, & Muhamad, 2016, p. 1143).

Lee and Hornik (2009) also recognize a possible opposite direction of influence wherein there may be a ceiling effect for patients who already have high trust in their provider – that is, there may not be much room for HISB online to increase HISB with a provider. People who have a lot of trust in their physician are already visiting them as much as necessary (Lee & Hornik, 2009). However, a specific chronic health concern like type 2 diabetes may motivate even an individual with low trust to engage in HISB online and with a provider, in which case trust would have no direct effect on HISB. In addition to characteristics of information such as its source's trustworthiness, we must also consider an individual's sociocultural foundation of their health decisions and behaviors.

Health Locus of Control

Health locus of control (HLC) – beliefs about the ability to control one's own health outcomes – is a widely tested construct derived from Social Learning Theory (Rotter, 1954), which asserts that behavior change occurs only when the action is expected to maximize rewards and minimize punishments (Wallston & Wallston, 1981; Wallston, 1992). These expectancy beliefs are based on an individual's HLC, which identifies the causal factors one attributes to the state of their health (Rotter, 1966). The place – or locus – of control is recognized along three distinct dimensions: internal HLC, the extent to which health is within one's control; chance HLC, the extent to which health is regarded as a result of fate, luck or chance; and powerful others HLC, the extent to which one's health is placed in hands of "powerful others" (e.g., physicians) (Armitage, Norman, & Conner, 2002; Wallston & Wallston, 1981).

HLC was designed to be tested as an independent variable to predict health behavior in combination with other belief and attitude variables, and has been tested in a variety of health behavior contexts, and health care utilization (Armitage et al., 2002; Kim & Baek, 2017; Wallston & Wallston, 1981). Internal HLC beliefs have been consistently found to be more positively related to a healthy diet compared to chance and powerful others HLC (Cobb-Clark, Kassenboehmer, & Schurer, 2014; Milte, Luszcz, Ratcliffe, Masters, & Crotty, 2015). And powerful others HLC has been found to play a role in promoting health outcomes such as health care utilization (Street et al.,

2009). HLC, in the context of health information seeking, operates as a measure of an individual's beliefs about the outcomes of the information seeking (e.g., Is there anything I can do about my health condition?), which is classified as an Antecedent of HISB in the CMIS (Johnson et al., 1995). We know that patients do not proceed toward behavior change in a rational, linear fashion, but rather they make decisions regarding self-management depending on current needs, seeking only information that seems important and relevant at the moment (Longo et al., 2010; Slater, 1999).

Wallston (1992) argued that health locus of control is most relevant when people place a high value on their health. Those who have been diagnosed with a chronic illness likely face daily reminders of the value of their health. The current study regarded patients with type 2 diabetes as having higher health value than someone who does not have daily reminders to manage their chronic condition. More so, HLC has been found to be more successful in predicting behaviors of chronic patient populations than in predicting preventive behaviors in a general population (Wallston & Wallston, 1981). Research has suggested that individuals' perceived control over their health (high internal HLC) and their self-efficacy – beliefs about their ability to perform health behaviors – will affect how they adjust to a chronic illness (Willis et al., 1997). Diabetics who are considered to be believers in control (high internal and powerful others, and low chance scores) were found to have the best blood glucose control and to be closest to their ideal weight (Bradley, Lewis, Jennings, & Ward, 1990).

As a person grows older, it is expected that their health locus of control shifts from internal to external, associated with the influence of powerful others such as health care providers (Grotz, Hapke, Lampert, & Baumeister, 2011; Zielińska-Więczkowska, 2016). Those who are aging are more likely to develop multiple chronic conditions, thus leading to more medical interventions, interactions with health care providers and dependence on the medical system and a resignation related to uncontrollable degenerative aging processes (Grotz et al., 2011; Zielińska-Więczkowska, 2016).

Theoretically, strong internal HLC is considered to be the most facilitative of preventive healthy behaviors (Wallston & Wallston, 1981; Zielińska-Więczkowska, 2016). A higher score for internal HLC is indicative of taking more responsibility for one's health, having high self-efficacy for health behaviors, and positively correlates strongly with participants' subjective health rating (Zielińska-Więczkowska, 2016). Those scoring higher on the powerful others HLC and chance HLC, both representing an external HLC, feel that their health is beyond their control. Grotz and colleagues (2011) found that individuals who scored high on the chance HLC were less likely to seek health information than those who had weaker attitudes about chance. An individual's belief that their health is subject to happenstance is particularly undesirable among health care professionals trying to motivate patients to take preventive action for the sake of their own health.

Previous research (e.g., Wallston & Wallston, 1981; Wallston, 1992) has tested health locus of control beliefs as a predictor of HISB. Wallston and Wallston recommend that researchers not test health locus of control beliefs as a sole predictor of behavior, but should also measure other relevant attitudes about the behavior such as trust for the source of health information. In order to continue exploring the facilitators of behavior change and chronic illness management from an ecological perspective, the current study sought to identify sociocultural predictors of HISB online and with health care providers.

> RQ 1: Among participants with type 2 diabetes, which dimensions of health status, trust for health information, and health locus of control are predictors of health information-seeking behaviors online?

> RQ 2: Among participants with type 2 diabetes, which dimensions of health status, trust for health information, and health locus of control are predictors of health information-seeking behaviors with a health care provider?

Method

The current research used publicly available data from the Annenberg National Health Communication Survey (ANHCS), a survey designed to capture national trends on health-related media exposure, behavior, knowledge and beliefs, and policy preferences. Data collection was conducted by Knowledge Networks for the Annenberg Schools of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania and University of Southern California (ANHCS, 2013a). The nationally representative data ($N = 29{,}094$) was collected online monthly from January 2005

to December 2012 (ANHCS, 2013a), with the response rate ranging from 14% to 31% (ANHCS, 2013b). The study sample was limited to participants who self-reported a type 2 diabetes diagnosis (*n* = 1,106), which is in line with the most recent findings from Pew Research Center (2016) stating that individuals most commonly seek information about specific diseases and treatments. Reflecting the tenets of the Comprehensive Model of Information Seeking, which argues that Antecedents including individuals' sociocultural characteristics, and Information Carrier Characteristics, together motivate Information Seeking Action, the following measures were included in the multinomial logistic regression models.

Measures

HISB. Two outcome variables were tested in the statistical models, which are identified as the Information Seeking Action element in the Comprehensive Model of Information Seeking (CMIS). For RQ 1, HISB online was measured by asking how often the participant searched for health information on the internet in the past 30 days (a lot, some, a little, or not at all). For RQ 2, HISB with a health care provider was measured using a single item that asked how many times participants consulted a doctor about their health in the past 12 months. To accommodate for zero cell frequency among categories in relation to the outcome variable, responses were recoded from five into four categories (never, one to two times, three to six times, once a month or more).

Health status. As an Antecedent of HISB according to the CMIS, self-reported health status was included in the current tests. Participants' perception of their health was measured by a single item asking individuals to rate their general health. To eliminate zero cell occurrence, responses were recoded from six to four categories: excellent/very good, good, fair, poor/very poor.

Trust for Health Information. One dimension of Information Carrier Characteristics identified by the CMIS is credibility and was tested as a motivator for HISB. For RQ 1, trust for health information online was measured using a single item asking how much participants trust information about health from the internet. For RQ 2, the variable was measured using a single item asking how much participants trust the information about health from their doctor or other health care professional. Originally, responses for both items were coded into four categories (e.g., a lot, some, a little, and not at all). To eliminate zero cell frequency, the current study recoded responses into three categories: a lot, some, and a little or not at all.

Health Locus of Control. Instead of using Wallston and Wallston's (1981) original typology, each of the three HLC orientations were tested individually as predictors of HISB, and was considered an Antecedent of HISB by the CMIS framework. All three aspects were measured by scaling six items asking participants to respond to statements reflecting their beliefs about their health status on a six-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (6) to strongly disagree (1), resulting in a scale range from six (weak locus of control) to 36 (strong locus of control). Mean scores for each HLC dimension were used (Norman, Bennett, Smith, & Murphy, 1998). Examples of statements directed at internal HLC include "I am in control of my own health," and "When I get sick, I am to blame." Examples of statements assessing chance HLC include "No matter what I do, if I am going to get sick, I will get sick," and "My good health is largely a matter of good fortune." Examples of statements directed at powerful others HLC include "Regarding my health, I can only do what my doctor tells me to do," and "My family has a lot to do with my becoming sick or staying healthy."

Control Variables. Following the assertions of the CMIS (Johnson & Meischke, 1993) that socioeconomic and sociodemographic characteristics add context to understanding predictors of HISB, five control variables were included in the models. All control variables, except gender, were recoded to accommodate for cell size requirements. Race was recoded into three categories including, 1) White, 2) Black/African American, and 3) American Indian/Alaskan (*n* = 17), Asian (*n* = 16), Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (*n* = 2), 2+ races (*n* = 56). Age was recoded into three categories (18-44, 45-59, 60+) for the same reason. Marital status was also recoded from six to three categories to satisfy cell size requirements: married/living with a partner, widowed/separated/divorced, and never married. To correct for multicolinearity, education was recoded into three categories (high school or less, some college, and bachelor's degree or more).

Data Analysis

ANHCS data were analyzed using SPSS, version 24. Because some measures were only included for part of the 96-month period of the survey and the voluntary nature of the survey, a portion of the total sample size was

included in each model after list-wise deletion for missing data. After examining descriptive statistics, predictors of HISB online and with a health care provider were examined with two multinomial logistic regression analyses. Five control variables were included: age, gender, education, marital status, and race.

Findings

The current research focused only on participants who had been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes (n = 1,106). The study population was evenly represented between men (50.8%) and women (49.2%). The majority of participants were White (78.9%), married (63.7%) and at least 60 years old (48.1%). Less than one percent of the study population was between 18-29 years old. The descriptive statistics for all demographic characteristics of the study sample are reported in Table 1 with originally coded categories.

Almost half (43.8%) of respondents rated their health as good, 31.7% rated their health as fair, and 13% of participants rated their health as excellent/very good. Only 11% rated their health as poor/very poor. The internal HLC scale shows the highest mean score (24.2), followed by the powerful others HLC scale (19.6) and the chance HLC scale (18.3), which is consistent with previous research (Grotz et al., 2011).

Table 1

Demographics (N = 1106)

	%	*N*
Age, years		
18-29	.8	9
30-44	14.3	158
45-59	36.8	407
60+	48.1	532
Gender		
Man	50.8	562
Woman	49.2	544
Race		
White	78.9	858
Black/African American	12.7	138
American Indian/Alaska native	1.6	17
Asian	1.5	16
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	.2	2
2+ Races	5.2	56
Education		
Less than High School	14.5	160
High School	34.6	383
Some College	27.8	307
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	23.1	256
Marital Status		
Married	63.7	704
Widowed	8.6	95
Divorced	13.3	147
Separated	2.4	26
Never Married	10.9	121
Living With Partner	1.2	13

Trust for online health information was generally low with 14% of participants reporting a lot of trust, 50.4% reporting some, and 13.1% reporting no trust. Most participants (48%) said they had not searched health

information on the internet at all in the past 30 days, and 10.7% sought health information online a lot. In comparison, the majority of participants reported they trust health information from a health care provider a lot (82%), and only 2.3% had little or no trust. Just over half (50.9%) of participants reported seeking health information from a health care provider three to six times in the past year. Only 3.3% of participants reported never seeking health information from a health care provider. Tables 2 and 3 illustrate the descriptive statistics for all variables included in the regression analyses.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics of predictors of HISB Online and with a Health Care Provider (N = 1106)

	%	*N*	*a*
Perception of Health			
Excellent/ Very Good	13.5	149	
Good	43.8	484	
Fair	31.7	350	
Poor/Very Poor	11	122	
Internal Locus of Control (M±SD)		24.2±4.6	.725
Chance Locus of Control (M±SD)		18.3±4.6	.640
Powerful Others Locus of Control (M±SD)		19.6±5.0	.693
Trust of Health Info from Health Care Provider			
A Lot	82	905	
Some	15.8	174	
A Little/Not At All	2.3	25	
Trust of Health Info from the Internet			
A Lot	14	153	
Some	50.4	549	
A Little	22.5	245	
Not At All	13.1	143	

Note. *M*=mean. *SD*=standard deviation. *a*=Cronbach's Alpha.

Table 3

Frequency of HISB Online in the last 30 days and with a Health Care Provider in the past year (n = 956)

	%	*N*
HISB Online in past 30 days		
A Lot	10.7	91
Some	22.3	189
A Little	18.8	160
None	48.2	409
HISB with Health Care Provider in the past year		
Never	3.3	32
Once or Twice	23.7	227
Three to Six Times	50.9	487
Once a Month or More	22	210

Model 1 testing predictors of HISB online accounted for 34.3% of variability in the outcome. Trust for online health information was the only significant predictor ($p<.001$). Participants who reported they have a lot of trust in online health information were 70 times more likely to engage in HISB online a lot, but only 5 times more

likely to seek health information online a little compared to those who report a little or no trust, controlling for age, gender, education, marital status and race. Age, as a control variable, was also found to be a significant predictor (p=.007). Participants ages 18-44 and 45-59 are approximately 4 and 2.5 times (respectively) more likely to seek health information online a lot in the past 30 days than those who are 60 years old or older. Little difference was found in the 45-59 age range among those who use the internet for health information a little. Tables 4 and 5 illustrate the findings from this analysis.

Table 4

Multinomial regression models testing predictors of HISB

Predictor	Online (n=478) Model 1				With a Health Care Provider (n=527) Model 2			
	Model Fitting Criteria	Likelihood Ratio Tests			Model Fitting Criteria	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
	-2 Log Likelihood of Reduced Model	X^2	df	p	-2 Log Likelihood of Reduced Model	X^2	df	p
IHLC	1029.15	1.07	3	.783	1030.91	.522	3	.914
CHLC	1033.09	5.01	3	.171	1035.53	5.15	3	.161
PHLC	1028.27	.2	3	.978	1045.23	14.84	3	.002*
Health Status	1037.33	9.25	9	.414	1110.21	79.82	9	<.001*
Trust	1124.73	96.66	6	>.001**	1037.46	7.08	6	.314
Age⁺	1045.65	17.57	6	.007*	1039.67	9.29	6	.158
Gender⁺	1033.72	5.64	3	.13	1032.55	2.17	3	.538
Education⁺	1040.43	12.35	6	.055	1036.44	6.06	6	.417
Marital Status⁺	1043.28	15.21	9	.085	1040.35	9.97	9	.353
Race⁺	1035.15	7.07	6	.315	1041.99	11.61	6	.071

Note. *p<.05, **p<.001. ⁺control variable. Model 1 $\chi^2(54)$ =181.43, $p < .000$. $\Delta R^2 = .343$ (Nagelkerke). Model 2 $\chi^2(54)$ =149.752, $p < .000$. $\Delta R^2 = .277$ (Nagelkerke).

Model 2 testing predictors of HISB with a health care provider accounted for 27.7% of variability in the outcome. Powerful others was the only dimension of HLC that was shown to have a significant relationship with HISB with a health care provider in the past year (p=.002). However, the odds ratio values reported for powerful others HLC are close to one, indicating a small difference among the categories and small influence on the outcome. In other words, participants are 1.1 times more likely to engage in HISB with a health care provider if they have strong positive attitudes about powerful others.

Health status was also found to be a significant predictor in model 2 (p<.001). Participants who rated their health as excellent/very good were 85 times more likely than those with poor/very poor health status to engage in HISB with a provider one to two times a year, and almost eight times more likely to engage in HISB with a provider three to six times a year, controlling for age, gender, education, marital status and race. Furthermore, those who rated their health as good were about 45 times more likely to seek health information from a health care provider once or twice per year, and 7.5 times more likely to engage in HISB with a provider three to six times a year. Tables 4 and 6 highlight the findings from Model 2.

Table 5

Odds ratios and 95% CI for statistically significant (p<.05) predictors of HISB Online.

Variable (*referent*)	A Lot OR (95% CI)	Some OR (95% CI)	A Little OR (95% CI)
Trust (A Little/Not At All)			
A Lot	70.06 (18.86-260.31)**	21.7 (8.16-57.73)**	5.1 (1.84-14.16)
Some	5.51 (1.77-17.18)	5.99 (3.1-11.56)**	2.52 (1.4-4.54)
Age (60+)			
18-44	4.12 (1.26-13.38)	3.62 (1.54-8.54)	3.17 (1.33-7.57)
45-59	2.56 (1.1-5.95)	1.16 (.66-2.06)*	.944 (.52-1.73)*

Note. **p*<.05. ***p*<.001. Reference category is Not At All.

Table 6

Odds ratios and 95% CI for statistically significant (p<.05) predictors of HISB with a Health Care Provider.

Variable (*referent*)	Never OR (95% CI)	1-2 times OR (95% CI)	3-6 times OR (95% CI)
Health Rating (Poor/Very Poor)			
Excellent/Very Good	101.99 (.03-14.7)	85.87 (.95-1.09)**	7.95 (2.7-23.36)**
Good	22.02 (1.87-258.57)	44.95 (9.6-210.72)**	7.51 (3.52-16.01)**
Fair	4.96 (.42-57.84)	10.1 (2.13-47.82)	4.51 (2.19-9.3)**
PHLC	.829 (.72-.95)	.897 (.84-.96)	.95 (.9-1.01)*

Note. **p*<.05. ***p*<.001. Reference category is 12+ times.

Discussion

Overall, the findings were consistent with national data on health care utilization among patients with diabetes. ANHCS data show that over 74% of respondents with type 2 diabetes reported seeking information from their health care provider one to six times per year. Accordingly, the CDC (2016) reported that 71.4% individuals with diabetes have received two or more A1C tests in 2015 and over 67% have since 2011. The A1C tests are often ordered during scheduled exams, and information-seeking is most likely also occurring then as well. The use of a U.S. nationally representative data is a major strength of this study. Since type 2 diabetes onset happens most commonly between the age of 45-64 (CDC, 2014b), the study population (of which more than 80% were over 45 years old) accurately reflects the general population.

Because of an overrepresentation among the older segment of the population, there was little opportunity to test predictors of HISB from either source among younger, unmarried individuals. This may also explain the strong relationship found showing age as a predictor of HISB online. The current study highlighted that HISB online occurred more often among respondents 59 and younger than those who are older, which directly reflects the strong negative correlation between age and internet use in the US for more than 15 years (Pew Research Center, 2016). Health care providers must be cognizant of this steadfast trend and a patient's willingness to seek health information

online, particularly among the older population that also has an increasing susceptibility to illness, and determine an effective approach to encouraging HISB for effective decision-making. Sociocultural aspects may also play a role in HISB.

Powerful others HLC was found to predict HISB with a health care provider. Despite the small influence shown here, this finding extends recent conclusions that highlight powerful others HLC as one of the important determinants of health behaviors such as HISB (Jang & Baek, 2018). Understanding the role of HLC is both theoretically and practically meaningful as scholars continue to explore predictors of health behaviors, chronic illness management and HISB. As the aging U.S. population faces multicomorbidities, it is important for health communication experts to recognize HISB patterns, and its motivators, preferences and barriers in order to facilitate the most conducive environment for patients to make informed health decisions (Grotz et al., 2011; Zielińska-Więczkowska, 2016). Health care providers must rely on research demonstrating predictors of HISB to continue their work to achieve goals set out by Healthy People 2020 for preventive care utilization among diabetics (CDC, 2016). Grotz and colleagues (2011) reported that those with a high health burden, an index including general health status and chronic illnesses, were found to have stronger attitudes about powerful others compared to those with less of a health burden, which may also explain powerful others HLC's role as strong predictor for HISB with a provider. Their argument points to the importance of training health care providers to engage in effective, meaningful interpersonal communication to enable patients' participation in decision-making and execution of health behaviors. Those with high chance HLC are probably the least likely to engage in HISB, and it would make sense that individuals with a high powerful others HLC would seek information from a source that they trust. Strong powerful others HLC does not indiscriminately determine HISB with a provider, however. We also know that individuals with poorer health status are more likely to have less income and education (Turner, Lloyd, & Roszell, 1999), which may inhibit an individual's HISB.

Another finding, that those with more positive perceptions of their health status engage in more HISB with a provider, seems to contradict Grotz and colleagues' (2011) conclusion that a more negative health status would encourage HISB with a provider. Yet, current findings also confirm observations in more recent research that reported more HISB activities among individuals with less health problems (Feinberg, Greenberg, & Frijters, 2015). Beyond HLC and health status, variables such as accessibility, ease of use, time constraints, utility of the health information sought, and everyday demands may also play a role in determining the source of an individual's health information. One possible explanation for why patients with more positively perceived health status engage in HISB with health care providers more frequently than those with negative health status, despite a presumed strong powerful others HLC, is that those with poorer health are less physically able to visit and engage with their providers. Conversely, perhaps health information from health care providers has helped interpersonal information-seekers to maintain good health, thus perpetuating a trend among healthy individuals to continue seeking wellness information from their providers.

The relatively weak relationship between powerful others HLC and HISB with a health care provider may also be explained by the multidimensionality of health behavior (Baumeister & Bengel, 2007), which echoes Weaver and colleagues' (2010) conclusion that active health information seekers do not have one commonality, and should not be treated as such. Furthermore, HLC is considered to be more dispositional than situation-specific (Armitage et al., 2002), which may also negate the role of a specific diagnosis on how an individual perceives the causes of the illness, their ability to improve their health, and HISB. Among patients with type 2 diabetes, there is still a wide range of health indicators and risks, and general communication tailoring strategies should be integrated by any source of health information. In contrast to previous research on HISB, which examined the construct in general terms (e.g., Shim, Kelly, & Hornick, 2006), the present study advances more recent research that differentiates information sources (e.g., Yang et al., 2016). It is possible that HISB with one source (i.e., internet) influences those with another source (i.e., provider) (Lee, 2008). Accordingly, HISB with online sources may also impact trust in health care providers as health information providers (Lowrey & Anderson, 2006).

The motivations that underlie HISB are a phenomenon frequently overlooked (Weaver et al., 2010), and the current study attempted to address this gap by only including participants who self-reported a type 2 diabetes diagnosis. People with type 2 diabetes have a prominent instrumental motivation to seek health information for managing their condition that might override attitudes and perceptions about health, which may have reduced the strength of the relationship between the predictors in the current models and HISB. By limiting the study sample to

individuals with type 2 diabetes, this research reduced variability in motivations for HISB and began to answer questions about how individuals seek health information about ongoing health priorities. The inclusion of health status presents a more robust analysis of motivators for HISB than simply the presence of a chronic condition. Most research on health-related uses of the Internet assumes that poor health or medical problems are the primary reasons people search for information (Lambert & Loiselle, 2007). Previous research, however, has produced conflicting results. Cotten and Gupta (2004) found that healthier individuals are more likely to search for health information online, supporting the health behavior model. Findings reported by other researchers (Baker et al., 2003; Goldner, 2006b; Houston & Allison, 2002), however, support the illness behavior model, showing that individuals in poor health are more likely to search for health information online. Additionally, the present study used a more reliable measure of HISB that assessed frequency of self-reported action as a dependent variable (Ayers & Kronenfeld, 2007) as opposed to measuring intent of use (Smith-Barbaro, Licciardone, Clarke, & Coleridge, 2001).

Understanding the psychological, socioeconomic and demographic determinants of HISB has the potential for benefitting both patients and health care providers, considering that decision-making may be counterproductive due to poor health literacy and insufficient information seeking skills, especially among patients managing chronic health conditions. Furthermore, socioeconomically advantaged or highly educated people might have had more experiences leading them to perceive control over external barriers that threaten their well-being, which could influence their HLC, thus their HISB, health care utilization, and health outcomes (Poortinga, Dunstan, & Fone, 2008). On the other hand, less educated people are more likely to rely on health professionals in managing health issues and tend to indiscriminately follow their recommendations (Jang & Baek, 2018). Additionally, the predominance of an external locus of control belief, either by chance or powerful others, has been associated with low socioeconomic status (Grotz et al., 2011), and poor mental health (Sun & Stewart, 2000; Wu, Tang, & Kwok, 2004).

Online health information may have a mobilizing effect for racial and ethnic minorities and individuals with low socioeconomic status who have been found to have lower trust in health care providers (Corbie-Smith, Thomas, & St. George, 2001). Echoing Lareau and Miczo's (2017) argument, an important practical implication of this work is that health care providers and organizations should promote health information including patient narratives both online and interpersonally.

Trust in health information may also be related to the historical experiences of communities, especially those who have been disenfranchised and exploited by the medical community (e.g., Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment). Research has found that African Americans were more skeptical of the role of computers in their everyday life, less trusting of online health information, and less likely to believe that computers increased control and efficacy in one's life (Jackson, Ervin, Gardner, & Schmitt, 2001).

The Comprehensive Model of Information Seeking provides a strong framework for recognizing the multidimensional aspects related to HISB. Despite the current study's two models demonstrating different statistically significant predictors based on source of health information, the tenets of CMIS have been supported and highlight several areas for improving future scholarship in HISB.

Limitations & Future Directions

The current research used cross-sectional data, and therefore cannot demonstrate causal relationships between health locus of control, current health status, trust and HISB. Individual responses were recorded only once for the ANHCS data, so there are no claims about directionality. Longitudinal studies are needed in order to verify the relationship between patient attitudes about their health, health status and HISB, specifically based on source. When patients are more informed about their health, there is a potential for more health behaviors and better patient-provider relationships. Future research should continue to attend to the role of HISB in managing chronic illness to better understand its effects on subsequent health behaviors, particularly among populations with specific conditions. Given the aging population of diabetics, learning more about perceptions of social support within this demographic and considering one's friends and family as sources of health information may enrich the current study's findings on HISB trends among diabetics (Yang et al., 2016).

Another limitation of this study is the measurement of HISB. Despite examining the sources for and frequency of HISB, the ANHCS dataset reflects a predominant approach to understanding HISB as illness-motivated and does not distinguish from different types of information sought (e.g., wellness-oriented or illness-

oriented) (Weaver et al., 2010). HISB is also not always best understood as a unidimensional concept, and future research should strive for better ecological validity (Anker et al., 2011). Motivations for wellness information-seeking (i.e., information to prevent illness and/or maintain health) may vary widely from motivations for illness information-seeking (i.e., information to resolve or manage an illness state). Future examination of the interrelationships among health literacy, health value, health status, socioeconomic elements such as level of health insurance or income, perception about importance of information, and HISB may demonstrate stronger relationships, as noted in previous research (e.g., Birru et al., 2004; Cotten & Gupta, 2004; Wallston, 1992). For example, HLC beliefs have been found to be better predictors when they are tested as moderators for perceived behavioral control or self-efficacy (Armitage, 2003). Health value may also be considered as a moderator of the HLC-HISB relationship. Future research on HLC should assess attitudes about locus of control using an ecological framework that acknowledges a comprehensive set of predictors of health outcomes and barriers to HISB. The approach would also recognize the moderating relationship among some of those variables and the complexity of such health communication outcomes. Furthermore, the ANHCS data provides self-reported health status and HISB, and corroborating these findings with directly assessed health and information-seeking data would be valuable.

Accessibility issues may also be a confounding factor. By including income and health care insurance coverage levels in future models, scholars may be better able to clearly delineate barriers to HISB. More than 70% of respondents in the current study reported HISB with a health care provider 3 times or more in the past year, and almost just as many participants reported no or a little HISB online in the past 30 days. This disparity of HISB based on source may be attributed to lack of access or availability of internet, or ease of HISB with a provider compared to self-directed searches online, or simply a reflection of generational preferences and expectations among an older population. Understanding how and why individuals are obtaining health information with their care providers and online would also add meaningful depth to conclusions about HISB. Primary qualitative research must be done to advance understanding of the barriers and motivators to HISB from all sources as well as perceptions of information during information seeking.

Conclusion

More than 86 million Americans are living with prediabetes and 90% of them are unaware of their risk (CDC, 2016). One drawback of using internet as one's primary source of health information is that most information sought is intentional and self-selected, and likely to reflect pre-existing values and beliefs about one's health. Without an awareness or curiosity about prediabetes and risky behaviors leading to diabetes to motivate HISB for wellness information as opposed to illness information, we may never see a meaningful decline in type 2 diabetes occurrence. Past research has found that the more frequently an individual uses the internet to retrieve health information, the greater odds to change health behavior (Ayers & Kronenfeld, 2007), and providers may do well to acknowledge the integral role of HISB and communication on health behavior and recognize that their patients may be receiving health information outside of the health care setting. By understanding the psychosocial motivators for HISB examined in the present study and the growing body of literature with an ecological approach, health communication experts and health care providers may consider tailoring diabetes-related information and utilizing dissemination techniques that will reach the most vulnerable populations as well as those who may be able to reap the most benefit.

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Tweetkeeping NBC's Rio Olympics

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This study qualitatively and quantitatively examined the @NBCOlympics Twitter account's gatekeeping practices during the Rio 2016 Olympics. NBC used Twitter in one-way communication with its audience to promote and hype its programs, or inform about the results of competition rather than interacting with its followers. The network served as a gatekeeper of results and video highlights. Most significantly, the coverage of women lagged behind the television broadcast with men's sports (n=810) receiving a slightly greater focus than women's (n=807) sports. Tweets were overwhelmingly about Team USA (n=745, 35% of all tweets) and focused on the most popular sports (swimming, gymnastics, beach volleyball) and athletes (Simone Biles, Michael Phelps).

The Olympic Games are a major media event, described as a spectacle and "mega-event," in large part because of its partnership with television (Billings, 2008). The National Broadcasting Company (NBC), now owned by Comcast, has broadcast most of the games in the U.S. since the first Olympic telecast on American TV in 1960, including every Summer Olympics since 1988. NBC paid $12.13 billion for the exclusive broadcast rights to both Winter and Summer Olympics from 2012 to 2032 (Sandomir, 2014). But the current media landscape, led by the rising popularity of over-the-top media services, also prompted the network to bet on more platforms than television: as soon as 2012, NBC partnered with Twitter to officially present the Olympics on social media for the first time.

Following the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, NBC found 67% of people surveyed said the Olympics were more enjoyable because the audience had more ways to consume the Games (Sandomir, 2014). NBC put more resources than ever into their social media strategy for the Rio games because, as NBC Olympics' late night host Ryan Seacrest said, the competition was expected to be "the most social games" ever (Spangler, 2016). As such, with so many people desiring to experience the Olympics through multiple platforms including Twitter, and NBC's outspoken wish to reach a larger audience through social media, it is worthy to study how NBC used social media throughout the Games. This paper focuses on the ways in which NBC used Twitter, as a gatekeeper, during the 2016 Olympics through qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Literature Review

Studies over the years (Billings & Eastman, 2002, 2003; Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983; Bryant, 1980; Duncan & Messner, 1994; Hallmark & Armstrong, 1999; Messner, 1992; Tuggle, 1997; Tuggle & Owen, 1999) have found that coverage of men in sports trumps coverage of women in sports. However, the Olympics give women an opportunity for more exposure. Indeed, Alexander (1994) found female athletes competing in the 1992 Olympics were covered more extensively than in non-Olympic sporting competitions. This trend in coverage continues. Billings (2008) noted "that women have not been showcased adequately if comparing their relative successes at the Olympics over the past several decades to the clock-time they receive or the number of times they are mentioned" (p. 70). According to Tuggle and Owen (1999), men's team competitions in the 1996 Olympics received significantly more coverage than women's team events and competitions that involved power or hard physical impact. Davis and Tuggle (2012) noted the differences in how traditional media (print and broadcast media) covered men and women athletes:

> This difference manifests itself in several ways: (1) total column inches and running times, (2) persons quoted, (3) placement of articles and stories, (4) presence and size/length, (5) placement of an accompanying photograph or videotaped highlight, (6) the range of sports depicted in photos and tapes, and (7) the size and content of newspaper headlines and magazine article titles. (p. 54)

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In fact, coverage of women's sports has been almost exclusively concentrated on individual swimming, diving, and gymnastics competitions (Tuggle & Owen, 1999; Davis & Tuggle, 2012). Yet, for the past two Summer Olympics in 2012 and 2016, NBC featured women more than men in their primetime coverage, something they had never done before (Coche & Tuggle, 2016; 2018). Similar trends have been found in studies regarding nationalism in NBC's Olympic broadcasts since the 1980s (Angelini, Smith, & Billings, 2017; Billings & Angelini, 2007; Billings & Eastman, 2002; 2003; Duncan, 1986; Tuggle & Owen, 1999).

Billings (2008; 2009) found not only that preproduced profiles typically focus on American athletes, but also that primetime broadcasts feature more name mentions of American athletes than all other nations put together. With colleagues, Billings has also noticed differences in how athletes are portrayed by NBC based on their nationality. While American athletes were more likely to be described succeeding because of their concentration, composure and commitment (Billings & Angelini, 2007), non-American athletes succeeded because of superior athletic skill and experience (Billings & Eastman, 2002; 2003). Most of the research points to the fact that NBC has focused its coverage of American athletes competing at the Olympics in a biased, nationalistic way in an attempt to draw in the widest possible audience possible.

Broadcasting the Olympics

As the Summer Olympic broadcaster in the U.S. for three decades, NBC has historically relied upon a dual-product revenue model that draws upon charging advertisers the highest rates possible for prime-time spots when ratings are at their highest (Billings, 2008). By 2012, Twitter and other social media platforms were beginning to challenge NBC's longstanding revenue model by generating revenue through live-streaming content online. But streaming and social media proved to be a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it offered new revenue streams for NBC; on the other hand, it threatened the network's organizational gatekeeping strategies. Since 2012, NBC's Olympic coverage has attempted to balance the network's economic interests when deciding what content will appeal to the widest range of audience members and advertisers, including multiplatform viewing options, such as live streaming and Twitter coverage.

NBC sits in a unique situation as the exclusive broadcaster of the Olympics in the U.S. It is the sole broadcast gatekeeper, with zero competition from other broadcast or video platforms because of the strict protections the International Olympic Committee (IOC) puts in place to protect paying broadcasters' rights. Even in this position of power, NBC relies on a business model that generates revenue by delivering audiences to advertisers (Picard, 2005). Consequently, NBC must produce content that appeals to both advertisers and the audience. Indeed, Picard (2005) noted that products that appeal only to the audience fail because advertising alone does not generate profits. Technological advancements have helped broadcasters, NBC included, in creating content that appeals to audiences and advertisers alike. Turner and Tay (2009) argued, "the major ratings successes of the twenty-first century have been multi-platform, multimedia events" (p. 7). Events such as the Olympics, Super Bowl and NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament have altered how events are covered: broadcasters are now using multiple platforms to create various viewing points (Tang & Cooper, 2013).

These multiple online channels of distribution are a small sum of what Aslinger (2009) calls the post-broadcast era, which is "defined by the ways that television industries make use of multiple distribution methods, potentially reducing the power of traditional broadcast television and opening up debates about how audiences are composed, segmented, and targeted" (p. 109). With these distribution methods in place in 2012, NBC made an undisclosed small profit from the London Games, highlighting the significance of social media and post-broadcasting offerings, despite the enormous cost of exclusive broadcasting rights in the U.S. (Sherman, 2012). NBC generated an even larger profit in 2014, in large part because of increased online advertisement sales that coincided with the popularity of the network's post-broadcasting options, social media and live-streaming coverage (Clarke, 2013). Yet, even with Olympic live streaming and Twitter coverage since 2012, NBC has consistently continued to employ organizational gatekeeping strategies.

Gatekeeping

Guided by gatekeeping theory (Lewin, 1947; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; White, 1950; 1964), which explains how gatekeepers can facilitate or prevent the diffusion of information, as well as how much information will be

allowed through the gates to the public, this study examines NBC's Twitter gatekeeping practices during the 2016 Rio Olympics. According to Tandoc and Vos (2015), "Traditional gatekeeping prioritized editorial autonomy" (p. 1) while protecting the content from outside influences.

Yet, gatekeeping in the digital age no longer depends upon the standard of the newsworthiness of information and content (Tandoc, 2014), as it is more complex than just selecting items for dissemination. Gatekeeping in today's social media age is also about making content more appealing (adding value) to the audience, particularly for an event as large as the Olympics (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Biddle (1986) argued that organizational gatekeeping assumes the normative roles of gatekeeper and consumer, in which the gatekeeper aims to generate economic profit from its content. NBC's coverage of the Olympics falls within this perspective of organizational gatekeeping: the network must make decisions based upon economic factors (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

Gatekeeping, in a social media world as an organization, can be challenging. NBC not only must gatekeep its content on Twitter, but also attempt to expand its reach to as many people as possible. Billings (2014) noted that a developed network of followers is not the only important thing, however:

> Thus, the power of a tweet is not primarily derived from the number of followers who receive it but the number of media gatekeepers (traditional and new) embracing it in some ancillary format…the power is in all of the major sports media outlets, making it a point of discussion to millions of viewers and readers over the course of the following weeks (p. 110).

It takes people within an organization to manage both its Twitter coverage of the Olympics and the interaction with its followers, while ensuring the ancillary formats of content are engaging the followers. Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2011) referred to this type of organizational gatekeeping as collaborative gatekeeping because it includes the audience as well. But even as NBC has exercised traditional and organizational gatekeeping over its television Olympic coverage, it has recognized the value of Twitter coverage during the Games. As Lebel and Danylchuk (2012, p. 462) argued in a study exploring professional tennis players' self-presentation on Twitter: "There is power in the direct communication that Twitter affords." As an institution, NBC thus incorporated both traditional organizational gatekeeping and a restrictive collaborative gatekeeping into its coverage.

Lebel and Danylchuk's (2012) coding scheme includes five categories that are significant for the purpose of this study: (1) *Publicist* is for tweets meant to promote sponsors and upcoming events; (2) *Conversationalist* is for tweets that constitute direct interaction with athletes, celebrities, family, and personal friends; (3) *Fan Aficionado* is for tweets that directly interact with fans; (4) *Informer* is for tweets containing general information about results or current events; and (5) *Analyst* is for tweets that include opinions or commentary about a piece of information. These five categories ground the purpose of a tweet unit of measurement into gatekeeping theory and were adapted to examine the types of information NBC allows through its Twitter gates to its audience.

Twitter and Sports

The inclusion of Olympic coverage on social media platforms such as Twitter was a significant development for broadcasting, traditional broadcast television and online post-broadcasting. For the first time, network executives took notice of an untapped resource to expand coverage (Ovide, 2012). According to Smith (2016), more than 300 million active users were sending a half-billion tweets daily on Twitter by 2013. Twitter has grown as a social media platform and become a permanent part of sports coverage because users can post tweets, share information (report), and interact with others in real-time (Clavio & Kian, 2010).

Twitter is one of the most significant new sources in collegiate and professional sports (Sanderson, 2011). Sports are particularly well-suited for information sharing on Twitter because fans generally are active in the discussion of the events, results, analysis, and interviews following the conclusion of the event and allow for sports organizations to maximize communication efforts (Fisher, 2009). In fact, sporting events are often among the most discussed and often shared topics on Twitter (Golbeck, 2012), and sports journalists are key participants: they use Twitter as a means to share information with their followers immediately, not as a story, but as notes in their notebook (Roberts & Emmons, 2016).

Interest in sporting events can be measured by the volume of posts on Twitter –known as tweets (Lanagan

& Smeaton, 2011). Activity usually centers on key moments. For instance, almost 620,000 tweets were posted within a minute of the final whistle during the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil (Lynch, 2016). With social media's popularity, traditional broadcasters have encouraged audience interaction by including Twitter feeds as part of their broadcasts (Fixmer, Lee, & Edwards, 2014; Hutchins, 2011). Twitter's ability to stream video footage, along with consumers' ability to use their mobile devices has also changed the ways in which sports are watched by fans. Roberts and Emmons (2016) found that the second screen experience that Twitter offers to sporting events is appealing for multiple reasons:

> Part of Twitter's appeal is its ability to be part of "second screen," the concept of watching television while using a smartphone, tablet, or other computer device to gain additional information and/or to converse with others about what is happening on television (p. 99).

It was that second screen experience that made the Olympics so popular among viewers in 2012; in the words of Tang and Cooper (2013), "significant positive relationships existed between and among Olympics viewing on television, on the web, and via mobile portals" (p. 862).

Because experts predicted the Rio Olympics to be the "most social games" ever (Lui, 2016; Spangler, 2016), this study examines NBC's gatekeeping practices through textual analysis and quantitative content analysis to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What events, athletes, sex/gender, and countries did NBC cover the most?
RQ2: What roles (publicist, conversationalist, fan aficionado, the informer, analysist) did NBC's Twitter account play most often?
RQ3: What themes emerged from the gatekeeping practices of NBC's Olympic Twitter coverage?
RQ4a: In what ways did NBC ask for Twitter audience participation with their Twitter content?
RQ4b: Did this interaction have an influence on gatekeeping practices?

Method

The researchers used a multiple methodological approach—a quantitative content analysis to analyze tweets sent from NBC's official Olympics Twitter handle and a textual analysis. This combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches allows for both descriptive understanding of the content and the organizational gatekeeping functions of the @NBCOlympics Twitter handle over what is disseminated. Multiple methodological approaches have become increasingly popular in studies concerning Twitter, according to Roberts and Emmons (2016). The tweets analyzed were compiled from the day before the opening ceremonies of the 2016 Rio Olympics, August 4, to the day after the closing ceremonies, August 22. The researchers compiled tweets from the @NBCOlympics Twitter account, the official NBC gatekeeping account of the Games, throughout the day, each day of the Olympics. A total of 3,877 tweets were collected and a simple random sample of 1,978 tweets was analyzed.

Data collection and sampling. The 3,877 tweets from @NBCOlympics were collected using a Google Docs add-on, Twitter Archiver. This premium version of this add-on collects tweets every 15 minutes. The researchers set up a protocol with Twitter Archiver to ensure the only tweets captured originated from the @NBCOlympics Twitter handle. The data collected through Twitter Archiver was then transferred to Microsoft Excel for analysis. Microsoft Excel was then used to randomly sample 1,978 tweets (51%), which were all coded and analyzed.

Procedure for quantitative analysis. The researchers drew upon previous studies at the intersection of sports and Twitter for the categories for the content analysis. The unit of analysis for this present study was each individual tweet.

Seven variables were coded for the quantitative part of the study: five pertained to the athletic content within the tweet and two were about the tweet itself. The five pertaining to the athletic content within the tweet were: (1) the Olympic sport(s) mentioned in the tweet, if any; (2) its scope (individual or team sport); (3) whether it involved physical power or hard body contact as a primary component; (4) its athletes' sex (men, women, both or "neutral" if no specific sport or athlete were mentioned); and (5) whether American athletes were in contention

or not. The last two variables were the type of the tweet and its purpose. Type was measured at the nominal level with eleven possible categories: *Preview*, *Live Event*, *Feature*, *Recap / Results*, *Awards Ceremony*, *Other Athletic News*, *Non-Athletic News* (e.g., the "Lochtegate"), *Photo Essay*, *Retweet from athlete*, *Retweet from celebrity other than an athlete*, or *Other* when the tweet did not fit in any other category. Purpose of tweet was also measured at the nominal level through six categories based on Lebel and Danylchuk's (2012) study on tennis players' self-presentation through Twitter:

1. Publicist: NBC promotion, publicity regarding their shows, upcoming events, tweetups, etc.
2. Conversationalist: direct interaction with athletes, celebrities, family, and personal friends.
3. Fan Aficionado: direct interaction between NBC and viewers.
4. The Informer: general information sharing, results, current events, etc.
5. The Analyst: sharing opinions about information
6. Other (explain)

The researchers completed a coding training session, then coded 10 percent of the sample, totaling 200 tweets, for intercoder reliability. Krippendorf's alpha showed strong intercoder reliability across the board. The lowest value was 0.91 for the sex of the tweet. All other variables had a Krippendorf's alpha of 0.93 or above.

Procedure for qualitative analysis. The researchers drew upon Aronson's (1995) study to develop an open-coding process that inductively created tweet categories. Following Aronson's four steps for thematic analysis, the tweets were collected using Twitter Archiver, identified through close reading, combined and cataloged, and categories were constructed as a result of the open-coding process. In following this process, the researchers constructed four categories for NBC's tweets: (1) NBC as a gatekeeper of results and medal counts; (2) NBC as a gatekeeper of highlights through 2-3 minute videos embedded in tweets, taken directly from the network's television broadcast; (3) NBC as a gatekeeper of promotional content to hype events in prime-time, whether by formal journalistic tone or in a tone that more closely resembles a fan; and (4) NBC as a gatekeeper of Twitter interactions between or among athletes, athletes and celebrities, athletes and/or celebrities with NBC itself, NBC talent, and NBC with its Twitter audience.

Quantitative Results

RQ1: What events, athletes, sex/gender, and countries did NBC cover the most?

@NBCOlympics tweeted about most sports, but five sports represented 62% (n = 1,224) of the sample, and each were tweeted about more than 100 times: swimming (n = 368), athletics (n = 353), gymnastics (n = 252), basketball (n = 148), beach volleyball (n = 103).

Table 1

Number of Tweets by Sex of Athletes and Scope of Sport

	Men	Women	Both	Neutral	Total
N/A	6	5	11	106	128
Individual Sports	536	449	30	12	1027
Team Sports	256	347	60	16	679
Both	12	6	59	67	144
Total	810	807	160	201	128

Overall, @NBCOlympics tweeted as much about men's sports as it did about women's sports (810 tweets vs. 807 tweets, respectively). Another 160 tweets either were about a mixed competition (such as equestrian or mixed doubles in tennis) or mentioned at least one athlete of each sex, and 201 tweets were neutral, mentioning neither men's sports nor women's sports (Table 1). Three of the 35 sports that included male events were not mentioned–only trampoline, equestrian and taekwondo were never mentioned; and five women's sports were not mentioned—canoe slalom, table tennis, archery, rhythmic gymnastics, and badminton. Further, some differences were detected in how sports were covered for each sex. While NBC tweeted heavily about gymnastics, it highlighted primarily the female gymnasts: Only 39 of the 252 tweets were about men's events while 194 were about women's events (Figure 1). Similarly, the account included more tweets about women's beach volleyball and soccer compared to their male counterparts. Walsh-Jennings' attempt at a fourth gold medal in beach volleyball and the status of the national women's soccer team were important variables as neither had male counterparts of the same level. In contrast, in athletics, swimming, and basketball, the men's events were covered with more frequency.

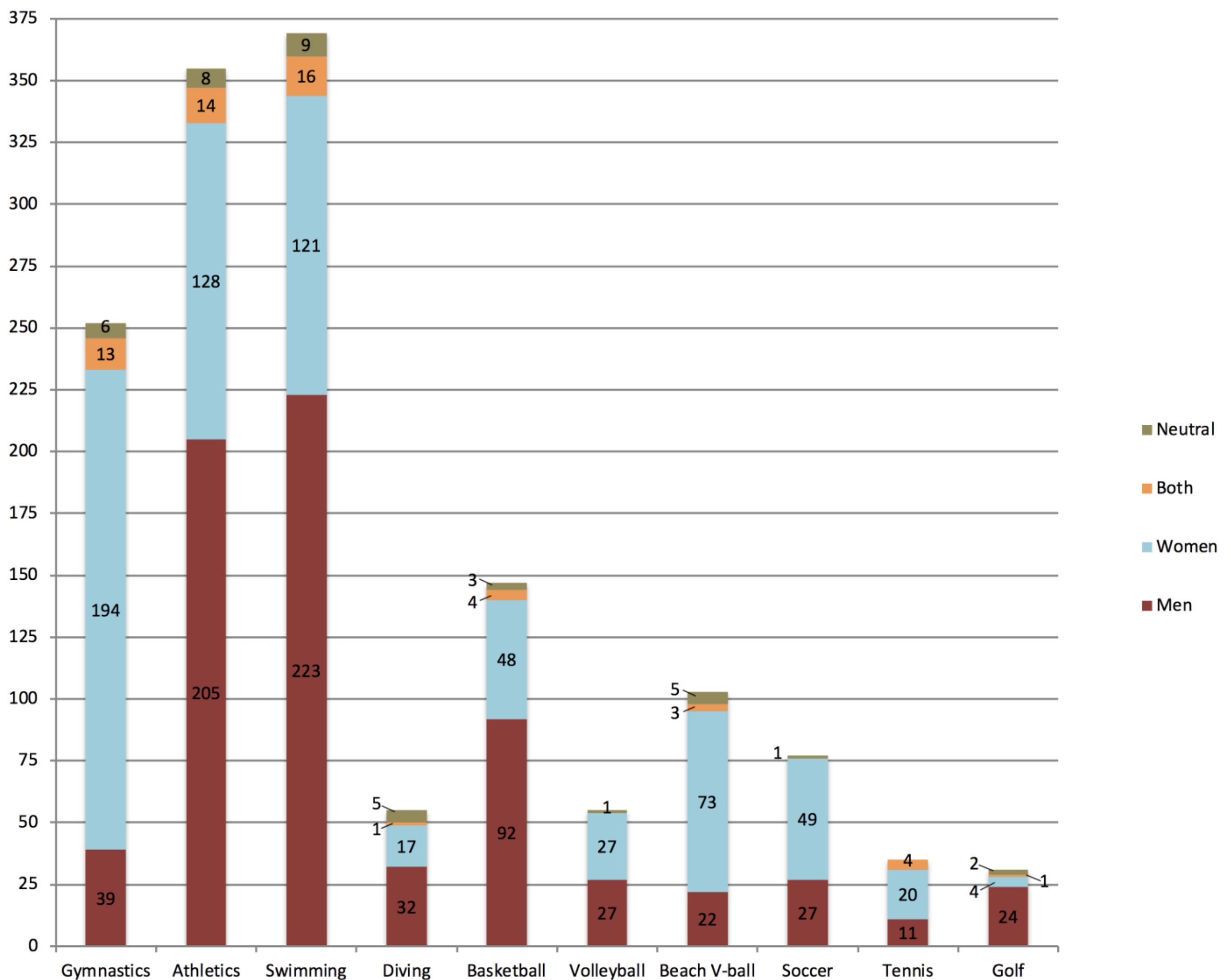

Figure 1. Number of tweets by sex in the most mentioned sports.

Overall, athletics and swimming were largely covered for both sexes – 31% of women's sports and 53% of men's sports (Figure 2), confirming these two sports as staples of the Olympic games. About a quarter of women's sports tweets were about gymnastics.

Regarding the scope of the sports, more than half of the sampled tweets (*n* = 1,027; 52%) were about individual sports; women's team sports were tweeted about more than men's team sports. The top three women's team sports in the data were beach volleyball (*n* = 73), gymnastics (*n* = 65) and soccer (*n* = 49), i.e., a mix of a traditional team sport (soccer), an aesthetic sport (gymnastics), and a ball sport that has been criticized for confining female "players to established gender roles" (Sailors, Teetzel & Weaving, 2012, p. 468). Meanwhile, the top three men's team sports in the data were traditional team sports—basketball (*n* = 92), soccer (*n* = 27) and volleyball (*n* = 27).

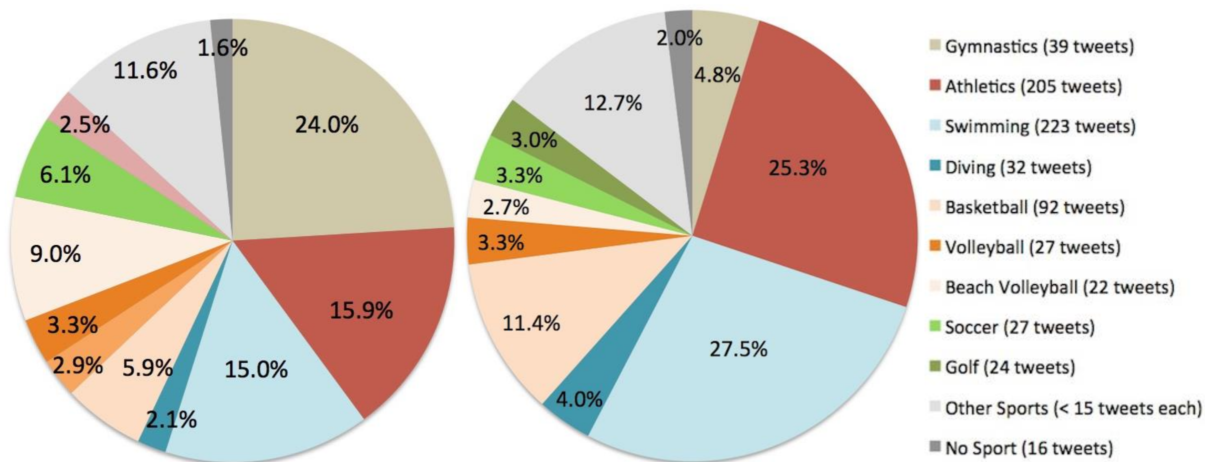

Figure 2. Distribution of tweets by sports of each sex: men's sports and male athletes (left), and women's sports and female athletes (right).

The large number of tweets for individual men's sports is in part because of Michael Phelps, who was mentioned in more than 15% of men's sports tweets (*n* = 125), Usain Bolt and Ryan Lochte. More than a quarter of men's sports tweets (*n* = 222) mentioned at least one of the three star athletes. While they all participated in relay events, which were coded as team sports, the majority of their events were individual ones.

Power or hard-contact sports were rarely discussed by @NBCOlympics (*n* = 124; 6%), including 8 tweets that mentioned both power and non-power sports. The majority of these tweets (*n* = 63; 51%) were about men's sports or male athletes, 52 of them were about women's sports or female athletes (42%), and the remaining 9 mentioned both sexes (7%).

Moreover, less than a quarter of tweets about power or hard-contact sports did not include Americans in contention (*n* = 28; 23%). This figure is only slightly lower than the overall figure—only 528 of all sampled tweets (27%) did not pertain to Americans. The majority of those were either about men's sports (n = 211, 40%), often because of Usain Bolt and soccer (the men's national team did not qualify for Rio 2016), or neutral in gender (n = 159, 30%), because of the 142 neutral NBC promotions. In contrast, women's sports and female athletes were the main subject of only 113 of tweets with no mention of an American athlete (21%).

NBC's coverage was unsurprisingly U.S.-centered: Team USA was specifically referred to 745 times (38% of all tweets). The second most represented country was the host nation, Brazil, with only 87 occurrences (4%). Jamaica with 52 (3%) and China with 48 (2%) followed.

The distribution for the type of tweet was similar across sexes, except for two categories (Table 2): men's sports were previewed more than women's sports (*n* = 101 vs. *n* = 86, respectively), but male athletes were retweeted fewer times than female athletes were (*n* = 76 vs. *n* = 49).

Table 2

Number of Tweets by Sex of Athletes and Type of Tweet

	Men	Women	Both	Neutral	Total
Preview	101	86	45	52	284
Live Event	181	180	20	26	407
Feature	63	58	18	17	156
Recap/Results	303	301	33	13	650
Awards Ceremony	13	16	-	-	29
Other Athletic News	11	13	2	3	29
Non-Athletic News	27	15	6	31	79
Photo Essay,	29	32	8	24	93
Retweet from athlete	49	76	17	18	160
Retweet from celebrity other than an athlete	14	14	7	9	44
Other	19	16	4	8	47
Total	810	807	160	201	1,978

Table 3

Number of Tweets by Sex of Athletes and Purpose of Tweet

	Men	Women	Both	Neutral	Total
Publicist	199	184	70	87	540
Conversationalist	84	91	23	28	226
Fan Aficionado	31	25	14	29	99
The Informer	390	392	41	38	861
The Analyst	84	95	6	12	197
Other	22	20	6	7	55
Total	810	807	160	201	1,978

RQ2: What roles did NBC's Twitter account play most often?

The bulk of NBC's tweets reflected the network's traditional role of informing its audience (Table 3): Almost half of the tweets sampled (n = 861; 44%) filled that role. The second category was that of *Publicist* (n = 540; 27%), showing that NBC heavily used Twitter to get audiences to watch their programs whether on television or online. In line with the "preview" findings aforementioned, men's events were slightly more promoted by @NBCOlympics than women's events, but opinions were shared slightly more often on women's events than men's events. Additionally, the handle is far more interactive as a conversationalist (n=226) with the athletes, their family, and friends than as the fan aficionado (n=99) with the general Twitter audience.

Qualitative Results

RQ3: What themes emerged from the gatekeeping practices of NBC's Olympic Twitter coverage?

Four themes emerged from NBC's Olympic tweets: (1) NBC as a gatekeeper of results and medal counts; (2) NBC as a gatekeeper of video highlights, in which the text component of the tweet provided context to the video highlight from the network broadcast that was embedded in the tweet; (3) NBC as a gatekeeper of promotional content to hype events and drive audiences back to the network broadcast; and (4) NBC as a gatekeeper of interactions between or among athletes, athletes and celebrities, athletes and/or celebrities with NBC itself, NBC talent and NBC with its Twitter audience.

Tweets for the gatekeeping of results were composed in two ways: just the facts or as an enthusiastic nationalist fan. The "just the facts" approach merely noted the results: "#USA downs #CHN 3-1 to go 5-0 in pool play! #Rio2016 #volleyball" (August 15). Whereas the "enthusiastic nationalist fan" approach cheered athletes on while providing results: "Winning 5 Medals in Rio calls for a CELEBRATION! Congrats @katieledecky! #Rio2016" (August 13). In this way, NBC served as a gatekeeper of results—letting the most popular content through the gates—and tweeting about content that NBC's social media team thought would appeal to the most people on Twitter.

The Rio Olympics featured the use of video highlights embedded in tweets as part of NBC's Twitter coverage. These highlights skewed heavily in favor of the most popular sports such as women's gymnastics and swimming. The text of the tweets fulfilled legacy media gatekeeping functions by setting up context for the video embedded in the tweet. For example, following Aly Raisman's floor routine NBC tweeted: "That floor routine made us all cry. Exhale Aly Raisman! You did what you needed to do" (August 11). Embedded in the tweet was the entire floor routine that had aired on NBC's television broadcast. NBC followed the same formula in setting up context for other tweets with video highlights. According to the retweet and like numbers, these video highlights tweets were among the most popular of the Olympics. The higher interaction rate with Twitter users, through likes and retweets, demonstrated NBC's Twitter account effectively adding value to its legacy gatekeeping functions by providing content across multiple platforms to reach a wider audience. According to Billings (2014), the power of tweets is not derived from the number of followers an account has, but how many adopt the tweet in some ancillary way. The tweets from NBC that featured videos were the most popular and widely shared of the Games. The use of video in tweets is significant and displayed the network extending its reach to an even wider audience.

NBC also used Twitter as a platform to generate hype for promotional events such as interviews and late-night programming for its television broadcasts. A variety of language, hashtags and events were used to further spotlight the network's Olympic programming. One such way was to mesh pop culture with the Olympics as seen with a video featuring swimmer team members appearing with Late Late Show host James Corden in his Carpool Karaoke: "MUST WATCH: @USASwimming takes on 'Carpool Karaoke' #Rio2016" (August 5, 2016).

Throughout the course of the Rio Olympics the @NBCOlympics Twitter account posted or retweeted many interactions between athletes, celebrities and athletes, and fans and NBC. As a gatekeeper, NBC selected specific interactions that brought even more attention to athletes. However, some of the tweets promoted sports and teams that do not usually receive much attention. For instance, there were multiple interactions between the U.S. water polo team and celebrity Leslie Jones throughout the Olympics that NBC retweeted: "RT @USAWP: .@Lesdoggg your robe has arrived in Rio! We need you @ our next game on Wednesday. #Olympics" (August 16, 2016).

Similarly, NBC also spotlighted high profile athletes and their Olympic experiences. For instance, NBC retweeted gymnast Simone Biles' experiences with celebrities during the Games: "RT @Simone_Biles: he kissed

me on the cheek just letting y'all know @ZacEfron ❧" (August 17, 2016). These retweets also included congratulations offered by celebrities to Olympians: "RT @SHAQ: Congratulations Ladies on your 100-meter hurdles win #PodiumSweep" (August 18, 2016).

RQ4a: In what ways did NBC ask for Twitter audience participation with their Twitter content? RQ4b: Did this interaction have an influence on gatekeeping practices?

The data revealed that NBC rarely used Twitter to ask for its followers' participation or to interact with them. Instead, the network fell back to the traditional role of legacy news media by informing its audience without appearing to expect anything in return. The network also used the Twitter as a venue for promoting its broadcasts. Overall, when NBC asked for the Twitter audience's participation, it did so in limited ways, using the platform as a one-way communication channel more often than not. When NBC took advantage of the two-way communication capabilities of Twitter, it did so with close-ended questions allowing for only limited ways for the audience to respond, such as a name of an athlete, or answering that, yes, indeed, they are ready for gymnastics or swimming. On occasion, NBC asked for the audience to like or retweet.

Overall, NBC provided little opportunity to the fans to share what they wanted to see. It also ignored some Twitter tools all together, including the poll option, which could have provided the network some opportunities to find out what its audience (both followers and viewers) wanted covered, what video highlights to tweet about, or athletes to interview. By not incorporating such elements into its tweets, NBC applied traditional one-way gatekeeping practices of legacy media, thus seeking feedback in highly restricted ways.

This did not keep NBC's viewers and media critics from speaking up on Twitter and other social media over their discontent with the network (e.g., Glines, 2016; Jenkins, 2016; Jhaveri, 2016), including in responses to NBC tweets. For instance, when NBC promoted its August 7 primetime broadcast, it used a picture of the U.S. women's gymnastics team, prompting the viewers to watch with their "whole squad." Many followers responded with dissatisfaction over NBC's tape delay. @WhitleyParker for example replied: "my whole squad wants to know why if you insist on tape delay you also spoil the results ON THE SAME TWITTER ACCOUNT" [*sic*]. While it does not seem that such responses made NBC change its strategy during the Rio games, the network did finally decide to follow its audience's wishes for the 2018 Olympics by ending its tape delay practices. It should also use all tools at its disposal to know what these wishes are, which obviously includes interacting with social media followers.

Discussion

Overall this study reveals that NBC's Twitter gatekeeping practices reflect the growing body of literature of Olympic television coverage, finding that women (n=807) and men (n=810) athletes are receiving about the same quantity of coverage from NBC (Coche & Tuggle, 2016). Though women are receiving nearly the same quantity of coverage as men on Twitter, there was more focus on women's team sports than men's team sports, which seems to counter long-standing findings from television and newspaper studies of women's sports coverage (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983; Tuggle, 1997). Antunovic (2016) asked longtime former Chicago Tribune international sports reporter Phil Hersh about the phenomenon. Hersh said that "women are every bit as important in the Olympic arena as men," implying that "nationalism makes space for women in sports media coverage," Antunovic concluded (p. 9).

However, this finding of equal coverage for gender results more from the inclusion of beach volleyball and individual sports with team events, such as gymnastics, than the increase in coverage of traditional team sports, such as basketball. Much like the television coverage (e.g., Billings, 2008; Coche & Tuggle, 2016; 2018), NBC's Twitter content about female Olympians seems to focus on non-contact sports featuring women dressed with bikinis and leotards. By doing so, NBC encourages women to practice only some socially-appropriate sports, and indicates that individual men's events and athletes are more important than women's individual events and athletes.

In addition, NBC's Twitter gatekeeping practices coincide and reinforce its television broadcast gatekeeping practices by tweeting about the same events and athletes as those featured in the promotions that air on television. Consequently, the tweets represent the network's nationalistic, American storytelling that is seen throughout its Olympics coverage.

Indeed, and unsurprisingly, the United States and American athletes were omnipresent in the data, which corroborates other scholars' findings (e.g., Antunovic, 2016; Billings & Eastman, 2006; Bruce, Hovden, & Markula, 2010) that "historically, [the Olympic games] have been as much a forum for fervent nationalism as they have been about peaceful competition" (Butterworth, 2007, p. 187). While NBC often tweeted about a few famous international athletes –especially Usain Bolt, as the Jamaican became the first sprinter to ever win three gold medals in three consecutive Olympics,[1] it mainly relied on the star power of American male swimmers, female gymnasts, and female beach volleyball players.

Regarding the roles NBC played on Twitter, the primary functions it took on show its dedication to the journalistic craft. The data show that the two main activities the NBC account engaged in were to inform and to promote, similar to Kim's (2002) findings that American television journalists, or in this case social media specialists, are most likely to uphold business objectives to meet an organization's goals. As such, NBC most often assumed the roles of the informer (n=861) and publicist (n=540). This is particularly noteworthy, as the social interactions with the general Twitter audience were only the fifth role the NBC account embraced (n=99), after the conversationalist role with the athletes and their sponsors, friends or family (n=226) and the analyst role (n=197), which, much like the informer role, is deeply related to the journalistic roots of the network's history as a legacy news outlet.

Perhaps the reason why NBC is most likely to engage with the athletes, their sponsors, or their friends and families (instead of the Twitter audience) is because the former are more likely to uphold the stories NBC wishes to tell through its gatekeeping practices. Tandoc and Vos (2015) noted that traditional gatekeeping maintains editorial control. By not engaging with, and allowing the Twitter audience to shift the focus through its gatekeeping, NBC is able to keep the focus on its narrative and attempt to meet its organizational goals financially.

The findings in how NBC used its Twitter account are particularly helpful in understanding what the network values and how that is applied in its gatekeeping practices. The Twitter account's role as publicist and informer ideally drive the Twitter audience back to the television broadcast, or encourage a multiple screen viewing experience using NBC's Goldzone live-streaming and television broadcast.

Conclusion

The Olympics continue their role as "the biggest show on television" (Billings, 2008), but viewers of the multi-sport event desire to experience the games through modern tools (Sandomir, 2014). This study offers an initial look at how the U.S. Olympic broadcaster covers the Summer Olympics on social media by examining the type of content NBC lets through its Twitter gates. Although the network uses its social media quite well as an informer and publicist, NBC has not fully adapted its gatekeeping decisions to the latest trends and tools available to connect with its followers. A major advantage of Twitter and other social networks is that they support dialogue and interaction (Tang & Cooper, 2018), but NBC rarely uses these functions with athletes and celebrities, and uses them almost never with viewers. While it is important for NBC to provide information about the Olympics through all platforms at their disposal (especially considering their exclusive contract in the United States), the network must evolve from the traditional one-way communication it has used historically as a radio station and television network. It should use all available tools possible through Twitter, such as video, polls, and live-streaming, to reach the most expansive audience possible, especially in light of the network's research that indicates the audience wants to experience the Olympics in as many ways as possible (Sadomir, 2014). Future research should not only analyze how NBC adapts to new tools available on social media, but also the interaction the network partakes in with its audience on social media.

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[1] Usian Bolt and the Jamaican team were subsequently stripped of the Beijing 2008 4 x 100m relay gold medal because their teammate, Nesta Carter, tested positive for a prohibited substance.

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"Who's Doing the Phubbing?": Exploring Individual Factors that Predict Phubbing Behaviors During Interpersonal Interactions

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Phubbing is a relatively new phenomenon (Blachnio & Przepiorka, 2018) and is conceptualized as a communicative behavior that occurs during interpersonal interactions when one or more communicators pays more attention to their phone than the actual face-to-face interaction. Framed by Social Information Processing Theory, the current investigation sought to understand what personality and demographic characteristics are associated with one's likelihood to engage in phubbing. One hundred fifty college students participated in an online survey about their phubbing behaviors. Results revealed the following: phubbing behaviors are positively associated with self-absorption, online self-presentation, and online impression management tactics; women are significantly more likely to engage in phubbing compared to men; and, one's frequency of texting behaviors are associated with his/her phubbing behaviors. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed, along with limitations and future directions.

Keywords: computer-mediated communication, Social Information Processing Theory, phubbing, self-absorption, image management, self-presentation

The advent of communicative technologies, chiefly smartphones and social media, have significantly affected the way we interact with others face-to-face (Roberts & David, 2016). In particular, our face-to-face interactions are now frequently interrupted by our desire to check our smartphones for texts, social media updates, or to simply stay connected to our digital lives. This is the essence of phubbing, a term that derives from the words "phone" and "snubbing." Phubbing occurs when a communicator is physically present with another individual but snubs that person by paying more attention to their phone rather than engaging in conversation (Roberts & David, 2016). Recent research has discovered that phubbing can decrease satisfaction with interpersonal interactions (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018); even the mere presence of a phone during face-to-face interactions significantly decreases the quality of interpersonal communication (Misra, Cheng, Genevie, & Yuan, 2014). Phubbing also has a negative influence on mental well-being. Specifically, it makes the other communicator feel excluded and threatens human need for meaningful existence. Relationship research also identified phubbing to be a critical risk to low marital satisfaction (Seppala, 2017).

Due to the negative impacts of phubbing on interpersonal processes, it is important to further understand what individual characteristics might be significantly associated with the enactment of phubbing behaviors. Framed by Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT), the current study seeks to explore potential antecedents of phubbing behaviors, including biological sex, phone use frequency, self-absorption, online self-presentation, and online image management. The following review of literature will first articulate the theoretical framework, review relevant literature on phubbing, and define the correlates under consideration.

Review of Literature

Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT)

SIPT is a theory of computer-mediated communication (CMC) that seeks to understand how relationships develop via CMC technologies (Walther, 2008). In particular, SIPT argues that individuals have unique communicative opportunities (i.e., hyperpersonal affordances) via CMC that are not present in face-to-face (FtF) communication. For instance, CMC is asynchronous, and thus, communicators have time to edit messages before

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they are sent. Also, nonverbal elements of communication that are relatively difficult to control in FtF interaction are removed via CMC. And, because nonverbal elements are eliminated in CMC, communicators are afforded additional cognitive energy toward message composition and impression management (Walter, 2007). Moreover, the theory posits that CMC has a potential hyperpersonal effect, which refers to the effect the aforementioned hyperpersonal affordances have on individuals using CMC to form closer, more intimate relationships than they would FtF (West & Turner, 2018). For this current study, SIPT will be used as a framework to understand the concept of impression management as related to CMC; specifically, phubbing behaviors.

Impression management is a core principle in SIPT, as the theory asserts that individuals are motivated to form favorable impressions online (West & Turner, 2018). In addition, the hyperpersonal affordances of CMC provide individuals unique opportunities to edit their online identities in ways that are not possible FtF. Shaw and Gant (2002) contend, "online anonymity allows people to express and experiment with aspects of their identities that they might feel compelled to suppress or keep hidden in their everyday lives" (p. 169). Because of this, it stands to reason that individuals might prefer CMC over FtF interaction for some interactions or under some circumstances, as it affords communicative opportunities not granted by FtF. In fact, Babkirk, Leuhring-Jones, and Dennis (2015) discovered that individuals tended to prefer CMC over FtF when they had higher depressive symptoms. These ideas are at the core of the current study; specifically, we seek to understand what individual characteristics predict someone's likelihood to engage in phubbing, which is a behavior that implies preference for CMC over FtF, as individuals are literally choosing to communicate via CMC even when they are FtF with another individual. The following sections will address recent phubbing research, as well as define the individual variables that might help predict one's phubbing tendencies.

Phubbing

As mentioned earlier, phubbing occurs within interpersonal relationships when two individuals are interacting FtF and one, or both communicators, turns their attention to their phone, away from the FtF interaction (Cizmeci, 2017a). Phubbing is multidimensional and is comprised of four aspects including: phone addiction, internet addiction, game addiction, and social media addiction (Karadağ et al., 2016). Scholars have suggested that younger individuals may be more inclined to engage in phubbing to have some sort of escape and solitude from the world (Turkle, 2012). It also makes sense that younger individuals would engage in phubbing, as they are part of a generation that has grown up with CMC technologies. Phubbing has become more of a normal and accepted behavior in society (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). In one study, phubbers claimed that phubbing is now a normalized behavior. They justified this by claiming that smartphones are an integral part of most people's lives, and everyone engages in phubbing behavior at some point, so everyone is used to it by now (Karadağ et al., 2016). Despite the so-called normalcy of phubbing, it still has been found to have negative effects on communication and interpersonal relationships (Karadağ et al., 2016).

Effects of phubbing. Karadağ et al. (2016) claim that phubbing can have serious negative effects on interpersonal relationships. For instance, they found that those who were being "phubbed" felt as if their conversational partner did not take them seriously, and that they were not being understood or fully heard to due lack of or partial attention from their conversational partner. Moreover, phubbing has been found to lead to depression, lower well-being, and relationship dissatisfaction (Roberts & David, 2016). This is likely because individuals view phubbing as a face threatening act because it diminishes their real-life conversation (Maginnis, 2011). Worse, phubbing can lead to resentment (Rainie & Zickuhr, 2015), less trust (Cameron & Webster, 2011), and jealousy (Krasnova, Abramova, Notter, & Baumann, 2016). Moreover, it leads to negative perceptions of communication quality and negatively affects individuals need to belong, self-esteem, need for control, and for a meaningful existence (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018). Although the effects of phubbing have been empirically examined, less attention has been given to the potential predictors, or individual characteristics of "phubbers."

Reasons for phubbing. Chasombat (2014) found that phubbing occurs for multiple reasons. As Angeluci (2015) states "[t]he need to stay connected and communicate all of the time[,] fear of being mentally alone[,] the need to be the center of attention[, and] the need to escape from social group reunions of awkward silences" (p. 194). In addition, others have pointed out that phubbing stems from internet addiction, and internet addiction stems from the fear of missing out (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). Moreover, Blanchnio and Przepiorka (2018)

found that phubbing stems from Facebook addiction, which stems from lower levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction. Phubbing can also simply be a byproduct of boredom (Cizmeci, 2017a). Extending on this line of inquiry that explores the antecedents of phubbing behavior, the current investigation seeks to understand what individual characteristics are associated with phubbing likelihood.

Individual characteristics associated with phubbing. The primary goal of the current study is to understand what individual traits predict one's proclivity to phub. Using SIPT, it is argued that individuals are motivated to maintain their online identities, which increases their likelihood to phub; in particular, we argue that individuals who have higher online impression management concerns, online self-presentation concerns, and self-absorption, are significantly more likely to phub during FtF interactions.

Self-presentation relates to Goffman's (1967) notion, of *face* or the image we wish to project to others. Brown and Levinson's (1987) extend on this notion of face to argue that individuals possess two dimensions of face: positive face and negative face. Positive face refers to "self-presentational concerns lead individuals to approach or engage with others to foster social connection," whereas negative face refers to "self-presentational concerns lead individuals to disengage from others or exercise restraint in expression out of the interest of respecting boundaries and/or maintaining independence" (Feaster, 2010, p. 117). According to Mehdizadeh (2010) online self-presentation is correlated with narcissism. Due to individuals' desire to form positive impressions online (Walther, 2008), the current investigation focuses on individuals' self-presentation concerns of positive face. Specifically, individuals often seek to present themselves positively in online contexts (Feaster, 2010), thus, it stands to reason that individuals with high self-presentation concerns would be more likely to phub, as phubbing could provide them an opportunity to engage in self-presentation behaviors to a larger audience online than the singular audience present in the FtF interaction.

Impression management is similar to self-presentation with regard to face concerns, but more specifically refers to the intentional manipulation of information to create and foster positive impressions of oneself in the minds of others (Blasberg, Rogers, & Paulhus, 2013). In a similar vein to self-presentation, it is speculated that individuals with high impression management concerns would be more likely to engage in phubbing, as this behavior would allow them more time and opportunity to construct their online identity.

Additionally, self-absorption, defined as one's proclivity to have "an excessive, sustained, and rigid focus on the self" (McKenzie & Hoyle, 2008, p. 726). Self-absorption, similarly to self-presentation, is also correlated with narcissism (Trumpeter, Watson, & O'Leary, 2006), and may also share a significant association with phubbing. In particular, we contend that FtF interactions often require people to listen and attempt to understand others (Hargie, 2017), which might be challenging for self-absorbed individuals. Consequently, individuals with a high level of self-absorption might prefer to interact on CMC, as they can focus on and enhance their own personal online identity, rather than engage in a FtF interaction; phubbing provides this opportunity. With this said, the following hypothesis is proposed:

> *H1:* There is a positive correlation between phubbing with the following individual traits: *1a*) online self-presentation; *1b)* online impression management; and, *1c*) self-absorption.

Another point of interest for this study is the potential influence of biological sex on the enactment of phubbing behaviors. In particular, biological sex may have an effect on the enactment of phubbing, however there is an inconclusive finding on sex differences in phubbing behavior, which warrants further investigation. Many studies report that females tend to engage in phubbing more than their male partners and have higher rates of phone obsession (Blanchnio & Przepiorka, 2018; Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016; Karadağ et al., 2016). However, another study found that males tend to engage in phubbing behavior more than females (Cizmeci, 2017b). Karadağ et al. (2016) attempts to explain this discrepancy with their findings when they note that phubbing by females tends to be more related to social media and texting addiction, whereas males' phubbing behaviors are more related to internet and game addiction. Due to inconclusive findings regarding sex differences in phubbing behaviors, the following research question is posed:

> *RQ1*: Do women or men report engaging in more phubbing behaviors?

Finally, it is believed that individuals' self-reported time spent on social media is associated with phubbing likelihood, as previous research has found that phubbing results from internet addiction (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016) and Facebook addiction (Blanchnio & Przepiorka, 2018). Moreover, approximately thirty-seven percent of smartphone users report spending five or more hours per day on their phones (Gallup, 2018), and approximately fifty-one percent of Facebook users report visiting Facebook multiple times per day (Pew Research Center, 2018). These statistics indicate that adults are spending more time on their phones and social media, and this increase in consumption might influence interpersonal interactions in the form of phubbing. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

> *H2*: The more time individuals spend on social media each day, the more phubbing they tend to engage in during interpersonal interactions.

Method

Recruitment Procedure

Undergraduate students from a large public university in California were recruited via email to participate in this study. The recruitment email included a brief summary of the study and that student participation will be anonymous. Those that were interested clicked on the link to participate in the online survey hosted on Qualtrics.com. We originally received 153 responses. Only the responses from students who own smartphones were kept.

Participants

One hundred and fifty (*N* = 150) students who were enrolled in a public university in Southern California participated in this study. From 150 participants, 50 identified as males (*n* = 50), while 100 identified as females (n = 100). For participant ethnicity, 36% identified as Hispanic/Latino/a (*n* = 54), 24.7% identified as Caucasian (*n* = 37), and 24.7% identified as Asian (*n* = 37), while 10.7% identified as mixed race (*n* = 16), 2% identified as African/Black (*n* = 3), 1.3% identified as Native American (*n* = 2), and less than 1% identified as Pacific Islander (*n* = 1). More than 80% of the participants reported to be 18 to 25 years old while the other 20% were 26 to 34 years old. 5% of respondents reported spending less than 1 hour a day on social media and texting, while 70% reported spending 1 to 3 hours a day, and 25% more than 3 hours a day. When asked how long they have owned a smartphone, 4% said 1 to 3 years, 48% said 4 to 6 years, 30% said 7 to 9 years, and 18% said 10 years and more. Participants self-rated their smartphone usage per day, which includes any function they use on the phone, 2% reported "Rarely," 18% reported "Sometimes," while 80% reported using their phones "Often" and "Always."

Measurements

Phubbing. A person's tendency to use their phones during interpersonal interactions is measured by a revised instrument containing 6 items. This self-report scale is based on Roberts and David's (2016) Phubbing Scale. Participants responded on a five- point Likert-type scale (1 = *Never* to 5 = *Always*). Sample items include: "During a typical mealtime with others, I generally pull out my phone and check it," "I glance at my cell phone when others are talking to me," and "I place my cell phone outside where people can see when I'm with others." Higher scores indicate higher amount of phubbing behavior engaged by the respondent. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale is .82. *M* = 2.83; *SD* = .62.

Online self-presentation. An individual's level of online self-presentation concerns is measured by an adapted version of the Self-Presentation Tactic Scale (Lee, Quigley, Nesler, Corbett, & Tedeschi, 1999). This scale includes twelve different tactics on how people try to present themselves and control how others think of them. Participants responded on a five- point Likert-type scale (1 = V*ery Infrequently* to 5 = *Very Frequently*). Sample items include: "I justify my behavior online to reduce negative reactions from others," "I try to get the approval of others online before doing something they might perceive negatively," and "I compliment people online to get them on my side." The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is .80. *M* = 2.64; *SD* = .55.

Online impression management. A person's level of tendency to manage other people's impression of them online is measured by an adapted version of the original Impression Management Scale (Turnley & Bolino,

2001). The adapted scale contains an item from each of the five subscales including ingratiation, self-promotion, exemplification, supplication, and intimidation. However, all items were revised to reflect the nature of social media interaction. A shortened scale was used for two primary reasons. First, there is a clear conceptual-operational link between the construct of online impression management and the selection of items for the current study. The focus is not on each Impression Management (IM) strategy but rather the holistic sense of IM (i.e., how much one creates and fosters positive impressions of oneself in the minds of others). Second, the abbreviated scale alleviates survey fatigue error that usually occurs with long surveys. In order to test the unidimensionality of the 5 items, they were submitted to a factor analysis with principal axis factoring. All 5 items loaded on to a single factor (Cronbach's alpha = .70; $M = 2.82$; $SD = .70$). Participants responded on a 5-point Likert-Type scale ranging from 1 = *Never* to 5 = *Always*. Sample items include: "I talk proudly about my experience or education on social media," "I praise my colleagues for their accomplishments on social media so they will consider me a nice person," and "I post about arriving at work/class early to look dedicated."

Self-absorption. A person's level of obsession in one's own interests, emotions, and situation is measured by an adapted self-absorption scale created by McKenzie and Hoyle (2008). The original scale contains two subscales: private and public self-absorption. Four items were selected from each subscale for the present study. Participants responded on a Likert-Type scale ranging from 1 = *Not at all like me* to 5 = *Very much like me*. Sample items include: "I think about myself more than anything else," "When I try to think of something other than myself, I cannot," "It upsets me when people I meet don't like me," and "When I'm about to meet someone for the first time, I worry about whether they'll like me." The Cronbach's alpha for private self-absorption is .82 and public self-absorption is .83. $M = 2.59$; $SD = .82$.

Results

Correlations between Phubbing and Individual Traits

Online self-presentation and phubbing. It was hypothesized that phubbing would correlate positively with online self-presentation. The correlation coefficient $r(148) = .30$, $p < .001$, R-squared = .09 indicates that the two variables are significantly positively correlated. The data suggests that individuals who score high in online self-presentation are more likely to score high in phubbing as well. Therefore, hypothesis 1a was supported.

Online impression management and phubbing. It was hypothesized that phubbing would correlate positively with online impression management. The correlation coefficient $r(148) = .14$, $p < .05$, R-squared = .02 indicates that the two variables are significantly positively correlated. The results suggest that individuals who score high in online impression management are more likely to score high in phubbing. Therefore, hypothesis 1b was supported.

Self-absorption and phubbing. It was hypothesized that phubbing would correlate positively with self-absorption. The correlation coefficient $r(148) = .20$, $p < .01$, R-squared = .04, indicates that the two variables are significantly positively correlated. The results suggest that higher scores in self-absorption are related to higher scores in phubbing. Therefore, hypothesis 1c was supported.

Table 1

Correlations between Phubbing, Online Self-Presentation, Online Impression Management, and Self-Absorption

	1	2	3	4
1.Phubbing	---			
2.Online Self-Presentation	.30**	---		
3.Online Impression Management	.14*	.48**	---	
4.Self-Absorption	.20**	.56**	.36**	---

Note. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Sex Differences in Phubbing

Research question one asked, do women or men report engaging in more phubbing behaviors? An independent-samples t-test was conducted to investigate the connection between biological sex and phubbing. The independent variable, sex, contained two levels: male (n = 50) and female (n = 100). The dependent variable was phubbing behavior. The t-test obtained a significant result, $t(148) = 2.71$ $p = < .01$, $\eta^2 = .02$. The results suggest that female participants (M = 2.93 SD = .60) engage in phubbing behavior significantly more than male participants (M = 2.64 SD = .60). While the effect size is quite small, based on the result of significance testing, research question one was supported.

Time Spent on Social Media and Phubbing

Our second hypothesis stated the more time individuals spent on social media a day, the more phubbing they tend to do during interpersonal interactions. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to investigate the connection between time spent on social media per day and phubbing. The independent variable, time spent on social media per day, contained six levels: less than one hour (n = 8), more than 1 hour (n = 24), more than two hours (n = 45), more than 3 hours (n = 26), more than four hours (n = 19), and more than 5 hours a day (n = 28). The dependent variable was phubbing. The ANOVA obtained a significant result, $F(5, 149) = 6.92$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .19$. The result suggests that there are significant differences between six groups. A Post Hoc analysis was conducted to further probe the differences between groups. According to LSD Post Hoc analysis, there are significant differences between people who spend less than 1 hour a day on social media as compared to those who spend more than 1 hour, 2 hours, 3 hours, 4 hours, and 5+ hours (Table 2).

Table 2

ANOVA Comparisons of Phubbing from Six Time Spent on Social Media Groups

			LSD Post Hoc Comparisons				
Group	Mean	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5
1. Less Than 1 hour a day	2.02	0.59	---				
2. More than 1 hour a day	2.54	0.46	<.05	---			
3. More than 2 hours a day	2.77	0.61	<.01	.12	---		
4. More than 3 hours a day	3.01	0.64	< .001	<.01	.08	---	
5. More than 4 hours a day	3.00	0.51	<.001	<.01	.14	.94	---
6. More than 5 hours a day	3.31	0.57	<.001	<.001	<.01	.45	.44

Discussion

In summary, this study found the following: 1) women reported engaging in more phubbing behaviors than men, 2) phubbing is positively associated with online self-presentation, online impression management, and self-absorption, and, 3) individuals who spent more time on social media per day tend to engage in more phubbing

behaviors during interpersonal interactions. The findings in this study indicate the prevalence of phubbing behaviors among young adults. The majority of participants reported checking their social media at least a couple of hours a day, and they also do that while they are supposedly interacting with others FtF. Effect sizes of the variables under consideration on phubbing behaviors were small to moderate (ranged from 2% - 19%), which indicates that biological sex, frequency of social media use, self-absorption, and online self-presentation and identity management explain a moderate, yet significant, amount of variation in phubbing.

Findings reflect the recent article on the danger of phubbing (Castellano, 2018), in which Castellano points out the obsession young adults have with phones; he states, on average, a young adult checks his/her phone 80 times a day. It makes sense that participants who reported spending more time on their phones each day, also phub more during FtF interactions. It is also important to point out that our participants are college students. The current generation of traditional college students are "digitally hyperconnected" and constantly on their smartphones and social media (Cheong, Shuter, & Suwinyattichaiporn, 2016). Future work might consider exploring how age moderates the effects of phubbing on interpersonal interactions; that is, younger individuals might perceive phubbing as more socially acceptable than older generations, as they have grown up with mobile devices for much of their lives.

The present study found sex differences in phubbing, specifically, women engage in phubbing behaviors more than men. This could be a number of reasons. Pew Research Center (2017) found that women spend more time on social media than men, and the number of women that have multiple social media accounts is higher than men. Additionally, this sex difference could reflect gender roles; that is, women are often socialized to be more relationally oriented compared to men. Thus, women may engage in more phubbing in order to maintain multiple relationships at once. Future work is needed to further flesh out the effects of biological sex, and potentially gender roles, on phubbing behaviors. Specifically, research should examine the motivations for phubbing (e.g., maintain relationships, nervousness, expectations, etc.), which may also help explain the sex differences in phubbing.

Our study provides evidence for the associations between phubbing, online self-presentation, online impression management, and self-absorption. Consistent with previous research, individuals that are more concerned with their online image also measured higher in narcissism (Mehdizadeh, 2010). Logically, it makes sense that individuals who are more concerned of their online self-presentation would spend more time on their phones and social media curating the perfect image while ignoring his/her surroundings including FtF interactants. Furthermore, it stands to reason that individuals with a high concern for online self-presentation believe phubbing is socially acceptable and appropriate; however, further research is needed to make such an empirical claim.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT; Walther, 2008) can help interpret current findings with more clarity. In particular, SIPT contends that individuals are motivated to create and maintain positive online images; moreover, individuals are able to explore facets of their identity online that they might not be able to do in person. However, little research has explored what individual characteristics make someone more inclined to invest in their online identity and self-presentation. We argued that the engagement in phubbing behaviors represents a high concern for online identity and self-presentation, as individuals are choosing to communicate on their phone instead of with the person in front of them. Consistent with this theorizing, results indicate that women, frequent social media users, highly self-absorbed individuals, and individuals with high online self-presentation and image management concerns are significantly more likely to engage in phubbing; consequently, these individuals might be more concerned with maintaining their identities via CMC technologies. This might help inform future SIPT work; in particular, are we moving toward a society where online identity management is more important, and attended to more, than our face-to-face relationships? Moreover, are younger generations more accepting of phubbing behavior due to the perceived importance of maintaining an online identity? Many of our daily tasks and professional responsibilities have also shifted to an online space that is accessible via our smartphones – might this also explain rises in phubbing and perceived acceptability of phubbing?

With regard to practical implications, we believe current findings highlight the fast-changing nature of communication; that is, individuals are beginning to use more CMC technologies, and they are even deciding to engage in CMC while they are FtF with other relational partners. Empirical evidence suggests that phubbing has deleterious effects on individuals' well-being, as well interactional quality (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018).

Consequently, we believe educational and intervention efforts need to be implemented to inform young adults of the potential consequences of phubbing. However, such efforts should also respect the autonomy and agency of individuals in a way that does not disparage or demean their choice to phub, but instead equips them with communicative tools to better navigate FtF interactions that may be affected by phubbing. Furthermore, self-awareness is a key factor of communication competence (Floyd, 2016), and making individuals more aware of their own phubbing behaviors, as well the effects phubbing can have on relationships, can help individuals be more conscientious of their communication.

Limitations and Future Directions

While the present study adds to the body of research on phubbing, it is not without limitations. First, the sample size may not be ideal for generalization. We received 150 responses, although the sample is ethnically diverse, more responses are needed to make a generalizable conclusion. Future research should consider recruiting more participants and perhaps those of different age groups, as the current study was homogenous with regard to age. It is likely that younger individuals engage in much more phubbing behaviors than older adults, as millennials and generation z are used to having smartphones in their lives.

The second limitation is the moderate correlations and effect sizes. As discussed in the results section, phubbing, online self-presentation, online impression management, and self-absorption are significantly associated to one another; also, phubbing differed significantly between men and women, as well as between different social media usage frequencies. However, these correlations and effect sizes are in the mid-range. Future research should examine other individual characteristics that might increase one's likelihood to engage in phubbing, for instance: self-esteem, social anxiety, narcissism, loneliness, etc.

In addition, future research could examine how certain communicative contextual features (e.g., physical location, relationship type and closeness, etc.) influence one's likelihood to phub. Additionally, research might also seek to understand the communicative goals and expectations individuals have for engaging in phubbing (i.e., Why do people phub while FtF with other individuals?; What expectations do people have for their own, as well as others', phubbing behavior?; etc.). Uncovering these more nuanced aspects of phubbing will help scholars obtain a more holistic understanding of this unique communicative phenomenon.

Lastly, this study is a cross-sectional quantitative investigation of phubbing. While we are able to identify the characteristics of phubbers, we do not understand why these groups of people engage in more phubbing than others. Perhaps a qualitative interview or focus group could offer a more holistic and interpretive understanding of the reasons individuals have for phubbing, perceived appropriateness of phubbing, and strategies for dealing with phubbing behaviors during FtF interactions. In addition, phubbing is an interpersonal behavior; thus, dyadic data studies (e.g., friends, romantic partners, family members, etc.) would help scholars understand both actor and partner effects of phubbing on FtF interactions.

Conclusion

The surface has only been scratched in terms of understanding phubbing and its complexities. While we have a clearer empirical understanding of some of the correlates of phubbing behaviors, significantly more work is needed to understand the expectations, motivations, and influences of phubbing in interpersonal interactions. This is no easy feat, however, as the technological landscape changes so quickly, it is challenging for research to keep up with these changes.

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Collective Communication within LGBT Leadership: Sharing the Vision

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With no national anti-discrimination law in place to protect LGBT community members (American Civil Liberties Union, 2016), it is vital to understand how marginalized leaders motivate others to enact change. Using participatory ethnographic methods, this study followed a LGBT Community Rights Group for five months. Two leadership communication strategies enabled LGBT leaders to act as community change agents: 1) cohesive communication encouraged collective discussion and leveraged individual group members' expertise, 2) proactive communication evoked tenacious defense strategies to counter opposition and facilitate outreach with external organizations. Collective leadership modeled by this LGBT Rights Group offers communication strategies for motivating community change.

Keywords: LGBT leadership, community engaged research, leading change, relational leadership

Leadership is a universal phenomenon that exists within every culture (Hackman & Johnson, 2009). As Hackman and Johnson (2009) explain, "leadership is human (symbolic) communication which modifies the attitudes and behaviors of others in order to meet shared group goals and needs" (p. 11). Interest in leadership has surged. After completing a search for the term "leadership" on Amazon.com books, over 80,000 books ranging from leader strategies to motivational styles were identified (Amazon, 2018). However, only 497 leadership titles pertained to "minority leadership" and only 115 titles specified "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender leadership" or the abbreviation "LGBT leadership" (Amazon, 2018). Further, on Google Scholar, while one may be encouraged to know there are 33,700 links to documents on "LGBT leadership," this represents less than one percent of the 3,930,000 links to documents for the search term "leadership" (Google Scholar, 2018). These figures call attention to the need to further explore leadership in non-dominant groups.

Understanding effective leadership in the LGBT community is vital for these individuals to achieve not only political rights, but basic human rights. Though marriage equality was issued in early 2015, allowing same-sex couples to legally marry in the United States, issues surrounding the LGBT community continue to perpetuate violence and discrimination of those with differing sexual orientations and gender identities. Currently, there is no nation-wide anti-discrimination employment law/policy in place, and in 28 of the 50 states business owners can fire individuals who are suspected or confirmed to be gay or transgender (American Civil Liberties Union, 2016). Further, hate crimes against LGBT individuals are committed nationally at alarming rates (Human Rights Campaign, 2015). These ongoing concerns invite a call for leadership. Coon (2001) argues that additional scholarship surrounding the LGBT community is needed; specifically, research should consider how sexual orientation and other characteristics have allowed LGBT individuals to "successfully navigate through societal prejudices and oppression, [which] may provide the insight necessary for the [LGBT] community to further its agenda" (p. 5). Fassinger, Shullman, and Stevenson (2010) further contend that "scholarly work on leadership has yet to consider the characteristics and perspectives that LGBT individuals may bring to the process of leadership" (p. 201).

Communication is a central factor in leadership (Riggio, Riggio, Salinas, & Cole, 2003), with communication and decision-making strategies varying within diverse groups (Swann, Polzer, Seyle, & Ko, 2004). Yet, research surrounding leadership often promotes leadership as hierarchal and typically casts leaders as heterosexual males (Chin & Sanchez-Hucles, 2007). Studying marginalized leaders is important to better understand leadership from the perspective of underrepresented groups and identify successful leadership communication processes (Moon, 1996). Additionally, marginalized leaders have a unique opportunity to enact change because the oppression they face allows them to see their own position, as well as entire systems (Fassinger et al., 2010). Enacting social change is important because, according to the American Sociological Association (2018), social

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change brings about a positive shift in societal acceptance over both short and long periods of time. Therefore, this qualitative study examines how LGBT leaders use communication strategies to attain community specific goals and contributes to the scholarship of marginalized leadership by addressing the research question:

How do LGBT leaders communicate their leadership in ways that motivate others to enact social change?

Leadership

Leadership is a universal phenomenon, occurring naturally despite differences in culture and race (Murdock, 1967). Yet, leadership is one of the most recognized and studied phenomenon in human history while simultaneously being one of the most misunderstood (Burns, 1978). Considering leadership definitions throughout scholarship, a current definition is "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2004, p. 3). However, leadership wasn't always conceptualized as a process; in fact, leadership was originally studied as an individual phenomenon where people were born with particular characteristics or traits that destined them for leadership (Bass, 1981). Following, four common leadership themes are explained to inform the study and explore leadership behavior within an LGBT organization: 1) individualistic leadership, 2) context and situational leadership 3) relational leadership, and 4) developmental leadership.

Individualistic Leadership

Individualistic leadership theories articulate that people are natural born leaders with unique characteristics, already possessing the ability to lead based on biological characteristics (Mostovicz, Kakabadse, & Kakabadse, 2009). Individualistic leadership is typically governed by two theories: 1) trait leadership theory and 2) charismatic leadership theory. Trait theory focuses on individual characteristics and personality traits which are considered to enhance leadership ability (Zaccaro, 2007). Traits rooted within the individual include extroversion, discipline, and sociability, which enhance leader effectiveness (Mumford, Campion, & Morgeson, 2007). Charismatic individuals tend to maintain influence through communicating confidence and dominance, setting clear goals, and upholding a sense of purpose (deVries, Bakker-Pieper, & Oostenveld, 2010). Charismatic leaders tend to rise in times of trouble or crisis, as people turn to individuals who possess these "mystical" qualities for guidance (Hackman & Johnson, 2009).

Context and Situational Leadership

Context leadership theories consider the times, contexts, and circumstances requiring leadership (Bass, 1981). Osborn, Hunt, and Jauch (2002) explain, "change the context and the leadership changes as does what is sought and whether specific leadership patterns are considered effective" (p. 797). According to contextual leadership theories, leadership is determined by outside factors, such as the ability for a group to come together to achieve a common goal, complete a specific task or series of tasks, and identify strong members suited for leadership (Graeff, 1997). Context leadership differs from situational leadership; context leadership arises from the need for a leader at a specific time and place, whereas situational leadership occurs when an existing leader evaluates situation factors and adopts the best strategy to develop followers while maximizing outcomes (Lynch, 2015).

Situational leadership is unique because it works as an identification process where leaders may be matched to positions, trained to change the situation to better fit their leadership style, or adapt their leadership style to the situation (Fiedler, Chemers, & Mahar, 1977). Situational leaders typically develop either a directive or supportive leadership style (Randolph & Blackburn, 1989) using four strategies depending on the context and situation: telling, selling, participating, and delegating (Hackman & Johnson, 2009). *Telling* requires directive explicit communication when there is a high task focus and low relationship focus. For high focus on tasks and relationships, leaders still use directive communication but the communication is used to persuade or *sell* their followers on completing the tasks while fostering positive relationships. *Participation* occurs when leaders attend to relationships and are less focused on the task, causing less directive behavior. When leaders have established trusting relationships and followers understand the task (low focus on task), leaders *delegate* work to followers with minimal directive communication.

Relational Leadership

Relational leadership theories focus on how leaders communicate emotion to connect and relate with their followers (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Relational leaders not only express emotions, but often encourage followers to share emotions (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Relationship-oriented leadership breaks away from task-oriented communication to honor connections between leaders and followers (Riforgiate & Ruder, 2017). Leaders engaging in relational styles motivate followers by relying on emotional expression, such as being in tune with their own feelings and reframing or directing follower emotional experiences (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Relational leadership is rooted in leader-follower interactions to set expectations, which highlights the importance of motivating followers while establishing and matching followers to roles (Bass, 1981). Relational leaders rely on these interactions to evaluate the best way to achieve goals and create cohesion amongst group members (Graen, 1976).

Developmental Leadership

Burns (1978) developed transformational leadership as a contrast to transactional leadership theory. Transactional leadership is characterized as a purposeful exchange of power, motivated by rewards and punishment, where a leader directs followers to accomplish discrete tasks (Bass, 1990). In contrast, transformational leadership is mutually beneficial, where leaders act as change agents to develop their followers into leaders (Riforgiate, 2016). Transformational leaders encourage followers to use their unique differences and individual characteristics (paired with past experiences, knowledge, and creativity) to shape the group into something bigger while making each member stronger (Yammarino, Spangler, & Bass, 1993). These leaders look for new ways to accomplish goals, take risks, find more effective ways of completing tasks, and challenge the status quo (Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996). Leaders who employ a transformational style set high expectations for their followers and work alongside them to achieve those expectations (Riforgiate, 2016). Ultimately, transformational leaders, "elevate the follower's level of maturity and ideals as well as concerns for achievement, self-actualization, and the well-being of others, the organization, and society" (Bass, 1993, p. 11). This style of leadership strengthens follower commitment and organizational loyalty while enhancing overall performance (Bass, 1993).

LGBT Leadership

Leadership research predominantly focuses on majority group members, often the white, upper-class, heterosexual individuals (Chin & Sanchez-Hucles, 2007). Minority groups, including the LGBT community, are less frequently represented in leadership research (Coon, 2001). However, LGBT leaders engage in effective leadership utilizing characteristics based on sexual orientation alongside relational, emotional, and motivational styles to lead people to fight for individual rights (Fassinger et al., 2010).

LGBT individuals have made significant contributions benefiting society; from influential poets such as Oscar Wilde and Gertrude Stein, to political leaders like Alexander the Great and Harvey Milk, LGBT individuals have solidified their footprints in history (Polaski, 2011). Unfortunately, many of LGBT leaders' accomplishments are not widely publicized, thus making the strides of the LGBT community under-acknowledged (Leipold, 2014). Through fear of repercussion, rejection, and criminalization, the sexual orientation and gender identity of influential LGBT leaders was often kept hidden by the individuals themselves (Coon, 2001). It wasn't until the rise of the gay rights movement in the 20th century, that the LGBT community received any recognition at all (Clendinen & Nagourney, 1999).

Interestingly, marginalization, despite the heterosexist effects it has on the LGBT community, can bring positive outcomes. "Learning to cope with the stresses related to marginalization actually may catalyze certain kinds of skill development that aid in LGBT individuals in leadership roles" (Fassinger et al., 2010, p. 206). LGBT individuals develop a sense of "crisis competence" through the coming out process that may allow them to accept and react better to criticism, evaluate their own stances on important issues even when opposed, develop a strong support network, advocate for inequality, and assess their own needs, goals, and psychological/mental state (Friend, 1991). LGBT leaders possess a unique ability to relate to and motivate their followers due to a shared marginalized status, frustration, and empathy towards others who experience similar inequalities (Chang & Bowring, 2015).

Further, LGBT individuals possess a sense of biculturalism, or the ability to simultaneously exist within two cultures, internalize otherness, and use creativity in decision making (Brown, 1989). Operating with a sense of

biculturalism, LGBT individuals understand the societal norms and rules yet are also able to place these norms within their own culture to assess what needs to be changed. This allows LGBT leaders to influence others to look at the dominant behavior differently while getting other sexual minorities to "see differently, hear differently, and thus potentially challenge the conventional wisdom" (Brown, 1989, p. 451). Since LGBT individuals are constantly inventing new ways to enact change, LGBT leaders can restructure society creatively, allowing others to "create boundaries that will work where none exist from tools that may only partially suited to the task" (Brown, 1989, p. 452).

Fassinger et al. (2010) argue for a model of LGBT leadership enactment and assert that sexual orientation, specifically the disclosure of a leader's "outness" to other group members, is a key factor for LGBT leadership. LGBT leaders tend to identify as "queer" and are motivated to question systems in place and seek societal change by setting much higher goals and standards (Renn, 2007). Like transformational leaders, LGBT leaders "demand deeper change … enacting transformational and other modern leadership approaches" (Fassinger et al., 2010, p. 207).

Many openly gay and lesbian individuals employed in leadership positions within the workforce credit their sexual orientation as having a positive impact on their career (Coon, 2001). These leaders articulate that their sexual orientation gave them unique leadership practices to successfully change the status quo, improve the work environment, motivate and empower co-workers, implement an organizational vision, inspire others to take risks, and be open towards others by using listening skills and expressing empathy (Coon, 2001). "Outness" is linked to positive job satisfaction, workplace morale, and higher levels of engagement (Snyder, 2006). According to Snyder (2006), after interviewing 150 openly gay male executives, these leaders exemplified leadership practices commonly associated with transformational leadership including adaptability, creativity, and strong communication.

LGBT leaders enact multiple facets of leadership theories in their communication. Through the review of leadership theory, how LGBT individuals have historically and professionally enacted leadership, and existing research on LGBT leadership, it is clear that the LGBT community has effective leaders. To extend this research, this study focuses on how LGBT leaders use communication to explore the question:

How do LGBT leaders communicate their leadership in ways that motivate others to enact social change?

Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods are recognized as an influential tool for social science research. While quantitative methodology tends to answer the *who*, *what*, *when*, and *where* questions, it is less effective at capturing the *how* or *why* a phenomenon occurs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Therefore, qualitative methods including participatory observations and a focus group interview were used to elucidate the experiences and communication strategies of LGBT leaders.

Participants

The first author approached a civil rights group in a Midwestern town (pseudonym Anytown) and they agreed to participate in this study. While mostly progressive, the state where Anytown is located does not protect LGBT individuals from discrimination in the forms of employment, housing, or service. This group, referred to as the LGBT Campaign (LGBTC), was chosen because of their community achievements and reputation. For example, in the past, LGBTC successfully took on multiple cases of harassment and misconduct against the LGBT community and actively fought against LGBT discrimination throughout the community by displaying billboards promoting LGBT acceptance, holding information sessions at community events to educate the non-LGBT community members, and providing scholarship opportunities for LGBT students attending the local college. The group still has a vocal presence in the community and is known as an activist group that takes on discriminatory cases against LGBT community members. LGBTC is also a local chapter of a national LGBT rights campaign and identifies with the larger organization's mission statement (to achieve equality for all).

At the time of the study, LGBTC consisted of 50 members who were a mix of LGBT individuals and allies and included three levels of involvement: (1) Donor, (2) Passive, and (3) Active Membership. *Donor membership*

(29 members) was identified as non-participatory commitment, where members paid annual dues ($10 a year) but did not engage in organization decisions. *Passive membership* (12 members) included those who paid annual dues and took on minimal responsibilities (e.g., attending social events, attending board meetings). Finally, *active members* (9 members) provided a heavy hand in the decision-making process and leadership regarding LGBTC, holding formal positions (President, Secretary, and Treasurer) and unofficial positions that were identified simply as Members-at-Large (no formal "title" but whose opinion is valued).

Active members planned and hosted social gatherings that passive members attended. Additionally, active members organized and participated in political gatherings, aiding in the enactment of community change within Anytown and were responsible for all financial decisions of LGBTC. Active members met at monthly board meetings to discuss community LGBT issues and corresponded frequently between meetings (primarily via email). This study focuses on these nine active member leaders to explore LGBT leader communication strategies.

All nine active members are white but differ in age (upper twenties to upper forties), sex, gender and sexual identity. Five of the nine individuals self-identified as male and four self-identified as female. Three males and one female are LGBT community allies (neither gay nor transgender), while the other five are LGBT (three gay/lesbian and two transgender).

Research Participation and Data Collection

After contacting the president of this group, the first author was granted access to attend monthly board meetings, social gatherings, and the public City Commission meetings. University IRB approval was obtained, group members signed consent forms, and members were fully aware of the role the first author held as a research participant-observer. As a gay man, the first author brought his own ideas surrounding social justice and LGBT equality and engaged in meetings and group decision making processes. Because of the first author's experiences of discrimination due to his sexual orientation, he was aware of his position and worked to provide an accurate account of LGBTC throughout the research process by recording interactions and interviews to review and share with the second researcher and including excerpts in the study as support for findings. Acknowledging his own biases, he worked closely with the second author (heterosexual female), who was not involved in the group and provided an outsider perspective to reduce bias throughout the research, analysis, and writing process. Further, observations were shared with two other communication experts (heterosexual females) to gain greater perspective for the analysis.

The first author attended five monthly board meetings, lasting one to two hours each. The first board meeting introduced LGBTC to the research process and was also used to answer questions, while starting the researcher's assimilation into the group (paying dues, learning LGBTC's mission/history, and identifying each board member's role). Subsequent board meetings occurred in the evening at a local café or the living room of a board member's home. During these meetings, the researcher was an active participant, engaged in group discussions, and suggested ways to address civic injustice experienced by the LGBT community in Anytown. Meetings were recorded and transcribed (64 typed, double-spaced text pages). The researcher also took hand-written field notes at each meeting (30 hand-written pages) which detailed who talked when, instructions given, how often the individuals asked for help from other group members, when emotion was salient during conversations, and how group members interacted with one another. Additionally, the researcher attended several group educational and social events, as well as a City Commission meeting which included discussion of an LGBT anti-discrimination ordinance generated by LGBTC.

After the observations, an hour-long focus group was conducted to ask questions about observations and engage in member checking to accurately represent LGBTC member experiences. Member checking allowed participants to reflect on observations, verify accuracy, and add to the researcher's understanding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2013). Study quality is enhanced when participants recognize accuracy and adjust interpretations (Krefting, 1991).

Of the nine board members, four attended the focus group (three LGBTC Members-at-Large and the President) that took place at a local coffee shop (20 typed, double-spaced text pages). While not all LGBTC board members attended the focus group, the four participating members were the most experienced and vocal members. Focus group LGBTC leaders discussed their roles within LGBTC, how the leadership throughout LGBTC is determined, and challenges they felt the group was facing, by answering questions such as: "How is leadership

within LGBTC rotated?" "How has the variety of LGBT representation within the group added to your success?" and, "What is the overall goal you want to accomplish for LGBTC?"

Analysis

After observing the monthly board meetings, participating in social and educational events, and attending the City Commission meeting, coding occurred in two phases: (1) an initial phase, where data was coded line-by-line by the first author, identifying the concept or theme that was salient; and (2) a focused phase, where the line-by-line codes were then evaluated (Tracy, 2013) by both the first and second author. During the initial coding phase, utterances that fit the four common leadership themes noted in the literature review were identified through a close reading of the transcripts. Three steps occurred during the first stage of coding. First, transcripts were read carefully to gain a better understanding of the meetings. Second, transcripts were color-coded to connect each segment to common leadership themes based on existing research (e.g., relational leadership utterances were highlighted in yellow, developmental leadership utterances highlighted in blue, etc.). In this initial phase, coding included all leadership theories to remain open to the idea that participants might engage in any number of leader communication strategies. Third, as patterns of leadership communication were identified, memos were inserted in the transcript margins to note how each utterance reflected communication practices.

In the second focused coding phase, the richest first phase codes were used to explain, organize, and sort through the data. Transcripts were reviewed and organized by the color coordinated utterances into separate documents for closer comparison of each utterance resulting in 44 coded segments for individual leadership (leadership influenced by specific traits or individual characteristics), 34 coded segments for contextual leadership (leadership based on a situation or context factor), 175 coded segments for relational leadership (leadership relying on emotion or interaction), and 38 coded segments for developmental leadership (leadership to develop followers into potential leaders).

Upon review of the codes for each type of leadership communication, commonalities were identified by the first author while consulting with the second author extensively. Using the memos from the first coding phase, five common themes of leadership communication specific to LGBTC were identified (organizational communication, discussion-based communication, emotional communication, tenacious communication, and communicative outreach). These five themes were then collapsed into two primary themes, where organizational and discussion-based communication were used by leaders to establish *cohesive communication* and emotional communication, tenacious communication, and communicative outreach were leveraged by leaders to create *proactive communication*.

Considering the initial and focused coding and the resulting themes, focus group questions were created in conversation between the first and second author for LGBTC board members. During the focus group conversation, LGBTC leaders confirmed and enriched the data by articulating uncertainties and expanding on patterns they agreed or disagreed with. Finally, meeting and focus group transcriptions were revisited based in the focus group and re-interpreted based on board members' feedback by the first author. The first and second author worked together on the final analysis which confirmed the two primary themes and refined sub-themes presented below.

Findings

This study addressed the research question: *How do LGBT leaders communicate their leadership in ways that motivate others to enact social change?* Analysis indicated that LGBTC leaders enacted a form of collective leadership to coordinate communication and activity as a cohesive unit. Specifically, LGBTC leaders motivated others to enact change through two strategies: (1) cohesive communication and (2) proactive communication. As will be further articulated, these leadership strategies became particularly important for LGBTC leaders to create social change because as minority group members, they had to address dominant group community elected leaders who held positions of legitimate power to enact community change.

Cohesive Communication

The first major strategy, cohesive communication, occurred when LGBTC leaders communicated and acted as a unified group to enhance the LGBTC's ability to enact change. LGBTC engaged in cohesive communication through three distinct methods: (1) identification and assimilation, (2) group discussion, and (3) individual expertise.

First, through *identification and assimilation*, LGBTC leaders identified members with leadership potential, encouraged them to take on more responsibility, and trained them for additional leadership. While this is a strategy leaders may rely on generally, it became a particularly important strategy for LGBTC and was different from mainstream leadership theories because of the unique challenges in representing minority members and moving minority members into leadership. The number of potential LGBT minority leaders was greatly limited based on the small number of LGBT individuals in the community and the reluctance of minority members to become actively involved. Therefore, identifying and assimilating potential leaders became an explicit goal of high importance.

LGBTC has played an integral part in enhancing the lives of the LGBT citizens in Anytown for many years. However, the previous leadership of LGBTC had self-identified as mostly heterosexual and recognized that to better understand and represent the needs of LGBT individuals to create social change, more diversity was needed on the board. Through recruiting efforts to be more inclusive, at the time of the study, 80% of the group's board members were new to the board and serving in their first term, including the President.

During the focus group interview, Casey, an official board member, explained that for the group to be taken more seriously, they needed more representation of lesbian, gay, and bisexual members. Casey shared, "Most of the previous board members were straight. They wanted fresh faces that actually represented our group because they thought that we would help engage the community more than they could." Jamie, an LGBTC Member-at-Large explained that the previous board members "identified people who had specific areas of knowledge or very closely held interests and could bring that specialty to the group." Prospective (and now current) board members were intentionally and specifically approached to take on these responsibilities.

Identifying LGBT individuals as potential leaders was an important aspect of the identification process and took greater effort than recruiting dominant group leaders. Past LGBTC leaders had more power in the community to be heard and accepted based on their majority status (heterosexual) but recognized their ability to understand and represent LGBTC member's experiences was simultaneously limited *because* of their majority status. However, LGBT individuals as minority group members faced different challenges in leading because their concerns were not viewed as widespread or substantive enough by the general community. These challenges for both dominant and non-dominant leaders made identifying potential leaders in LGBTC different from the way leadership succession is studied in organizations where there is a hierarchical structure for leadership. An emphasis on building relationships through open communication at social events and disclosing reasons for LGBT individuals to move in to leadership were used to actively recruit for greater diversity on the leadership board.

Once identified, new board members had to assimilate into the group's culture. Two of the previous board members moved from "official" leadership roles to Member-at-Large positions to transition and help the new board. Casey explained, "That's why [the two previous board members] stayed on, so that somebody would be there to steer the ship." These previous board members helped the new members learn the processes of active membership and gave the new LGBTC leaders the tools they needed to essentially "run" the organization. Besides continuity, having officers who were part of the LGBT minority group work in tangent with heterosexual dominant group members (allies) allowed for both groups to offer different affordances to the group; this will be further discussed below as individual expertise.

The second way LGBTC leaders engaged in cohesive communication was through *group discussion* and decision making. Again, most groups engage in discussion, but what made this communication exchange interesting was the way the leaders collectively and explicitly focus on forming tangible goals and the way the group would deliberate extensively until decisions were unanimous. Based on the literature review provided at the beginning of this study, LGBTC's leadership differs from the dominant theories that cast the leader as an individual influencing followers; instead LGBTC shared leadership across many individuals and did not weigh one leader's opinion any more than the others.

In any given context, each member of the board could speak for the organization with the authority and backing of the board; this allowed for LGBTC leadership to be in multiple locations at once and to speak in a unified

voice. The president of LGBTC did not have more power or say than any of the other board members (including members-at-large), indicating how important communication and unanimous support for decisions were across the leaders. Group discussion was used to ensure that every tactic implemented was agreed upon by the entire board, unifying their decisions and enhancing cohesion amongst the nine leaders. Group discussion that created cohesive decision making occurred on two levels: (1) educating the community and (2) addressing legislative concerns.

First, when educating the Anytown community on LGBT issues, LGBTC leaders felt it was important for citizens to understand LGBT discrimination occurring daily. Pat articulated the importance of consistent community education by *all* group members because it dispelled common misconceptions about LGBT individuals. Pat explained, "There are so many people who just have such a knee jerk reaction to things, especially [in this state]. I think we fix that when we have booths at places and they see normal people sitting at them." Jamie agreed, "Yea, they see these LGBT people who don't run right up to them and they see us differently." Pat and Jamie proceeded to talk about how, by just attending certain events where they could set up a table and pass out pamphlets, LGBT individuals who may have been unaware of the group's existence became aware, sought membership, or simply thanked them for their work. Increasing community awareness became an agreed upon crucial tactic for the LGBTC leaders.

As the year progressed, later meetings focused on political responsibilities and legislative decisions. A major goal of LGBTC was getting sexual orientation and gender identity on the list of protected classes in the Anytown. LGBT individuals can still be fired from their jobs, evicted from their homes, and denied service nationally, and Anytown was no exception. LGBTC prioritized addressing these concerns, creating a focused goal.

The LGBTC President attended the City Commission meetings to speak on behalf of LGBTC addressing the need for social change in Anytown, but it became clear in three months of City Commission meetings that one voice speaking for a group was not enough. Casey emphasized this after the November City Commission meeting saying:

> We need more voices than just mine and Jamie's every month. The Commission won't fix the problem because they don't feel like there is a problem. We need to prove that this issue is affecting more than just two people.

At this November board meeting the legislative discussion was most salient.

Alex asserted they needed to develop a "political campaign" to get the City Commission members to take them seriously. The group agreed, but Jordan, a Member-at-Large, argued that this wouldn't be possible unless they could prove they had "political clout." Alex agreed, "We have a long history about speaking up for injustice, but when it comes to being politically savvy, [LGBTC] tends to fall flat." To enact actual change, Jordan noted that as a group they needed to start fighting the City Commission more politically, implementing change with "brute force and hardball politics." Jordan argued, "We need to draft an anti-discrimination ordinance. We need to identify voters that would support the ordinance. We need to control the news in our favor."

During this meeting, LGBTC leadership shifted from sometimes individualistic approaches to collective agreed upon tactics. The use of the word "we" became more prevalent and demonstrated they worked as a group force. LGBTC leaders knew they had a tough road ahead and they needed to band together. Jesse confirmed the additional focus and collective commitment that passing the ordinance would require, stating:

> This is going to take us away from responsibilities that we would rather be doing, life responsibilities. We are all gonna' have to decide if we are willing to give that up to focus on this, so that we can all speak for each other. Because, in order for this to work, we all will have to know what's going on and the only way for that to happen is if everyone in the group is just as involved, responsive, and committed.

The leaders of LGBTC deliberated this decision for approximately two hours, engaged in back and forth discussion, and amended ideas they thought were good, but not strong enough. For example, Alex proposed potential allies, Jordan shared concerns and proposed alternative solutions, then Alex affirmed the suggestion noting "That's a group of young people with energy and a thirst for change." LGBTC also sought to include all members with Alex suggesting, "Lets draft an email identifying what we want to do and what we need help with, and then

maybe use our annual party as a way to confirm this with all our members." At the end of the meeting, the leaders agreed on the steps they would collectively take to build their political clout to be taken seriously by the City Commission.

The group also agreed they needed to research the process neighboring communities used to get anti-discrimination ordinances passed and how other communities enforced discrimination violations. Conversations were lively, with notable ideas and information sharing between all board members. For example, when Jessie shared how difficult discrimination was to prove, Alex explained that was why they needed to see what other communities were doing, and Casey provided additional information she had from her contacts in the City Commission that would make the proposal more likely to be adopted. This discussion-based process allowed LGBTC leaders to identify every angle of the argument, dissect it as a group, share additional information, and address potential drawbacks to make their strategy as strong as possible.

After becoming more diverse and incorporating different gender identifications and sexual orientations into the group, LGBTC needed to make sure that all the diverse experiences and ways of thinking were heard. This is important because, as Clark (2015) points out, for organizations comprised of diverse individuals to function appropriately, the marginalized individuals need to feel comfortable speaking up and speaking out about issues that are important to them. Using a unanimous decision-making process through group discussion, LGBTC leaders accomplished more together than any one of them could have individually. Truly sharing leadership (a departure from the way leadership is studied as held by an individual) allowed each board member to represent the group at any venue; highlighting how the group was larger and more encompassing than one or two people attending City Commission meetings.

The third way LGBTC leadership practiced cohesive communication was by leveraging *individual expertise* to work toward the common group goal. The board trusted each other and turned to specific members for help because those individuals were better equipped to resolve the issue due to their background, interests, and expertise. While LGBTC relied on knowledge bases of members, they were unique compared to other leaders in the ways they drew on the embodied marginalized experiences of members across different sexual orientations to provide lived expertise and perspective. By alternating responsibilities based on expertise, there was an ever-changing shift in leadership of the group, which tended to be shared. This reliance on everyone's expertise was confirmed in the focus group when Pat, Casey, and Jamie spoke up about the experiences everyone brought to the group.

Examples of expertise included Pat's research skills when she shared, "I'm really good at finding articles about all different kinds of things, so I identified all the laws and I contacted city attorneys." Pat recognized Jordan and Casey's contributions, sharing that they "have taken on the majority of leadership when it comes to politics and talking to the Commissioners." Jamie self-identified as a "Trans Activist" and explained, "No one else on the board can address Trans issues like I can, 'cause I'm so involved in it and I'm the only Trans person on the board who is entirely out about it." Jamie instructed LGBTC regarding Transgender rights and injustices and spoke during the public comment portions of the City Commission meetings when Trans issues went unaddressed. Alex and Jordan provided "historical knowledge of what they've gone through in the past with the challenges facing LGBTC" and provided the perspective of allies with "LGBT family members." Finally, Jesse was well-connected throughout the community and knew what events were being held and how LGBTC could participate. LGBTC leaders turned to the best equipped member to maximize LGBTC's efforts, particularly in proposing the anti-discrimination ordinance, which built trust, created cohesion, and unified LGBTC. Importantly, expertise was not only based on skills, but often on embodied experiences of being an LGBT individual to talk about embodied experiences that shaped the need for social change.

LGBTC's shared leadership certainly acknowledged contextual and situational factors but was different from these leadership theories in that each of the board members acted as leaders working in concert rather than as a leader "participating" with followers. Clearly relationships were also important to the board members, but unlike relational leadership theories, the decision-making processes and authority for the group was shared equally across board members. Finally, while the group certainly worked hard to develop each of the board members, this was a process of collective and mutual influence that differs from mainstream developmental leadership theories where the leader is developing followers.

By identifying and assimilating new members into the LGBTC board, making decisions through a group discussion processes, and sharing the leadership to leverage each member's personal expertise and experiences, LGBTC leaders created cohesion inside and outside of the board meeting sessions. As a whole LGBTC relied on collective leadership to motivate the City Commission members to add sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of protected classes, while educating community members about LGBT issues.

Proactive Communication

The second overarching tactic LGBTC leaders used to enact change was proactive communication which reflects existing research on LGBT minority group leadership. As discussed in the literature review, the process of coming out often gives LGBT individuals the ability to cope with difficult situations, handle criticism in constructive ways and create useful support networks to advocate for themselves and others (Friend, 1991). Further, LGBT individual's marginalized status can enhance LGBT leaders' ability to collaborate with others (Chang & Bowring, 2015) and develop strategies for change that inspire others.

In this study, LGBTC leaders anticipated objections and developed responses in advance. LGBTC recognized that the City Commission members would claim that, though the discrimination of LGBT individuals existed elsewhere, it wasn't happening in Anytown. This realization forced LGBTC leaders to approach City Commission meetings with a plan to highlight injustices that would otherwise not surface through two strategies: (1) building a narrative of discrimination in Anytown and (2) identifying community allies.

First, LGBTC proactively worked to collect stories and *build a narrative*. Up until October 2015, LGBTC worked with a strategy rooted in logical arguments, providing an overwhelming amount of statistics and information about the type of discrimination LGBT individuals faced in the state on a day-to-day basis, but this strategy wasn't motivating the City Commission members to vote on the non-discrimination policy. Casey talked with multiple City Commission members and shared, "What they said is that our argument is compelling with all the statistics, but it's not happening here in our community." Casey proactively sought out information to identify objections, then the LGBTC board used this information to shift tactics.

Jamie and Taylor immediately spoke up about discrimination they personally had experienced. Taylor shared, "If some of these people knew who and what I was, there would be pressure to get rid of me [at work]." Jamie also articulated an experience of discrimination, "When they found out I was transgender, [a potential employer] immediately asked me, 'how are we gonna' handle bathrooms?' and that's not something that would ever be asked to a cisgender person." Hearing these stories, Casey suggested, "If each of us can reach out and bring forward one story of LGBT discrimination, we can start to build a narrative to prove that discrimination is in fact happening here and that this ordinance would stop it."

The leaders of LGBTC agreed that everyone should gather several stories. This was another example of collective leadership, but instead of relying on individual expertise as mentioned above, they identified and built narratives as a proactive defense. They changed their strategy from statistics to stories to make the City Commission members understand the discrimination. Jordan explained, "It's putting faces on what it means to be a LGBT individual in [Anytown] … This is impacting the lives of real people."

Gathering stories from community members was an important aspect of LGBTC's proactive defense because it allowed LGBTC leaders to tell a holistic narrative of LGBT individuals within Anytown, not just the stories from nine people who ran an LGBT organization. During the April 2016 City Commission meeting, LGBT leaders provided a document with all the collected stories from people in Anytown, told their own stories, and invited other community members to orally share stories. After proposing the anti-discrimination ordinance to the City Commission, the mayor opened discussion, to determine if this was an issue valued in the community. A line of people ran from the front podium to the back door and for approximately three hours LGBT individuals who had experienced discrimination and LGBT allies spoke. Stories spanned all types of discrimination from experiences with schools to housing evictions to families. A local teen arrived later in the evening, after watching the meeting unfold on the local TV station and felt it was necessary to speak out on LGBT discrimination and the pain he experienced the past year sharing "In the past year alone, I have had fifteen of my friends commit suicide because they are gay. Fifteen! … Please protect us. Fifteen people is too many." By proactively inviting as many people as possible to share their story, LGBTC successfully shifted the way City Commission members viewed the issue,

thus motivating them to enact change. At the end of this meeting, the five City Commission members voted unanimously to add sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of protected classes.

A second proactive strategy included identifying allies. This strategy differs from the predominant leadership theories discussed earlier because it relied on the help of others to lead, rather than placing the emphasis on the leader. The LGBTC leaders knew that the stories of discrimination would not be enough to motivate the City Commission to enact change. During the November board meeting Alex explained that discrimination based on religion was allowed because “sexual orientation and gender identity are not backed by the state.” LGBTC leaders recognized that they needed a way to fight religious objections to work in their favor. Casey identified a local congregational leader who might be willing to help because “she had written a couple of editorials to [the local newspaper] about how we need to be an inclusive community and what we needed to do.” The group decided to contact inclusive congregations and local clergy who could act as allies to promote the religious basis for equality and speak on behalf of LGBTC. Identifying and partnering with allies was crucial for LGBTC.

At the April 2016 City Commission meeting, clergy member allies in support of LGBTC’s mission spoke up. Casey shared that they had aligned with a total of 23 clergy members, representing seven congregations, and at least one member from each congregation was represented at this meeting. Whenever the opposing side would stand up, read a verse from the bible, and articulate a religious aspect of why the ordinance shouldn’t be passed, the supporting clergy members got in line to diffuse those claims by providing another religious remark in favor of LGBT inclusivity, thus canceling out or refuting the previous religious argument. A local religious leader of the opposing side argued, “no man shall lie with a man as he lies with a woman, as this is immoral. This is in the bible, God’s words and thus should be held in high order.” A clergy member in support of the ordinance got up and argued that, “‘honor and love thy neighbor’ is also in the bible, so why should we not hold this in high order?” This went back and forth, some arguments relying on bible verses, others deeply rooted in personal beliefs. The LGBTC allies provided important voices that were not LGBT and were not connected to LGBTC other than their support. In the focus group, Casey articulated, “The Commissioners wanted other voices. They were sick of hearing the nine of us talk. By contacting those clergy members and getting them to speak out in support of us provided that variety.”

LGBTC leaders worked collectively with the local congregations, adding the representatives of these congregations to their email chain so that they could all remain in immediate contact with one another. LGBTC leaders and clergy allies worked together to draft editorials for the local newspaper. Also, the clergy members helped explain and educate LGBTC about the religious side of the debate, while LGBTC leaders educated the clergy members on some of the political concerns. “The letters we wrote [with clergy] really helped us,” Casey noted in the focus group. “After reading them, other congregations reached out to us or the clergy members we had already been in contact with and asked, ‘what can we do to help?’” These relationships enhanced LGBTC’s ability to remain proactive, as the clergy members were able to predict what the opposing congregations would say and remain one step ahead.

The City Commission members voted unanimously to amend the list of protected classes to include sexual orientation and gender identity. However, they did not vote to pass the specific ordinance LGBTC drafted and proposed because the City Commission members couldn’t agree on the enforcement of violations. Ultimately, LGBTC interpreted this meeting and the unanimous vote to include sexual orientation and gender identity as a protected class as a major win, and the first step toward LGBT equality within Anytown. The reliance on others to create social change was essential to LGBTCs success and is a departure from predominant leadership theories where the leader influences followers. In line with previous research on LGBT minority leaders, LGBTC leaders worked creatively and strategically to understand the community political systems, identify ways to influence officials, and then found allies to enhance their credibility and share leadership to ultimately instigate change.

Creating cohesion within their group, the LGBT leaders were able to speak, think, and act as a unified force within the community, engaging in a type of shared and collective leadership where they were all stronger together rather than individually. While leaders generally work to create group cohesion among members, LGBTC was unique in the strategies they used to share leadership and empower all members of the board to lead simultaneously. This cohesion allowed them to garner defense in a proactive way, shifting the argument from logical to emotional by building a narrative of discrimination and identifying allies within the community to aid in their defense.

Discussion and Implications

Due to their unique leadership based on their experiences of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, the leaders of LGBTC successfully inspired the City Commission to enact change. Research supports the importance of having diversity in groups because diverse members promote positive outcomes in terms of production, creativity, and attraction of potential investors, consultants, or interest groups (Eagley, 2016). Including diverse members on the LGBTC board was motivated by a desire to move the group forward and enhance creativity; the past leaders recognized that LGBTC had become stagnant and needed to innovate to better engaged with members and the community. LGBTC minority leaders' behaviors are supported by Packer, Miners, & Ungson (2018) findings that including marginalized individuals within groups contributes to cognitive heterogeneity where "the expression of different perspectives and ideas should improve performance, particularly in groups facing complex tasks requiring innovation" (p. 59). Further, Page's (2008) research extends recognition of the importance of cognitive heterogeneity, explaining that the conscious acknowledgment of the importance of diversity is essential to the success and the development of core values. LGBTC leaders leveraged their diversity to share leadership and proactively approach challenges.

As observed, LGBTC utilized specific characteristics and personality strengths developed from their experiences as being part of the marginalized and diverse LGBT community. These characteristics were leveraged to (1) share leadership, (2) enhance emotional communication, (3) promote inclusivity, and (4) build partnerships within the community.

Shared Leadership

First, considering the LGBTC leaders' most prevalent and effective strategies involving cohesive and proactive communication, the study highlights how relational leadership can be used by minority leaders to promote social change. Because LGBT leaders felt marginalized within their own community, it was important for the leaders to band together and share leadership to present a unified front. Leadership often indicates a power dynamic where one person is in charge and the followers take the lead. Even in relational leadership, the relationship between the leader and the follower is enhanced, but there is not an equal distribution of power. LGBTC engaged in an adaptation of relational leadership through *fully sharing* leadership to create cohesive communication.

Shared leadership is "an emergent team property that results from the distribution of leadership influence across multiple team members" (Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007, p. 1218). Shared leadership allowed each LGBTC leader to contribute individual skills while working on a common goal, which may also be effective for other minority leaders because resources are pooled to increase effectiveness. In essence the leader was not one individual, but nine individuals functioning collectively to enhance the scope of the impact in Anytown. However, shared leadership is only successful when the group is able to (1) promote teamwork by adequately dividing tasks among members, (2) put personal recognition aside to focus on the group goal and success, and (3) communicate effectively and openly with all members (O'Toole, Gabraith, & Lawler, 2002).

Passing the anti-discrimination ordinance proved to be a difficult task due to all the nuances of gender equality and acceptance of LGBT individuals, specifically regarding transgender rights. The City Commission members were hesitant to add gender identity as a protected class because of concerns about gender assigned bathrooms and co-worker and customer perceptions. These concerns created a specific focus for LGBTC leaders, who recognized they needed to rely on the knowledge, skill, expertise, and embodied LGBT experiences of all group members and their relationships to accomplish their overall goal.

Emotions

Secondly, through the marginalization experienced within their own community, the leaders of LGBTC were successfully able to communicate an emotional necessity to enact change. It is noteworthy that the previous board of heterosexual leaders recognized they needed minority leader participation and insight to enact community change. After experiencing discrimination first hand and witnessing it from other members within the LGBT community, the newly elected minority leaders of LGBTC expressed and worked to control emotions which is characteristic of relational leadership (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The LGBT leaders' initial approach to remove emotions and use statistics and logical appeals was not sufficient. Although organizations largely prefer logic and

neutral or positive emotions in decision making processes (Riforgiate & Komarova, 2017), LGBTC departed from traditional organizational behaviors of emphasizing rationality and logic and decided that to be heard they needed to do something differently. LGBTC leaders encouraged others' narratives of highly negative emotional experiences, motivating people to attend the City Commission meetings to share their stories. Without the emotional arguments they provided through narratives, it may not have been possible for the leaders of LGBTC to convince the City Commission that discrimination against LGBT individuals was salient in Anytown.

Inclusivity

Thirdly, after experiencing a wide variety of discrimination within their community due to their sexual orientations and gender identities, the leaders of LGBTC emphasized a welcoming and supportive environment. This environment emphasized discussion-based decision-making strategies to create cohesion amongst the entire group and provided a practical implication of inclusivity. Inclusivity can benefit other organizations in which members experience discrimination and be particularly helpful for minority groups. LGBTC leadership worked to make sure everyone's voices were heard.

While established leadership theories emphasize follower participation in varying degrees, these theories to not cast every member as collaborative leader in the way LGBTC functioned. All decisions were made through open group discussions with active participation of all board members; this created a group of leaders with shared power. LGBTC further benefited by including various members throughout the LGBT community. By having embodied representation of the gay community, transgender community, and heterosexual community, all angles of discrimination could be detailed. The inclusive nature of the group allowed for various minority groups to come together fighting for change as one larger force.

Strategic Partnerships

Due to their marginalized status, the leaders of LGBTC recognized they needed to bring their argument into a majority standpoint and prove that this was a community crisis and not merely an individualized dilemma. Addressing this challenge, LGBTC enacted strategic partnerships that were instrumental to create social change. Certainly, many types of leaders benefit from allies in and outside of organizations; however, the minority position of LGBT leaders made these partnerships more important for success in creating community change.
Non-affiliated community members including clergy from local congregations and LGBT community members enhanced LGBTC's ability to motivate the City Commission to enact change. LGBTC leaders extended their leadership externally to provide a variety of voices and provide evidence to prove discrimination existed. This suggests that minority leaders can network with community partners to gain a better understanding of issues, provide a deeper perspective and scope of the concern, and generate a more inclusive way to achieve goals.

Complicating Leadership Theory

Finally, while LGBTC leaders predominantly used relational leadership that allowed them to accomplish social change, it is important to note that they also used other leadership communication strategies. Of the 291 coded segments sorted by predominant leadership theories, communication strategies for each theory were represented (44 individual leadership; 34 contextual leadership; 175 relational leadership; 38 developmental leadership). While approximately 60% of the leader communication was coded as relational leadership, LGBTC leaders engaged in other types of leadership communication as needed. This confirms Omilion-Hodges and Wieland's (2016) work arguing for the need to complicate the way scholars theorize and teach leadership communication. Further, LGBTC leaders went beyond notions of relationships with their followers to create a shared and cohesive leadership that differs from the predominant leadership theories and requires extensive collaborative communication efforts.

This complication, according to Robles (2012) is necessary because, by examining leadership solely based on predominant theories such as task and relational methods, hinders the application of creative forms of leadership to develop in ways that are unique to social change. This study agrees with Hackman and Johnson's (2009) argument for the need to remove the dichotomy associated with leadership. The leaders of LGBTC banned together and used their unique differences that grew from the experiences they had regarding their differing sexual orientations. The leadership in this case study extended beyond task and relationship orientations. The leadership was shared,

specified collective goals, and proved effective at creating social change because LGBTC minority leaders involved groups outside of their own to advocate with them. Scholars can benefit by shifting focus from “the leader” by complicating what the term “leader” refers to and how the leader(s) coordinate action with others through communication exchanges. LGBTC acted as a collective group of leaders who jointly worked to inspire a community.

Limitations and Future Research

LGBTC was chosen for this study because of the injustice experienced within the LGBT community of Anytown and the commitment LGBTC had to achieving political rights and social change. However, because this group existed on a local level in a small Midwestern town, the findings may not be representative of groups sharing this marginalized status. Further research can refine the study findings on minority leadership communication and social change and extend the research to other minority group demographics and geographic contexts. Additionally, LGBTC leaders were volunteers which likely influenced their communication strategies; further research should consider other voluntary organizations where members are motivated by personal or emotional interest, rather than professional or financial gain.

Conclusion

This qualitative study explored how LGBT leaders motivate others to enact social change. Analysis indicated that LGBT leaders engaged in relational leadership that included cohesive communication practices, such as (1) recruiting and assimilating leaders, (2) engaging in group discussion and decision-making, and (3) capitalizing on individual members’ strengths. Further, LGBT leaders used proactive communication to (1) collect community narratives and (2) develop community ally partnerships. What differentiates the way these minority leaders functioned from mainstream leadership theories is the extensive efforts to share leadership; this practice allowed leaders to have many voices and more influence than any one single leader. Though no national anti-discrimination law is currently in place, groups like LGBTC are fighting to change this. Understanding effective leadership communication strategies among minority group members can help identify avenues for social change so that one day, all can be treated equally.

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