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Editorial Staff

Note from the Editor-in-Chief:
I am incredibly grateful for the countless hours of work invested by each member of our editorial team and the reviewers for the articles in this issue. You have completed a valuable service to the field, and it is appreciated.

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Racial and Gender-Based Differences in the Collegiate Development of Public Relations Majors: Implications for Underrepresented Recruitment and Retention

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The current study contributes to the public relations scholarly literature that addresses issues related to the diversity pipeline into the public relations profession. Specifically, the authors seek to determine if public relations students believe that race and gender affected their educational experiences and social development during their collegiate careers. The findings suggest that both race and gender appear to play a significant role in students' undergraduate public relations experiences, with White respondents and female respondents expressing more positive experiences educationally and socially than underrepresented racial and ethnic persons (UREP) and male counterparts, respectively. Practical recommendations for recruiting and retaining underrepresented students within the major are provided based on the findings.

Keywords: diversity, public relations professional pipeline, race, gender, public relations education

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1 This study was funded by the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations, but the Center did not have a role in the research process.

More than a decade ago, the Public Relations Coalition, an alliance of 23 industry-related organizations, conducted its first diversity benchmark survey. That survey of senior communication managers revealed that the industry needs improvements in recruiting and retaining women and underrepresented racial and ethnic persons (UREPs) (Grupp, 2006). In the early part of this decade, public relations leaders listed diversity recruitment and top-talent employee acquisition as their top priorities (Berger, 2012), and nearly a decade later, Fortune magazine senior editor Ellen McGirt (2018) is trying to answer the same question: Why is public relations so white? Contemporary public relations practitioners see the advantages of creating a diverse workforce, and as such, these leaders have lamented the lack of diversity and have prioritized diversity in public relations (O'Dwyer, 2018). However, progress in the area of increasing the number of underrepresented racial and ethnic persons (UREPs)[2] working in the profession of public relations has been slow—despite the fact that agencies have attempted to build a pipeline of diverse practitioners. Some would argue that the issue begins in college (underrepresentation in the student body), only to be magnified in practice (see Brown, Waymer, Fears, Baker, & Zhou, 2016; Brown, White, & Waymer, 2011).

With this position in mind, the authors designed this study to examine the collegiate experience of public relations students from an educational and social perspective to uncover any differences students might experience based on their race or gender. The study helps identify areas of need, concern, and opportunity that could improve the academic, professional, and social development of members from underrepresented

2 For a discussion of why "UREP" is used as opposed to "minority," which is a term under attack in various disciplines, or even the more politically correct "African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American" (AHANA), which does not account for persons that are the by-product of interracial UREP unions or other UREP groups that might encounter racism in the United States such as Arab Americans, see Waymer (2013).

groups. Such an effort could potentially increase the chances of members from the underrepresented groups entering the profession and advancing to management positions. The authors hope that this study's findings help facilitate more underrepresented practitioners entering the field of public relations by honing in on recruiting and retaining these groups into the undergraduate major.

Literature Review

The Impact of Racial Diversity in Public Relations

While racial diversity recruitment and retention efforts seem well-intentioned, finding examples of ways that the industry has put into practice measurable objectives for increasing UREPs is far more challenging. As indicated previously, the majority of senior communications managers articulated that the industry needs improvement in UREP representation at all levels (Berger, 2012; McGirt, 2018; O'Dwyer, 2018). In fact, some board members of the LAGRANT Foundation, a nonprofit established (in part) to increase the number of UREPs in the fields of advertising, public relations, and marketing, highlight their frustration with the current state of affairs stating that the lack of diversity is "completely intolerable" (Vallee-Smith, 2014, p. 3).

Despite the fact that the people representing these UREP groups constitute around 36% of more than 300 million people in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011), the number of people in public relations from these underrepresented groups falls considerably short of reflecting demographics of the general population. For example, a 2010 census of the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) 22,000 professional members showed that only 14% of the organization's membership self-identified as Hispanic, Black, and/or Asian/Asian American (Nguyen, 2015). The aforementioned 14% statistic represents a 100% increase (doubling) of the percentage of PRSA members from underrepresented groups since 2005 (Nguyen, 2015). In short, racial representation in the public relations industry remains skewed; the Harvard Business Review recently reported that the racial/ethnic composition of the public relations industry in the United States is 87.9% white, 8.3% African American, 2.6% Asian American, and 5.7% Hispanic American (Chitkara, 2018).

In sum, the profession of public relations continues to be a "lily-white" field of women (Vardeman-Winter & Place, 2017). This can be deemed a problem of the profession for various reasons. First, research shows that some underrepresented publics, Latinx populations, during times of risk or crisis (e.g., hurricanes, chemical plant explosions, acts of terror), prefer to hear such news from people similar to them (Heath, Lee, & Ni, 2009). Therefore, a practitioner's diversity might be the difference in underrepresented publics receiving and accepting vital safety alerts and messages intended for them in times of risk and crisis. Second, practitioners' social-cultural identities likely affect how they perform as public relations practitioners and the messages they create for vast groups of people (Curtin & Gaither, 2007; Vardeman-Winter, & Place, 2017; Waymer, 2012b), so it is imperative that organizations continue to prioritize a diverse public relations workforce and make it a visible, high-level, organizational objective. To address these diversity issues, it is equally important that the public relations industry, like other professions, such as engineering, intentionally work with K-12 and higher education institutions to increase diversity in schools in hopes of increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the profession (Waymer & Brown, 2018).

Diversity in Public Relations: The Underrepresentation of Men in the Profession and Classroom

While women attend college more overall than men at rates of about 57% to 43% respectively (Kena et al., 2015), an even greater gap exists when comparing the percentage of women and men majoring in the communication subspecialty of public relations. Reports have indicated that, for more than two decades, there are more women than men pursuing a public relations major—whereby women constitute more than 80% of the students in many PR programs (Bardaro, 2009; Daughtery, 2014); the gap is even greater for the public relations profession with a difference of 85% to 15%, women to men respectively (see Khazan, 2014; Sebastian, 2011). Yet, when considering the imbalance in the distribution of men and the positions they hold in the profession, a paradoxical state becomes apparent. Men dominate top spots, while women are clustered at the bottom (see Pompper & Jung, 2013; Yaxley, 2012). Furthermore, men in the field continue to earn about $6,000 more than women (even when tenure, job type, education, field of study, location, and ethnicity are held constant) (Chitkara, 2018). Indeed, despite their underrepresentation in the field of public relations, men still represent 80% of upper management positions (Sebastian, 2011) and earn more money.

Scholars argue that the paradox of men constituting the numerical minority in the profession of public relations yet holding the majority of power positions in the industry can be explained by (mis)perceptions (Choi & Hon, 2002; Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2001). Men are perceived as being more apt to self-promote, to be assertive, and to network with other power players, compared to women who are perceived to be more suited for micro-managing duties, efficiency, and sensitivity (Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2001). These misconceptions have dire consequences as Dozier, Sha, and Shen (2013) found that participation in management decision-making was a key factor contributing to pay inequity between women and men in public relations. Despite these prevailing misconceptions and pay disparity, women are making strides in the profession and experiencing positive change in opportunities for senior-level advancement. For example, "Barri Rafferty of Ketchum was appointed the first woman global CEO among the top 10 public relations agencies. Edelman made Lisa Ross, who is black, president of the company's Washington, DC office," and in April 2018, "WPP, the parent of Burson-Marsteller and Cohn & Wolfe, named Donna Imperato the CEO of the newly merged agencies, Burson Cohn & Wolfe" (Chitkara, 2018, para 5).

Even with these recent noteworthy promotions of women to top leadership roles in the public relations industry, men still constitute a numerical minority in the profession. Moreover, when students have been asked about positives and negatives of their undergraduate, pre-professional socialization experiences, many women have lamented the fact that their classmates were almost exclusively women (Waymer, Brown, Fears, & Baker, 2018). To address these diversity issues, it is equally important that the public relations industry, like other professions, intentionally work with K-12 and higher education institutions to increase the representation of men studying the subject in school in hopes of increasing men's representation and diversity in the profession, a suggestion consistent with insights gleaned from previously presented public relations education scholarship (Rawlins, VanSlyke Turk, & Stoker, 2012).

The Importance of Educational Experience for Career Preparation

While it is important to increase the racial and ethnic diversity and number of men in the public relations field, all of these efforts would be futile if students were not prepared academically, socially, and professionally to enter the industry. To pinpoint the overall skills that students entering college are expected to master across programs, Conley, Drummond, DeGonzalez, Rooseboom, and Stout (2011) conducted a national survey of more than 1,800 faculty members representing 944 courses at 1,897 institutions. The researchers found that top-ranked skills, regardless of subject area, included speaking and listening, reading comprehension, writing, and problem-solving. Other important factors the researchers noted related to developing an overall comprehension of life skills and a mature persona. These can be measured in the form of students adopting effective study habits, managing time efficiently, taking ownership of learning, and demonstrating a variety of cognitive strategies, such as collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information, formulating and relaying ideas, and developing the ability to become more accurate, precise, open-minded, and creative.

The Key to Employability model (Pool & Sewell, 2007) has provided additional insight into the importance of the educational experience of college students and students' preparation for entering entry-level positions. The model builds from five components that provide a foundation for students to adequately reflect and evaluate their readiness for becoming hired within their chosen career fields, which in turn affects their self-efficacy, self-confidence, and self-esteem: (1) career development learning, (2) experience related to work and life, (3) degree-subject knowledge, understanding, and skills, (4) generic skills, and (5) emotional intelligence. While knowledge about the career field is obviously an important part of any academic program, the hard skills included in this area are suggested as only one part of academic preparation (Pool & Sewell, 2007). Pool, Qualter, and Sewell (2014) discuss that a lack of employment opportunities after graduation can be influenced by a deficiency in competencies related to the remaining areas (i.e., "soft" skills and work-based knowledge), which includes a lack of skills that are more likely to be learned in a controlled professional setting (i.e., internships, practicums). These include demonstrating competency and professionalism, demonstrating abilities to cope with uncertainty and pressure situations, developing self-monitoring and time-management skills, and becoming self-confident, responsible, and adaptable.

Because of the importance of gaining skills through educational experiences, whether it is in the classroom or through professional settings, examining the racial and gender differences in these experiences can help provide insight into areas of needed improvement in order to increase diversity through increasing collegiate success for underrepresented groups. Therefore, the following research questions are posed:

> RQ1: Are there differences in public relations students' educational experiences as they progress in the major based on their racial background?
>
> RQ2: Are there differences in public relations students' educational experiences as they progress in the major based on their gender?

The Importance of Social Development for Career Preparation

Research has been conducted regarding the social development and involvement of students who participate in extracurricular activities on a college or university campus. Previous research examined the correlation of student involvement and its direct effect on students' social development and future career success. For example, Wenger (1998) developed and expanded the Communities of Practice Theory, and this is a useful theoretical framework for people studying the importance of developing social skills (Farnsworth, Kleanthous, & Wenger-Trayner, 2016; Wenger, 1998). Simply stated, communities of practice are groups of people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor. Typically, this group shares a common concern or passion for something the group does and learns to do better through interacting regularly. This would presume that the social learning process is more effective when people are like-minded individuals and share common interests or passions. In sum, socially engaging with a community of members sharing similar interests is beneficial to the individual's social learning and development, which can enhance the potential of future career success (Farnsworth et al., 2016; Wenger, 1998). This is directly applicable to enrichment activities for students that are sponsored by organizations such as Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA).

Several scholars in various disciplines have explored social development and career preparedness for learners (see Bronfenbrenner, 2009; Kolb, 2015; Stahl, Dobson, & Redillas, 2018; Wenger, 1998). Most of these works draw from and extend the seminal work of Vygotsky (1978), who found that social interaction, especially with those who are more knowledgeable about a subject matter, plays an integral role in the process of development—both socially and academically. Whether it be experiential learning (Kolb, 2015) or studying the importance of "demonstration schools," which are communities of learning and applied research inquiry that exist in an integrative designed space (Stahl et al., 2018), they all relate to and extend Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the "more knowledgeable other" (MKO).

Vygotsky theorized that interactions with and exposure to such MKO individuals is vital to one's social development. The MKO concept has clear implications for professional student organizations, such as PRSSA or social organizations like fraternities and sororities that provide students with invaluable leadership experiences. The fact that many departments require students to participate in internships (a form of experiential learning from an MKO) is a testament to the continued applicability of these concepts.

By drawing from diverse theoretical traditions of involvement and social development, one can infer that an important part of college or university students' success is contingent upon their participation in extracurricular activities that are relevant to their career choice or interests. In sum, research supports the premise that being involved in extracurricular activities is a positive investment for students.

The benefits of such participation enable students to gain higher levels of self-esteem, self-confidence, and leadership abilities, which are all essential skills to master before entering the professional working world (Astin & Sax, 1998; Maruyama, Furco, & Song, 2018).

Extracurricular activities also provide college and university students with a network of peers and professionals who share common interests and goals. Students that are involved have the opportunity to gain real-world experiences, which essentially serve as a form of preparation for their futures (Hardin, Pate, & Bemiller, 2013). Students also have the opportunity to work in team settings and foster the ideas of commitment and responsibility while ultimately developing a work ethic. Several research studies in journalism, mass communication, and public relations support this line of research, suggesting the essential nature of extracurricular activities to student development and success (Nadler, 1997; Todd, 2009; Waymer, 2014).

Because of the importance of developing social skills through interactions with peers, educators, and current professionals, examining the racial and gender differences in these experiences can also provide insight into areas of needed improvement at the collegiate level to increase diversity. Therefore, the following research questions are posed:

RQ3: Are there differences in public relations students' social development as they progress in the major based on their racial background?

RQ4: Are there differences in public relations students' social development as they progress in the major based on their gender?

Method

This study extends the work of Waymer, Brown, Fears, and Baker (2018); those authors used interviews and other qualitative approaches to uncover themes related to a diverse sample of young professionals and their collegiate experiences, specifically their educational experiences and social development. Based on those findings, the current authors designed this survey for current public relations majors to uncover racial and gender differences in public relations majors' collegiate experiences. To measure these differences, an online questionnaire was distributed through the use of Qualtrics, a web-based survey research company.

Participants

A convenience sample of 294 current public relations majors was collected from eight colleges and universities: 48 males (16.3%) and 246 females (83.7%). Table 1 provides a description of the eight colleges and universities and the number of participants from each one.

The majority of the sample was white (196 participants, 66.7%), with 28 African-American participants (9.5%), 49 Hispanic or Latinx participants (16.7%) and 21 participants of other races (7.1%). The average age of the participants was 22.3 (*SD* = 3.57). All students were of at least junior standing and had completed a Public Relations Writing course, or the equivalent, in their curriculum.

Variables

Researchers created a seven-point Likert scale to measure aspects of students' collegiate experiences based on qualitative research conducted previously by the authors (Waymer, Brown, Fears, & Baker, 2018). The scale items (provided in Appendix A) measured the degree to which the participant agreed with the statements provided. An exploratory factor analysis with a Varimax rotation was conducted to group the scale items, and three factors were extracted: (a) classroom educational experiences, (b) on-the-job educational experiences, and (c) social experiences. Appendix B provides the factor loadings for each scale item, with 51.07% of the variance explained by the three scales. Because the depth of the study relied on specific aspects of students' collegiate experiences, not a composite satisfaction score for students' educational and social experience, scale items were analyzed as individual variables. Cronbach's (1951) alpha was used to measure the reliability of the scales, and all scales were considered reliable (Classroom $\alpha = 0.828$, On-the-Job $\alpha = 0.864$, Social $\alpha = 0.872$).

Table 1

Universities Used in the Study

Region	Type	Participants
Southeast	Four-Year Public University	87
Midwest	Four-Year Private University	38
Midwest	Four-Year Private Liberal Arts College	27
Southeast	Four-Year Private Liberal Arts College	33
Southeast	Four-Year Public University	21
West	Four-Year Public University	36
West	Four-Year Public University	22
Northeast	Four-Year Private Liberal Arts College	30

Questionnaire and Procedure

Once IRB approval was granted, the questionnaire was uploaded to Qualtrics. The researchers contacted representatives from a national sample of universities that offer public relations as a major. Representatives interested in participating in the study were given a web address to distribute to their students. Participants that completed the questionnaire were entered into a drawing to win either a $50 or $100 VISA gift card.

Students that visited the distinct web address were directed to a five-part questionnaire. Section A provided the informed consent form and screening questions. Participants that were not of at least junior standing and participants that had not completed the Public Relations Writing course or its equivalent did not proceed to the questionnaire. Sections B and C provided the collegiate experience scale items. Scale items in each section were randomized to prevent priming effects. Section D provided a thank-you statement and demographic questions. Section E prompted students to provide an email address for the VISA gift card, as well as any additional information for contacts that were providing extra credit for participating in the study.

Once it was designed, the questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of public relations professionals and scholars. Once revisions were made, the survey was pretested among 30 students. The pretest data was used to edit question order and language, as well as functional changes. Statistical analyses of the data were computed using IBM SPSS Statistics, version 21.

Results

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to analyze the research questions. RQ1 asked if there were differences in public relations students' educational experiences based on their racial backgrounds. The MANOVA revealed significant differences among the 18 statements addressing classroom and on-the-job educational experience between white respondents and UREP respondents (Wilks' Lambda = 0.872, F (1, 292) = 2.25, p = 0.003, η_p^2 = 0.13). Further analysis revealed significant differences in 6 of the 18 statements addressing educational experience:

- The project-based courses I have taken in college prepared me for my professional goals [M_W = 5.95 (SD_W = 0.97); M_U = 5.68 (SD_U = 1.24)] [F (1, 292) = 4.18, p = .042].
- I have been able to find multiple internship opportunities [M_W = 4.95 (SD_W = 1.7); M_U = 4.48 (SD_U = 1.82)] [F (1, 292) = 4.86, p = .028].
- I am actively involved in student organizations that have helped my professional development (i.e., PRSSA, Ad Team, Bateman, etc.) [M_W = 4.57 (SD_W = 2.21); M_U = 4.01 (SD_U = 1.86)] [F (1, 292) = 4.66, p = .032].
- I have been provided opportunities to gain leadership experience

from the organizations I joined [M_W = 5.52 (SD_W = 1.68); M_U = 5.09 (SD_U = 1.67)] [F (1, 292) = 4.17, p = .042].

• The professionals I have met in college gave me valuable insight into the PR profession [M_W = 5.66 (SD_W = 1.38); M_U = 4.91 (SD_U = 1.64)] [F (1, 292) = 17.21, $p < .001$].

• I regularly seek career advice from a public relations professional [M_W = 4.73 (SD_W = 1.67); M_U = 4.26 (SD_U = 1.8)] [F (1, 292) = 5, p = .026].

RQ2 asked if there were differences in public relations students' educational development based on their gender. The MANOVA revealed significant differences among the six statements addressing social development for male and female respondents (Wilks' Lambda = 0.873, F (1, 292) = 2.23, p = 0.003, $\eta_p^2 = 0.13$). Further analysis revealed significant differences in 11 of the 18 statements, with females having a higher level of agreement than males in all 11 statements:

• The writing-intensive courses I have taken in college prepared me for my professional goals. [M_M = 5.21 (SD_M = 1.50); M_F = 5.76 (SD_F = 1.04)] [F (1, 292) = 9.74, $p < .01$].

• The project-based courses I have taken in college prepared me for my professional goals [M_M = 5.44 (SD_M = 1.44); M_F = 5.95 (SD_F = .97)] [F (1, 292) = 9.28, $p < .01$].

• My previous courses helped me understand the importance of ethics and codes of conduct for my profession [M_M = 5.42 (SD_M = 1.37); M_F= 6.04 (SD_F = .96)] [F (1, 292) = 14.67, $p < .001$].

• My previous courses taught me how to effectively manage communication on social and digital media platforms [M_M = 4.90 (SD_M = 1.78); M_F = 5.44 (SD_F = 1.35)] [F (1, 292) = 5.84, $p < .05$].

• I have been able to find multiple internship opportunities [M_M = 4.06 (SD_M = 1.69); M_F = 4.94 (SD_F = 1.73)] [F (1, 292) = 10.39, $p < .01$].

- Other organizations, besides PR and communication-related organizations, have provided me opportunities to practice my professional skills [$M_M = 4.54$ ($SD_M = 1.77$); $M_F = 5.34$ ($SD_F = 1.64$)] [F (1, 292) = 9.23, $p < .01$].
- I have been provided opportunities to gain leadership experience from the organizations I joined [$M_M = 4.88$ ($SD_M = 1.65$); $M_F = 5.47$ ($SD_F = 1.68$)] [F (1, 292) = 5.1, $p < .05$].
- I have been able to build a professional network of PR and communication professionals [$M_M = 4.00$ ($SD_M = 1.89$); $M_F = 4.87$ ($SD_F = 1.63$)] [F (1, 292) = 10.8, $p < .01$].
- The professional network I am developing in college will be beneficial for my career [$M_M = 5.02$ ($SD_M = 1.55$); $M_F = 5.54$ ($SD_F = 1.38$)] [F (1, 292) = 5.57, $p < .05$].
- The professionals I have met in college gave me valuable insight into the PR profession [$M_M = 4.65$ ($SD_M = 1.85$); $M_F = 5.56$ ($SD_F = 1.39$)] [F (1, 292) = 15.45, $p < .001$].
- I regularly seek career advice from a public relations professional [$M_M = 4.10$ ($SD_M = 1.68$); $M_F = 4.66$ ($SD_F = 1.73$)] [F (1, 292) = 4.25, $p < .05$].

RQ3 asked if there were differences in public relations students' social development based on their racial backgrounds. The MANOVA revealed significant differences among the six statements addressing the social development of White respondents compared to UREP respondents (Wilks' Lambda = 0.816, F (1, 292) = 3.7, $p = 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.07$). Further analysis revealed significant differences in five of the six statements addressing social development.

- I have been comfortable interacting with other students in the classroom [$M_W = 6.2$ ($SD_W = 1$); $M_U = 5.9$ ($SD_U = 1.37$)] [F (1, 292) = 4.74, $p = .03$].
- I have been comfortable interacting with other students in PR and

communication-related student organizations [M_W = 5.94 (SD_W = 1.27); M_U = 5.58 (SD_U = 1.46)] [F (1, 292) = 4.67, p = .032].

• I have built a strong support group of fellow PR students (i.e. study group, social group, etc.) [M_W = 5.4 (SD_W = 1.71); M_U = 4.84 (SD_U = 1.84)] [F (1, 292) = 6.83, p = .009].

• Interacting with other students in PR classes is important to me [M_W = 5.81 (SD_W = 1.3); M_U = 5.46 (SD_U = 1.53)] [F (1, 292) = 4.25, p = .04].

• Other students seemed to value my contributions in a PR setting (classes, student organizations, group projects, etc.) [M_W = 5.82 (SD_W = 1.13); M_U = 5.44 (SD_U = 1.47)] [F (1, 292) = 6.11, p = .014].

RQ4 asked if there were differences in public relations students' social development based on their gender. The MANOVA revealed significant differences among the six statements addressing social development for males and females (Wilks' Lambda = 0.954, F (3, 290) = 2.320, p = 0.033, η_p^2 = 0.05) Further analysis revealed significant differences for four of the six statements, with females having a higher level of agreement than males in all four statements:

• I have built a strong support group of fellow PR students (i.e. study group, social group, etc.) [M_M = 4.71 (SD_M = 1.85); M_F = 5.31 (SD_F = 1.74)] [F (1, 292) = 4.75, $p < .05$].

• Interacting with other students in PR classes is important to me [M_M = 5.23 (SD_M = 1.69); M_F = 5.78 (SD_F = 1.31)] [F (1, 292) = 6.553, $p < .05$].

• Interacting with other students in PR and communication-related student organizations is important to me [M_M = 5.19 (SD_M = 1.83); M_F = 5.65 (SD_F = 1.42)] [F (1, 292) = 3.929, $p < .05$].

• Other students seemed to value my contributions in a PR setting (classes, student organizations, group projects, etc.) [M_M = 5.19

(SD_M = 1.63); M_F= 5.79 (SD_F = 1.15)] [F (1, 292) = 9.508, $p <$ .01].

Discussion

The authors surveyed 294 current undergraduate public relations students. The authors sought to determine if race, gender, or both constructs affected public relations students' educational and social experiences during their collegiate career. The findings suggest that both race and gender play a significant role in students' undergraduate public relations experiences.

Findings showed that UREPs were less likely to build a professional network in PR, build a strong support group among other public relations students, and experience comfort interacting with other students in the classroom and in extracurricular activities. These findings have implications for increasing the presence of UREPs in the public relations profession—especially if access to a professional network (or even a social network of peers) is a means for students to gain entry into the profession.

Significant differences between men and women were also found. Women were more likely than men to experience greater satisfaction in both their educational and social experiences, with results showing that female student typically get more out of classroom experiences, have more opportunities to network and intern, and gain more valuable leadership experiences. Perhaps the most telling finding is that UREP respondents and male respondents felt that their peers valued their contributions in a PR setting less than their white respondents and female counterparts. These findings along racial and gender lines have implications for UREP recruitment and retention into the discipline of public relations. If targeted strategies are developed to help increase social development for males (an underrepresented group in the major), as well as UREPs, then their satisfaction with the major increases.

When taking the findings on gender into account and coupling them with the preceding findings on race, these findings continue to support the fact that majority status (white students and female students, in this case) plays a significant role in students' ability to build social and professional networks and find greater success in the curriculum. The silver lining and key finding, however, is that the negative effects associated with numerical minority status appear to be mitigated if students are able to find and take advantage of adequate means of social development. With that said, greater efforts should be made by public relations education administrators and faculty to ensure that men and UREPs are provided and encouraged to pursue key social development activities. We recognize that this recommendation is idealistic for the following reasons: (1) PR professors are likely taxed with teaching, service, and research obligations; therefore, asking them to inform men and UREPs of specific opportunities might be an unrealistic request. (2) PR professors also have very little say over who registers for their classes, making control over the composition of their classes difficult. Thus, a more feasible strategy might be to talk to men and UREPs who are already in PR classes, and then incentivize them to then encourage peers in these demographic groups—through word-of-mouth—to join them in the public relations courses. The gender and racial/ethnic diversity of the public relations profession depend on such proactive strategies and tactics. The discipline needs to practice what it teaches. Setting clear, definable, and measurable goals and objectives is a cornerstone of public relations campaigns courses, and that knowledge should be transferred to address diversity issues in the student body, which is the pipeline to the discipline.

Recommendations for Public Relations Educators

Based on the findings, the researchers provide six practical recommendations for educators to help progress racial and gender diversity in the field. First, male students and UREPs, once in the major, must be informed of the opportunities available to gain professional experience and guidance. Based on the responses to the survey, White students overall (regardless of gender) indicated higher success levels in professional network building. Similarly, female students (regardless of their race or ethnicity) indicated higher success levels in professional network building. White students and female students constitute a numerical majority in the public relations major. Because of this disparity, male and UREP students must be better informed of their opportunities for professional growth.

Second, diversity must start at the classroom level in order for emerging practitioners to embrace diversity at the professional level. Based on the responses to the survey, students in the aforementioned racial and gender numerical majority groups indicated that they have strong peer support groups. Moreover, these students also indicated higher levels of comfort interacting with other peers and students in comparison to UREP and male students. Finally, when compared to UREP and male students, students in the racial and gender numerical majority also indicated that other students are more likely to value their contributions in class and in service. There is an obvious disconnect here, and professors, instructors, and advisors must work to increase diversity in the classroom composition and more holistically embrace diversity education via the curriculum, classroom content, and discussions. This could work by weaving difficult discussions about identity and diversity into mainstream public relations courses, by recruiting male and UREP students to join extracurricular groups, as well as by making groups for classroom projects more diverse.

Third, communities of practice and experiential learning are powerful ways to reinforce learning and for students to develop a sense of belonging as they learn. Programs could create Bateman case study competition teams or host PRSSA activities that might be attractive for men and equally attractive for UREPs. In this way, having students wrestle with the public relations challenges that might resonate with them, such as the recent protest cookout case in Oakland, CA (see Holson, 2018), could attract students because they can learn strategies and tactics to address potential issues of interest.

Fourth, diverse professionals must be more visible to all public relations majors, and they should be asked to proactively mentor and network with male and UREP students. Male and UREP students scored lower in "agreement that they have built a network of professionals" and "seek career advice regularly from professionals" compared to their counterparts. These differences illustrate a need for a more visible presence of UREP and male professionals, as well as a need for these professionals to be more willing to mentor and network with male and UREP students.

Fifth, colleges and universities should help proactively encourage socialization among students of different genders and racial backgrounds. Results showed that male students, compared to their female counterparts, and UREP students, compared to their white counterparts, not only felt less comfortable interacting with other students, but also did not see the importance of interacting with other students. Providing subtle opportunities to have students of diverse backgrounds interact could help combat these issues, such as creating diverse groups for group projects and leadership committees for extracurricular groups.

Finally, professors and instructors must proactively discuss racial and gender differences related to the public relations industry in the classroom (see Waymer, 2012a; Waymer & Dyson, 2011). Both UREP and male students scored less in agreement than their counterparts in the dimension of "Other students seem to value my contributions in a PR setting." Part of this could stem from a lack of substantial focus in the classroom on the racial and gender disparities in the industry. Discussing these differences in major courses could help to balance classrooms and remove this stigma of disrespect.

Limitations and Future Research

This study only considered race and gender as factors for increasing diversity. Obviously, there are other cultural and social factors that play a part in building a diverse profession. Studies that look at other forms of diversity (e.g., disability, sexual orientation, international origin) could offer more insight into this need. In addition, this survey treated all non-White races and ethnicities as one group. Future studies should attempt to gather a larger sample size and a more racially/ethnically representative sample in order to examine specific differences among races and ethnicities and pinpoint specific challenges and issues facing these groups as well—as opposed to grouping them into one category.

This study only looked at students that were advanced in the public relations major, targeting students that have taken at least PR Writing. It would be helpful to interview or survey incoming students to see if there are initial challenges that they face while adjusting both to college and to the public relations major.

This study also gathered respondents from predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Future research should compare the underrepresented populations at these institutions to similar populations at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). There could be potential differences in the educational and social development among students at these two types of institutions. In addition, it would be interesting to see the educational and social development among White students at HBCUs to see if they experience the same issues that underrepresented students experience at PWIs.

Despite these limitations, this study uncovers substantial racial and gender differences in the development of public relations students and helped identify areas of growth to improve the diversity of the profession's workforce. It is the hope of the researchers that these findings will help provide insight into the best ways to recruit and retain a more diverse group of majors, which would proactively increase diversity in the public relations field.

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Appendix A

Scale Items: Collegiate Development

Classroom Educational Experience

A1: The writing-intensive courses I have taken in college prepared me for my professional goals.

A2: The project-based courses I have taken in college prepared me for my professional goals.

A3: My previous courses helped me understand the importance of ethics and codes of conduct for my professional.

A4: My previous courses taught me how to conduct research properly.

A5: My previous courses taught me how to effectively manage communication on social and digital media platforms.

A6: My previous courses taught me to honor the uniqueness of each individual.

A7: My previous courses taught me the importance of cultural sensitivity and inclusion.

A8: My previous courses taught me the basics of business and financial literacy.

On-the-Job Educational Experience

P1: I have been able to find multiple internship opportunities.

P2: I am actively involved in student organizations that have helped my professional development (i.e. PRSSA, Ad Team, Bateman, etc.)

P3: Other organizations, besides PR and communication-related organizations, have provided me opportunities to practice my professional skills.
P4: I have been provided opportunities to gain leadership experience from the organizations I joined.
P5: I have taken advantage of the professional development opportunities that my school or department provided (i.e. workshops, resume and portfolio help, etc.)
P6: I've had exposure to professionals in the public relations field through visits to agencies or corporations, or interactions during campus visits.
P7: I have been able to build a professional network of PR and communication professionals.
P8: The professional network I am developing in college will be beneficial for my career.
P9: The professionals I have met in college gave me valuable insight into the PR profession.
P10: I regularly seek career advice from a public relations professional.

Social Development
S1: I have been comfortable interacting with other students in the classroom.
S2: I have been comfortable interacting with other students in PR and communication-related student organizations.
S3: I have built a strong support group of fellow PR students (i.e. study group, social group, etc.)
S4: Interacting with other students in PR classes is important to me.
S5: Interacting with other students in PR and communication-related student organizations is important to me.
S6: Other students seem to value my contributions in a PR setting (classes, student organizations, group projects, etc.)

Appendix B
Factor Loadings for Collegiate Development Scales

	Factor A Classroom	Factor B On-the-Job	Factor C Social
A1	0.664		
A2	0.578		
A3	0.636		
A4	0.672		
A5	0.647		
A6	0.709		
A7	0.662		
A8	0.690		
P1		0.648	
P2		0.572	
P3		0.647	
P4		0.733	
P5		0.591	
P6		0.591	
P7		0.706	
P8		0.668	
P9		0.621	
P10		0.577	
S1			0.680
S2			0.723
S3			0.771
S4			0.839
S5			0.773
S6			0.686
Eigenvalue	2.029	7.469	2.758
% Variance	8.46	31.12	11.49

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Developing a New Generation of Public Relations Leaders: Best Practices of Public Relations Undergraduate Programs

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored best practices for leadership development within U.S. accredited and/or certified undergraduate public relations programs. Researchers conducted a qualitative content analysis of website content regarding leadership development for 110 undergraduate programs offering a public relations major, which are accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) and/or hold Certification in Education for Public Relations (CEPR) by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). The second phase of the study involved semi-structured interviews (n = 19) with program directors and educators identified through website analysis as having the most information about fostering leadership development; additional programs were included in the sample, based on interviewees' recommendations. The results suggested four components for undergraduate public relations programs to help develop the next generation of leaders.

Keywords: public relations, leadership, leadership development, public relations education, public relations curriculum

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Scholars have already established that leadership is essential to effective public relations practice (Berger & Meng, 2010; Meng, Berger, Gower, & Heyman, 2012). Subsequently, the Commission on Public Relations Education (2015) advocated for better integration of leadership development in public relations education. Further, this need to develop future communication leaders was conveyed in the largest global study of public relations leadership to date (Berger & Meng, 2014).

How to best go about developing the public relations leaders of tomorrow, however, remains a difficult question to answer. Researchers have looked at the degree to which educators integrate leadership development within existing public relations courses (Erzikova & Berger, 2012); how perceptions of leadership differ between college students and established practitioners (Meng, 2013); and even the specific competencies that aspiring public relations leaders need (Jin, 2010). A study among U.S. students, young professionals, and senior professionals supported the need for undergraduate curricula to include courses with leadership/management principles (Remund & Ewing, 2015). Further, this study indicates that young people in public relations want to step into leadership responsibilities to gradually acclimate to the demands.

This qualitative study builds upon existing scholarly knowledge while filling a gap. The study was designed to identify and analyze best practices for leadership development within undergraduate public relations programs in the United States.

Literature Review

Leadership development has gained traction as an issue in public relations practice and as a focus for scholarly research. The Plank Center for Leadership's global study emphasized the need for leadership development to be better integrated in educational curricula (Berger & Meng, 2014). However, while researchers have acknowledged the growing importance of developing leaders within the public relations profession, the scholarly examination of best practices for leadership development is comparatively thin, particularly as it relates to how such practices actually come to life in undergraduate education.

To better emphasize leadership development and improve public relations curriculum, Berger and Meng (2010) recommended educators must first determine how leadership is taught in undergraduate courses and to what extent it is taught and incorporated into existing courses. They need to pinpoint where the gaps in education exist, and find effective ways to teach leadership to students. This study begins to help answer these important questions.

Leadership in Public Relations

Prior studies have explored how public relations roles are defined, how the communication function is structured within corporations and other organizations, and the competencies and cognitive qualities that communication leaders must possess in order to be effective (Algren & Eichhorn, 2006; Berger, 2005, 2009; DeSanto & Moss 2004; Dozier & Broom, 2006; Lee & Evatt, 2005). Additionally, J. Choi and Y. Choi (2009) identified seven dimensions of public relations leadership. They determined that leadership in public relations includes “upward influence, coordinating, internal monitoring, networking, representing, providing vision, and acting as a change agent” (p. 292). These aspects indicate that leadership in public relations is multidimensional and involves a variety of skills (Choi & Choi, 2009).

Still, the concept of leadership is difficult to define (Gaddis & Foster, 2015). A variety of attributes are involved in leading and leadership roles, and some individuals may consider certain aspects of leadership to be more important or valuable than others. Additionally, previous research suggests that public relations professionals consider leadership in their field to be different from leadership in other fields (Berger & Meng, 2010). Therefore, Berger and Meng (2010) developed a definition of leadership in public relations as "a dynamic process that encompasses a complex mix of individual skills and personal attributes, values, and behaviors that consistently produce ethical and effective communication practice" (Berger & Meng, 2010, p. 427; see also Meng et al., 2012, p. 24). This definition takes into account that leadership is an ever-evolving process that consists of skills, characteristics, values, and actions. Berger (2012) asked participants in his study to rank 12 leadership-development approaches according to importance. The highest-rated leadership-development approach was "strengthen change management capabilities," followed by "improve the listening skills of professionals" and "enhance conflict management skills" (Berger, 2012, p. 18).

The Need for Expertise in Leadership

In public relations, good leadership has the potential to strengthen the entire field and to increase organizational effectiveness (Petersone & Erzikova, 2016). Additionally, good leadership benefits both organizations and employees. Meng (2014) found that "organizational culture generates a direct, positive effect on the achievement of excellent leadership in public relations. More importantly, excellent leadership in public relations also influences organizational culture by reshaping it in a favorable way to support public relations efforts in the organization" (p. 363). Developing communication leaders who can navigate issues and respond effectively is critical, as organizations become more dynamic and change rapidly (Meng, 2015).

Gender may play an important role. Women have dominated the public relations field during the past two decades and female enrollment in many undergraduate public relations programs has exceeded 80% (Daughtery, 2014). However, some scholars argued that feminization of the public relations field has resulted in lower pay (Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2001), less power (O'Neil, 2003) and slower advancement to leadership (Grunig et. al, 2001). In turn, a 2012 study indicated that manager role enactment and participation in management decision-making were among the factors contributing to the pay inequity between male and female public relations professionals (Dozier, Sha, & Shen, 2013).

Gender poses unique challenges at work, making leadership development particularly vital for women. It is essential that public relations students, young professionals, and experienced practitioners be trained in leadership skills and informed about best practices to develop strong leadership. A nationwide study involving interviews with senior public relations practitioners, recent graduates, and students nationwide showed young professionals and students want to be mentored and have actual leadership responsibilities, need to take risks without the fear of failure, and know that hard work is important (Remund & Ewing, 2015). This interest in leadership among young public relations professionals and students, as well as the need to focus on leadership development, provides an opportunity to break down barriers for future female leaders.

Although the demand for strong leaders in public relations is high, leadership training is inconsistent. Berger (2015) concluded that "a lack of leadership development programs," and "incredibly high expectations for future leaders in the field" exist (p. 50). Consequently, teaching and mentoring students and professionals how to be good leaders is essential in helping them succeed in the field. The literature documents limited leadership-specific development and training for students and professionals, but not much is being done to address this problem. Based on the Plank Center for Leadership's study among public relations professionals in 10 countries, Berger (2015) concluded that there is no sense of urgency to address the need for leadership development programs within companies or schools. Meng (2015) noted, "Although the profession has advocated for leveraging the roles of public relations to a managerial and strategic level, the actual effort in building up the pipeline of future leaders in the profession is delayed" (p. 31).

Best Practices for Developing a New Generation of Leaders

While the literature has conveyed the need for leadership expertise in public relations, limited research focused on best practices for developing the next generation of public relations leaders has been conducted. Earlier research suggests that university programs need to focus specifically on leadership skills. Bronstein and Fitzpatrick (2015) stated, "To truly groom a generation of leaders for the future will require intentional leadership training" (p. 77). Some scholars argue that leadership training should occur both in and outside of the classroom. Shin, Heath, and Lee (2011) explain that contact with professionals and professional organizations will prepare students to become public relations leaders. A study conducted by Erzikova and Berger (2012) indicates that PR educators advocated "a holistic approach to teaching that includes more specialized leadership content, greater access to PR leaders and role models, and increased opportunities for related experiences outside of the classroom" (p. 3).

Integrating leadership development into curriculum. Some scholars contend that students learn about leadership as they progress through the program (Berger, 2015). However, many scholars believe students need more leadership-specific training and education. Bronstein and Fitzpatrick (2015) argued that undergraduate public relations programs do not focus enough on leadership. "In higher education, there is a remarkable scarcity in designing, integrating, and delivering leadership in public relations teaching and education" (Meng, 2015, p. 31), which has a negative impact on future generations of leaders. The lack of curricular integration of leadership development slows the development of future public relations leaders (Meng, 2015). Even when leadership development is integrated, concerns linger about how to teach it. Several researchers argue the curriculum requires a better balance of abstract concepts and real-world experience (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011). These authors noted, "Our challenge is to ensure that our curricula not only provide abstract concepts and frameworks but are also grounded in the real problems that our students will have to navigate" (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011, p. 468). Leadership is an abstract concept that requires contextualization and application to take meaningful root with students.

Scholars have made recommendations for how to integrate leadership development into curriculum in public relations programs. After comparing public relations students' and professionals' perceptions of leadership skills, leadership in public relations, and leadership development, Meng (2013) suggested six ways to incorporate the findings of her study into education: use the findings as a training checklist to discuss how to apply leadership principles in real-world situations; as an assessment tool administered before or after a public relations course; as the basis for a research project or a role play assignment involving strategic planning, an ethics scenario, or a crisis; and as a platform for discussions about issues in leadership or as assessment metrics to help students monitor and revise their ideas about leadership through internships or group projects.

Bronstein and Fitzpatrick (2015) argued formal leadership training in the curriculum would prepare students to become thought leaders, corporate leaders, and team leaders. They determined that students need a "leadership mindset, or a purposefully cultivated understanding of oneself as capable of exercising leadership in daily contexts" (Bronstein & Fitzpatrick, 2015, p. 78). Cooley, Walton, and Conrad (2014) explained that students need more exposure to leadership theory in their courses. They concluded, "PR professors do an adequate job of teaching students good management skills, but, generally speaking, the PR curricula needs more focus on theoretical understanding, development, and application" (Cooley et al., 2014, p. 444). Educators advocated that case studies, group discussions, and student-led projects are the most effective approaches to teach leadership content and concepts (Erzikova & Berger, 2012).

One challenge to integrating leadership development into the curriculum, though, is that schools focus on skills needed in first jobs rather than leadership skills (Bronstein & Fitzpatrick, 2015). According to Cooley et al. (2014), students must be prepared for their first jobs; consequently, skills training should take precedence. Practical skills and knowledge are necessary for students to be hired, so more focus is placed on those rather than on leadership skills. Further, a lack of leadership training and teaching experience among educators may create obstacles for leadership education (Erzikova & Berger, 2012).

As the literature review reveals, existing research on public relations education generally suggests that not enough is being done to address leadership development within undergraduate education, and there are mixed recommendations about how to hone leadership among public relations students. To that end, the first research question is:

RQ1: What are U.S. undergraduate public relations programs doing in the realm of leadership development?

Developing leadership skills outside of the classroom. Students can develop leadership skills through means other than coursework. Aside from more specialized leadership content in classes, educators say that more access to public relations leaders, mentors, and role models, as well as more opportunities for experiences outside of the classroom, will improve leadership development (Erzikova & Berger, 2012). Benjamin and O'Reilly (2011) determined that leadership should be taught through building procedural and declarative knowledge in a course, as well as through hands-on opportunities in which students can apply that knowledge. Mentorships and interactivity between students and professionals can also be beneficial in leadership development. Contact between students and professional public relations associations may help better prepare future leaders, as well as educate them on how leadership is viewed around the world (Shin et al., 2011). Finally, leadership skills can be developed and improved through extracurricular activities and involvement outside of the classroom. Haber, Allen, Facca, and Shankman (2012) found that individuals involved in student organizations self-reported higher emotionally intelligent leadership behaviors than students who were not involved, which suggests that the more involved an individual is in student organizations, the more that individual will practice emotionally intelligent leadership behaviors.

These prior studies make a consistent argument that leadership development should stretch beyond classroom instruction. With that position in mind, the second research question is:

> RQ2: What are the recommendations among educators from U.S. undergraduate public relations programs for developing the next generation of industry leaders?

Methods

The study began with a qualitative content analysis of website content regarding leadership development for all 110 undergraduate programs offering a public relations major (Appendix A) that are accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC), hold Certification in Education for Public Relations (CEPR) by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), or have both distinctions. This decision was based on the premise that these programs meet similar national standards. A second phase of the study included interviews with a sample of program leaders and/or educators to further explore leadership development best practices inside and outside of the classroom for public relations majors. The sample for the interviews was drawn from the full list of 110 programs and determined based on an analysis of these programs' websites, as well as using a snowball sampling method (Stacks, 2016).

As part of the qualitative content analysis, the researchers conducted thematic analysis of website content for 110 U.S. programs offering an undergraduate public relations major to identify the extent to which leadership development is being addressed. This process, common in qualitative research, involved determining the essential information to know about each program and developing a guide to identifying, recording, and ultimately comparing such information (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Based upon the literature review, the researchers determined essential information for recruitment purposes, including whether the program's website mentions leadership development in the undergraduate PR program description; mentions leadership in any of the PR course descriptions; offers a specific course on PR leadership/management, and whether that course is optional or required for PR students; whether the program has a PRSSA chapter; and whether leadership development is mentioned as a focus of that PRSSA chapter.

A thorough qualitative content analysis generally involves more than one researcher reviewing an entire data set and looking at each dimension in question, then drawing thematic conclusions based upon that comprehensive investigation (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The researchers worked independently at first, with each person reviewing all of the programs' websites and recording notes for each program, specific to the dimensions of essential information outlined above. The researchers subsequently compiled all of their notes into a cohesive spreadsheet for comparison, resolving or discarding any areas of substantive disagreement.

The qualitative analysis of website content helped form the essential foundation of knowledge from which an interview guide was developed. To choose programs for the interview phase, the researchers identified the programs that conveyed the most information about leadership development on their websites. As a whole, 18 U.S. programs were identified that explicitly emphasized leadership development in their curricular descriptions online; two of these programs were eliminated from the interview phase to minimize potential author bias in the study. An additional program was included in the interview process based on recommendations of primary interviewees; this purposive snowball process helped ensure a rich set of interviews. As Table 1 shows, the 19 interview subjects represented 17 U.S. universities, representing both public and private institutions, as well as those with large and small enrollments.

The second phase of the study involved semi-structured interviews (n = 19) with directors of the programs having the most robust information about leadership development on their websites, based on the qualitative content analysis of website content for all undergraduate public relations programs across the United States. An interview guide (Appendix B), based on literature findings and the website content analysis, ensured consistency in topics being discussed with participants.

Notably, the interview subjects possessed extensive experience in the professional industry and the classroom, as well as with managing academic programs. Participants, on average, had 14 years of teaching experience (range = 4 to 34 years), with seven years as PR sequence director (range = 1 to 30 years). In addition, participants had, on average, 11 years of professional experience (range = 3 to 25 years), largely in agency or corporate settings. Some also had worked in health care, government, military, and other sectors.

All 19 phone interviews were recorded and fully transcribed, representing 10 hours of interviews. The researchers used open coding when reviewing transcripts to identify major themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). They initially worked independently and then worked collaboratively to refine their examples that illustrate the major themes.

Findings

The study identified best practices for developing the next generation of leaders, including leadership training, curriculum revision, and more experiential learning opportunities.

Defining Leadership

When asked to define what leadership is today in PR, participants most often said leadership means having a vision of how to help move an organization or industry forward, thinking strategically and providing counsel. One respondent said, “Leadership means making decisions for our company and really being able to influence the strategy for different organizations.” Another respondent said: “It’s about defining a vision and setting an example.” One respondent noted:

> It means to have a clear vision about the role of public relations as a strategic function of management; to take the responsibility of this important advising role; to be on top of your game in terms of time management, supporting your team, working as a team leader, and accomplishing your tasks according to the expectations of your supervisors.

The participants considered leadership to involve motivating staff members and helping them grow, especially by providing a professional and ethical example of what it means to lead.

Finally, participants talked about leadership in terms of simply managing a team or project and collaborating to get the necessary work accomplished. A respondent explained:

> Leadership falls into the traditional realm of leadership in terms of managing employees, managing people. But I think in public relations it takes on a slightly other track as well, and that would be taking leadership on particular projects with multiple audiences simultaneously.

Developing Leadership Skills

Consistent with Berger's (2012) findings, program leaders agreed that students and practitioners must develop change management, listening, and conflict management skills. Overall, the interviewees agreed with these findings and most often discussed change management. They noted that it is fundamental for both students and practitioners to understand and manage change because the world is transforming at such a fast pace; change is inevitable. As one respondent said: "PR people can be a catalyst for change. They're the only ones—and I teach this—PR people are the only ones who are prepared or trained to be environmental scanners both internally and externally to an organization." Another respondent said:

> We will continue facing transformations of audiences, issues, and realities, especially socioeconomic and political reality. So definitely knowing how to understand and approach change, it will be fundamental…Change is going to also bring conflict, and we see those conflicts playing out right now in the political realm.

Some interview participants raised the point that change management, listening, and conflict management skills are related because listening helps manage change, and effective change-management skills will help minimize and resolve conflicts. One respondent explained:

> To communicate with our various stakeholders in public relations, you have to listen. That is the way by which we get feedback, which then enables us to go back and modify, reinforce, or even keep things the way they are.

Best Practices for Cultivating Leadership

The results suggested four components for undergraduate public relations programs to help develop the next generation of leaders: train faculty about leadership, infuse leadership principles in every class, encourage students to pursue leadership opportunities, and provide

Table 1
Interview Subjects' Experience (years)

University*	Professional	Teaching
Ball State	19	6
Boston**	14	14
Brigham Young	15	22
Drake	6	10
Illinois State	16	13
Loyola	3	28
Louisiana State	25	26
Ohio Northern	5	9
Ohio Northern	8	16
Penn State	10+	9
San Diego State	21	10
Syracuse	7	21
Temple	12	14
Florida	7	19
Florida	4	4
Georgia	15	15
Maryland	8	34
Oklahoma	23	16
Virginia Commonwealth	5	5

*University of Alabama and Kent State University were excluded to minimize bias in the study.
**The inclusion of Boston University was recommended by interview participants.

accessible leadership opportunities through PRSSA, a student agency and experiential learning.

Train faculty about leadership. Interviewees emphasized the value of focusing faculty training and professional development on leadership. The more that faculty are familiar with leadership concepts, the more likely they seem to be able to intentionally integrate leadership development into courses. One respondent explained:

> We need to get outside of our comfort zone…discover what are our leadership styles. What are our unconscious biases? We have to learn those things ourselves…because we can't expect our students to do things that we ourselves haven't attempted to do, learn, or understand.

Another respondent advocated a need for training:

> I don't think we're doing a good job of teaching leadership. I'm sure there maybe are faculty who have either had more professional experience to complement their graduate work or who have more of a business-academic background…they have more development in leadership…. I've never had any leadership training formally.

Interview participants also recommended talking to faculty and exploring other undergraduate public relations programs to obtain ideas for leadership development. The educators suggested sharing leadership-related assignments, assessment methods, and coaching and mentoring activities for PRSSA and student agencies. Finally, participants recommended reading recent research on leadership and looking critically at faculty experience in leadership.

Infuse leadership principles into every class. Less than half of the programs offer a class specifically in public relations leadership or management. Indeed, based on both the analysis of website content and interviews, most of the programs included in the interview process cannot or do not offer specialized classes in leadership, which is consistent with Berger's (2015) conclusions. When it comes to leadership development, the message from interview participants was loud and clear: Infuse these concepts in every class and get the core curriculum right because adding specialized classes in leadership isn't easy or even necessarily more effective. Of the 110 universities included in the website analysis process, fewer than half of the programs offer a public relations management and/or leadership class, but all make a concerted effort to address leadership in the core public relations courses, particularly writing, case studies, research methods, and campaigns/capstone. One respondent explained, "We start in the classroom because that's where we can have, I think, the greatest and most immediate impact on teaching leadership skills." The best advice for administrators and educators is simply to build from the foundation they have in place. Nearly all suggested infusing leadership development within existing classes, rather than creating standalone courses focused on leadership. Part of the reason is simply because of accreditation and the associated credit-hour constraints.

They use service learning and/or group projects as teaching methods but provide coaching on leadership first. One respondent noted:

> One easy way (to teach about leadership) is the group assignments we have in all of our classes at all the levels so that students learn how to work together. And, we often—not always, it sort of depends on the assignment—will ask the students to pay attention to their group dynamics so that we can discuss how it is that certain things happen in their groups, including leadership emergence, but especially group dynamics.

On the leadership development front, the programs have students conduct personality self-assessments, assign case studies for reading and discussion, and require students to interview and write about industry leaders. Some programs also provide PR-specific labs for certain required courses so that students can apply their talents and grow in a controlled, focused environment.

Based on interviews, the assigned literature for leadership development heavily incorporates books, articles, and online resources, which describe an argument on the most important habits and skills an effective leader needs to possess, as well as personal growth. These pieces are written by journalists, business professionals, government officials, and scholars who have vast leadership experience or connections and stories to tell about others who exhibited good leadership skills. These books also give students tips on how to polish their communication skills. Other required books focused on the principles and theories of public relations, or professors encouraged students to stay current through news and business publications. These texts were often used in conjunction with another. Recurring authors included Heath Brothers, Jim Collins, Charles Duhigg, Peter Northouse, Tom Rath, and Peter Smudde.

Some educators used resources from the Institute of Public Relations, Page Center, Plank Center, and PRSA to facilitate leadership discussions. Multicultural case studies were often mentioned as reading materials for students to learn about diversity and inclusion within the public relations practice. These case studies were compiled from texts, professional trade journals, online resources, and the PRSA Silver Anvil competition.

Help students overcome fear of failure. Educators discussed the importance of coaching students to step up to take on leadership opportunities without fear of failure, which aligns with prior research (Remund & Ewing, 2015) indicating senior public relations practitioners supported the value of young practitioners and students taking risks and learning from mistakes. Experience builds confidence and leadership. One respondent said: "Help students stand up and have a voice and to take risks and occasionally fail. This generation hasn't really been allowed to do that. It's a much different student than even 10 years ago." Another respondent further explained:

> We don't spend time developing them [students] as humans and a lot of times we push that off to the Career Center, which I don't think is as capable as we are at developing them and getting them to apply those concepts back to the work they'll be doing in the disciplines.

The educators interviewed for this study considered their vibrant PRSSA chapters as essential to grooming young leaders, which is consistent with Haber et al.'s (2012) findings. A respondent said, "Giving students the opportunity to operate in that environment where the stakes are a little bit higher than a grade and they can exercise leadership… that's a huge part of the way forward." Another respondent noted, "We also provide students with plenty of opportunities I will say nowadays to engage with the practice, both here at the college and in internships, and also in professional conferences and activities."

The respondents also emphasized how rich their curricula are with group projects and service-learning opportunities, exemplified by capstone campaign courses that involve working with real clients on complex issues. One respondent noted: "Here are teachable moments about leadership, especially when things don't go well, especially with a service-learning client." Another respondent agreed, "Service learning is always really helpful. Many of our classes work with real clients. It helps students develop a sense of initiative. Any kind of real-world experience is helpful because it creates opportunities to require students to lead."

Likewise, respondents mentioned that their student agencies are a tremendous incubator for fostering leadership, especially when the firm is guided by a faculty member with strong professional experience. One respondent noted:

> The agency fosters the opportunity for students to grow into leaders…For example, [the agency was helpful for] one student who is smart and capable but lacked confidence in herself. It was great to watch that she started to believe in herself and see the growth.

Finally, the participants expressed that their internship programs are exceptional in terms of longevity and scope, often involving corporations, agencies, and other partners in out-of-state markets, including some of the biggest cities in the United States.

Assessing student growth in soft skills remains a challenge. Leadership is an abstract concept and is often not explicit in term of learning outcomes. To that end, many participants discussed challenges with evaluation and assessment. Most suggested incorporating peer reviews, conducting interviews with students, and/or assigning reflections, either as an individual writing project or group discussion. Several participants reiterated the importance of quality grading by instructors. Some participants discussed the use of exit interviews with senior students about their proficiency in a number of topics, including leadership. One respondent shared:

> We have a series of questions that we personally answer about the students…we look at their resume and their portfolio, not only are we looking at what kind of experiences they have but one of the questions directly asks about what leadership experiences they had while they were in school. It doesn't necessarily ask them to judge them or for us to qualify them, but at least we look to see where they have had leadership positions at any point in their college career, not just within the PR-related organizations.

Discussion

The first research question for this study centered on what U.S. undergraduate programs are doing in the area of leadership development. All of the programs participating in the interviews emphasize leadership in their core public relations classes, namely writing, case studies, research methods, and campaigns/capstone. Philosophically, this finding suggests that leadership development is more than simply traits or skills, but rather competencies that must be honed over time and through various experiences. That sense of acquired adaptability is also consistent with the notion of change management as an essential leadership skill needed in the future, according to Berger (2012). On the other hand, a specific course in leadership would undoubtedly offer significantly greater opportunities for students to learn about the various models of leadership, which models apply best to their individual personalities and strengths, and how to determine which method of leadership would work best in a given situation. That kind of comprehension and application certainly could not be possible in the context of a core course such as writing or research methods.

The second research question centered around recommendations that educators would offer for developing the next generation of leaders. Educators and program directors emphasized the importance of recruiting faculty with leadership experience and/or providing training opportunities for faculty to learn more about leadership development. Educators need to be informed about and comfortable with leadership so they can guide students to become effective leaders. One respondent noted, "The best bet is to infuse it (leadership principles), but unless... the faculty member has some expertise in it, they don't usually teach it." Participants suggested that faculty infuse leadership in every class and encourage students to participate in PRSSA and/or a student agency, as a de facto learning lab for leadership development. Educators felt it important that leadership be covered in all core courses and that students seek extracurricular ways to put leadership concepts into action. This notion of experiential learning is certainly consistent with the model of U.S. undergraduate public relations education. However, the onus is put squarely on the student to figure out what being a leader really entails, in an applied circumstance such as the PRSSA chapter or student agency. Faculty supervision, if any, would be minimal, and even less so would be in-the-moment coaching from a faculty advisor. Educators emphasized the importance of presenting leadership opportunities for students and encouraging students to lead inside and outside the classroom. One respondent said:

> We really emphasize with students that you need to be on top of your game. You need to develop your own voice. You need to be self-directed. You need to be self-driven. You need to seek opportunities and take advantage of opportunities.

Ultimately, one is left to question just how consistently students can learn about leadership, given the time constraints of core courses and the freedom of a student-run PRSSA chapter or agency. Indeed, participants nearly unanimously agreed that assessment and evaluation are difficult at best when it comes to teaching leadership development. These findings underscore prior findings that suggest leadership development is lacking in public relations education and that greater training in leadership is crucial (Bronstein & Fitzpatrick, 2015; Meng, 2015).

This qualitative study sheds important light on the fact that greater leadership development is sorely needed in public relations. One respondent advocated this need:

> We have to teach them how to be good managers of people; how to give feedback; how to understand how non-verbal communication might translate; how to be sensitive; and how to be good listeners. All those real basic things…but they're not so basic. We (educators) just haven't done a good job in our public relations

> curriculum. And as much as we want to say: “Oh, that’s what the business school teaches; we cannot wait and rely on business schools.”

Another respondent noted: “I’m glad you all are doing this study …. I’ve done a little bit of digging around and maybe there are some new courses, but I don’t think we’re doing a good job of teaching leadership.”

Though there are no silver bullets or straightforward solutions, one thing is clear from these findings: programs find a common strength in building upon their core courses and their primary extracurricular programs, such as PRSSA and student-run agencies. Adding specialized classes and additional experiences may not be necessary or even desirable; the most directly applicable learning may come in the most familiar of places: the classroom and the PRSSA chapter or client meeting. This study reinforced the need for leadership development to support the success of public relations graduates and public relations. One respondent noted:

> Leadership in PR—in spite of the Plank Center and a few academics—is underserved and hasn’t been developed as much… we need to develop the field more, and we’ll graduate better students able to take leadership roles in the field. If we can help create talent, you know, leadership talent and people who can think for themselves, we’ll do the field a great service.

Limitations and Future Research

Qualitative research is appropriate to employ when exploring areas of inquiry that have not been studied to a substantial extent yet. To that end, this mixed-methods study employs qualitative research in an appropriate way, yielding new insights that had not previously been discovered through other means of scholarly research. However, findings from qualitative research cannot be generalized to a broader universe, and, therefore, their meaning holds true only within the context of the studied population. That depth of insight, both rich and substantive, speaks strictly to the subjects under analysis; a statistically sound quantitative study would be necessary to extrapolate these findings. In that spirit, a forced-response survey of a representative sample of all U.S. program directors would yield generalizable findings.

Still, learning and leadership development are organic and dynamic processes; the perspectives of the varied participants in this study affirm that fact. Quantitative research would yield generalizable data, yet such findings would simply serve as an underpinning and framework. Program directors and educators at all ranks would benefit, as well, from further qualitative and mixed-methods research, particularly related to pedagogical methods and student outcomes. Digging deep is what public relations educators need from future leadership development research – and it is what their students deserve in order to thrive in an increasingly complex world.

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Appendix A
ACEJMC-Accredited and/or CEPR-Certified Programs
Included in Website Audit

University	Name of College/School Housing PR Program
Abilene Christian University	Journalism and Mass Communication Department
American University	School of Communication and Journalism
Arkansas State University	Department of Communication
Auburn University	School of Communication and Journalism
Ball State University	Department of Journalism
Baylor University	Journalism, Public Relations and New Media
Bowling Green State University	Department of Journalism and Public Relations
Brigham Young University	School of Communications
Buffalo State University	Communication Department
California State University, Chico	Department of Journalism and Public Relations
California State University, Fullerton	College of Communications
California State University, Long Beach	Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
California State University, Northridge	Mike Curb College or Arts, Media, and Communication
Central Michigan University	College of Communication and Fine Arts

University	Name of College/School Housing PR Program
Drake University	School of Journalism and Mass Communication
Eastern Illinois University	Department of Journalism
Eastern Kentucky University	College of Business and Technology
Elon University	School of Communications
Ferris State University	College of Business
Florida A&M University	Division of Journalism
Florida International University	Journalism and Mass Communication
Grambling State University	Department of Mass Communication
Hampton University	Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications
Hofstra University	Department of Journalism, Media Studies and Public Relations
Howard University	School of Communications
Illinois State University	School of Communication
Indiana University, Bloomington	The Media School
Iona College	Department of Mass Communication
Iowa State University	Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication

University	Name of College/School Housing PR Program
Jacksonville State University	Department of Communication
Kansas State University	AQ Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communications
Kent State University	School of Journalism and Mass Communication
Lee University	Communication Arts
Louisiana State University	Manship School of Mass Communication
Loyola University, New Orleans	School of Mass Communication
Marquette University	Diederich College of Communication
Marshall University	W. Page Pitt School of Journalism and Mass Communications
Middle Tennessee State University	College of Media and Entertainment
Monmouth University	Department of Communication
Murray State University	Journalism and Mass Communication
Nicholls State University	Department of Mass Communication
Norfolk State University	Department of Mass Communications and Journalism
North Carolina A and T State University	Journalism and Mass Communication
Ohio Northern University	Communication and Media Studies

University	Name of College/School Housing PR Program
Ohio University	E.W. Scripps School of Journalism
Oklahoma State University	School of Media and Strategic Communications
Penn State University	College of Communications
Radford University	College of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences
Rowan University	College of Communication and Creative Arts
San Diego State University	School of Journalism & Media Studies
San Jose State University	Journalism and Mass Communications Department
Savannah State University	Department of Journalism and Mass Communications
Seton Hall University	College of Communication and the Arts
Shippensburg University	Department of Communication/ Journalism
South Dakota State University	Journalism and Mass Communication
Southeast Missouri State University	Department of Mass Media
Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville	Department of Mass Communications
Southern University	Department of Mass Communication
St. Cloud State University	Communication Studies

University	Name of College/School Housing PR Program
Syracuse University	Newhouse School of Public Communications
Temple University	School of Media and Communication
Texas Christian University	Bob Schieffer College of Communication
Texas State University	School of Journalism and Mass Communication
Union University	Communication Arts Department
University of Cincinnati	College of Arts and Sciences
University of Alabama	College of Communication and Information Sciences
University of Alabama, Birmingham	Department of Communication Studies
University of Alaska	Department of Journalism and Communication. Note: Strategic Communication Concentration and the major Journalism and Public Communication
University of Arkansas	Walter J. Lemke Department of Journalism
University of Central Missouri	Department of Economics, Finance and Marketing
University of Colorado, Boulder	College of Media, Communication and Information
University of Florida	College of Journalism and Communications
University of Georgia	Henry W. Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communications
University of Idaho	Department of Journalism and Mass Media

University	Name of College/School Housing PR Program
University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign	College of Media. Note: College offers a certificate in PR, no degree
University of Iowa	School of Journalism and Mass Communication
University of Kansas	William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications
University of Kentucky	College of Communication and Information
University of Louisiana, Lafayette	Department of Communication
University of Maryland at College Park	Department of Communication
University of Memphis	Department of Journalism
University of Minnesota	Journalism and Mass Communication
University of Mississippi	The Meek School of Journalism and New Media
University of Missouri	School of Journalism
University of Nebraska, Lincoln	College of Journalism and Mass Communications
University of Nevada, Reno	The Reynolds School
University of New Mexico	Department of Communication and Journalism. Note: Called Strategic Communication
University of North Alabama	Department of Communications
University of North Carolina	School of Media and Journalism

University	Name of College/School Housing PR Program
University of North Carolina, Charlotte	Department of Communication Studies
University of North Texas	Frank W and Sue Mayborn School of Journalism
University of Oklahoma	Gaylord College
University of Oregon	School of Journalism and Communication
University of South Carolina	College of Information and Communications
University of South Dakota	Department of Media and Journalism
University of Southern California, Annenberg	School for Communication and Journalism
University of Southern Mississippi	School of Mass Communication and Journalism
University of Tennessee	Communications Department
University of Tennessee, Chattanooga	Communication
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	College of Communication and Information
University of Washington	Department of Communication
University of Wisconsin, Eau-Claire	Department of Communication and Journalism. Note: Called Integrated Strategic Communications, PR Emphasis
University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh	Department of Journalism
Virginia Commonwealth University	Richard Robertson School of Media and Culture

University	Name of College/School Housing PR Program
Virginia Polytechnic University	College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences
Washington and Lee University	Department of Journalism and Mass Communications
Wayne State University	Department of Communication
West Virginia University	Reed College of Media
Western Kentucky University	School of Journalism and Broadcasting
Winthrop University	Department of Mass Communication

Appendix B
Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Thank you, again, for volunteering to participate in this research project. Today's interview should take no more than 30 minutes.

As you know from our email exchange, we are studying leadership development and inclusiveness within public relations curricula. We are talking with PR sequence directors and PR instructors. Our intent is to identify best practices and provide recommendations to the academy about how we can all help better develop the next generation of public relations leaders.

I'd like to remind you that your participation in this study is voluntary. You may now refuse to participate, or if you choose to participate as intended, you may stop today's interview for any reason and at any point in the process.

Your responses will remain strictly confidential, unless you provide approval now, or at the end of today's interview, for us to identify you with all or some of your replies. Otherwise, your input will simply be included in aggregate themes within the final report. Would you like to provide approval now, or shall we discuss this again at the end of the interview?

Finally, I'd like to remind you that research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the University of Oregon Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 541-346-2510 or by e-mail to ResearchCompliance@uoregon.edu. If you contact the IRB, please refer to study number #16-146.

At this time, I would like to confirm your participation in this research. Please say "yes" now, if you are willing to be interviewed. This will serve as your consent.

Do I have your permission to record this interview? The only use of the recording is for data collection and analysis. Do you have any questions or concerns before the interview begins?

1. Let's begin. I would first like to confirm a few details, simply for statistical purposes.

- Tell me how many years you have served as PR sequence director (if applicable).
- How many years have you been teaching public relations courses?
- Did you work in the industry before joining the academy? If so, for what type of organization: corporation/business, agency/consulting firm, nonprofit organization, government, or other (please specify)?

2. In your own words, tell me what you believe leadership means today in public relations.

3. And how about inclusiveness in public relations?

4. What do you feel would be the best way to develop the next generation of inclusive public relations leaders?

5. A global research survey of thousands of practitioners worldwide identified the most pressing leadership needs as change management skills/capabilities, listening skills, and conflict management skills. How do you feel about this assessment? Why?

6. What is your program doing well when it comes to fostering leadership development and/or inclusiveness? Please share a few examples.

For specific programs identified:
6a. Tell me about (name of course/program). Is this a requirement for PR students? Other students? What are the learning objectives?
6b. What is the structure and methods used to teach?
6c. Describe the core content. Is it possible to obtain a copy of the syllabus?
6d. Are diversity and inclusiveness covered within the course/program? If so, please briefly explain. If not, how and where is diversity addressed in the PR curriculum?
6e. What textbook(s) or other educational materials/resources are used?
6f. How is student learning evaluated?

7. Are there other examples of leadership development and/or inclusiveness that come to mind within your own teaching? What teaching methods, assignments or other techniques do you use to foster leadership development and/or inclusiveness, beyond those already described? Please share a few examples.

8. What advice would you give to a school that's just starting a public relations program, or to someone new to teaching public relations, with regard to fostering leadership development and/or inclusiveness?

9. When it comes to excellence in public relations education, what programs immediately come to your mind? Why?

10. We are nearing the end of this interview. What haven't we touched on today about leadership development and inclusiveness in public relations education that is important to include in this study?

NOTE: If subject did not provide approval for identity disclosure earlier, read the following:

As a reminder, your responses will remain strictly confidential, unless you provide approval for us to identify you with all or some of your replies. Otherwise, your input will simply be included in aggregate themes within the final report. Would you like to provide approval for us to disclose your identity? If so, for all replies or only some of them? If only some of them, which replies?

Thank you very much for your time.

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One Liners and Catchy Hashtags: Building a Graduate Student Community Through Twitter Chats

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Abstract

This study takes a mixed-methods approach to understanding how graduate student education and engagement are intertwined, as well as the ability of an ongoing Twitter chat to increase both. As more strategic communication master's programs utilize hybrid and online course components, finding new and innovative ways to help students feel oriented, engaged, and part of a community leads to increased success for both students and departments. The analysis includes the chats themselves, a mixed-methods survey to chat participants, and memoing completed by the researchers (faculty chat participants and the chat moderator). Key findings for graduate student engagement include the importance of building both online and offline connections, the ability of Twitter chats to increase fun and reduce stress, and to gain both tacit and explicit knowledge. Finally, the project offers practical suggestions for programs looking to start their own chat series to improve student engagement.

Keywords: graduate student community, student engagement, Twitter chat, social media, hybrid online education, professional development

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Research on social media use in the general population has skyrocketed over the last few years, but most has been focused on either American adults at-large or specifically college students, largely ignoring graduate students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2017), three million graduate students enrolled in programs around the country in the 2017-2018 academic year, a group large enough to be research worthy. For undergraduate students, student engagement and student achievement are positively correlated (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006); it stands to reason that similar interactions would occur at the graduate level.

Twenty-nine percent of American adults who have at least a college education (a group that would include graduate students) are using Twitter, higher than individuals with any other level of education (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). Social media, in general, is known to improve communication in a classroom setting (Tyma, 2011) and to help student perceptions of engagement and quality of education (Rutherford, 2010). Research that does exist on Twitter usage in the classroom, while focused on undergraduates, is positive (Fraustino, Briones, & Janoske, 2015; Tyma, 2011).

This project focuses on how social media use may impact engagement and education at the graduate level. Specifically, it looks at the impact of Twitter chats that are promoted and moderated by a specific department with a master's program in journalism and strategic media in the context of a mid-sized Southern university. The department in question was particularly interested in these questions, as it has both on-campus students and online students who take classes together and synchronously, making it necessary to find unique, creative ways to engage students regardless of whether they are participating in person or only online.

This project employs a qualitative content analysis of the Twitter chats and researcher memoing, as well as a qualitative and quantitative online survey to understand the impact of the chats on student engagement and education. The study reviews literature on how technology and student engagement currently interact and ends with suggestions on incorporating similar chats into other master's programs.

Literature Review

This review builds on current literature related to synchronous hybrid graduate programs, addresses knowledge of current approaches to student engagement, particularly at the graduate level, and explores the role that technology plays in this process.

Synchronous Hybrid Graduate Programs

Online asynchronous courses—those that do not have a specified meeting place or time—have received criticism because of the feelings of isolation they can induce (Liu, Magjuka, Bonk, & Lee, 2007) and the lack of real-time interaction (West & Jones, 2007). Because of the noted shortcomings of online asynchronous courses, a number of post-secondary institutions are utilizing synchronous hybrid delivery as a course option where on-campus students participate simultaneously with online students via web conferencing services (Roseth, Akcaoglu, & Zellner, 2013). This offers the convenience of an online format for students and creates a greater sense of community for students by being able to engage with one another in both auditory and visual manners (Henriksen, Mishra, Greenhow, Cain, & Roseth, 2014).

Park and Bonk (2007) examined online and residential students' learning experiences in a synchronous environment. While most interaction for the students in their study was primarily task-related and focused on accomplishing course assignments, non-task related interaction was observed in the form of "humor, compliment, encouragement, or voluntary offer of additional supports" outside of the official course time (Park & Bonk, 2007, p. 252). Butz, Stupnisky, Pekrun, Jensen, and Harsell (2016) explored the role that emotions play in student achievement in synchronous hybrid graduate courses. Results from their study indicated that success in such courses positively correlates with student enjoyment and negatively correlates with anxiety and boredom (Butz et al., 2016). Additionally, findings suggested that although students initially enjoy this type of environment for engaging with courses, the novelty of the delivery system tends to decrease over time. This is in line with earlier research that suggested instructors need to experiment with new tools to enliven student participation in technologically mediated programs (Hrastinski, 2008). This need to innovate and consider the holistic student experience is a major focus of student engagement literature.

Student Engagement

Astin (1984) defines engagement as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 297). This can be understood as the time and effort students devote to educational activities, which are comprised of both in-class and out-of-class engagement (Kuh, 2009). Research has shown repeatedly that student engagement is positively associated with desired outcomes for institutions of higher education, such as psychosocial development and academic success (Junco, Heibergert, & Loken, 2010).

Universities often focus more resources on undergraduate student engagement for a variety of reasons, including a greater number of students enrolled at the undergraduate level, a belief that academic units are meeting the needs of graduate students, and an assumption that graduate students already know how to navigate institutions of higher education (Fischer & Zigmond, 1998; Pontius & Harper, 2006). Research on student engagement concentrates on the undergraduate level as well. In their seminal study, Chickering and Gamson (1987) proposed seven principles related to engagement in undergraduate education: (1) student/faculty contact; (2) cooperation among students; (3) active learning; (4) prompt feedback; (5) emphasizing time on task; (6) communicating high expectations; and (7) respecting diversity. These seven principles have heavily guided subsequent student engagement dialogue, research, and practice. Kuh (1997) even posited that this list of seven principles "is one of the most widely disseminated documents in American higher education" (p. 72).

However, there is a growing recognition that graduate students face a very different campus environment from undergraduate students and often bring in external circumstances that may make engagement more challenging (Pontius & Harper, 2006). Therefore, Pontius and Harper (2006) proposed their own seven philosophical principles for engagement in graduate and professional education: (1) eradicate marginalization among underrepresented populations; (2) provide orientation to the institution beyond the academic unit; (3) invest resources in communication; (4) facilitate community-building and multicultural interaction across academic units; (5) create engagement plans for students; (6) enhance career and professional development; and (7) systemically assess satisfaction, needs, and outcomes. Individual departments should consider how these principles can guide and improve programs and initiatives to better engage graduate students.

Cohort programs—groups of students who begin a program of study together—are becoming increasingly common in higher education to increase student retention and graduation rates, mainly in traditional, non-online programs (Lei, Gorelick, Short, Smallwood, & Wright-Porter, 2011). Even if a department does not intentionally follow a cohort-based educational program, students naturally form groups around similar interests, shared classes or both (Hubbell & Hubbell, 2010). Martin, Goldwasser, and Galentino (2017) found that graduate students in cohorts develop closer bonds than students in non-cohort programs, and that these close bonds positively influence student engagement. Because a cohort-model generally requires a more traditional educational format (in-person and on-campus), graduate programs that offer distance education options may need to consider alternative routes for engagement. This is where technology may help to facilitate closer bonds and a cohort-mentality among students, offering the benefits of a cohort to all students.

Janson, Howard, and Schoenberger-Orgard (2004) reflected on their experiences as graduate students and the needs they had for emotional and academic support. One way that they were able to reduce isolation and improve engagement was through virtual discussions, although this study predated the development of Twitter. However, this virtual environment did provide stewardship opportunities to help orient new members to the community so that important documents could be saved and information shared (Janson et al., 2004). Relatedly, Kimble, Hildreth, and Wright (2001) discussed the role that virtual communities could play in managing both explicit knowledge (knowledge that can be easily codified and shared) and tacit knowledge (knowledge rooted in experience, which is less accessible). As Janson et al. (2004) explained, "Humans *need* other humans to surface and share tacit knowledge" (p. 177, italics in original). Therefore, opportunities for real-time virtual engagement results in not only helping to build the community but also in facilitating the sharing of vital information, which can help students gather knowledge that may not be easily accessible any other way.

Social Media in the Classroom

In addition to engagement benefits, incorporating social media use into a program can improve important digital skills. More than 90% of college students use some form of social media, and most consider themselves experts (Smith, Rainie, & Zickuhr, 2011). However, that self-assessed digital expertise does not always translate to actual professional skill (Kinsky, Freberg, Kim, Kushin, & Ward, 2016; Melton & Hicks, 2011). This lack of connection between living in a digitally saturated environment and actual digital competency must be mitigated in the classroom with additional training and exposure to social media (Toliver, 2011). Experiential learning in the classroom setting provides students with a structured space to gain "expertise using technology" and the skills necessary for both the professional and academic worlds (Madden, Winkler, Fraustino, & Janoske, 2016, p. 203). Including this type of training in the classroom benefits the students and the faculty, keeping everyone up to date on the latest developments and polishing skill sets (Kinsky, Freberg, Ehrlich, Breakenridge, & Gomes, 2018).

Also, social media-based interactions can encourage rich, meaningful dialogue and critical discussions of various topics (Moody, 2010), and social media in classrooms allows for the exploration of new ideas and different ways of completing tasks, while learning important and practical media skills. Social media usage in the classroom provides students with experience in the production and sharing of information quickly and clearly (Locker & Kienzler, 2012), and it provides training in basic social media skills, including how to manage a large amount of information and respond to it effectively.

Furthermore, the use of Twitter in and out of the classroom can be beneficial to both students and faculty (Hull & Dodd, 2017). Because of the interactive nature of Twitter, both students and faculty who use Twitter in the classroom report being more actively engaged in the learning process (Bowen, 2012; Virtanen, Myllärniemi, & Wallander, 2013). Also, students who use Twitter reported a higher grade point average at the end of the semester than non-Twitter users (Junco, Merson, & Salter, 2010). Twitter is easily accessible, increasing the availability of course content, instructors, and other educational resources (Van Rooyen, 2015). According to Hull and Dodd (2017), the use of Twitter in the classroom may involve all seven of Chickering and Gamson's (1987) principles of good practice in undergraduate teaching. Hull and Dodd (2017) argue the incorporation of Twitter into assignments and discussions makes learning interactive, which allows students to see knowledge "as dynamic rather than being based on the fixed materials of a textbook" (p. 94). In addition, Twitter allows instructors to interact with students outside of the classroom and to provide additional feedback or information relevant to class (Hull & Dodd, 2017).

Fraustino, Briones, and Janoske (2015) found that Twitter chats in the classroom provide an experience that may benefit students with varying learning styles because each student has the opportunity to individually and effectively process information in their own way. Aside from reaching diverse learners, Twitter chats also provide students with the opportunity to network with students and instructors that they may otherwise never have met in person or interacted with beyond a surface level. These critical networking skills give students experience in navigating, building, and maintaining relationships in a social media environment (Fraustino et al., 2015). In addition, Twitter chats provided participants with an opportunity to better connect with their instructors who were able to demonstrate a personal side during the chat, thus forging a better student-instructor relationship in the classroom (Fraustino et al., 2015).

Based on this literature review, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1: How are Twitter chats used to connect and engage graduate students with their department?

RQ2: How do students make sense of the Twitter chats as part of their graduate education?

RQ3: How do students make sense of the Twitter chats as part of their engagement with a graduate school community?

Method

Data collection and analysis for this project included qualitative observation of Twitter chat interaction from three professors; qualitative analysis of all seven Twitter chats (1,736 total tweets, ranging from 111 to 357 tweets per chat, with an average of 248 tweets per hour-long chat); and an online quantitative and qualitative post-only student survey.

Procedure

Twitter chats have been administered twice a semester by the master's program of a single journalism and strategic media department at a mid-sized Southern university, which includes students studying news journalism, public relations, and advertising. The chats began in fall 2015, for a total of seven chats at the time of data collection. All seven chats were moderated by one of the researchers, who is also the assistant director of the graduate program. The chats were held at both the beginning and end of each semester to help students build initial connections and to reflect upon what they have learned by the end of the semester. The chats lasted for one hour; had a general topic (examples included journalistic coverage of the Olympics, crises in the field, and connections between the field and politics); included general discussion and the chance to ask questions about the program or department; and occured during at least one graduate class, to ensure a base level of participation. Participation for students taking that class was mandatory but had no impact on their grade in the course; other graduate students not taking the course were informed of the chat via email and a post to the department's graduate student Facebook group; students were strongly encouraged to participate.

Because all classes in the department are a mix of in-person and online students, as well as full-time and part-time students, the chats had a mix as well. The chats had a total of 32 unique participants, ranging from 10 to 23 users per chat (based upon class attendance on that particular night and the ability or willingness of students outside of the course to participate), with an average of 17 users per chat. (Individual chat numbers may be slightly different from unique participants, as most users participated in more than one chat, and since the chats happened over multiple semesters, some participants graduated and others joined the program during this time frame). Most often, chat participants were students, with three to six faculty members joining each chat.

All responses and contributions used in this paper included a department hashtag to make following the conversation feasible during the chats themselves. For the purpose of anonymity, the hashtag and the handles and/or names of participants were removed from the results.

Qualitative data. Data were analyzed via a grounded theory approach, with constant comparative coding to identify and establish themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Line-by-line coding established emerging themes, which were then combined into axial coding categories. All three researchers were in contact throughout data analysis.

All three researchers also memoed about their experiences with the chats and what they noticed about student engagement. Memoing is a way for researchers to write "clear descriptions" of how they are interpreting the data as "a final component of analysis . . . an insightful, interpretive exercise" (Warren & Karner, 2010, p. 242).

Quantitative data. A post-only survey was administered online via Qualtrics. Since the program is relatively small and researchers wanted to preserve anonymity, no personally identifying information was collected, participation was voluntary, and students were not offered anything in return for their participation. Students were asked to participate via the graduate program's Facebook page, and the survey was administered in each of the four graduate courses offered in the semester. Of the 31 graduate students in the program at the time of survey administration, 16 participated, for a participation rate of 51.6%. Students self-reported participating in an average of 2.5 chats apiece, with half of students (50.0%) participating in 3-5 chats during their time with the department.

Two scales were adapted and combined to create the survey: the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (Junco, Elavsky, & Heiberger, 2013) and the Sense of Belonging Scale (Good, Rattan, & Dweck, 2012), where questions were adapted from math to the area that students study. The open-ended questions from the survey were adapted from Welch and Bonnan-White's (2012) questions on Twitter enjoyment.

Students were asked 46 Likert-type questions adapted from the scales discussed above: four quantitative questions related to their Twitter usage and participation in the chats and four open-ended questions used to describe their experience with the chats and how they believed the chats affected engagement and education.

Results

RQ1: How are Twitter chats used to connect and engage graduate students with their department?

The chats allowed graduate students to not only engage with one another, but also with the faculty, established through themes of *accessibility to online students, tacit knowledge, explicit knowledge,* and *integrating knowledge across classes.*

Accessibility to online students. Survey results indicated that 69% of students felt the department "very much" or "quite a bit" emphasized attending campus events and activities. For a graduate program that offers a completely online degree program, though, this emphasis for on-campus students can feel isolating for online students who do not live near campus. To account for these geographic limitations, the Twitter chats offered a way for all students to equally participate in an event. This response from the qualitative survey feedback indicates the importance of these types of online events:

> As an online student, chats connect me more so than any other offered activity outside of the classroom. It reinforces the community connection. . . . that I am in fact a member of this

> college community and not just an outsider looking at dozens of emails of things I can't attend or participate in because I can't attend classes on location.

One online graduate student participated in the first departmental Twitter chat and said, "I've only been in the program for one week and I'm enjoying interacting with my professor and classmates so far."

Twitter chats also offered the opportunity for students who had completed coursework and were writing theses or capstone projects to still feel like they were part of a graduate community. In the survey, one student wrote, "I am currently not enrolled this semester and still interact with my professors and classmates." A student who was not able to participate in the Twitter chats one semester noted feeling like they were "missing out on the conversations with other students and faculty." By creating a consistent and ongoing Twitter chat series, students could actively develop community and relationships regardless of their locations.

Tacit knowledge. Twitter chats also offered a way for students to share insider advice and tips with each other that may not have been previously shared. For example, one Twitter chat conversation focused on giving tips for success to each other. This was incorporated into a visual design course where students tweeted a graphic they had created with advice for their fellow students. One student tweeted out advice for research topics in the courses: "Pick a damn good topic for mass comm theory. Your life will be so much easier if you use it for mass comm research methods, too." Faculty members also responded with their advice for success in graduate school. As one faculty member tweeted, "There will be stress. Find one day a week that you do something for yourself." In an even earlier Twitter chat, students were asked about the best things they have learned in the program. One student responded, "I learned that sometimes it's good to just...write! Forget the formalities and be free! [A local author] helped me with that :)." This tacit knowledge sharing also translated into more in-person interactions for some students. In the survey feedback, one student wrote that, “I enjoyed it more because it got the class to have more discussion outside of the Twitter chat.” In reflecting on the Twitter chats, the faculty moderator said that “It’s our online beer after class (except we’re also still in class), a chance to reflect and share on what we know and what we’re doing.”

Explicit knowledge. Although less frequent than community building and tacit knowledge sharing, the Twitter chats also offered an opportunity for graduate faculty to share important reminders and updates with students. Explicit knowledge sharing helped to reinforce information and deadlines that were available online and in emails sent to all graduate students, but that may have been forgotten or overlooked. For example, in one Twitter chat, the moderator took the opportunity to see if students had any questions about the graduation process: “And speaking of forms, who has questions about advising or candidacy or what you have to do to get out of here? #dontleaveus.” Similarly, she shared “a quick reminder, for those of you graduating this semester (!!!!!)—forms are due to [the graduate director] tomorrow!”

Integrating knowledge across classes. Twitter chats also provided an opportunity to both share and reinforce knowledge gained from graduate courses. Each Twitter chat consisted of thought-provoking questions designed to encourage conversation about issues related to the fields of study. Students then were encouraged to apply their course knowledge and professional experiences (along with relevant and humorous GIFs). For example, in a Twitter chat a few days before the 2016 presidential election, one of the questions posed was “What has the election taught us about social media usage in professional settings?” Student responses included “I’ve noticed how often social media commentary can become news,” “It’s too often used for off-the-cuff ‘reporting’ that lacks proper context,” and, “You really need to control your campaign staff, too. Low level staff can say something and cause an issue."

One of the challenges of a professionally oriented graduate program is helping students to see the connection between classroom work—particularly theory and research methods—and their future career options. In a chat from April 2016, the moderator tweeted, "Make your profs feel good: how can you take what you learn in the classroom and apply it to real world experiences?" One student responded that it is a good idea to "Build off of real world things we created . . . like our content creation assignments!" Another student responded, "Networking tip: Talk with absolutely everybody - and their moms and dads." However, in the humorous spirit of the chat, one student did respond to this question with "I'm drawing blanks tbh ;)."

RQ2: How do students make sense of the Twitter chats as part of their graduate education?

While students did gain both tacit and explicit knowledge, they also worked to integrate the chats into their overall educational experience by building *stronger connections overall, peer relationships,* and *faculty relationships.*

Stronger connections overall. Students came into the Twitter chats with social media experience and knowledge already in place—nearly all participants (93%) reported using Twitter outside of the departmental chats, and 73% reported using Twitter in other classes or programs of study. Furthermore, many students saw the connection between the Twitter chats and social media training for a future career or career advancement; however, many of the respondents saw the stronger connection to the graduate program, faculty, and their peers as the most important educational outcomes. The majority of respondents described their overall quality of education in the program as "excellent" (50%), followed by "good" (31.25%), and "fair" (18.75%).

Many students pointed to the Twitter chats as a way to boost their connection with fellow students and with faculty members. The Twitter chats provided a space outside of the classroom for students and faculty to chat about topics related to the program while also allowing students a chance to be free of more formal classroom structures. One student commented, "[The chats] feel like separate time frames that are used to really get to know the department. I don't mind that. I like having a space where this is fun and this is work but we learn from both." Another reported that the chats "made me feel more connected, and therefore, more likely to join in, in class." Both comments are emblematic of the responses many students offered. The idea that being more connected to other students and faculty leads to a greater involvement in the classroom and in the class materials is also evident in the survey results. Nearly 88% of respondents said they asked questions or contributed in class often or very often.

Peer relationships. Many students reported a stronger relationship with their peers as a result of the chats, while reporting a tangential connection to their grade in a class or a specific learning outcome. This, however, did not seem to devalue the chats for students. One student, when asked whether the chats affected grades or classroom performance, responded, "Not really other than to help foster camaraderie with classmates," while another respondent said, "I feel my classroom performance was better because I'm also invested in my colleagues' success."

These open-ended responses were supported by the survey data, as well. The majority of students (75%) surveyed reported that their relationships with other students are supportive or friendly. The remainder of students reported a "sense of belonging" (12.5%), or, for two students, a "sense of alienation" (12.5%). In addition, approximately 82% of respondents reported having conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity often or very often. In addition, nearly 81% of students reported at least sometimes having serious conversations with students who have very different religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values, which helps to support the goals of the graduate program—to help students gain a broader understanding of the world around themselves and to move beyond that which is already familiar.

Faculty relationships. In addition to stronger relationships with peers, many students also reported the chats made them feel like the faculty was more accessible. One student reported, "Twitter chats did not affect my involvement, but it did give direct access to professors (and helped humanize them)." Another respondent added, "It probably showed the professors that we are interested in the department."

The majority of students surveyed reported that their relationships with faculty are "helpful" (56.25%) and "available" (31.25%). In addition, 87.5% of students reported that they had talked to at least one faculty member about their career plans while in the program, and 81.25% reported discussing readings from their classes with a faculty member outside of class at least sometimes.

RQ3: How do students make sense of the Twitter chats as part of their engagement with a graduate school community?

Students overall reported feeling that the Twitter chats improved their engagement with the department community because it allowed them to *"have fun a little," interact with faculty,* be an *active community participant,* and conversely, at times, to feel *bored and overpowered.*

"Have fun a little." In the qualitative survey results, many students reported the feeling of ease and comfort the chats gave them. One student said that they "liked being able to interact with students from different classes and just relax and have fun a little. I enjoy people's humor on the chats." Another student talked more broadly about how they "loved the sense of community I felt," and how that was especially important during “the lighthearted moments and the times when, despite the efforts of some, we just let it get silly for a little bit. It was a nice reprieve from the usual stress.” Graduate school can be a stressful experience, something mentioned often during the chats, so students seemed to have extra appreciation for an activity that was connected to the department but was also a chance to talk about how stressful the department could be.

These chats are often a mix of academic questions, reminders about department information, and then *Friends* quotes, zany GIFs, and questions about zombies. The faculty chat moderator memoed that she:

> likes to be there with a group of students, playing songs and talking and laughing about our favorite tweets, or explaining on the fly how to find the perfect GIF or coming up with hashtags together. That’s where I think some of the real work of this comes into play—the chance to have fun with an online conversation that’s also part of an offline experience.

Interact with faculty. Faculty interaction through the chats helped with a student’s perceptions of their educational experience, as discussed in RQ2, but it also offered a chance for students to see a different, lighter side of their professors, increasing their feelings of engagement and connection. One student talked about how they “like the casual atmosphere the Twitter chats create. It allows us to feel more at ease with professors.” Another indicated that humanizing the faculty was important, where they “like the interaction between faculty and classmates outside of the classroom because I can see their true humor and ideas.” One of the faculty researchers memoed about how they are “teaching my first graduate class this semester, and I feel like I knew a few of the students based solely on the conversations we had in the Twitter chats—and they seemed more comfortable with me because they recognized me from the chats, as well.” Faculty were also able to get in on this, using the chats to find out what students wanted, what questions they had, and reiterating the importance of engagement by asking, "any other ideas ya'll have for grad student fun times? It's important to stick together!" From the survey, 93.75% of students said they found faculty to be available, helpful, and sympathetic overall; while the Twitter chats may not be able to lay claim to the entire reason for that, the quotes discussed here indicate that they certainly helped support that connection.

Active community participant. One of the best benefits the chats offered was for students to almost immediately feel like part of the community. Over 76% of the students surveyed indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the idea that they enjoyed being an active participant in the department, and over 56% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they belonged to the greater academic community. The community building via the chats also acted as an icebreaker, with one student noting that "I liked being able to interact with others in the program. Put a name with a face. It became an icebreaker and helped to create class connections." The chats also helped students feel more comfortable, and to "assess other personalities and made me comfortable with my classmates and other faculty members." Finally, one student said, "Professors I've had have been involved with each student from beginning of semester to end."

The chats also served as a way to introduce students to broader communities. In a chat from April 2016, networking and job searching was a main topic of conversation. One professor noted, "I credit #networking at local PRSA events to the job I'm in now!" and another encouraged students to "get in the habit of #networking in your city. Pick biz casual events where ppl you want to meet will be."

Bored and overpowered. Within the survey, two students (12.5%) did report they felt a sense of alienation within the department; clearly, the chats, and perhaps other factors at work, were not enough to build engagement with every student. One student noted that the chat was "boring. I don't really see the point in them," and another student felt like the chats made them "enjoy myself less. I feel like they take away from class time and don't help at all." While neither of the students elaborated on the reasons behind feeling this way, one student offered a hint, saying, "I liked the different conversations but I did not like that some participants seemed to overpower others in the Twitter chats." This is definitely something to keep in mind for future chats, and as the faculty works to continue to improve student engagement.

Discussion

The main goal of this study was to better understand whether or not a series of Twitter chats for faculty and master's students was able to build engagement and improve education within the department. These chats allowed the department to build upon Pontius and Harper's (2006) seven principles of orientation, community building, and the development and assessment of student success and outcomes in order to improve classroom interaction and to increase application of knowledge to the field as a whole. These outcomes were particularly important since the department has both online and on-campus students who all take classes synchronously.

Many graduate programs are increasingly moving to, or at least incorporating, online options for students (Best Colleges, 2018), and as these programs continue to focus on student enrollment and graduation rates, understanding and utilizing methods to improve student engagement becomes an important focus of research (Junco et al., 2010). The students studied here were able to have more diverse conversations with classmates, to be more involved with faculty, to gain more experience with media tools, and to have additional spaces to ask questions and make connections, all of which should be goals of effective graduate programs. In this section, we spotlight main areas of accomplishment, acknowledge that the goals may not be met for every single student, and offer practical suggestions for other faculty and programs to implement their own chats.

Engagement Learned

Student engagement has improved since instituting the Twitter chats, both within classes and the department, and also at a level of engagement that students see as necessary for successful navigation of the job search and application process. Because social media is such an integral part of a media professional's world, social media engagement and networking is education (Fraustino et al., 2015). While faculty are working to better engage students with their peers and with the department, the Twitter chats are also helping students to better engage with future clients, readers, watchers, publics, and consumers. Some students also work to maintain these Twitter relationships by tweeting outside of the formal chats to each other and to faculty. Additionally, as the number of graduate students who are Black, Hispanic, or over the age of 25 continues to increase, being able to hold conversations with diverse audiences becomes increasingly important (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

The results of this study also reinforce the literature that social media help to create rich and meaningful relationships (Moody, 2010) in a way that goes beyond what some students may experience in ordinary in-class interactions with students and faculty. Engagement increases success, particularly engagement that fosters enjoyment and innovation (Butz, et al., 2016; Hrastinski, 2008; Junco et al., 2010). One of the researchers memoed, "Anecdotally, as a faculty member, I can see where the Twitter chats have fostered and strengthened relationships that may not have otherwise happened—even among the faculty." Offline interaction increases trust among community members, which reduces concerns with sociability, which increases online knowledge sharing, leading to the mix of offline and online interaction seen as the most beneficial component for building community (Matzat, 2010).

This also connects to the importance of non-task oriented interaction in the form of humor and social support (Park & Bonk, 2007). While the levity of the chats may mask some of the skills reinforcement that occurs, most students responded well to the ability to have fun with the chats and used them to humanize their classmates and professors. The chats appeared to increase the willingness to talk about research outside of the classroom and engage with someone different from them. Similar to Hrastinski's (2008) findings, Twitter chats were also a way to incorporate different technological tools into the graduate student experience.

Keep Our Chats Weird

The humor and social support evident in the chats also allows for a more organic and relaxed building of engagement. Trying to make the chats more structured or requiring students to post a specific number of tweets or replies may make students feel "on," or compelled to recite answers to formal questions in an orderly fashion. In some ways, the natural conversation flow and amorphous structure of the chats is what makes them not only fun but also successful. In many ways, the chats are more effective at getting the students to interact than the beginning-of-the-year social event, a common method for boosting engagement. There, people select a seating arrangement at the beginning of the night and usually stay there until the end of the social. Mostly, they talk to students and faculty they already know, or they remain flies on the wall without engaging, and the online students are left out almost entirely due to geographic restrictions. In the Twitterverse, the chats allow for more flexibility, potentially fewer awkward social situations, and a greater chance for everyone to be heard and seen.

This flexibility comes through in the skills gained, as well. From a faculty perspective, students are building social media usage skills, networking skills, impression management skills, social media engagement skills, and critical thinking skills (even if just to outdo the last funny meme that was posted). Part of graduate school is teaching students to be part of the broader academic community and to become peers to the faculty (eventually), so this flexibility, skill building, and connection are all good things.

Perhaps relatedly, some students found the chats to be overwhelming or overpowering, often due to the speed of interaction, or believing that the information discussed was not interesting or relevant to them. These students require attention paid to them and a moderator's ability to draw them out, but they also gain the ability to practice having conversations with people different from them or in situations where they need to network or participate, even if it is complicated.

Typically, visible in both in-person interactions observed by the researchers, and in the analysis performed for this project, Twitter chat nights are upbeat, fun, and exciting. Students like class that night, no matter what happened earlier, and it is powerful to be able to offer them that oasis in what can otherwise be a stressful, demanding, confusing time for them. On Twitter, they do not have to focus on getting the right answer or having the proper insight into a reading; the chat becomes, in a way, the great equalizer, allowing students to engage with a discussion no matter what.

Stop Avoiding the Questions

Some of the more self-reflexive chat questions, those focused on what students were getting from the program and able to apply in professional settings, were often the ones that devolved most quickly into humor and where people didn't really answer the questions. There was, however, an impressive amount of discussion about broader topics within the field, such as the role of social media in the elections and crisis case studies. People seemed to take these questions more seriously, so it seems like the best Twitter chats are those that allow for some community building (through ice breakers and humor) while still focusing on broader societal questions. It is possible that students are not always aware of what they are learning or how much they are learning in the moment, and so having a moderator and a variety of questions and opportunities to answer them becomes helpful.

We See You, and We Like You

The chats worked well to engage online students, a definite boon for a program that encourages student participation in events where not all students can attend. Here, the online-offline combination is potent. The "offline experience" also seems to exist for the online students as well, since their "offline" piece is being in class, even if that class experience is computer-mediated. Students who were not even taking class during a particular semester, and thus might be expected to be slightly less engaged than others, reported using the chats as a way to continue that engagement, and to feel connected to the community at large. Students can also be encouraged to continue using the department's hashtag beyond the chats to engage one another, and the faculty, during other classes, guest speakers, or departmental events.

Suggestions for Starting a Chat

The chats used for this paper were held twice a semester, once at the beginning and once at the end, in order to help students feel connected right from the beginning and to reflect upon what they had learned by the end. Chats were an hour apiece, always the final hour of one graduate class, in order to offer a guaranteed audience for the chat. This class was typically taught by the assistant graduate director, who acted as the moderator. Chats were promoted via class and event announcements and the department's social media pages. Students and faculty were strongly encouraged, but not required, to participate. Suggestions for starting a chat are included below:

1. Familiarize students with Twitter chats, and jump in! The best way to do it is just to start.
2. Develop a good hashtag that can be used over and over, and in

multiple situations. Check to make sure no one else is using it, and that it does not mean something unsavory.

3. Have people introduce themselves, their area of research/ interest, and a great icebreaker.
4. Pick a topic and 2-3 questions surrounding it (related to the department/field/class). Have these prepared in advance and within Twitter's character limitation.
5. Use a platform to make the chat easy to follow, such as TweetDeck.
6. Hold the chat during a class time, so a core group of participants is present.
7. Be willing and prepared for the chat to go off the rails, at least a little bit.
8. Have a moderator, preferably someone who has participated in Twitter chats before, who can help bring things back to the general topic and encourage quieter participants.
9. Make sure other faculty are able to participate and understand how to best engage students on Twitter.
10. Have fun!

Limitations and Future Research

While this project has much to offer in the way of graduate student engagement and community building, it is not without its limitations. One issue with this project is that the survey only reached students who were still in the department, and only approximately half of the students in the department took the survey. Without a pre-test, there is no point of comparison for knowing how students felt about their engagement and education before participating.

Future research into engagement learning could look at what skills develop through engaging, and why students may not conflate this type of learning with "book" learning. Possible future research on Twitter chats specifically as a learning tool can also look at how to foster deeper interactions between faculty members in a program, as this is not often an interaction method for co-workers, and it would be helpful to model that engagement for the students. Additionally, as so many master's programs expand to include both on-campus and online offerings, it would be helpful to test the results in other programs or to compare results among multiple programs.

Conclusion

This research project offered a look at the knowledge building, education, and engagement of graduate students participating in Twitter chats within their academic department. For students in the synchronous hybrid program described in this study, the chats offered the benefit of the cohort model (Martin et al., 2017) and a way for the department to improve the experiences of a variety of diverse learners, thus meeting the goals of the graduate program. Twitter chats can be a fun, interesting, exciting way to help graduate students feel more connected to their department and to build the confidence necessary to go out and be successful members of the field and broader community.

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Does Your PR Course Syllabus Excite, Intrigue, and Motivate Students to Learn? Syllabus Designs and Student Impressions of the PR Course and the Course Instructor

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine how a format of a syllabus influences student motivation and engagement in a public relations course and students' impression of the course and course instructor. This study conducted focus group interviews and a lab experiment with undergraduate students at a large university in the Midwestern United States to examine how a format—design or length—of a PR course syllabus can affect student motivation, engagement, and impression of the course and course instructor. Results from the two focus group interviews were mixed, but students' preferences were geared toward the long version of the visually appealing syllabus. Findings from the experimental study show no effect of syllabus design on student engagement. However, the visually appealing syllabus had an effect on student motivation, and its short version produced positive impressions of the course and course instructor.

Keywords: course syllabus, syllabus designs, student engagement, impression on course and instructor, public relations education

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Scholars have paid special attention to how teachers can engage college students in the classroom and have called for more research to advance theory and best practices (Mazer & Hess, 2016). Instructional scholars have suggested that teachers be agile in creating and adapting course curriculum, especially the course syllabus, to engage college students in the classroom (Hosek & Titsworth, 2016). It is argued that the course syllabus can provide a first impression that may directly influence the interests and motivation of college students, possibly leading to their engagement throughout the semester (Ludy, Brackenburg, Folkins, Peet, & Langendorfer, 2016).

Despite a growing body of public relations education research, public relations scholars have not paid much attention to the importance of a course syllabus design and its implications or effects on student learning. Recently, public relations educators and professionals have recognized the importance of visual communication in public relations practice and education. Richard Edelman (personal communication, June 21, 2012), president and CEO of Edelman, called for "more informative visuals" and "visual representation of information" at the Edelman Academic Summit. Academics have also noted the importance of visual communication in PR education and student learning (Gallicano, Ekachai, & Freberg, 2014; Sisson & Mortensen, 2017). Hence, it is more appropriate for PR educators, in order to practice what they preach, to consider whether or not they should include visual elements in their course syllabus to interest, motivate, and engage students.

By conducting two studies—focus group interviews (Study I, $N = 10$) and an experimental study (Study II, $N = 81$)—this study aims to examine the extent to which the design of a PR course syllabus could influence student motivation and engagement in a PR course, as well as students' impressions of the course and course instructor.

Literature Review

A syllabus is typically seen as a legal document or a contract between an instructor and the students concerning the overall plan of the course, course objectives, student learning outcomes, course expectations, class activities, assessments, and course policies (Fornaciari & Dean, 2014). If the syllabus contents are carefully crafted to create conceptual unity, then they can engage students (Canada, 2013). A syllabus can set a tone for the students and create first impressions on the first day of class that might inspire them to further engage for the rest of the semester (Ludy et al., 2016).

According to Fink (2012), a course syllabus plays a variety of functions, such as a communication mechanism, a planning tool for instructors, a course plan for students, a teaching tool or resource, an artifact for teacher evaluation, and evidence for accreditation. Many of these functions are more or less instructor-oriented. Therefore, more attention and research should be spent on how to construct and design a syllabus to motivate and engage students (Ludy et al., 2016). With this in mind, this study seeks to understand how syllabus design influences students' engagement, motivation, and course impression.

Student Engagement and Course Syllabus

Student disengagement is one of the utmost concerns for educators and has been linked to deviant behavior at school, low academic achievement, and absences (Harris, 2008). To enhance student engagement, scholars have paid special attention to using visual images in the classroom. The findings indicate that using visual images in the classroom can stimulate active learning and enhance student engagement, appeal to students' attention (Liu & Beamer, 1997), increase their interests (Rankin & Hoaas, 2001), and boost satisfaction and participation (Hagen, Edwards, & Brown, 1997), leading to pleasant classroom experiences (Ulbig, 2010). Visual images can also enhance the classroom experience by helping students better understand abstract concepts (Levin, Anglin, & Carney, 1987). Results from an experimental study by Ulbig (2010) suggest that the use of visual images in class presentations imparted by an instructor increased student classroom engagement and student attitudes about the course in general.

Following similar rationales from such studies, other scholars have placed more efforts on how the format or design of the course syllabus (i.e., visually appealing or text-oriented syllabus) impact student interest and engagement. Palmer (2009) offered suggestions on how to use a course syllabus to set a tone of engagement by suggesting required contents in the syllabus: clear, specific learning outcomes; class format; student behavioral expectations; and professional behavioral expectations. Canada (2013) agreed, stating that a well-crafted syllabus can serve as an initial point of engagement for college students by using plain and direct language, friendliness, and humility to appeal to college students. Thus, the format can convey the instructor's style, voice, or enthusiasm to the students, leading to student engagement (Hockensmith, 1988).

To better grasp the effects of syllabi arrangement on student engagement, Ludy et al. (2016) conducted qualitative and quantitative surveys that compared student perceptions of a text-rich contractual syllabus and a graphic-rich engaging syllabus and found that a visual or graphic-rich syllabus can benefit instructors who seek to gain favorable initial course perceptions by students. Their study concludes that while students reacted positively to both designs, students judged the visual syllabus to be more appealing, comprehensive, and suitable to student engagement than the traditional contractual syllabus (i.e., text-oriented syllabus; Ludy et al., 2016). Applying previous research reviewed on student engagement and syllabus design, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Those who read a visually appealing syllabus will be more likely to engage in a PR course than those who read a text-oriented one.

Student Motivation and Syllabus

It is imperative that instructors understand the underlying components of motivation as they pertain to student engagement (Oblinger, 2003). While similar to engagement, motivation remains its own separate variable (Appleton, Christensen, Kim, & Reschly, 2006). Motivation has been conceptualized as the direction, intensity, and quality of one's energies (Maehr & Meyer, 1997), answering the question of "why" for a given behavior (Appleton et al., 2006), belonging (Goodenow, 1993), and competence (Schunk, 1991). Simply put, motivation is tantamount to a student's ability to engage with the course information (Appleton et al., 2006).

According to Wigfield and Eccles' (2000) model of motivation, student motivation and engagement stem from the intrinsic knowledge of responsibility, which means that students must value the course syllabus to become motivated and engaged by it. Therefore, the combination of a student's value of the course and the perception of his or her likelihood to succeed leads to higher levels of motivation (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). However, many students enter higher education with a lack of academic responsibility, which suggests the belief that instructors are responsible for students' learning outcomes and desires should be met (Buckner & Strawser, 2016).

With regard to the association between students' motivation and the course syllabus, Bishop (2006) argued that facilitating student ownership over course materials increases student creativity and motivation. Nilson (2010) also asserts, a syllabus might not only be "the road map for the term's foray into knowledge but also a travelogue to pique students' interest in the expedition and its leader" (p. 33). In addition, scholars agreed that student-friendly explanations (e.g., explanation of course assignment and a list of campus resources) and warm and friendly language on the syllabus can increase student motivation to learn (Richmond, Slattery, Mitchell, & Morgan, 2016).

Recently, Ludy et al. (2016) also found that visually appealing syllabi highlighted with different colors and underlining or bold print leads students to be more motivated to learn the course than text-oriented or contractual-style syllabi. In this regard, scholars suggest that students' intrinsic motivation should be taken into consideration when crafting syllabi (Fornaciari & Dean, 2014). Based on the literature about student motivation, this study examines the extent to which the syllabus design (visual-oriented vs text-oriented) influences student motivation to learn in the PR course. The following hypothesis is posited:

H2: Those who read a visually appealing syllabus will be more likely to be motivated in the PR course than those who read a text-oriented one.

Impression of Course, Instructor and Syllabus

Researchers have examined how the course syllabus affects students' impressions of the course, as well as impressions of the instructors (e.g., Jenkins, Bugeja, & Barber, 2014). Matejka and Kurke (1994) argued that the course syllabus conveys a first impression on the first day of class; it is a statement of preliminary work that instructors put into the course. Furthermore, Saville, Zinn, Brown, and Marchuk (2010) conducted an experimental study that compared a brief version of the course syllabus (e.g., a two-page document with general course information on course objectives, exams, and policies) with a more detailed version (e.g., a six-page document with additional information on course objectives, exams, and policies) and found that the detailed version resulted in higher student impressions of the instructor's effectiveness.

Grounded on Saville et al.'s (2010) findings, Jenkins et al. (2014) conducted an experimental study and found that including different kinds of syllabus information may influence initial impressions of the instructor. They suggested that "a lengthier or more detailed syllabus is not necessarily more beneficial; the addition of restrictive course policies is critical" (Jenkins et al., 2014, p. 133). In addition, Ludy et al. (2016) corroborated the previous research by finding that a more-detailed syllabus increased students' positive impressions of the instructor. However, they did not find impact of the visually engaging syllabus on the impression of the instructor. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis to provide further evidence about whether the syllabus design impacts students' impression of the course and the course instructor:

> H3: Those who read a visually appealing syllabus will be more likely to have a positive impression of the course (H3a) and the course instructor (H3b) than those who read a text-oriented one.

Effects of Syllabus Length

The length of a syllabus (i.e., how much information should be included) has received much attention from scholars (Becker & Calhoon, 1999; Saville et al., 2010). In general, scholars agree that a detailed syllabus is better than a brief one because the detailed syllabus provides students with important course information and influences students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness (Fink, 2012; Richmond et al., 2016). In particular, a detailed syllabus could communicate that a teacher cares about his or her students—one quality of effective teachers (Buskist, Sikorski, Buckley, & Saville, 2002)—but a less-detailed syllabus could lead students to have a negative perception that a teacher is not interested in students' learning or is not approachable (McKeachie, 2002). Subsequent studies also indicate that a lengthier syllabus can influence the positive impressions of instructor effectiveness (e.g., approachable, creative, effective communicator, enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and prepared; Jenkins et al., 2014; Ludy et al., 2016). Specifically, Saville et al. (2010) suggested that a detailed syllabus serves a communicative function, providing students with information about a course, as well as a motivating function, encouraging students to do well in the course.

Despite the benefits of having a detailed syllabus, other research indicates that students tend to either ignore or have difficulty remembering a great portion of syllabi (Smith & Razzouk, 1993; Thompson, 2007) and tend to get bogged down in details (Leeds, 1992). Fornaciari and Dean (2014) also argued that the length of andragogy syllabi has "shifted from long contractually detailed to short[er] and more flexibly constructed" to optimize adaptability for student learning (pp. 712-713). Thus, there has been mixed evidence in previous studies.

Moreover, there is no study that examined the possible moderating role of syllabus length on the effects of a visually appealing syllabus. To fill the research gap, this study proposes the following research questions regarding main and interaction effects of syllabus design and length on student engagement, motivation, and impression:

RQ 1: How will the length of a syllabus affect student engagement in the PR course?

RQ 2: How will the length of a syllabus affect student motivation in the PR course?

RQ 3: How will the length of a syllabus affect student impressions of the course (RQ3a) and the course instructor (RQ3b) in the PR course?

RQ 4: How will the length of a syllabus moderate the effect of syllabus design on students' engagement in the PR course?

RQ 5: How will the length of a syllabus moderate the effect of syllabus design on students' motivation in the PR course?

RQ 6: How will the length of a syllabus moderate the effect of syllabus design on students' impression of the course (RQ6a) and the course instructor (RQ6b) in the PR course?

Methods and Results

To test the hypotheses and research questions above, two studies—two focus group interviews (Study I: FGIs) and one experimental study (Study II)— were conducted. One public relations elective course was chosen for the course syllabus because the course has a large enrollment, and thus, more participants could be recruited. In addition, since it is an elective course, the psychological pressure required to take the course for graduation can be controlled. The designs of the course syllabus with recommended features were crafted based on previous research, and two different design formats—contractual (i.e., text-oriented) and engaging (i.e., visually-appealing)—were used (e.g., Ludy et al., 2016).

Study I – Focus Group Interviews (FGIs)

FGIs Methods

Procedures

Researchers often rely on focus groups to collect data from multiple individuals simultaneously to discuss perceptions, ideas, opinions, and thoughts on certain issues. Focus groups are also used to explore issues before a questionnaire for a quantitative research study is developed (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Therefore, the purposes of the focus group interviews (FGIs) in this study were (1) to obtain detailed information about individual and group perceptions and opinions about the syllabus and (2) develop the stimuli for an experimental study (Study II). Researchers recruited participants using announcements in college courses, flyers, and social media posts.

After agreeing on the consent form about the purpose, procedures, statement of privacy, and benefits, students participating in the focus group sessions received $15 gift cards as compensation. A trained moderator conducted both focus groups. Five participants were recruited for each FGI session (N =10). The FGI sessions took place in a quiet and comfortable room. Complimentary beverages and snacks were provided.

Two FGI sessions were conducted and voice-recorded with students enrolled in communication courses related to strategic communication (e.g., advertising and public relations) at a large university in the Midwestern United States. The information of the course instructor, especially the name, was hypothetically created based on random selection from the list of popular names over the last 100 years, provided by The United States Social Security Administration (www.ssa.gov), in order to avoid the effects of previous experiences or relationships with the actual instructors. Other information on the syllabus (e.g., course goal, objectives, and policies) was presented the same as it was in the actual class.

After completing a demographic questionnaire, participants were asked what contents or information they typically looked for in a syllabus and how many times a semester they would refer back to that syllabus. They were then presented with four different versions of the International Advertising and Public Relations syllabus: short and long versions of text-oriented syllabi, and short and long versions of visually appealing syllabi. The short version of text-oriented and visually appealing design contained four pages that included general course information (i.e., description, instructor name and contact information, and office hours), course goals, learning objectives, required readings/textbooks, course requirements (names of assignments and grade scales), and a course schedule. The eight-page long version of the text-oriented and visually appealing syllabi added the following parts to the short version: detailed assignment descriptions, deadlines, and course policies (i.e., assignment submission, professionalism, attendance, communication, academic integrity and other campus resources such as the counseling center and disability center). The text-oriented version was crafted only using black and white colors. For the visually appealing versions, images relating to the course and assignments were highlighted with different colors and styled with bold and underlined lettering based on previous research (Ludy et al., 2016). The first page of each design type is provided in the appendices.

Each participant received the four versions of the syllabus in random order of length and design. After reviewing all four versions, students answered questions about their impression or reaction towards the different designs, their motivation to take the course, their levels of interest and engagement in the course based on each design, their preference among the four designs, and their impression of each course instructor.

FGIs Results

Participants. Among the total participants (N = 10), there were six females. The average age was 21.9 (SD = 2.18). The majority of participants were white (60%, n = 6), followed by Asian or Asian American (30%, n =3), and Black or African-American (10%, n = 1). Regarding class standing, seven students (70%, n =7) were seniors, two were sophomores (20%, n = 2), and one was a graduate student (10%, n =10). Most of them were majoring or minoring in public relations and advertising or communication-related areas (e.g., media studies) (70%, n = 7), and others were sociology (10%, n =1) and business (20%, n = 2) majors.

Analysis. The focus group interviews were transcribed, yielding 45 pages of typed, double-spaced transcripts. The transcriptions did not include observational or non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions, speech tones, pronunciation, or pauses reflected in the interviews. This analysis relied on a constant comparative method to interpret the transcribed interview texts for key concepts or themes that emerged from the questions posed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Attempts were made to find key concepts for syllabus design and length preferences, students' motivation and engagement in the course, and their impressions of the course and instructor.

General results on syllabus. Students said they have received syllabi with text-oriented designs in most courses they have taken, many with more than five pages. Some mentioned that the visual syllabi mostly came from lower-level courses, while the text-oriented syllabi were from upper-level classes.

When asked what students looked for in the syllabus, most agreed that they looked for the course description, weekly calendars, due dates, textbook information, exams, quizzes, grading breakdowns, attendance policies, class assignments, and papers, if any.

On the first day of class when most of the class time was spent on the syllabus, students said they expected instructors to explain all class expectations. As one mentioned, "I don't think I actually go read the syllabus besides the class schedule or reference to the assignments. I like having the expectations explained to me by the teacher on the first day." After the first day of class, students said they would refer back to the syllabus (frequently for some students) when they needed to check on weekly class activities, assignments, and due dates.

Design and length preferences. Most participants preferred the visual design, and some liked the long version over the short one. They commented that the long syllabus with all the information is more "professional" and "looked important." Although they would keep the syllabus length of eight pages, they wanted the most important parts of the syllabus (such as assignments, class projects, or grading policy) to be on the first few pages. They would not read all pages at first but would know all of the information was there in the long syllabus. One student commented on the visual design of the syllabus: "I like this one because it's colorful. If you got lots of these on the table, you can find that easier. And I like that the highlights and the words are a little bit bigger than the text one."

When asked whether they would like to get a short syllabus with additional handouts on assignments provided later, students said they prefer to have an "all-in-one" syllabus with detailed descriptions of all assignments over getting separate handouts. Students pointed out: "That (separate handout) is going to be lost or be thrown out. I'm going to lose it anyway" and "I like keeping the length, and I like keeping the project descriptions and stuff like that in the syllabus because it's easy to reference." Another student said:

> Here is the thing about the long one: it tells you all the stuff that you have to do.... When I was doing the group project, I would literally have the syllabus on half of my computer screen, so I know I was going through all the components and stuff.

An additional student agreed and explained the reasons for the preference:

> I like the long one more. The short one doesn't have all the information. The short version has all the links, but if you type in all the links, it's more of a pain to do than if you have the information written in front of you already.

But a few students in both focus group sessions expressed that the long version of the text-oriented syllabus "stressed me out," "is cluttered," and is "so much information." These students prefer a concise version with links to additional information, such as university policies that can be found on a website.

Motivation and engagement. Most students in both sessions commented that, while the visual design of the syllabus looked appealing and interesting, their motivation to learn and engage in class is not based on the syllabus design only. They voiced that it depends on the teacher's attitude and enthusiasm on the first day of class. Student feedback on this was represented by the following quotes:

- "It's about the professor's personality, course contents, and a lot of things. Sometimes they just give you very simple, not so

appealing syllabus, but the class is amazing."
• "I don't think my motivation in the class is going to be based on the syllabus. If the teacher passes the syllabus and was super-excited, then I'll probably be motivated to come to the class."

But one student differed and perceived that the visually-appealing syllabus reflected the instructor's efforts to motivate students. She explained, "They want to make sure you are going to learn something out of the class. And they kind of took the time, so you should take the time to care for the class too."

Impression of the course and the instructor. Students mentioned that the visual design of the syllabus indicated that the instructor spent time and effort on the syllabus, meaning they care and want students to be successful. Some said that teachers who hand out the visual syllabus are probably more creative and "trying to get a different perspective." One student remarked: "If the professor gives me a syllabus like this (visual), I'm like, 'Oh, we're going to be friends. We will have so much fun this semester.'"

One student noted that she preferred either of the visual designs—four or eight pages—because they indicated that the instructor put time and effort into creating the syllabus.

> I think the visually appealing one shows that the professor took time and cares about your success in the class…I mean if I'm handed the 4-page black and white, no pictures versus this one and it's the same class just taught by a different professor, I'm taking this professor over this one because it shows that they actually care about students.

Some students further noted that the short version of the text-heavy syllabus with no pictures could be interpreted that the teacher was uncaring. One student commented: "They had to hand you a syllabus, this is what you get. Figure it out. Got a problem, let me know. Have a nice day."

On the other hand, the text-oriented syllabus might convey the seriousness of the course for some students. One student noted that the text-only syllabus made her feel like "I need to work. This teacher means business, and you don't want to mess around in this class." For her, the visual designs with colors and graphics made her think that she can "slack off a little bit" and it would be all right to "get away with missing a few assignments."

In sum, the results from the two focus group interviews showed that most students liked the visually appealing syllabus. However, they did not provide a clear answer in terms of the length of the syllabus and the effect on students' engagement and motivation in the course. At any rate, most students reported positive impressions of the course and the course instructor when they read the visually appealing syllabus, regardless of the length. To find clearer results with reliable statistical significance, we conducted further analysis through an experimental study.

Study II – Experimental Study

After conducting two FGIs, an experimental study was conducted with the students who did not participate in the FGIs. All sessions of the experimental study took place in a lab setting, equipped with tables and computers that allowed students to read the printed syllabus and answer the questions online.

Experimental Study Methods

Participants. Through announcements in college courses, e-mail, flyers, and social media posts, 83 individuals were recruited from undergraduate communication courses at a large university in the Midwestern United States. Deleting two cases with missing data resulted in a total of 81 participants for data analysis ($N = 81$). All subjects participated in the experimental study voluntarily and received $10 gift cards as compensation. Ages ranged from 18 to 31 years old, with an average age of 20.83 (*SD* = 2.41). Nearly 90% (*n* = 73) were female, and 10% (*n* = 8) were male. The majority of participants (82.7%, *n* = 67) were White, 7.4% (*n* = 6) were Hispanic/Latino, 6.2% (*n* =5) were Asian/Asian-American, and 3.7% (*n* = 3) were other races (e.g., Native American). The senior students were dominant (51.8%, *n* = 42), followed by sophomores (19.8%, *n* = 16), juniors (18.5%, *n* = 15), and freshmen (9.9%, *n* = 8).

Procedures. This study used a 2 (design: text-oriented or visually appealing) x 2 (length: short or long) between-subjects experimental design. The same stimuli from the FGIs were used in the experimental study because all participants in the two FGIs confirmed syllabus contents, design, and length in terms of ecological validity.

The questionnaire for the experimental study was created on Qualtrics. After signing a consent form, student participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions, produced by a cross combination of syllabus design (text-oriented or visually appealing) and syllabus length (short or long). According to each condition, a printed version of a syllabus, as a stimulus, was provided for the participants. After reading each type of syllabus, the participants answered questions measuring dependent variables: motivation, engagement, and impression of the course instructor.

A pre-test (*N* = 21) was conducted to check the procedure (e.g., stimulus manipulation and randomization) and other issues (e.g., clarity of questions), and there was no issue in the pre-test. The main test (*N* = 81) was conducted by the same procedure confirmed in the pre-test.

Measures. Multiple items in the experimental study were used for each variable and measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1= not at all to 7 = very much). All items for main variables were adopted from previous research.

The 17-item instrument to measure student engagement is from

Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002), consisting of six items related to vigor (Cronbach's α = 0.87) (e.g., after reading the syllabus, I would feel strong and vigorous when I am studying or going to this class), five items related to dedication (α = 0.85) (e.g., after reading the syllabus, my studies in this class would inspire me), and six items about absorption (α = 0.90) (e.g., after reading the syllabus, I feel happy when I am intensely studying for this class). All dimensions were combined into one construct for engagement.

Motivation was measured by one item (i.e., how likely the syllabus motivates student interest in the course), adopted from Ludy et al. (2016).

Student impression was measured in two aspects—impression of the course syllabus and impression of the course instructor. Adapting Saville et al.'s (2010) measures for Syllabus Detail and Students' Perceptions of Teacher Effectiveness, the impression of the course syllabus was measured with two items (α = 0.89; the syllabus is easy to read and understand, and the syllabus is easy to navigate and find information). The impression of the course instructor was assessed by the students' feelings about the instructor's characteristics and expertise (i.e., teacher effectiveness) based on the syllabus (Ludy et al., 2016). Six items (e.g., the course instructor is enthusiastic) measuring the impression of the instructor's characteristics (α = 0.86) and four items (e.g., the course instructor is knowledgeable) measuring the impression of instructor expertise (α = 0.86) were used in this study.

Demographic information, including gender, race, major, and school year (class identification), were gathered at the end of the experiment.

Experimental Study Results

Manipulation checks. Randomization was successful as all conditions were balanced. Each group was almost an equal size, and demographics in each group (e.g., major, race, and school standing) were all balanced without any significant differences at 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). The manipulation of syllabus design was successful, as intended. To check the manipulation of design and length, the following question was used: "the syllabus provides detailed explanation of obligations for both instructor and student in text-rich design with black and white," and participants were asked to provide an answer on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The independent samples T-test revealed that there was a significant difference in the mean scores for the text-oriented version ($M = 6.39$, $SD = 1.02$) and visually appealing syllabus ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 2.43$) conditions, $t(79) = 5.38$, $p = 0.00$. The manipulation for length was checked through the independent samples T-test. The result demonstrated that those who received the long version ($M = 5.80$, $SD = 1.86$) were more likely to report "the detailed explanation of obligations for both instructor and student" (i.e., course policy) than others who received the short version ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 2.33$), $t(79) = 2.13$, $p = 0.03$.

For the length manipulation check, participants were also asked to provide answers to true or false questions about one of the course policies (i.e., late assignments are accepted without any penalty), which was included only in the long version. Those who received the long version ($n = 76$, 93.8%) were more likely to answer true than others who read the short version ($n = 5$, 6.2%). There was significant difference between two groups, (1) = 5.20, $p = 0.02$. Overall, the analyses demonstrated that participants perceived different length and design among conditions as expected.

Testing hypothesis. H1 hypothesized that a visually appealing-syllabus would have a more positive effect on student engagement, and RQ1 and RQ4 asked how the length of a syllabus would affect or moderate the effect of syllabus design on student engagement in a PR course. To test H1 and answer RQ1 and RQ4, a two-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run by using SPSS Statistics 24 for the different effects of syllabus design and length on engagement. For the engagement, significant main and interaction effects were not found. Differences of visually appealing and text-oriented design ($F(1, 77) = 0.09$, $p = 0.77$, Partial Eta Squared (η^2) = 0.00), short and long length ($F(1, 77) = 0.58$, $p = 0.48$, $\eta^2 = 0.00$), and an interaction term of design*length ($F(1, 77) = 0.84$, $p = 0.36$, $\eta^2 = 0.00$) did not reach statistical significance in terms of engagement in the course. Therefore, H1 (a more positive effect of a visually appealing-syllabus on student engagement) was not supported.

For the student motivation by different syllabus design and length, H2 predicted that a visually appealing syllabus would have a more positive effect, and RQ2 and RQ5 asked how the length of syllabus would affect the motivation or moderate the effect of syllabus design. ANOVA was conducted again and revealed that there was a significant difference only for design, $F(1, 77) = 8.29$, $p = 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.10$. Participants who received the visually appealing design ($M = 4.93$, $SE = 0.30$) were more likely to be motivated in the course than others who received the text-oriented design ($M = 3.70$, $SE = 0.30$). Therefore, H2 (a more positive effect of a visually appealing syllabus on student motivation) was supported. There was neither a main effect for length nor interaction effect of length and design for student motivation.

Regarding the impressions of the course, H3a suggested that a visually appealing syllabus would have a more positive effect, and RQ3a and RQ6a asked how the length of a syllabus would affect the impression of the course or moderate the effect of a syllabus design. ANOVA yielded that there was a significant difference only for length, $F(1, 77) = 4.65$, $p = 0.03$, $\eta^2 = 0.06$. The shorter syllabus ($M = 5.87$, $SE = 0.27$) was more positively associated with impressions of the course syllabus than the longer one ($M = 5.01$, $SE = 0.27$). Hence, H3a (more positive effect of a visually appealing syllabus on the impression of the course) was supported.

For the impressions of the course instructor, H3b suggested that a visually appealing syllabus would have a more positive effect, and RQ3b and RQ6b asked how the length of a syllabus would affect the impression of the course instructor or moderate the effect of a syllabus design on the impression of the instructor in a PR course. To test H3b and answer RQ3b and RQ6b, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted because there were multiple dependent variables that were conceptually correlated. Impressions of instructor characteristics and expertise were measured separately. When there is more than one dependent variable, a MANOVA is preferred over a series of ANOVAs because a MANOVA has an advantage of "the protection against inflated Type 1 errors" caused by conducting multiple ANOVAs independently (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013, p. 246). Prior to conducting a MANOVA test, a Pearson correlation (r) analysis among the variables for the impression with two factors ($r = 0.50$, $p < .001$) was conducted to justify the use of a MANOVA analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outlier, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity, with no serious violations noted.

There were the main effects, as well as interaction effect with statistical significance. Specifically, significant differences were found between text-oriented and visually appealing designs, $F(2, 76) = 13.65$, $p = 0.00$; Wilks' Lambda (λ) = 0.74, Partial Eta Squared (η^2) = 0.26, between short and long lengths, $F(2, 76) = 6.98$, $p = 0.00$; $\lambda = 0.84$, $\eta^2 = 0.16$, and the interaction term of design and length, $F(2, 76) = 8.13$, $p = 0.00$; $\lambda = 0.82$, $\eta^2 = 0.18$, for the combined impressions of the course instructor.

When the results for the dependent variables, impressions for the course instructor characteristics and expertise were considered separately, significant differences were found only for impressions of the characteristics of design: $F(1, 77) = 13.46$, $p = 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.15$, and length: $F(1, 77) = 7.65$, $p = 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.90$. There was no significant difference found for the impressions of the course instructor expertise. The mean scores indicated that those who read the visually appealing syllabus were more likely to have a positive impression of instructor characteristics (M = 5.13, SE = 0.18) than those who read the text-oriented syllabus (M = 4.20, SD = 0.18). Also, those who read the short version of the syllabus were more likely to perceive instructor characteristics positively (M = 5.00, SD = 0.18) than those who read the long version of the syllabus (M = 4.31, SD = 0.18). Thus, H3b (more positive effect of a visually appealing-syllabus on the impression of the course instructor) was partially supported.

Regarding RQ6b, in addition, the interaction effect of design and length was found only in the impression of instructor characteristics, $F(1, 77) = 8.75$, $p = 0.00$, $\eta^2 = 0.10$. Those who read the visually appealing syllabus were more likely to have a positive impression of the instructor characteristics when they read the short version (M = 5.85, SD = 0.26) than when they had long version (M = 4.40, SD = 0.26). Post-hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the mean differences (M = 5.85 and M = 4.40) of visually appealing syllabi were significantly different at the significance level of 0.01 (p = 0.004). However, the mean differences of those who read text-oriented syllabi were not significantly different regardless of the length differences—the short version (M = 4.22, SD = 0.25) or the long version (M = 4.17, SD = 0.26) (See Figure 1).

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the extent to which a format or a design of a PR course syllabus influences student engagement and motivation for the course and the impressions of the course and the course instructor. Two studies—focus group interviews and an experimental study—revealed that (1) the design and length of a syllabus did not

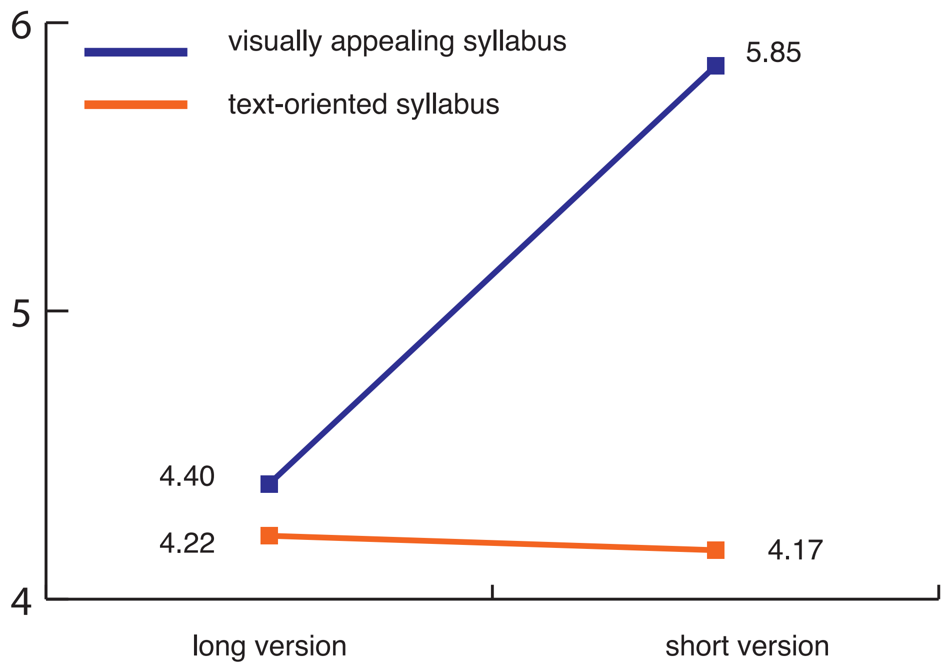

Figure 1. Interaction effect for design × length for the student impression of the course instructor characteristics.

make any difference for student engagement in the course, (2) a visually appealing design made a difference for motivation in the course, and 3) a visually appealing syllabus mattered for the course impression and the course instructor.

In both studies, students preferred visually appealing syllabi with different elements of design. They found the visually appealing syllabi to be more interesting but not significantly engaging. Focus group participants preferred a visual design, and some liked the long version over the short one. However, the design of the syllabus did not necessarily motivate them to learn or engage in the class. This finding is similar to a result in the experimental study, which indicates that student engagement in the course was not influenced by differences of syllabus design, length, or the interaction of two independent variables. It could be plausible that the participants may be highly engaged already in the course itself, demonstrated by the high mean scores across independent variables (above 4 on a 7-point Likert-type scale). Also, the finding could be caused by consistent tone and style in the syllabus languages across the different designs that might generate different psychological or emotional factors (e.g., students' sense of belonging or emotional climate), which can be influential for engagement (Soria & Stebleton, 2012).

In the experiment, however, the visually appealing syllabus was positive with statistical significance for student motivation in the course, consistent with findings from FGIs in this study. The findings are also in line with previous research that accounts for the positive effect of visualized contents in students' classroom experience (e.g., Ulbig, 2010), as well as student motivation in the course (e.g., Ludy et al., 2016). Not surprisingly, the results indicated that the course instructor can stimulate more active learning from students through visual images or contents of the course syllabus. However, this result could be limited to the general motivation for the course due to a single-item measurement. Further research should be conducted to provide more fruitful results indicating more detailed motivations related to both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

Regarding students' impressions of the course, there were inconsistent results across the two studies: the FGIs and the experiment. The participants from the focus groups also preferred a long version because they wanted complete, step-by-step instructions of assignments in the syllabus. However, the results of the experimental study demonstrated that students who read a short syllabus would be likely to think that the syllabus is easy to read and understand, as well as to navigate and to find information. In addition, the experimental study found that the shorter syllabus is better for positive characteristics of the course instructor such as being approachable, personable, creative, enthusiastic, and open-minded.

This result indicates that additional information for the longer version, such as assignment description with deadlines, course policies, and other campus resource information (e.g., counseling and disability center), is not beneficial for positive impressions of the course, as well as the course instructor. In this regard, this study extends the previous research about preferences for a lengthier or more detailed syllabus regarding course effectiveness (e.g., Ludy et al., 2016). Contrasting with the findings from the previous research, this study suggests that the syllabus is sufficient for itself and course instructor effectiveness if it contains general information about the course, textbook, categorized assignments with grade scale, and course schedule. Also, this could be added into the empirical evidence for how flexible syllabus features or contents should be included in support of researchers who advocate for the shorter and flexible construction for the syllabus (Fornaciari & Dean, 2014).

This study also found that the visually appealing syllabus can generate positive impressions of the course instructor, compared to the text-oriented one. Based on the focus group interviews, students perceived the instructor who designed a visually appealing syllabus to be more creative and caring. In the experimental study, the positive characteristics of the instructor were also influenced by length, particularly short—a result of an interaction of length and design. Especially, the effect of the visually appealing syllabus on the impressions of the course instructor became stronger when students read the short version, as the post-hoc test revealed (See Figure 1). This result demonstrates how important a visually appealing syllabus is for perceived course instructor effectiveness—that is, design matters in an effective syllabus. The plausible explanation for the finding is that current students have more familiarity and enjoyment of being provided with a variety of visualized inputs (Phillips & Trainor, 2014).

Implications

As a pragmatic implication, the results provide insight into the importance of making syllabi a well-crafted document by using visually appealing contents. As some participants addressed in the FGIs, visualized content is not limited to visual images but can be achieved by underlining or highlighting text with different colors or bolded letters. By doing so, PR course instructors can benefit from the positive impressions of their course, as well as themselves, as the first impression may be weighted more heavily than other sources of information (e.g., instructor reputation; Buchert, Laws, Apperson, & Bregman, 2008). More importantly, the results for the length (i.e., a short syllabus) indicate the elevated importance of the type of information that is included.

Furthermore, these results provide meaningful insight into how course instructors build and develop relational rapport with their students through the course syllabus. Relational rapport with the course instructors is of paramount importance to college students (Morreale & Staley, 2016). It can increase students' class participation, affective learning, and satisfaction with the course (Frisby & Myers, 2008). By creating a short, visually appealing syllabus, instructors can build relational rapport with students and expect positive results subsequently. Thus, the results in this study provide the need for the course instructors' efforts on the syllabus for teaching effectiveness, as a well-designed syllabus can help them increase student learning (Monaco & Martin, 2007).

Limitations and Future Research

There are some limitations that should be addressed for future research. Both studies, the FGIs and the experimental study, relied on a convenience sample as the researchers recruited students based on availability at a Midwestern university. Although this nonprobability sample was cost-effective and efficient for this study, more studies are needed to replicate and generalize the results. In addition, the PR course selected (International Advertising and Public Relations) may have contents or topics that students are already interested in, which could have resulted in high scores on their likelihood to engage, regardless of the design and length. Different PR courses should be used in future research. Prior attitudes for the course should also be controlled in future research. With today's increasing use of online syllabi on the web, a comparison between a printed, visually oriented syllabus and an online web version should also be explored in future research.

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Appendix A
The First Page Example for Text-Oriented Syllabus Used in the Study

ADPR 4600 International Advertising and Public Relations
Spring 2017, Section 101
Tu/Th: 09:30 a.m. ~ 10:45 a.m.

Professor: Jacob Miller, Ph.D.
Office: Johnston Hall 413
Phone: 414-288-0826
Email: Jacob.miller@marquette.edu

Office hours: 1:30 ~ 3:00 p.m.
on Monday & Wednesday

A career in advertising or public relations requires imagination, dedication and a willingness to embrace the challenges of ever-more diverse marketplace. My objective is to help each of you develop a thirst for and knowledge about international brands, people and the cultures in which people and brands live. In this course you will be asked to stretch critically and intellectually, often stepping outside your comfort zone.

COURSE GOAL
This course is designed to help you develop knowledge and skills related to strategic communications with global audiences. The course addresses a variety of topics including the role of culture in strategic communication, differences in styles of communication across groups, and the role brands play in this process. The course explores culture as it applies to integrated marketing communication (advertising), public relations, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and public diplomacy.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
By the end of this semester, students will learn to:
- Acquire knowledge related to the role of culture in communication, differences in styles of communication across groups, and the role brands play in this process.
- Gain knowledge about the ever-increasing development of the field across the world and the opportunities it offers, especially in governmental, transnational business, NGOs, and agencies.
- Evaluate a range of characteristics across various international audiences and be able to determine effective ways to strategically communicate with these audiences.
- Increase awareness of the different types of private, public, for-profit, non-profit, and activist organizations that use public relations strategies in a global arena.
- Understand multiculturalism and diversity and socially responsible ways of communicating with international audiences that respects the cultural and economic needs.

Required Reading / Textbook:
- Mueller, B. (2010). *Dynamics of international advertising: Theoretical and practical perspectives*(2nd ed.). New York: Peter Lang Inc.
- Freitag, A. & Stokes, A. (2009). *Global public relations: Spanning borders, spanning cultures*. New York: Routledge.

Other reading assignments (e.g., journal articles, book chapters) will be assigned throughout the semester. All additional readings are posted on D2L. You will be expected to read, in advance, all readings assigned for each class meeting. This course is highly discussion-based, and therefore the expectation is that you will read and prepare for each meeting so you can fully participate in class.

- 1 -

Appendix B
The First Page Example for Visually Appealing Syllabus Used in the Study

ADPR 4600
International Advertising and Public Relations
Spring 2017, Section 101
Tu/Th: 09:30 a.m. ~ 10:45 a.m.

Professor: Jacob Miller, Ph.D.
Office: Johnston Hall 413
Phone: 414-288-0826
Email: Jacob.miller@marquette.edu

Office hours: 1:30 ~ 3:00 p.m.
on Monday & Wednesday

A career in advertising or public relations requires imagination, dedication and a willingness to embrace the challenges of ever-more diverse marketplace. My objective is to help each of you develop a thirst for and knowledge about international brands, people and the cultures in which people and brands live. In this course you will be asked to stretch critically and intellectually, often stepping outside your comfort zone.

COURSE GOAL

This course is designed to help you develop knowledge and skills related to strategic communications with global audiences. The course addresses a variety of topics including the role of culture in strategic communication, differences in styles of communication across groups, and the role brands play in this process. The course explores culture as it applies to integrated marketing communication (advertising), public relations, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and public diplomacy.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this semester, students will learn to:
- Acquire knowledge related to the role of culture in communication, differences in styles of communication across groups, and the role brands play in this process.
- Gain knowledge about the ever-increasing development of the field across the world and the opportunities it offers, especially in governmental, transnational business, NGOs, and agencies.
- Evaluate a range of characteristics across various international audiences and be able to determine effective ways to strategically communicate with these audiences.
- Increase awareness of the different types of private, public, for-profit, non-profit, and activist organizations that use public relations strategies in a global arena.
- Understand multiculturalism and diversity and socially responsible ways of communicating with international audiences that respects the cultural and economic needs.

Required Reading / Textbook:

- Mueller, B. (2010). *Dynamics of international advertising: Theoretical and practical perspectives*(2nd ed.). New York: Peter Lang Inc.
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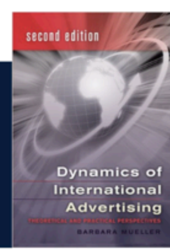

Other reading assignments (e.g., journal articles, book chapters) will be assigned throughout the semester. All additional readings are posted on D2L. You will be expected to read, in advance, all readings assigned for each class meeting. This course is highly discussion-based, and therefore the expectation is that you will read and prepare for each meeting so you can fully participate in class.

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Public Relations Ethics: Senior PR Pros Tell Us How to Speak Up and Keep Your Job

Book reviewed by
Denise Bortree, Penn State University

Authors: Marlene S. Neill and Amy Oliver Barnes
Business Expert Press, LLC, 2018
ISBN: 9781947098640 (paperback); 9781947098657 (eISBN)
150 pages

In an age of misinformation and fake news, the role of public relations professionals increasingly includes guiding organizations toward transparency, integrity, and ethics. In addition, professionals are taking stock of their own personal ethical decision making, as they encounter ethically murky situations in the work world. In the book *Public Relations Ethics: Senior PR Pros Tell Us How to Speak Up and Keep Your Job*, authors Dr. Marlene Neill, APR, assistant professor at Baylor University, and Amy Barnes, APR, associate professor at University of Arkansas, Little Rock, offer advice for today's public relations professionals. The book addresses important questions about providing ethical counsel, leveraging personal influence to persuade leadership's ethical decision making, and deciding when to walk away from a job.

Packed with research and interviews with senior professionals, the book brings together decades of research on public relations ethics and presents it in an accessible way that's useful for practitioners, researchers, and students. Moving from topic to topic, the book offers a map for someone who is building personal influence as an ethics counselor or someone who is currently facing an ethical dilemma. Frequent stories and quotes from the profession give the reader a good sense of how professionals understand and address ethical issues. It is clear that the authors have spent years in public relations practice and bring that experience, along with their strong research skills, to this topic. Chapters wrap up with a summary of the key points and "Questions to Ponder" that give the reader an opportunity to reflect on their own experiences and how they may match (or not) the experiences shared in the book.

Ethical Principles and Ethics Counsel

The first chapter of the book introduces basic ethical concepts and explains more advanced ethical principles, establishing the purpose and value of the book to public relations. It then argues the need for public relations to be the ethical conscience of the organization, stating that the department's unique position as a boundary spanner and environmental scanner lends it to this role. However, the authors argue, being an ethical conscience is a challenging position. "This role takes courage as it often involves providing less-than-welcome advice to people who may outrank you" (p. 14). The rest of the book helps instruct readers about how to prepare for and implement this role.

Role of the Ethics Counselor

Having established the need for ethics counsel and argued that public relations is uniquely qualified for the role, the book moves on to answer the next important question: "So what can public relations do to earn respect so that their counsel is valued?" (p. 19). Chapter 2 explains how "power" and "influence" help fuel successful advocacy and how public relations professionals need to have influence in order to act as counselors to senior management. Internal organizational structures and personalities can create barriers to influence in public relations. One of the most important ways to build influence is through building relationships and coalitions as discussed in Chapter 3. As the authors point out, internal collaborations can raise challenges for the ethics counselor, and this chapter offers suggestions for addressing these challenges.

Advice from Senior Professionals

Sometimes the best way to make an ethical decision is to hear what others have done. Chapter 4 allows the voices of senior professionals to guide the reader through the process of building and leveraging influence to advocate for an ethical cause. The professionals share their struggles and the outcomes (good and bad) of their own attempts to offer counsel. In an interesting twist, the chapter also looks at how gender might influence the way public relations professionals engage strategies to influence management. The results of a study of PRSA Fellows and Page Society members found that male and female leaders find different strategies to be more successful. The chapter wraps up by sharing strategies to avoid when offering ethics counsel.

Chapter 5 builds on the advice in Chapter 4, and the authors dig deeper into the issue of leveraging allies and coalitions to advocate for an ethical cause. Insights offered in this chapter aid the readers in understanding the political dynamics of organizational settings. These include suggestions to help identify influencers within an organization and ways to gain access to current coalitions. As the chapter says, "Being politically savvy also means knowing who sits on influential committees and how decisions are made in an organization" (p. 59).

When Ethics Counsel Fails

Chapter 6 begins by making an important observation, "Sometimes ethics counsel falls on deaf ears" (p. 67). What if an ethics counselor implements the strategies recommended in this book but is unable to convince management to reconsider an ethical decision? According to the authors, three options exist: drop the issue, appeal to someone else, or find another job. How to decide which is the best option is the subject of Chapter 6. By offering examples and principles to consider, the authors help the reader clarify the importance of the issue they are addressing and how best to move forward. When should a professional consider rocking the boat or becoming a whistleblower, as the chapter title suggests?

Practical Advice for Ethics Counselors

So how does a professional prepare to become an ethics counselor? Chapter 7 offers many suggestions, including mentorship and training. The authors argue that one role of ethics counselors is creating an ethical culture in an organization by communicating values, building structures that encourage ethics, and rewarding ethical behavior. Chapter 8 defines ethical culture and explains its value for the organization. In Chapter 9, the authors share practical guidance that would help new public relations professionals perform more successfully in any organizational setting. These nuggets of advice come from senior practitioners and range from "young professionals need to build business literacy" (p. 101) to "leadership involves listening to the concerns of various stakeholders" (p. 112). The book wraps up (Chapter 10) with suggestions for engaging with ethics topics every day. These bits of advice include reviewing codes of ethics, reading case studies and blogs, and talking to others about ethics. This is good advice especially for young professionals, and the last two chapters make this book not only a reference for senior practitioners but also a good source of information for young practitioners alike.

Recommendation

Who can benefit from reading this book? Faculty, including both teachers and researchers, would appreciate this book. At only 140 pages, it could easily be added to a reading list for a graduate or undergraduate course on ethics. The writing is clear, and topics in the book follow logically, allowing those who have not worked in the field to understand the importance of ethics. Researchers will appreciate the way the authors weave together decades of research on public relations ethics and demonstrate how it translates to real-world practice. The book also identifies areas where more research is needed.

I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say all senior public relations professionals should read this book. In a communication environment ruled by social media, organizations that are caught acting in unethical ways will experience public reprimands with far-reaching consequences. Preventing mistakes like this begins by creating a culture of ethics within the organization that allows employees to raise ethical issues when they see them. This book offers excellent advice to both senior and junior professionals that would help create such an environment.

Overall, this is an excellent, well-researched book, and it presents professional dilemmas and solutions in a way that resonate as authentic. I would strongly recommend this book to students who are preparing for the work world or public relations professionals who want to improve the effectiveness of their ethical counsel.

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New Media and Public Relations (3rd Edition)

Book reviewed by
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Editor: Sandra Duhé
New York: Peter Lang, 2018
ISBN: 9781433132735 (paperback); 9781433101243 (eISBN)
336 pages

The third edition of *New Media and Public Relations* offers a comprehensive edited collection of original research regarding digital, social, and mobile media in public relations and strategic communications contexts. Readers of this edition will engage with entirely *new* content, which spans the most prolific period of new media research thus far between 2012 and 2016. This book is most appropriate for graduate students and faculty in communication disciplines who are seeking an array of new theoretical and practical concepts addressing corporate and nonprofit applications of new media, ethical and diversity implications of new media, and crisis implications of new media. It makes a strong contribution to public relations education by offering creative and cutting-edge applications of social media and public relations theory while offering excellent recommendations for future digital and social media research trajectories.

Organization of the Book

Structurally, the book features 30 chapters that are divided into eight separate categories. First, an introduction by Duhé analyzes the status of new media research since 2012. She found that scholars have largely focused on applications, perceptions, and concerns regarding new media in public relations. The introduction concludes with a spotlight on unique theoretical contributions, such as Hon's (2015) development of a digital social advocacy model, Valentini's (2015) critical analysis of social media, Li's (2016) testing of a psychological empowerment framework for social media, and Vujnovic and Kruckeberg's (2016) research regarding the concept of pseudo-transparency. The remaining seven parts feature chapters addressing emerging or groundbreaking ideas regarding new media research, corporate applications of new media, nonprofit and education advancements in new media research, ethical implications for new media use, activism and new media, community management and new media, and lastly, crisis management applications of new media.

Inclusion and New Media

Part 2, dedicated to emerging ideas, offers especially thoughtful calls for more inclusive, global, personal, and publics-focused scholarship regarding new media and public relations. Vercic, Vercic and Sriramesh's chapter entitled, "Where have all the publics gone: The absence of publics in new media research," argues that the majority of new media research remains limited to a North American perspective and remains "silent" on issues of privacy, diverse and marginalized publics, and the remaining digital divide. Similarly, Brand and Beall's chapter entitled, "Cognitive listening theory and public relations practices in new media" acknowledges the understudied concept of listening in the context of new media. Applying Harfield's (2014) cognitive listening model, they argue, can best enable public relations professionals to understand and interpret voices and contexts of diverse publics, manage social media listening on a global scale, and foster an effective listening environment within organizations.

Nonprofits, Ethics and New Media

Parts 4 and 5, dedicated to non-profit and ethical applications, also provide creative and thoughtful theoretical models and professional best practices for engaging with publics in the digital and social media spheres. Sutherland and Mak's chapter in Part 4, for example, acknowledges the challenges of integrating social media and traditional media in non-profit organizations. The authors recommend the blending of dialogic and relationship management principles in order to best foster a consistent flow of communication, integration of social media and traditional media, and relationships among all key publics. Their integrated social media communication model (p. 137) offers a guide for doing so. Similarly, Sisson's chapter acknowledges the lack of research regarding relationship management, ethics, and social media. After a thorough review of extant scholarship, she argues for greater focus on the concept of control mutuality in ethical non-profit engagement in order to give voice to all publics. In Part 5, McCorkindale applies theoretical concepts regarding care ethics (i.e., Gilligan, 1982; Tronto,1993) and moral reasoning (i.e., Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) to social media. Citing Tronto (1993), she emphasizes the importance of caring about publics (attentiveness), taking care of publics (responsibility), care giving for publics (competence), and care receiving by publics (responsiveness) (p. 163). McCorkindale's chapter concludes with important recommendations for practice emphasizing the tenets of responsibility, nurturance, and compassion online.

Activism and New Media

Part 6 features research regarding understudied practices of activism in digital and social media environments. Frohlich's chapter, for example, offers an extensive review of activism and social movement scholarship, focusing on the evolution of new media, public relations efforts, and activist relations. She argues that organizations must better develop specific social media strategies to engage activists and consider them as key organizational stakeholders. Similarly, Lee, Chon, Oh, and

Kim's chapter applies the situational theory of problem solving (STOPS) and communicative action in problem solving (CAPS) theories to activist publics, who are assumed to be quite active on social media. Particularly valuable is the authors' list of digital communicative activism behaviors addressing dimensions of information acquisition, information selection, and information transmission of digital activists (pp. 202-205). This list and the concluding paragraph offer new scholars excellent ideas for future research regarding digital activism, especially concerning best communication approaches to foster online relationships among organizations and digital activist publics.

Recommendations

Ultimately, Sandra Duhé's third edition of *New Media and Public Relations* is a joy to read. It offers timely, original, and insightful considerations for public relations students, scholars, and practitioners who are interested in digital, mobile, and social media theory development and practice. The book is well organized and provides balanced and substantial content regarding a variety of nonprofit, educational, corporate, and activist new media contexts. To strengthen future editions, the addition of a chapter that concludes the book is suggested. The concluding chapter might discuss overarching themes across all contributed chapters, overarching applications of the research to professional and educational contexts, discussion questions for classroom engagement, or additional directions for future research.

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Mastering Business for Strategic Communicators: Insights and Advice from the C-suite of Leading Brands

Book reviewed by
Patricia A. Swann, Utica College

Editors: Matthew W. Ragas and Ron Culp
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320 pages

The internet and social media's powerful influence on today's communication landscape has been a game changer for public relations, and it has opened an opportunity for the chief communication officer (CCO). As Ragas and Culp note, "You cannot *not* communicate" in our lighting fast, interconnected world. How an organization responds, however, is often rife with hidden obstacles just waiting to trip up even the most experienced professionals. One word can make all the difference, as the authors point out, citing United Airlines' passenger-dragging fiasco and their use of the jargony word "reaccommodate" in their clumsy apology. Today's uber-scrutiny of organizational messages and actions doesn't leave room for much error. Ragas and Culp's new book seeks to shed light on how CCOs manage and inspire ("woo") their organizations strategically.

Point of View

Ragas and Culp are public relations faculty in the College of Communication at DePaul University in Chicago. In 2014, they wrote *Business Essentials for Strategic Communications: Creating Shared Value* *for the Organization and its Stakeholders*. This text provided students with the essential "Business 101" knowledge, including financial statements, the stock market, public companies, corporate disclosure, governance, social responsibility, and reputation.

Their new text, *Mastering Business for Strategic Communicators: Insights and Advice from the C-suite of Leading Brands*, continues their premise that today's modern communication student needs to understand business in order to help organizations communicate effectively. Where their first book gave students a solid business foundation, this book takes the reader into the mind of the senior communication professional.

Format

Following the book's table of contents is a list of 46 communication professionals representing corporate, agency, higher education, and philanthropic organizations. Contributors include communication executives from General Electric, General Motors, Edelman, MillerCoors, Starbucks, Southwest Airlines, and Levi Strauss & Co. to name just a few. Guest contributors give their take on their organization's DNA such as history, culture, structure, products/services, and challenges, all within the sphere of communication. Contributors give their views on the phrase "business acumen" and how it applies to their personal work success.

Structure

In Part 1, the chapter "Advising 'The Room Where it Happens': The Business Case for Business Acumen," presents the book's justification for what follows. Ragas and Culp quote Bob Feldman, co-founder and principal of PulsePoint Group, that "basic business skills are still required," and "the need for basic leadership skills is stronger than ever" (Feldman, 2016, as cited in Ragas & Culp, p. 6). Feldman noted that to get a seat at the table, professionals would be judged on their professional "stature, business acumen and performance" (p. 7).

Each chapter represents one organization and a mix of executives, including its CCO. Executives are featured in boxed interviews called "Career Spotlight" and "C-suite View," which focus on career advice and supplemental information.

Part II, titled "Communications, Business Acumen and the C-Suite" (chapters 2-4), presents Weber Shandwick's Gary Sheffer, senior corporate strategist, who details the challenges of General Electric's complex acquisition deal of the French company Alstom, and MillerCoor's Peter Mario, chief public affairs and communications officer, explains why he decided he needed to hone his business acumen and go back and get an MBA.

Part III, titled "Finance and Investor Relations" (chapters 5-6), includes Kathryn Beiser, a former communication executive for Discover Financial Services, explaining how "numbers need a storyteller" to communicate the company's strategy and accomplishments in its financial filings to investors and other stakeholders (p. 52). Carole Casto, vice president of marketing and communications for Cummins, Inc., details some of the key investor relations communication activities—quarterly earnings releases, annual meeting of shareholders, and the analyst day.

Part IV, "Human Resources and Employee Engagement" (chapters 7-9), provides a much-needed look at this employee-focused practice area. Often forgotten or lopped off due to time restraints, this section explains how communication practitioners at Starbucks work closely with their "partners" because customers say the positive human interaction is the main reason for return visits (p. 69). For this reason, company culture is important. Corey duBrowa, former senior vice president, global communications for Starbucks, says Starbucks' partners often identified key issues early, which helped Starbucks address them earlier. Anne Toulouse, vice president, global brand management and advertising at Boeing, offers her experience of working with HR and communications.

She advises practitioners to get a mentor and "pull deep knowledge" about your field (p. 85).

Part V, "Corporate Strategy, Innovation and Legal" (chapters 10-13), features a journalist's transition into corporate communication for Southwest Airlines. Another chapter deals with the importance of strategy in business and provides some sage advice from a Walgreens Boots Alliance communication executive to make sure your assumptions are right (p. 109). Mark Bain of Upper 90 Consulting gives a brief introduction to the legal department and why communication professionals should interact with the legal staff.

Additional sections include Part VI, "Marketing, Brand, and Data Analytics" (chapters 14-16); Part VII "Social Responsibility and Transparency" (chapters 17-19); and Part VIII "Communication and Corporate Transformations" (chapters 20-22). Part IX sums up the book with Ragas and Culp providing observations and conclusions about the contributors' advice (Chapter 23).

The book also provides readers with short biographies of contributors, resources on business acumen, a glossary, and an index, which are useful.

Recommendations

For public relations programs that provide a business foundation, this book is valuable because it reinforces basic terminology and business concepts from a CCO perspective. It's conversational in tone and is a quick read. It tells us how top communication professionals view their roles and duties in today's organizations. It would be a good supplemental textbook at the undergraduate or master's level for strategic communication or public relations courses that introduce or focus on leadership and management concepts such as a case study course.

If you are looking for detailed information about how communication executives accomplish specific strategy or tactical tasks, you'll need to find another alternative. It does not show, for example, how research contributes to strategic planning and implementation of tactics or how to form effective fast-acting social media teams. Instead, the book discusses the strategy, counseling and leadership side of managing the public relations function—all important to understand. The sidebar "C-Suite Views" that discussed CEO expectations for their CCO or what it takes to succeed in the role were particularly interesting.

The book's design could have benefitted from a more readable typeface for the "C-suite View" sidebar features, and the black-and-white photos of contributors are somewhat hazy.

Overall, it is exciting to see a book like this one, and I hope this is just the beginning. For years, our field has discussed the need for developing business IQ and understanding the expectations of professional communicators within the C-Suite. Here is a book that does both.

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