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Editorial Staff

Note from the Editor-in-Chief:
We are pleased to welcome our new editorial board members, who are listed on the following page, and we thank them for their service and support. This impressive group of public relations professors and researchers held its first board meeting at AEJMC 2019 in Toronto.

As usual, the editorial team listed above invested an incredible number of hours of work into this issue. Thank you to each of them. We have happily added a designer to the team to handle the layout of the issue. We are glad to have you join us, Brandi.

Thank you to those who have reviewed manuscripts for JPRE this year. You all have completed a valuable service to the field, and it is appreciated.

Journal of Public Relations Education
Editorial Review Board

AEJMC JPRE Public Relations Division
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Different Formats, Equal Outcomes? Comparing In-Person and Online Education in Public Relations

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A survey of students enrolled in undergraduate online and in-person courses in public relations (N = 452) allowed for comparisons between the two course formats in terms of student motivations, satisfaction, grades, and characteristics that predict success in online environments. Findings revealed that student satisfaction and grades were equivalent between the online and in-person courses. Additionally, the Test of Online Learning Success (TOOLS) was applied to public relations education, and findings indicated some differences but more similarities among students in online and in-person classes regarding the following five factors: academic skills, computer skills, independent learning, dependent learning, and need for online learning (Kerr, Rynearson, & Kerr, 2006). Implications are discussed related to students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

Keywords: Online education, distance learning, public relations, survey, Test of Online Learning Success (TOOLS)

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A recent article by Seth Godin (2017) offered provocative ideas and stirred debate about higher education. The article's headline, "No laptops in the lecture hall," with the sub-head, "How about this instead: No lecture hall," summarizes the author's thoughts about traditional college lectures being antiquated and inefficient. Instead of large in-person lectures, he suggests short (8-minute) video lectures delivered online, followed by interactive conversations. He does not seem to argue entirely for online education, but perhaps for a hybrid experience, which some universities are already offering. Godin's article is just one example of the differing opinions that exist about various formats of education as our society has grown increasingly dependent upon technology for many forms of communication, entertainment, and education.

In recent years, a number of researchers have studied online teaching and learning, sharing perspectives of both faculty and students from various disciplines (e.g., Donavant, 2009; Kerr, Rynearson, & Kerr, 2006; Kim, Liu, & Bonk, 2005; Kleinman, 2005; Poniatowski, 2012; Song, Singleton, Hill, & Koh, 2004; Wallace, 2003). While an image of successful online education is taking shape, more research is needed to continue to understand this educational practice, particularly in the fields of journalism and mass communication (JMC), including public relations (Castañeda, 2011; Moore, 2014). Because these fields rely on media and technology that change rapidly and because these majors are popular at colleges and universities across the United States, studying communication education in an online setting could benefit students, faculty, staff, and administrators in terms of determining if, when, and how to offer such courses, as well as who might be best to teach and take such classes.

As students' needs change and as universities across the country experience budget cuts and issues with traditional classroom settings, online education is growing at an incredible rate (Kauffman, 2015). Online course options have been proliferating since the 1990s. In 2001, 56% of all two- and four-year degree-granting institutions offered distance education courses with more than 2.8 million students enrolled in these courses across the United States (Waits & Lewis, 2002). By 2010, student demand for online courses and programs increased dramatically with more than 6.5 million students enrolled in at least one online course (Allen & Seaman, 2011). More recent data indicate even more growth in online course offerings with 31.6% of all students taking at least one online course; more than half of those taking online courses (16.7%) are taking a combination of online and traditional courses (Seaman, Allen, & Seaman, 2018). Indeed, while online course options are on the rise, most U.S. colleges and universities still offer traditional classes to accompany their online course offerings. When students have a choice, do they prefer traditional or online public relations courses? And which type of PR course leads to better learning outcomes, grades, or satisfaction among students? These are some of the questions this research seeks to answer. Additionally, what motivates public relations students to take one type of course over the other? And what characteristics are helpful for succeeding in online public relations courses?

A measure of online student characteristics known as TOOLS—Test of Online Learning Success—has been constructed and validated to document the student characteristics that are important for achieving success in online courses (Kerr et al., 2006). However, it is not known whether TOOLS works across academic disciplines, nor whether these characteristics are very different from what makes students successful in traditional classroom settings as well (Kauffman, 2015). Simply put, more research is needed into what makes online teaching and learning successful across disciplines, including in JMC and public relations.

The purpose of this paper is to explore these issues related to online education in public relations (specifically) by comparing four undergraduate courses offered at the same university and taught by the same professor in the same semester in two consecutive years. By comparing student grades and satisfaction, exploring responses to a survey about motivations for taking one course over the other, and assessing the student characteristics measured by TOOLS, this research aims to contribute to our understanding of online education, particularly in JMC and public relations.

Literature Review

As digital natives continue to enter higher education programs, demand for online courses has grown. What once may have been perceived as a phenomenon associated with for-profit institutions is now a focus for traditional public universities. According to recent data, public universities teach the largest portion of online students (67.8%). However, these online enrollments are highly concentrated; only 5% of educational institutions have almost half of all distance education students (Seaman et al., 2018). Interestingly, students are not necessarily taking online courses because of distance. More than half (52.8%) of all students who took at least one distance course also took courses on campus, and more than half (56.1%) of those who took only online courses actually reside in the same state as the institution in which they were enrolled; a very small proportion (less than 1%) of online students are international. Despite the fact that the majority of students taking online courses are also taking more traditional, in-person courses at the same time, the number of students taking courses on a campus dropped by more than one million (or 6.4%) between 2012 and 2016 (Seaman et al., 2018). To remain competitive and economically viable in this environment, universities have become more proactive about encouraging faculty to develop online courses and degree programs, and JMC programs have responded accordingly (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Castañeda, 2011; Palfrey & Glasser, 2008).

Online Education in Journalism, Mass Communication, and Public Relations

According to Sutherland (2003), JMC programs first implemented "web features" into courses in 1985 and 1990. Referring to diffusion of innovations theory, Sutherland (2003) dubbed these programs "innovators," and those that started offering such courses in 1993-94 were "early adopters." Between 1995 and 1999, 101 additional programs began implementing web features into courses, meaning the early and late majority of JMC programs—and even the "laggards" of those surveyed at the time—were offering courses with online components by 2000 (Sutherland, 2003). In a more recent survey of accredited JMC programs (Castañeda, 2011), online courses, defined as those that deliver 80% or more of content online with no face-to-face meetings, were more common than hybrid courses, in which 30-79% of content is provided online with some in-person meetings. Web-facilitated courses, which means 1-29% of content is delivered online, were the most common among accredited JMC programs at the time (Castañeda, 2011). This study did not offer more specific information about public relations courses, in particular.

Some say that research in online learning seems to fall into four camps: there is no significant difference between online and traditional learning; online learning is more effective than face-to-face learning; online learning is less effective than face-to-face learning; and results of comparisons are too mixed, or courses are too different to draw effective conclusions (Castañeda, 2011). Indeed, various studies have reported different results in terms of student grades and satisfaction. At least two studies have compared online and traditional management classes and found no significant differences between the two classes in terms of grades (Daymont & Blau, 2008; Friday, Friday-Stroud, Green, & Hill, 2006). Moore and Jones (2015) studied introductory journalism writing courses and found that students in a hybrid course were more satisfied than students in an online course; the authors found mixed results in terms of grammatical skills among students by the end of the courses. However, multiple instructors taught these courses over the course of four semesters, so results could be attributed to a number of factors (other than or in addition to the course format).

One study that compared different formats of online learning for a mass communication course concluded that online discussion boards may help students who have difficulty expressing themselves in a traditional classroom (Rosenkrans, 2001). In particular, asynchronous discussion environments (where participants can log into a site anytime and participate at their convenience) were preferred by students (Rosenkrans, 2001). Similarly, research on diversity and online education reported that some students prefer asynchronous discussion boards because they provide a permanent transcript and time to reflect and formulate responses to thought-provoking questions (Shlossberg & Cunningham, 2016).

While numerous public relations scholars have turned their attention toward faculty and student use of technology in the classroom in recent years (e.g., Curtin & Witherspoon, 2000; Fraustino, Briones, & Janoske, 2015; Kinsky, Freberg, Kim, Kushin, & Ward, 2016; Tatone, Gallicano, & Tefertiller, 2017), there seems to be limited research into online education in public relations. One study (Kruger-Ross & Waters, 2013) applied the situational theory of publics to online learning and found that awareness (or problem recognition), involvement, and constraint recognition were related to students' (N = 182) information seeking and processing in online PR courses. Another study examined instructor and student interaction across multiple online public relations courses taught by various faculty at one university over the course of two years (Moore, 2014). The author found that student-student interaction and self-discipline seemed to be the biggest predictors of success and satisfaction with online classes. Moore (2014) also noted that research regarding online

PR courses had been "particularly deficient" and suggested that future research compare online PR classes with traditional formats (p. 272).

This research seeks to fill that gap by comparing four undergraduate public relations courses taught by the same professor in the same semester in consecutive years (fall 2016 and fall 2017) at the same university. With all other elements being equal, this study aimed to explore how course format (online vs. in-person) might affect student satisfaction and grades, as well as student motivations for taking one type of course over the other. With these goals in mind, this study asked the following preliminary research questions:

RQ1: What motivates students to take an online versus in-person course in public relations?

RQ2: What is the relationship between course format (online vs. in-person) and student satisfaction?

RQ3: What is the relationship between course format (online vs. in-person) and student grades?

Student Characteristics for Online Learning Success

Although there seems to be limited research into online education in JMC and public relations, there is significant research about online education in general, including the characteristics that might make students successful in online learning environments. Kauffman (2015) summarized the literature related to student characteristics and skills needed to be successful in online courses in various disciplines. According to existing research, these characteristics and skills include the following: higher emotional intelligence, including self-awareness of needs and adequate management of feelings (Berenson, Boyles, & Weaver, 2008), self-discipline, time management, organization, planning, and self-evaluation skills (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005; Ruey, 2010; Waschull, 2005; Yukselturk & Bulut, 2007). Additional research has shown success in online courses among students who have visual and read-write learning styles (Eom, Wen, & Ashill, 2006), as well as those who are self-motivated and self-directed, demonstrating an internal locus of control, with above-average communication and technological skills (Dabbagh, 2007).

These findings make sense when one considers the nature of online learning. As Kauffman (2015) noted: “More responsibility is placed on the learner, especially in asynchronous courses. The student is responsible for reviewing course material, taking exams at scheduled intervals, etc., which requires adequate self-regulation skills” (p. 7). Other research confirms the need for students to feel involved, have a sense of self-efficacy, and to be self-directed in their learning in online, flipped, or blended courses (Chyr, Shen, Chiang, Lin, & Tsai, 2017). Perhaps not surprisingly, some research has shown that students report feeling alienated or isolated when taking classes in online environments (McInnerney & Roberts, 2004; Tsai, 2013). However, encouraging online academic help-seeking (OAHS), which refers to students requesting assistance from peers or others through the internet, seems to help (Cheng & Tsai, 2011; Chyr et al., 2017). So, how do students know if they possess the skills and characteristics necessary to succeed in online courses, and how can faculty and administrators help students determine this fit before enrolling in online courses that may not be a good fit for their learning styles?

One measure—the Test of Online Learning Success (TOOLS)—has been created and validated to empirically assess such characteristics in students (Kerr et al., 2006). It measures subscales identifying students’ individual behavioral strengths and weaknesses regarding online learning. TOOLS was created over several years through three studies that assessed myriad characteristics that have been observed to be predictive of student success in online settings. While these studies were extensive, all of the research was conducted in Texas with education and social science courses. As scholars have noted (Kauffman, 2015; Kerr et al., 2006), more research is needed to explore whether TOOLS translates across diverse geographic regions, university types, and academic disciplines.

Much of the TOOLS research thus far seems to focus on non-traditional students. One study (Donavant, 2009) applied TOOLS to examine professional development training for police officers and found no statistically significant differences based on their TOOLS scores between those who completed and those who did not complete the training. Another study assessed discussion board post patterns among 14 students in a Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) course and found few differences in terms of quality or frequency of posts among students based on their TOOLS scores (Kim & Bateman, 2010). To date, it does not seem that TOOLS has been applied to students in JMC courses, including public relations, and there does not seem to be much research comparing online and in-person courses, which Moore (2014) suggested is needed.

The test of online learning success includes 45 items measuring five characteristics that correlate with student success in terms of course grades and also with other characteristics that predict positive online learning experiences. The five areas assessed by TOOLS include academic skills, computer skills, independent learning, dependent learning, and need for online learning (Kerr et al., 2006). More specifically, the "academic skills" assessed by TOOLS refer to proficiency in reading and writing, which are arguably important for any type of learning. These academic skills have been reported to be the best predictor of student performance as measured by grades in online courses (Kerr et al., 2006). The test also measures independent learning and dependent learning, which are essentially the inverse of each other. The independent learning subscale yielded the most consistent results across previous studies, and it consists of items that assess a student's ability to manage time, balance multiple tasks, and set goals. It also measures traits and behaviors regarding self-discipline, self-motivation, and personal responsibility. The items that measure dependent learning, on the other hand, describe students who need reminders from faculty regarding assignment due dates and other characteristics that would seem to make most learning (in-person or online) more difficult. According to previous research, students with high independent learning scores received significantly higher course grades than those with low independent learning scores (Kerr et al., 2006).

Computer skills, also known as computer literacy, is the fourth dimension assessed by TOOLS. Of course, one can imagine why such skills might be important to facilitate online learning or any learning in most modern classroom settings; however, previous research has shown that there was no difference in course grades when comparing students with high versus low levels of computer skills. As scholars note, as long as students have some degree of computer skills and as long as instructors and/or institutions provide some degree of technical support, even students with poor computer skills can perform well in online courses (Kerr et al., 2006).

Finally, TOOLS measures need for online learning, which consists of items related to students' schedules, geographic distance from campus, and other elements that may make online learning more advantageous for some students. It makes sense that this subscale would predict a student's need or desire for taking online classes, but what about the other subscales measured by TOOLS? Do these characteristics differ across students taking an online versus in-person course in public relations? Because there is limited research on TOOLS and it does not seem to have been applied to students in the fields of JMC or public relations, this study proposes a hypothesis related to one of the student characteristics measured by TOOLS and then asks a research question related to the remaining characteristics.

H1: Students in online courses will show higher levels of need for online learning, one of the characteristics measured by TOOLS, than students in in-person courses.

RQ4: What is the relationship between course format and the other student characteristics measured by TOOLS (i.e., academic skills, computer skills, independent learning, and dependent learning)?

The Current Study

The current study compares four undergraduate Public Relations Principles courses—two online and two in-person—taught by the same professor in consecutive fall semesters at the same university—a large, public institution in the United States. All four classes were large. In the first year, 120 students enrolled in the in-person course, and 135 students enrolled in the online course. In the second year, the school lowered the number of students who could enroll in both courses, and the in-person class had 106 students while the online class had 113 students. The instructor aimed to keep the two course formats similar in most respects, other than the modes of course content delivery. For example, the in-person classes met twice a week, for an hour and 15 minutes per class period. Meanwhile, most weeks, students in the online courses had to watch two "modules" per week. The modules consisted of the same (or similar) PowerPoint slides used in the in-person class, and the instructor used Adobe Presenter to record a voiceover to narrate the content in the slides. In conformance to recommendations provided by the university, the modules were typically no more than 10 to 15 minutes in length, so it can be argued that the in-person students received more content, but the modules that were made for the online classes contained the same basic information that would be important to students regarding course concepts, definitions, and examples that would aid in student understanding and completing course assignments. The online courses utilized asynchronous discussion boards, audio and video components, and various types of student-instructor content interactions that are recommended by previous online education research (Fabry, 2009; Moore, 2014; Rosenkrans, 2001).

All four courses used Blackboard as the content management system, although the online classes relied on Blackboard to a greater extent. Both class formats also relied upon four exams as the main method of assessment (80% of the final grade). The other 20% of the final course grades consisted of discussion board assignments in the online classes and of class attendance, participation, and in-class assignments for the in-person classes. Students in both course formats had approximately 10 discussion board or in-class assignments throughout the semester. The online class was asynchronous, meaning discussion boards were open to students 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; however, there were strict due dates for discussion board assignments as well as for exams. Course syllabi and other information are available upon request.

Methods

This study employed an online survey of students in the four undergraduate Public Relations Principles courses described at the end of the literature review. Online education researchers encourage the use of surveys to uncover students' responses regarding effectiveness of such courses (Graham & Scarborough, 1999; Picciano, 1998; Rosenkrans, 2001). The questionnaire included the 45 items that measure the five subscales assessed by TOOLS—academic skills, computer skills, independent learning, dependent learning, and need for online learning—along with items designed to measure student motivations for taking a particular course, as well as satisfaction with the course. Demographic items also assessed students' gender, age, race/ethnicity, year in school, major, and employment status. There was also one open-ended question that asked students for additional comments about the course. Final grades were pulled from both courses to help answer the research question related to course grades.

The online survey was developed using Qualtrics software and was distributed via email to students in the two courses in late November 2016 and then to the next set of two courses around the same time the next year (late November 2017). Participation was not required, but students were offered extra credit for completing the survey. The survey was anonymous, and all research procedures were approved by the university's institutional review board. The body of the email and the consent form students read before participating in the study noted that taking the survey was voluntary and anonymous. Students' emails and names were not collected, and students were notified they would not be personally identified in any published results. Teaching assistants tallied the extra credit points for the students. In terms of the rationale for the survey, the instructor explained that the purpose of the study was to explore motivations for taking the course, as well as "how the class has been for you." The instructor also relayed the following to students: "There are also several items in the survey that will help educators determine what characteristics are important for success in online and traditional course offerings."

Survey Measures

After identifying which section of the course students were in (online or in-person), students were asked the following two questions about their motivations: "Why are you taking this course?" and "Why did you choose this section of this course?" Response options are discussed in the findings section related to RQ1.

Student satisfaction was measured with three items adapted from previous research (Kim et al., 2005; Song et al., 2004). Students were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the following statements: "Generally or overall, I am satisfied with this course"; "I would recommend this course to a friend"; and "Compared to other similar courses, I feel like I learned a lot in this course." Response options were on 5-point Likert-type scales ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). After collecting responses, these items were assessed for reliability and demonstrated internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$). Thus, these items were summed and averaged to create a composite measure of satisfaction ($M = 4.32$, $SD = .67$)

The 45 items making up the five subscales assessed by TOOLS are listed in Appendix A. Participants were asked to rate their agreement with all of the statements using a Likert-type response format ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). After collecting survey responses, all of the TOOLS subscales were assessed for reliability and demonstrated internal consistency. Specifically, reliability measures were as follows: academic skills ($\alpha = .74$, $M = 3.94$, $SD = .41$); computer skills ($\alpha = .96$, $M = 4.71$, $SD = .49$); independent learning ($\alpha = .84$, $M = 4.16$, $SD = .48$); dependent learning ($\alpha = .81$, $M = 3.61$, $SD = .80$); and need for online learning ($\alpha = .85$, $M = 2.67$, $SD = .94$). The items in each TOOLS subscale were summed and averaged to create composite measures for further analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using SPSS (Version 24.0) and jamovi (jamovi.org, n.d.). The results of the analyses are described next, beginning with demographic information about the survey respondents.

Findings

As mentioned, 226 students enrolled in the two in-person classes over the course of the two fall semesters. The online classes had 248 students the same two consecutive fall semesters; it should be noted that the online courses had five students drop out or withdraw from the class the first year. During the second year, one student moved from the online class to the in-person class because she was visually impaired and decided the in-person class would be better for her. The survey was completed by 452 students across the two classes (in-person $n = 207$; online $n = 245$), for a response rate of 95%.

The demographics of the class formats were similar in some ways. The average age of students in all four classes was about 20, and the majority of students in both class formats were white (about 83% in-person; almost 85% online). Both class formats were majority female, with more male students in the in-person sections (22%), compared with the online sections (11%). The in-person classes had more public relations majors (49%) compared with the online classes (22%), while the online classes had more marketing/business and "other" majors (51%) than the in-person classes (31%). In terms of employment, the online classes had more students employed either part-time or full-time (65%) when compared with the in-person classes (50%). Other demographic information about the students in both course formats can be found in Table 1.

The first research question (RQ1) asked: "What motivates students to take an online versus in-person course in public relations?" The majority of students in both course formats took the course because it was required for their major or minor, and for some it fulfilled an elective requirement. However, the in-person classes were filled with primarily PR majors (65%, n = 134) followed by some PR minors (29%, n = 60), while the online classes were filled with primarily PR minors (47%, n = 116) followed by some PR majors (35%, n = 86). There were more students taking the course to fulfill an elective requirement in the online classes (17%, n = 41) than in the in-person classes (5%, n = 10). One student in the in-person format and three students in the online format selected "the topic sounded interesting" as the main reason for taking the course.

Beyond major, minor, and elective requirements, the two major motivations for taking a particular format of the course came down to scheduling and preference. More specifically, the majority of students in the in-person format (58%, n = 121) selected "the course days and times fit my schedule," while the majority of students in the online format (76%, n = 187) selected "the online option best fit my busy schedule."

Table 1. Sample characteristics by course format (In = In-person; On = Online)

Variables	**In (*N* or *M*)**	**(% or *SD*)**	**On (*N* or *M*)**	**(% or *SD*)**
Age	20.14	1.61	20.60	1.11
Gender :				
Male	45	22%	27	11%
Female	161	78%	218	89%
Prefer Not to Answer	1	< 1%	0	0%
Race/Ethnicity:				
American Indian	1	< 1%	0	0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	5	2.4%	7	2.9%
Black/African American	17	8.2%	19	7.8%
Hispanic/Latino	5	2.4%	7	2.9%
White/Caucasian	172	83.1%	208	84.8%
Other	7	3.3%	4	1.6%
Major:				
Public Relations	102	49.3%	55	22.4%
Advertising	13	6.3%	12	5.0%
Journalism	6	2.9%	20	8.2%
Other Communication	22	10.6%	34	13.8%
Marketing/Business	31	15.0%	62	25.3%
Other	33	15.9%	62	25.3%
Year in School:				
First Year	2	< 1%	4	1.6%
Second Year	93	44.9%	41	16.7%
Third Year	75	36.2%	112	45.7%
Fourth Year	35	16.9%	84	34.3%
Fifth Year +	2	< 1%	4	1.6%
Employment:				
Full-time	7	3.4%	14	5.7%
Part-time	96	46.4%	144	58.8%
Not employed	104	50.2%	87	35.5%

Note. Percentages are based on $n = 207$ for the in-person class and $n = 245$ for the online class, with the exception of age, which had 206 responses for that particular item for the in-person class.

The second most selected option for students in the in-person format was "I prefer traditional courses to online courses" (32%, $n = 67$), while the second most selected option for students in the online format was "I prefer online courses to traditional courses" (11%, $n = 27$). Approximately 3% of students ($n = 7$) in the in-person courses selected, "I have never taken an online course and did not wish to take one," while two students in the online courses selected, "I am not on campus this semester so the online course was my only option." Another 4% of students ($n = 8$) in the in-person courses selected "other" and specified things like, "I have ADHD and focus better in an in-person class"; "I am a PR major and decided my PR foundation courses should be taken in person"; "I took the online version and it was far more difficult so I decided to retake it and take the in-person class instead"; and "I am a transfer and wasn't sure how I felt about doing an online course my first semester." Similarly, about 3% of students ($n = 7$) in the online courses selected "other" and wrote in reasons such as: "I needed the class due to medical instructions" and "this was the only section available when I registered."

The second research question (RQ2) asked: "What is the relationship between course format (online vs. in-person) and student satisfaction?" Results from an independent samples t-test indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in terms of satisfaction between students in the in-person classes ($M = 4.35$, $SD = .67$) and the online classes ($M = 4.30$, $SD = .68$), $t = .839$, $p = .402$. Because of the marginal differences observed between students in the two course formats, follow-up statistical equivalence tests were conducted using two one-sided tests (TOST) procedures (see Lakens, 2017, for a detailed overview) in order to discern whether the difference was small enough to denote equivalence. Findings from the TOST analysis revealed students in the two course formats exhibited statistical equivalence on the measure of satisfaction, as denoted by statistically significant upper and lower TOST equivalence test t-values (TOST Upper = 6.14, $p < .001$; TOST Lower = -4.46, $p < .001$).

An additional open-ended question asked students in both course formats: “Is there anything else you would like the instructor to know about your experience in this course?” Students wrote in varying responses, some of which commented on the nature of the online or in-person courses and noted some differences between the two formats, especially in terms of student satisfaction and learning preferences. Some of these comments shed light on possible best practices for online teaching and learning in public relations. For example, students in the online courses wrote in responses such as, “I really enjoyed the video modules. I love being able to pause them and take notes . . . .You can’t do that in an in-person course!” and “I liked the discussion questions and thought they cultivated critical thinking.” Another wrote, “The discussion boards are just tough enough that you cannot fake them, but relatively easy and stress free.” Students in the online courses seemed to appreciate the organization of the course, consistency of weekly due dates, reminders that were sent, and “very good email communication!” Others in the online courses appreciated being able to work at their own pace: “I liked the format of the course a lot because I was able to learn from it, but at my own time and pace.” Another student said: “This was my first online class I have ever taken and I really enjoyed it! I feel like I learned a lot more with the online class because I could go at my own pace, while also completing many other classes and a part-time job.”

Some of the comments from the online courses seemed to stem from students having fairly low expectations for online learning. For instance, one wrote: “I love the way online lectures are set up with the powerpoint [sic] and audio. You made an online class much more interesting that I thought it would be!” Others commented, “I appreciated the effort put into each online video module as well as the appropriate amount of reminders for remaining online workload," and "This was one of the better online courses I have taken in the past four years!" Others expressed frustration with previous online course elements: "One thing I dislike about past online courses is that the professor will use a software associated with the textbook that can make the class extremely costly (up to $200) on top of tuition. I like that this class was blackboard based [sic] and a lot more affordable."

Students in the in-person classes enjoyed the guest speakers that were brought in to speak about various types of public relations jobs. One student in the in-person section wrote: "I have really enjoyed this course and appreciate the frequent guest speakers. I much prefer being in class." Others commented on the variety of examples, videos, discussions, and other teaching techniques used in the in-person classes. For example, several students enjoyed the "openness to class discussion," and others commented on qualities such as enthusiasm, care or concern for students, or said things like, "thank you for bringing so much energy and life to this class." Another student commented: "Having a class that meets face-to-face is nice because it allows us to have conversation, have guest speakers, and other modes of learning that may not be available via an online platform."

As with any class or set of student evaluations, there were also criticisms and suggestions about how to improve the course. Students in both course formats commented about the exams being too difficult, and one student wrote, "I think more group work would be helpful." Another student asked for a few more assignments "for students to boost their grade." Some of these comments were not specific to either format and could be applied to both course formats. At least two students who took the online course seemed to think the in-person course would have been better. One wrote: "I felt that the supplemental videos were not as extensive as the notes people receive in the traditional classroom setting."

Another commented: “I think I would have done better in the in-person section of this class because it was hard to break up the online work throughout the week and I found myself doing it all in one day which wasn’t beneficial.” The attendance policy was mentioned as a complaint among students in the in-person course.

The third research question (RQ3) asked: “What is the relationship between course format (online vs. in-person) and course grades?” Results from an independent samples t-test indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between students in the in-person classes (M = 87.02, SD = 6.80) and the online classes (M = 88.08, SD = 9.05) in terms of course grades, t =-1.75, p =.081. Because of the marginal differences observed, follow-up statistical equivalence tests were conducted using TOST procedures (Lakens, 2017) to determine whether the difference was small enough to denote equivalence. Findings from the TOST analysis revealed students in both course formats exhibited statistical equivalence in terms of their grades, as denoted by statistically significant upper and lower TOST equivalence test t-values (TOST Upper = −9.29, p < . 001; TOST Lower = 5.78, p < .001).

The fourth research question and one hypothesis were related to the student characteristics measured by TOOLS. The hypothesis predicted that students in the online format would show higher levels of need for online learning than students in the in-person format. Results from an independent samples t-test indicated that there were statistically significant differences in terms of need for online learning between students in the in-person format (M = 2.25, SD = .92) and students in the online format (M = 3.02, SD = .80), t = −9.38, p < .001. Students in the online course reported higher levels of need for online learning, and the difference between the two groups was significant. Thus, H1 was supported.

This study’s last research question (RQ4) asked: “What is the relationship between course format and the other student characteristics measured by TOOLS (i.e., academic skills, computer skills, independent learning, and dependent learning)?" According to independent samples t-tests, there were no statistically significant differences between students in the in-person format and the online format in terms of the remaining characteristics measured by TOOLS, including academic skills, computer skills, independent learning, and dependent learning (see Table 2). Because of the marginal differences observed between students in the two course formats for all four of these subscales, follow-up statistical equivalence tests were conducted using TOST procedures. Similar to the findings related to student satisfaction and course grades, results from the TOST analyses revealed students in the two course formats exhibited statistical equivalence in terms of academic skills, computer skills, independent learning, and dependent learning (see Table 2).

Finally, although it was not the focus of a research question, the study also examined the TOOLS characteristics and student satisfaction related to students' year in school, and there were some interesting findings. In terms of satisfaction with the course, there was a significant negative correlation between year in school and satisfaction (r = -.114, $p < .05$). There was also a significant negative correlation between year in school and independent learning (r = -.108, $p < .05$). There was a significant positive correlation between year in school and need for online learning (r = .157, p = .001). The relationships between year in school and the three remaining variables measured by TOOLS (computer skills, academic skills, and dependent learning) were not significant. Implications related to these findings as well as to the findings specific to the research questions and hypothesis are discussed below.

Discussion

This study may be one of the first to assess online undergraduate education in public relations, specifically looking at student motivations for taking online versus in-person courses and comparing similarities and

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and results from t-tests and TOST procedures for academic skills, computer skills, independent learning, and dependent learning

Variable	M	SD		Welch's t	df	P
Academic Skills: In-person	3.95	.41	t-test	0.895	437	0.371
Academic Skills: Online	3.92	.41	TOST Upper	6.19	437	<.001
			TOST Lower	−4.40	437	<.001
Computer Skills: In-person	4.68	.46	t-test	−0.974	445	0.331
Computer Skills: Online	4.73	.50	TOST Upper	4.34	445	<.001
			TOST Lower	−6.28	445	<.001
Independent Learning: In-person	4.11	.46	t-test	−1.698	445	0.090
Independent Learning: Online	4.19	.48	TOST Upper	3.61	445	<.001
			TOST Lower	−7.01	445	<.001
Dependent Learning: In-person	3.55	.77	t-test	−1.123	445	0.262
Dependent Learning: Online	3.64	.82	TOST Upper	4.19	445	<.001
			TOST Lower	−6.43	445	<.001

Note. Levene's tests were significant ($p < .05$), indicating a violation to the assumption of homogeneity of variance underlying student's t. The Welch test is an approximate test for the equality of means without the homogeneous variance assumption.

differences across the two formats in terms of student satisfaction and grades. This research also seems to be the first to explore the TOOLS characteristics, which have been explored through online courses in other fields, related to students in JMC and specifically public relations education. The findings uncovered by this research may be useful to public relations and JMC faculty, administrators, advisers, students themselves, parents, and anyone else who might be teaching, taking, or debating the merits of online courses.

According to the results of this study, student motivations revolved primarily around scheduling needs, and it is not surprising that many of those in the online courses noted their busy schedules as being the main reason for taking that particular section. Meanwhile, preference for a particular format was the other major factor in decision making, with some students preferring in-person classes and others preferring online options. Several students also noted that they had never taken an online course, and there may be some fear of the unknown, or perhaps some stigma about online courses not being quite as good as in-person courses. This should dissipate as online courses continue to proliferate, but faculty teaching online courses can help assuage such fears by letting students know early on what to expect. Pointing to research like this study, for example, which shows equivalence in terms of grades and satisfaction, might help reduce stigma or change perceptions that may exist about online courses not being as good or as rigorous as in-person courses.

Those who advise students could also help provide glimpses of online courses for students who might have concerns, and university websites could do myriad things to help mitigate this fear. For instance, sample discussion board assignments or online exam questions could be shown to students via one of the school or university's web pages. Universities and staff might also want to post or share the Test of Online Learning Success (TOOLS) online or in-person, which it seems a few schools are doing already (see, e.g., University of Arkansas, 2019 for a modified version of TOOLS). Meanwhile, continuing to create and deliver quality online courses may help dissolve some of the stigma related to online courses being inferior to in-person courses. As more four-year public and private universities offer online courses, and if these courses are taught by professors who spend substantial time creating content and managing the courses, then students' experiences will change over time, and online courses may become less associated with for-profit institutions or with possible negative perceptions or experiences from a time when online courses weren't as prevalent as they are now.

Student satisfaction and course grades were statistically equivalent between the two course formats in this study. Of course, this may be because the two courses were taught by the same instructor during the same semester at the same university, and there were attempts made to keep the courses similar in terms of content and assessment. This may suggest a key best practice for online teaching, though, and that is that faculty should treat online courses very much the same as they would in-person courses, in terms of time, energy, communication, and so on. In fact, in some ways, online courses require more communication because students do not have that face-to-face time that they get in an in-person course. Online courses can also take extensive time to develop on the front end, but the return on investment in terms of student learning and satisfaction may be worth the effort. Also, that there was equivalence between four courses (not just two) taught over two years with a fairly substantial student population ($N = 452$) shows some reliability, although more research is always preferred and would be helpful moving forward.

The open-ended responses related to particular components of the online course may suggest additional best practices. The online modules, which consisted of PowerPoint slides with recorded voiceover and some videos embedded as well, seemed to be appreciated by students.

The discussion board assignments also seemed to be valued, in terms of helping students learn and interact on a deeper level with course content and with their classmates. These two elements may be helpful for faculty developing online public relations courses in the future, where online examples abound, and the changing nature of the industry can lead to interesting online discussions. Because of the fast-paced nature of news and examples in PR and related industries, videos should only be embedded in PowerPoints if they seem timeless, or unless the instructor plans to update the modules frequently. Otherwise, videos can be added separately or links can be distributed via email or Blackboard to supplement the pre-recorded lecture modules.

Creating course groups via social media or using a class hashtag in conjunction with whatever online learning system universities prefer or require is also especially relevant for students in public relations and related subject areas where social media is a focus. Such tactics are already being used by faculty in public relations for in-person and online classes (Fraustino et al., 2015; Janoske, Byrd, & Madden, 2019), but these tactics may be particularly helpful for encouraging the type of online academic help-seeking that has been found to make students feel more in control of their learning experience (Cheng & Tsai, 2011; Chyr et al., 2017). For example, while some students may be reluctant to go to the official course page if they have a question while studying late at night, they may be more likely to turn to social media to ask questions of their peers. Online courses might encourage this type of interaction among students and between students and instructors more so than in-person courses, but, of course, more research is needed.

Students also seemed to like the asynchronous method of course delivery and discussion board assignments, as other scholars have found (Rosenkrans, 2001). However, as Kauffman (2015) noted, large courses—such as those included in this study—may make it difficult for instructors to manage and students to participate in highly engaging discussions. While this issue affected student satisfaction in previous studies, it did not seem to happen in this case. However, that may be because of some of the fairly low expectations that seem to exist related to online courses, some of which seem to stem from negative experiences or perhaps false perceptions of online education. Again, findings such as those reported in this research, showing equivalence in student grades and student satisfaction, should help change those perceptions over time.

Many students in the online courses also noted appreciating things like weekly deadlines, the organization and structure of the course, frequent email communication, and reminders about due dates. In terms of structure, the instructor worked closely with someone at the university's Center for Teaching Excellence to determine the best way to set up an online course. While this may not be available at all universities, more institutions are offering such support, and similar information is also available online or in books and journal articles about online education. Strategies vary and there are many ways to be successful, but in this case, the online course was designed very much like the in-person course with weekly readings, modules (like in-person lectures), and discussion board posts (like in-class discussions), and students seemed to respond well to these elements.

Additionally, while some may argue that students should not need to be constantly reminded of due dates, the students in the online courses typically received at least one email per week from the instructor. These emails would outline the coming week's content, attempting to make connections to previous weeks or explaining why these topics were important or being covered next, and often reminded students of upcoming deadlines for discussion board posts. Many students noted that they appreciated these emails, although some said they still had a hard time keeping up with deadlines in the online courses because it is just easy to forget when you do not have in-person classes as reminders. Students also commented on instructor qualities such as enthusiasm, even in the online course, and such qualities may be made evident via email. One student in an online course wrote: “You can tell she cares about her students through her emails and voice when speaking on lectures.” Indeed, including elements such as your voice or face through video might make online classes seem more personal and similar to in-person courses. This may be particularly important to students in public relations, where relationships are an important focus and may be the reason some students are majoring, minoring, or are simply interested in PR.

It may be that students in PR have different expectations in terms of online teaching; this would be an interesting topic for future research. New technologies such as VoiceThread (2019) make it possible for students to comment and contribute to discussions via voice, video, or text as well. These types of educational innovations mimic some of the creating and commenting that many students are already doing in various online environments, which may make an online course seem more relevant and/or enjoyable to them, perhaps particularly for students in public relations or JMC, although more research is needed on these various strategies, tactics and technologies for teaching online in these areas.

Many students in the in-person courses commented on the guest lectures, but it should be noted that the online courses also included recorded Skype calls with two former students who were working in the public relations industry. These online guest lectures were also appreciated by the students in the online courses, as noted in comments such as the following: “I enjoyed the interview with the previous student who was working for a big pr agency in new york [sic].” Finally, students in both courses noted their appreciation of study guides, which were provided via Blackboard in both course formats. While study guides are nothing new, it might be worth mentioning that these traditional types of teaching and learning tools are still valued in online environments.

Beyond offering some best practices, this research confirms the reliability of the TOOLS subscales used in previous studies (Kerr et al., 2006). Interestingly, there were no differences between students in the two course formats in terms of academic skills, computer skills, independent learning, and dependent learning. This is somewhat surprising, considering some people's perceptions about online education and some mixed results among previous research about the effectiveness of online education, but perhaps it should not be surprising in this case where direct comparisons were made. For instance, it makes sense that general academic skills would be important in any kind of learning environment, so perhaps it should not be surprising that there was equivalence among the students in both course formats regarding academic skills.

In terms of computer skills, it could be that as "digital natives" enter higher education and take online courses, there is not much variance in computer skills. It may become a moot subscale, assuming students have had some experience with computers, which is typical of most traditional students these days. Of course, computer skills could still be important to assess among non-traditional students who may not have had as much experience with computers for various reasons. Independent learning is probably important for students in any class and does not apply only to online classes, so perhaps it is not surprising that there was equivalence among students in both course formats in terms of independent and dependent learning. It is still interesting, though, considering that this is one of the first studies to do direct comparisons between the two course formats, and considering some presumptions about independent learners perhaps being more inclined to take online courses while dependent learners might be more likely to choose traditional or in-person courses. Again, as online education options proliferate and become more sophisticated, it may be that these differences do not matter, or perhaps other factors are more important for determining student success.

It is not surprising that the need for online learning was higher among students in the online course. This coupled with student responses regarding motivations for taking online courses, including jobs and other responsibilities, may mean that need and/or preference may be the biggest factors to consider when debating online education. However, as noted earlier in this study, there were at least five students who dropped out of the online course throughout the semester, and it could be that some of those students dropped out because they did not enjoy or could not manage themselves in an online course. Another student tried the online course but switched to the in-person course because the former was too difficult. Time management and self-motivation, which are specifically mentioned in some of the items in the independent learning subscale of TOOLS, may be the most important factors for being successful in online courses. They are also likely influential on students' perceptions of online courses when they are enrolled in those courses.

In the future, if individuals are trying to pare down TOOLS or combine elements of TOOLS with other student characteristics, independent learning and need for online learning may be the most important items to measure. Academic skills are likely important for all students; computer skills may be a moot subscale to measure among today's students, and dependent learning may be redundant if a study is already considering independent learning. Interestingly, independent learning and need for online learning were the only TOOLS characteristics to have statistically significant correlations with year in school. The relationship between year in school and need for online learning was positive, meaning the further along in school students were, the more they desired or required taking courses in online environments. This finding may be due to the fact that students who are closer to graduating (in their third or fourth year) are probably more likely to also be working or interning while taking courses. The relationship between year in school and independent learning was negative, meaning the further along in school students were, the less likely they were to perceive themselves as being self-motivated and skilled at time management and related skills. The reason for this relationship is not known; however, it may be connected to the factors just mentioned related to the need for online learning. Perhaps students who are earlier on in their college career have fewer obligations (jobs, internships, extracurricular activities), which could be why they also feel more independent in their ability to learn and achieve at their own pace. Future research could further explore the TOOLS characteristics related to other online public relations courses or other types of courses related to JMC. Other characteristics or variables also may be of interest for understanding success in online education in PR and/or JMC.

Conclusions, Limitations, and Future Research

This research helps shed light on what it might take to teach or take an undergraduate online course in public relations. In addition to some of the best practices and student characteristics already discussed, research into online education can help us determine who might benefit most from such opportunities. Online courses might be helpful for students who may be more open online or are less likely to speak up in the classroom, or for students who feel discriminated against in a traditional classroom for any reason. Online education might also be best for nuanced topics, for which time, reflection, and many diverse perspectives would aid in understanding, as some scholars have suggested (Shlossberg & Cunningham, 2016). Asynchronous online discussions allow for this time and reflection, and not meeting face-to-face may make it easier for some students to express diverse perspectives. All of this must be managed by an engaged instructor, though, and more research is needed to validate some of the findings from this study, which is limited in size, scope, and subject matter.

Indeed, while it seems public relations education—and JMC education in general—might benefit from online course offerings, more research is needed. More courses could be developed on various topics by faculty at diverse institutions, and similar comparison studies could help provide a more complete picture. Additionally, assessing different types of assignments would help us understand more about what works and does not work in online courses related to these fields. This study relied on undergraduate student responses to a survey (in addition to final course grade comparisons), which could be considered limitations of this research. Qualitative methods, including interviews and focus groups, and experimental research could provide additional insights into online education in public relations and other areas of JMC. Longitudinal research to track whether students retain more over time in PR or JMC courses taught online or in person would add another layer of insight to understanding online education in these fields.

Many graduate programs are now offered completely online, and this is another area that is ripe for future research. Because of the focus and reliance on new technologies, digital and social media, and relationships in PR and JMC, which present unique opportunities and challenges when teaching in online environments, more research may be particularly useful in these areas to further hone best practices and offer faculty specific resources and tips for teaching online successfully. Additional research on hybrid courses is of interest as well. Courses that deliver much of the content online yet meet periodically to engage in discussions and/or hear from guests may provide the best of both types of education for students.

While it seems too early to go along with Godin's (2017) suggestions of doing away with all lecture halls, there is no doubt that higher education has changed and continues to change at a rapid pace. It would be wise to continue to explore the many possibilities provided by technology and innovation to ascertain what might be best for student learning in public relations, in particular, and in higher education as a whole. This study adds to existing research in these areas, but more research is needed and encouraged for the sake of students, faculty, staff, and other decision makers in higher education.

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Appendix A:
The Test of Online Learning Success (TOOLS)

The following items were measured on 5-point scales with the following response options: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree (5).

Note: Items that were reverse scored are indicated below. In addition to looking at the five subscales individually, Kerr et al. (2006) stated that the "total online learning success (OLS) is calculated by summing across all 45 items. Higher scores reflect higher skills. Thus, lower scores on dependent learning denote more dependence (less independence)" (p. 97).

Computer Skills

I am capable of learning new technologies.
I am capable of sending and receiving e-mail.
I am capable of attaching files to an e-mail message.
I am a competent Internet browser.

I am capable of using standard word processing software.

I am capable of managing files on a computer.

I can download new software when necessary.

I can install new software when necessary.

I can copy and paste text using a computer.

I am capable of using discussion boards online.

I am capable of using chat rooms online.

Independent Learning

I am capable of prioritizing my responsibilities.

I am a good time manager.

I am a procrastinator. (reverse scored)

I am capable of making time for my coursework.

I am able to balance many tasks at one time.

I am goal-oriented.

I am self-disciplined when it comes to my studies.

I am self-motivated.

I take responsibility for my learning.

I am capable of critical thinking.

Dependent Learning

I often leave tasks unfinished. (reverse scored)

I require help to understand written instructions. (reverse scored)

I wait until the last minute to work on assignments. (reverse scored)

I have trouble comprehending what I read. (reverse scored)

I need faculty to remind me of assignment due dates. (reverse scored)

I need incentives/rewards to motivate me to complete a task. (reverse scored)

Need for Online Learning

Because of my personal schedule, I need online courses.

It is difficult for me to get to campus to attend classes.

I need online courses because of my geographical distance from universities.

I need online courses because of my work schedule.

I need the freedom of completing coursework at the time and place of my choosing.

Academic Skills

I can learn by working independently.

I am self-directed in my learning.

I am capable of solving problems alone.

I need face-to-face interaction to learn. (reverse scored)

I need faculty feedback on my completed assignments. (reverse scored)

I am a good reader.

I need classroom discussion to learn.

I am capable of asking for help when I have a problem.

I am comfortable learning new skills.

I read carefully.

I am a good writer.

I am capable of following written instructions.

I am capable of conveying my ideas in writing.

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Visionary Public Relations Coursework: Leveraging Service Learning in Public Relations Courses to Spur Economic Development through the Arts, Travel, and Tourism

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Abstract

Scholarship on service learning demonstrates a variety of benefits to students, faculty, universities, and surrounding communities. While literature in public relations education offers strong examples of community benefits pertaining to civic engagement, community service promotion, and fulfillment of the needs of local governments and nonprofit organizations, scholarship is just beginning to address the potential long-term benefits for economic development. Literature in business and economics education offers some indication of the potential value of service learning to economic development in communities. This article offers an account of the use of service learning in a senior internship and two public relations courses as part of a collaborative project to promote a community partnership, a visionary arts venue, and the community that stands to benefit from its success. The article discusses the project development, execution of courses, and subsequent early indicators of economic impact.

Keywords: service learning, nonprofit, internship, community, economic impact

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Service learning is a common approach to teaching in the public relations curriculum, particularly in capstone and management courses. The benefits of service learning to students are clear: direct application of practice, grounding theory and principles of best practice in the real world, and a wide variety of essential skills in communication that employers now prioritize in entry-level employees (Muturi, An, & Mwangi, 2013; Werder & Strand, 2011). The value of service learning to communities is also a growing, well-established body of literature within the context of public relations (Rogers & Andrews, 2015), as well as across disciplines (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996).

One key potential area of impact is on economic development within communities. A body of literature in business pedagogy demonstrates the value of using service-learning projects in the classroom of inner city (Desplaces, Steinberg, Coleman, & Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2006) and rural communities (Frazier, Niehm, & Stoel, 2012) in economic struggle, as well as for study abroad programs (Dato-On & Al-Charaak, 2013). That said, the current literature in public relations education (e.g., Fraustino, Pressgrove, & Colistra, 2019) is just beginning to examine the potential of service-learning projects to provide economic benefit to communities through nonprofit, public sector, or small business means. Public relations is a management function and plays a central role in organizational decision-making (J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig, 2008). As such, it stands that providing students with an opportunity to strengthen experience in economic development would have long-term benefits to the students and the organizations they represent.

This article offers a report on the conduct of a multi-term service-learning project across multiple public relations courses. The project's initial aim was to promote a new arts and culture venue managed by the university, which grew to include recommendations and materials for helping the community adapt to a travel and tourism economy that supported those coming to visit the new venue, as well as promotion of the region surrounding the venue. The initial success of the first course projects provided students with the means to expand on the initial recommendations for the community to include execution of travel and tourism promotion to support local venues in a subsequent public relations management course, as well as an individual public relations internship focused on executing grant writing work and daily management of the community's marketing and promotion of the venue. The net result was that the students' work served to set up the subsequent efforts in economic development that continues to take place today. To gain insight on the economic impact of the community transition and potential value of student project work after the project's completion, the author conducted an analysis of statewide and local economic data, along with open interviews with the local chamber of commerce to assess the impact of the project on the community. Early returns are positive, suggesting value of service-learning work to support community economic development initiatives.

Literature Review

Since Sigmon (1979) introduced the term *service-learning*, the pedagogical practice has been defined by what students do to better understand theory and best principles of practice through structured reflection. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) defined service learning in the following way:

> A course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of the course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. (p. 112)

Often, service learning is identified as a process of development for creating knowledge where students are given opportunities to transform the information they receive from their experience and make sense of it within the theoretical framework of their academic course material (Kuban, O'Malley, & Florea, 2014). Eyler and Giles (1999) noted that service learning is an evolving form of pedagogy connected back to John Dewey's (1998/1933, 1938) calls for direct experience in the field that cultivates well-rounded citizens.

The body of literature exploring benefits of service learning to students, faculty, and communities is well-documented across disciplines, including public relations pedagogy. Service learning became a broadly accepted part of public relations education in the 1990s (Bourland-Davis & Fall, 1997; Daugherty, 2003). Most commonly, service learning is used in campaign or capstone courses (Aldoory & Wrigley, 1999; Allison, 2008; Kinnick, 1999; Rogers & Andrews, 2015; Werder & Strand, 2011), and typically includes a client component (Benigni, Cheng, & Cameron, 2004).

Given public relations' connection to business, particularly as it relates to corporate communications and community relations in this case (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006), the potential to execute service-learning projects associated with economic development initiatives is viable. Moreover, there is room for exploration in scholarship on the impact of service learning in public relations.

Value of Service Learning to Public Relations Faculty and Students

The public relations literature offers insight to the perceived benefits of service learning among students. Wandel (2005) found that 84% of students surveyed reported a strong preference for service-learning courses to traditional lecture learning, and that 90% of those responding believed they had learned more from the service-learning course than alternative course designs. Civic and social efficacy among students was also a point of emphasis. Of the students responding, 37% of those who responded planned to continue their service work beyond the class project. Bollinger (2004) identified increased student understanding and successful application of principles in group, organizational, and interpersonal communication, as well as improved public speaking acumen with the use of service-learning course components. Wilson (2012) found value in service learning for public relations students' critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. The most significant impact came in students' increased ability to identify new information needed for creative thinking to support problem-solving. She notes creative thinking and problem solving are of particular value to those interested in entering a dynamic, challenging field like public relations.

Numerous researchers indicate the benefits of service learning. Allison (2008) found common themes around the value of service learning, including motivation for better performance, critical thinking improvement, and exposure to the value of civic engagement. Toncar, Reid, Burns, Anderson, and Nguyen (2006) identified perceived benefit for students' practical skills, interpersonal skills, sense of personal responsibility, and citizenship. Witmer, Silverman, and Gashen (2009) cited several benefits to public relations students, including application of theory and principles of best practice to real-world settings, teamwork experience for students, opportunities for client interaction, and the ability to enhance civic responsibility.

Public relations literature on service learning also explores holistic assessment of student learning. Werder and Strand (2011) developed and tested a model for assessing student achievement across multiple dimensions, including practical skills, interpersonal skills, personal responsibility, and citizenship. The model also included discipline-specific technical, creative, and research skills. Skills found of greatest value to students in this study included creative expression, design, writing/editing, strategic planning, group-work dynamics, client relations, and both quantitative and qualitative research. These skills proved key in evaluating quality of student performance and project output.

Muturi et al. (2013) found that public relations students reported a high level of motivation from service-learning projects, viewing them as an opportunity to learn about the real world. The authors identified a key motivating factor for students to engage in service learning could be the "desire to move away from hypothetical classroom situations and into a real-world setting as the site for education" (Muturi et al., 2013, p. 400).

Research shows the service-learning experience is rewarding for faculty members as well. The public relations literature offers a body of evidence supporting the benefits of service learning to the faculty who adopt it, particularly in the areas of the pedagogical approach involved in service learning (Bollinger, 2004), a demonstration of faculty service on the tenure track (Fall & Bourland-Davis, 2004), and a more-engaged classroom (Rentner, 2011; Wandel, 2005). With benefits to public relations students and faculty discussed, the author will now address challenges and limitations of service-learning pedagogy.

Challenges and Limitations of Service Learning

Scholarship in public relations pedagogy does identify limitations in service learning and suggests some practical considerations before adoption of the practice in the classroom. Aldoory and Wrigley (1999) raised concerns about discrepancies between client-partner expectations and students' ability to deliver a finished product that meets client-partner needs. Rogers and Andrews (2015) identified a lack of scholarship on the communication needs of local nonprofits and what they believe constitutes ideal service-learning relationships. Through focus group interviews, the authors confirmed public relations faculty assumptions that partners need a stronger education in the practice of public relations and the public relations process. It is clear that public relations educators need to establish a role in educating nonprofit partners about the discipline in order to manage client expectations of student groups. Witmer et al. (2009) found that instructors perceived a failure of university administrators to manage perceived risks of both students and community organizations that comprise a client partnership. Among the challenges noted with clients were unpredictability, occasional unprofessionalism, a vast time commitment, and the nebulous role service-learning projects might play in the tenure and promotion process. Witmer et al. (2009) noted that the findings raised more questions than were answered.

Emergent strategic communication scholarship identified some students' concerns with service-learning course projects, particularly in the area of senior capstone courses. Fraustino et al. (2019) identified several student concerns about time management, instructor and client expectations of student travel to communities, unrealistic instructor expectations of students, and a shaky sense of self-efficacy with the project. In reflection on the class experience, immediate perceived student concerns about time commitments were mitigated by how personally rewarding they found the class project experience. A consistent comment from students, however, was the potential for the capstone course project to dominate their focus and attention to the detriment of other courses. This finding drew parallels with Witmer et al.'s (2009) concerns about the potential negative impact of wide institutionalization of service learning. Another key finding was student fears about the "parachute effect," where the class dropped in on the communities and worked toward providing assistance and recommendations; however, there was no guarantee that the communities would keep the work going over the long term on the heels of a short-term engagement with the class.

Fraustino et al. (2019) cited the need for managing expectations, the need for being mindful of the potential of service at the expense of learning, and the need for community assessment going into the partnership. The authors expressed concern about the viability of service-learning impact on communities in single capstone projects, noting that the only means of managing the potential for a parachute effect was for the client or professor to see the preliminary work of students to its conclusion. The authors noted that many of the benefits of service learning stand but that scholarship should address concerns and how to limit concerns through performing stewardship (Waters, 2009) and closing the gap between partner expectations and student output (Rogers & Andrews, 2015). The focus will now shift to a discussion about the potential impact of service learning on economic development.

Service Learning in Economic Development and Other Subfields

Literature on the teaching and learning of public relations has established the benefits and challenges of service learning. Scholarship in public relations pedagogy offers clear examples of the benefits of service learning to corporate communication (Clark, 1999), development (Kelly, 1991; McKinnon, Longan, & Handy, 2012), public health (Rentner, 2011), and a variety of public sector (Rothberg, Brais, & Freitag, 2016) and charitable nonprofit programs (Bollinger, 2004). These examples establish the practical benefits to communities collaborating with university programs that employ service learning. Public relations literature focusing on economic development is still in its infancy.

Fraustino et al. (2019) analyzed a service-learning project that tested a place-based branding model for promoting economic development in communities experiencing downturn. As part of two senior capstone projects, students engaged in research, development, and strategy designed to rebrand each community. Students acknowledged that the project would help them grow professionally, specifically on practical skills, interpersonal skills, career development, and personal responsibility. Through post-class surveys, students confirmed that many of the initially established desired skills to develop were met, including technical skills, teamwork skills, and client relations. The authors cited enhanced motivation among students to perform exceptional work, particularly on dimensions of professional development and community engagement. Students reflected on the experience and expressed that the service-learning campaign project left them with a sense of accomplishment, a valuable test of knowledge, and a resume builder. The authors also cited benefits to civic and community engagement. Scholarship in the teaching of economics, marketing, and management offers additional examples of the value of service learning and experiential learning to entrepreneurship and economic development for students, faculty, and the institution.

Historical and Economic Background on Marion County and Pasaquan

Outside of a small town in the southeast, a visionary artist named Eddie O. Martin was born in 1908 and returned home to care for the property after his mother's death in 1957. From 1957 until his death in 1986, Martin transformed his home into a folk art center called Pasaquan (Patterson, 1987). For some in Marion County, he was a peculiar neighbor, who produced admirable work and put unemployed or underemployed members of the community to work on the grounds. For others, he was a threat to their way of life, rumored to engage in drug dealing, homosexuality, and other forms of behavior outside of the socially acceptable behavior of residents in the rural Southeast of the 1950s (Patterson, 1987). His apparent suicide in 1986 left Pasaquan largely unattended, with the exception of a few men and women who formed the Pasaquan Preservation Society.

Over time, Pasaquan fell into disrepair, and the Pasaquan Preservation Society engaged in the process of seeking support to rehabilitate the property and the artwork for the purposes of public exhibition. After years of petition, and 28 years of relative neglect at the venue, the Kohler Foundation responded and offered to facilitate the rehabilitation of Pasaquan in 2014. At the end of the process, the Kohler

Foundation identified a local university as the appropriate caretakers for the future maintenance and stewardship of Pasaquan after its rehabilitation completion in October 2016.

This opportunity brought with it challenges for the university and work for the community to prepare for the takeover. To sustain Pasaquan, the university needed a means to promote the venue that could capture the interest of a global audience over time, the community needed to develop a plan for supporting the venue and a broader appeal for travel and tourism, and the previously split community needed to unify behind a reinvigorated visionary art venue created by a mercurial former member of its community.

The process of working toward these goals provided students enrolled in two public relations courses and their instructor with the unique opportunity to cultivate relationships with local businesses, a city government, the state's travel and tourism marketing team, and the university's Pasaquan director. The experience created a means for public relations students to gain valuable experience in arts management, as well as arts and entertainment promotion.

The partnership between the venue and university came at perhaps the most opportune time for Marion County and the neighboring small town. The county and town have endured an economic downturn that began with the migration away from production plants in the region and hit its lowest points in the economic collapse of 2008. Unemployment figures at the time for Marion County stood at 11.2% (United States Department of Labor, 2018). With a minor rebound and the presence of a livestock processing plant, the employment numbers rebounded to 7.0% in May 2015 (United States Department of Labor, 2018). The town and county suffered another setback as the livestock processing plant closed its facility that May, and unemployment rose to 9.4% within a month (United States Department of Labor, 2018).

Seeing the potential of Pasaquan and understanding the need for other economic opportunities, the Marion County Chamber of Commerce approached the state's Department of Economic Development about bringing in a team to assess the potential for adapting the town, Marion County, and Pasaquan into a travel and tourism economy. Over the fall semester of 2014, the state economic development team visited all regional venues and held town halls with citizens to gather information and to offer a set of recommendations to the town about approaching revitalization, building mutually beneficial partnerships, and adjusting the town mindset to art and cultural promotion. The finished product was a 115-page report that detailed the resources available to Marion County, effective models for a travel and tourism economy, and community-specific recommendations for updating storefronts, sidewalks, and the types of business and infrastructure they would need to develop as the new economy began to grow over the next 5 to 10 years (Georgia Department of Economic Development, 2014). One of the chief recommendations was to make full use of the new partnership with the university and its various departments to achieve mutual benefit that would help improve Marion County and the town's prospects, while enhancing the university's town-gown profile.

Research Questions

On the basis of the aforementioned literature on service learning and its value to the community and students, the researcher posed the following research questions:

RQ1: What constitutes the process of developing and executing a multi-semester public relations service-learning project?

RQ2: To what extent do the community partners make use of the resources provided by students in public relations courses?

On the basis of the aforementioned literature documenting the potential benefits of service-learning projects, the researcher posed the following research questions:

RQ3: What evidence of economic impact on Marion County and Pasaquan can be identified since completion of the multi-semester public relations service-learning project?

RQ4: What benefits did the service-learning project provide for students engaged in the project?

Method

To answer the research questions, the researcher performed a mixed-methods case study analysis (Yin, 2014) for two reasons. First, the need to offer a clear breakdown of course development, execution, and impact required a comprehensive approach that documented each step in the process. Second, the timing of discovery of the influence and impact of students' projects after course completion when reported by the local chamber of commerce limited the researcher to consider the project and its impact through a review of materials. To promote clarity, the discussion of methods employed is broken into two sections. Each is discussed below and will permit the reader to review the findings in a sequential flow.

Documenting Course Research, Design, Execution, and Partner Adoption

As a first phase of the discussion, the researcher explained the project and its results. The researcher began with a discussion of the process of conducting course background research, course designs, students' execution, and clients' use of students' work. The researcher explained the course research and design through the use of logged notes collected during the background research and course development phases of the course projects. The researcher also reviewed completed project work and student peer evaluations of other group members to assess the overall effectiveness of groups. This triangulation of differing forms of data will enable readers at other academic institutions to consider how they might adopt some of the more successful practices into their own programs. To explain the client-partners' use of student materials, the researcher performed a qualitative review of all marketing materials, news content relating to the community and Pasaquan, as well as venue websites in the two years since the project's completion. In addition, the researcher interviewed the Marion County Chamber of Commerce president to track the students' work in both courses, as well as in the senior internship. To assess student benefit, the researcher's assessment incorporated the content review of course project products, as well as a report on the work of a graduate who participated in the project in both courses and the senior internship. To identify the larger body of student engagement across the university, the researcher reviewed archived counts of student engagement collected by the Pasaquan's site director, who documented the information for the purposes of fundraising efforts for Pasaquan.

Documenting Economic Impact

After the project completion with Pasaquan in fall 2016, the researcher decided to revisit the venue in fall 2017 to assess the progress of student recommendations with the Marion County Chamber of Commerce president. To perform the analysis, the researcher interviewed the chamber president for a report on community progress since the partnership's inception in May 2014 and obtained economic data from January 2014 through January 2018 from the United States Department of Labor's Unemployment Statistics and performed a simple comparative analysis to track the community's progression, paying specific attention to the period from 2014 through 2018, to assess the progression of Pasaquan's revitalization, opening, and the continued development and revitalization of local venues in Marion County and the town. The interview consisted of one 60-minute session, and consisted of open-ended questions focusing on progress in economic revitalization, the relationship of the county with Pasaquan, and how the students' work influenced the efforts of the Chamber of Commerce as it progressed in its community revitalization efforts. The researcher performed his own transcription, and utilized Nvivo to conduct coding and thematic analysis of the interview, utilizing a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) in an effort to allow for emergent themes in the analysis. The findings report will begin with the development of the client partnership before progressing to the instructor's course design, discussing campaign execution and assessment, reviewing of client adoption of student materials, and ending with an analysis of preliminary economic impact.

Findings

Instructor Relationship Cultivation and Research

Shortly after the partnership announcement with Pasaquan in summer 2014, the Department of Art tasked one of its professors with the role of director of Pasaquan. Among the first challenges he had to address was making Pasaquan self-sustaining. To do so, he would need to cultivate revenue and donor partnerships that could help keep the maintenance and promotion of the venue viable. To achieve this end, he began brokering partnerships with faculty, the community leadership, and the state travel and tourism board. In short, the director was engaged in relationship management.

To earn the support of university faculty, the director of Pasaquan brought university faculty out to the venue for a social event and a tour of facilities to garner ideas for added value. Faculty in the sciences and other social science disciplines brainstormed and contributed valuable ideas for retreat meetings, conferences, and lab observations of the nature surrounding the venue. The public relations professor conversely identified the need for economic development in the community, the need to effectively brand and promote Pasaquan, and the need to revitalize the brand for Marion County, all while garnering the buy-in of the town. With this in mind, the public relations professor brokered a relationship with Pasaquan's director and worked with him to cultivate an active role with the Marion County Chamber of Commerce, a seat on the university's

Pasaquan advisory committee, and a consulting partnership with the state's Department of Economic Development's Travel and Tourism Promotion team. The instructor's participation in these roles allowed him to develop contextual knowledge and collect information of value to course design. The role with the chamber indeed helped the public relations professor build a contextual knowledge of the community and its economic challenges. The seat on the Pasaquan advisory committee helped the instructor learn about both the resource and creative challenges the art venue had to address prior to takeover by the university. Finally, the partnership with the state's Department of Economic Development opened the door for research data in travel and tourism that his students would find invaluable as they tried to design and pitch a campaign. It also enabled the instructor to bring the state economic development team to the public relations classroom to present guest lectures on specific strategies and tactics for effective travel and tourism public relations work, as well as opening a line of dialog with the students to seek advice and input throughout both courses.

Over the subsequent six months, the instructor made bi-weekly trips to various functions at Pasaquan to strengthen relationships, expand on his partnerships, and to collect data to build a strong course design that would yield service-learning projects that could have tangible impact on Marion County, the town, and Pasaquan. With a sense of the need for effective partnership cultivation established, as well as the lead time for data collection established, the article will now cover the design of the courses so that the reader will understand how the projects, partnership, and products were meant to advance the relationship and enhance student skill sets.

Course Designs

The instructor spread the client work across two courses: a fall public relations campaigns course and a spring public relations management course. Students in each of the courses and the senior internship were instructed to use best practices in public relations through effective application of RACE PR (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006), ROPES PR (Kelly, 2001), and the four models of public relations communication (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

The fall campaigns course used a competitive pitch format (Rentner, 2011) modified to an internal class model (McCollough, 2018). This involved six student teams engaging in three separate competitions on behalf of three separate clients. The student teams were pre-assigned to work together on the basis of balance of public relations coursework experience, media production coursework experience, and media writing acumen. The goal of the pre-assignment was to maximize competitive balance, while providing students with experience in working in a professional environment akin to those where they might be hired. The three teams that won each of the three pitch competitions earned an A on the course project while receiving thorough, constructive feedback. Those that lost the pitch were subject to full evaluation by the instructor (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Competitive Team Assignments by Client Partner Need

Client Partner	Team 1	Team 2
Community Relations	20/20 PR	*Peachbelt Grassroots PR*
Community Marketing & PR	*Kindred 5*	Brevity
Pasquan Marketing & PR	Champion PR	*Craft PR*

The purpose of adopting a competitive evaluation model was to encourage a higher quality of strategic planning and material development in support of each team's proposed campaign (McCollough, 2018). Even in losing a pitch, with the exception of one team earning a poor grade due to poor research, planning, and production, the other five teams earned a B or above on the final course project. To assist each of the three clients in selecting a winning pitch, the instructor brought in four public relations practitioners from the community to offer constructive feedback on each team's product and pitch, as well as an informed perspective to relatively uninitiated clients.

Two four-member student teams worked with Marion County on community relations work meant to help the community acclimate to supporting an emerging travel and tourism economy, as well as growth in support for the once-controversial Pasaquan. Two five-member student groups worked on travel and tourism public relations intended to help develop a larger brand for the county and town, support materials to use in promoting the town and region, and a larger strategy meant to bring visitors into town and to push more capital into the community. Their client was the director of the travel and tourism office of the state's Department of Economic Development. Finally, two five-member student groups worked with Pasaquan's director on cultivating a brand identity consistent with the venue, developing marketing materials, and creating an effective promotional strategy for Pasaquan.

Communication and effective client relations were an essential aspect of course performance. Students met each of the three clients at the outset of the project, were required to meet frequently with their client and instructor as teams throughout the term, and were encouraged to maintain open communication to achieve the best results. This line of communication included encouraging students to discuss prospective plans for pitches and execution in advance of roll-out to ensure the product was in line with their client's expectations and needs. The instructor also worked with each client to bring every student to Pasaquan and the community to collect preliminary data and to gain a more immersive perspective on the project and each of its elements. This step helped students in providing a more representative finished product that their client could more immediately employ in practice.

The initial client conversations set the baseline for student teams to identify preliminary areas of focus for research prior to developing a strategy. The research work included interviews with the clients, their respective staff, and local community members to better understand the local context they needed to attend to in their work. For the students assigned to Pasaquan and Marion County, students built upon this by reviewing current promotion approaches of similar arts and travel and tourism venues, both nationally and within the state. In support of student efforts, the state's travel and tourism office also provided materials on the larger travel and tourism strategy to students to inform their strategy and align it with the existing body of promotions in place. For students engaged in the community relations effort, the professor provided supplemental reading on community relations from Center, Jackson, Smith, and Stansberry (2014), including case studies involving community relations strategy, to aid students in establishing a contextual baseline for community relations work.

At the completion of the fall course, each of the winning bids was collected and held for the spring public relations management course, in which a team of seven students worked with the Marion County Chamber of Commerce President as a client to adopt the best of each winning project in executing a campaign that helped market Pasaquan, Marion County, and the neighboring town. The reduction from three clients to one reflected an anticipated consolidation of interaction once the preliminary work with Pasaquan and the state's travel and tourism office were complete. The move to one seven-student team kept the group of students involved in the fall campaigns course engaged with the efforts in the subsequent spring management course, preserving institutional memory and reducing lag in cultivating contextual knowledge. To ensure continuity in work, the instructor provided all collected winning strategies as a resource tool to students to engage in a preliminary review of strategy, prior to execution. This enabled students to meet with the client and adapt the strategy to updated client needs and student skills. The client took the community relations strategies at the end of the fall course and the refined work in the spring management course and implemented the finished product in the Chamber of Commerce.

While not part of the initial plan, the development and implementation of promotional materials prompted a student from Marion County in both courses to take on a senior internship course in Marion County's Chamber of Commerce where the student implemented the refined version of the strategy with the client. The intern spent the final four months of her program of study working closely with the Chamber of Commerce in developing a new public relations strategy and executing on the initial stages of promoting Pasaquan and helping to continue bringing in new businesses and infrastructure to support the new travel and tourism economy, including grant writing to support community revitalization initiatives to enhance the profile and presence of the town. The following section will highlight the extent to which the clients made use of student work in meeting local needs.

Quality of Student Products: Sometimes When You Lose, You Win

In reviewing the projects and considering the ultimate adoption of student materials, it was clear the client used both winning (Craft PR) and losing teams' (Champion PR) materials and strategies. In reviewing the Pasaquan teams' projects, one team offered strong graphic design and manuals for standards and practice, prompting the Art Department to adopt many of their designs in the logos for the venue's marketing materials. The Art Department, however, believed the losing team actually cultivated a much stronger perspective on Pasaquan's identity, the concept of visionary art, and the perspective of potential visitors to the venue. Thus, much of the research and messaging used in promotional literature and the venue's website that accompanies the logos of the winning team actually come from the losing team's book. This particular example demonstrates the relative strength of the work of both student teams engaged in a direct competition and bodes well for competitive modeling in service-learning courses (McCollough, 2018; Rentner, 2011). Both winning and losing team members were able to use their work to strengthen their professional portfolios because the client derived tangible value.

That said, there were elements that clearly posed a challenge for some student groups. In one group, it was clear that the inability to balance group dynamics and individual student egos limited their effectiveness in managing a campaign. Student peer evaluations consistently discussed team disagreements and criticism over team members' inability to accept one another's viewpoints as part of the strategy. In another student group, inattention to the quality of the writing and media produced led to the campaign falling short against a better balanced campaign pitch despite superior research and strategy by the other team. Finally, one team's inability to communicate with the client for the duration of the campaign left them well behind their opponent, making winning a pitch a very difficult prospect. Even with the limitations on individual projects, the overall quality of the products were stronger than in previous campaigns courses and helped yield a solid campaign execution in the spring semester.

Impact on the Community and Pasaquan

While not causal, the data point to strong indicators of positive returns for Marion County and Pasaquan in terms of revenue, development, and population growth. Interview data and the content review of student materials and subsequent promotional materials and grant writing indicate student work took on a foundational role upon

which the community built its materials and arguments for support.
The Chamber of Commerce president reported the county successfully obtained $62,000 in initial grant support targeting economic development and travel and tourism promotion support. The chamber president noted the state's Department of Community Affairs granted the funds on the basis of an updated design proposal from the public relations management team for refinishing storefronts, streets, and the courthouse grounds of the town square. This design proposal was based on the recommendations of student teams in the public relations campaigns course tasked to help the community adapt to effectively support Pasaquan's guests.

The chamber president credited the partnership and project success with enabling subsequent growth and project work from the county. Since June 2016, eight new businesses have opened in Marion County, and there is an ongoing conversation about the opening of seven additional businesses, according to the Marion County Chamber of Commerce president. In addition to the proposed openings, early reports indicated new buyers were developing recreational hunting and lodging venues, as well as commercial real estate purchase inquiries from potential commercial developers. Furthermore, the chamber was working to encourage small business development through multiple seminars for aspiring business owners and travel and tourism promotion seminars. Most importantly, the unemployment numbers were down to 5.5% from the 9% after the Tyson plant closed (United States Department of Labor, 2018).

Another solid indicator was the recent reports on sales tax revenue. In the summer of 2016, the Chamber of Commerce president reported the sales tax revenue had bottomed out in 2015 but has enjoyed a steady increase in revenue each subsequent quarter. She attributes this increase in revenue to the opening of new businesses and growing tourism numbers in the community related to both Pasaquan and the partnership now in place with a regional tourism program sponsored by the state's Department of Economic Development. The community relations and promotional strategies in use employed elements both directly and indirectly sourced from the core materials and strategies developed, presented, and shared by students in the public relations campaigns and management courses. The finalized strategies and materials were implemented and monitored by the senior public relations intern.

Another area of concern when the local community entered into the partnership was the potential for community growth, and early indicators also suggested successful community growth. At present, 34 housing permits have been approved for additional development. This number is the largest in the seven years the Building, Code, and Zoning Administrator has been in office. The president of the local Chamber of Commerce asked new residents about their reasons for joining the community, and several reasons were clear. Among the strongest reasons were the community culture, the strong school district, and the revitalization underway. Helping the effort are the relatively inexpensive property taxes and the positive reputation of the local government in Marion County.

Although the areas of macro-business development, shrinking unemployment, and growth in residence and sales tax revenue were not targeted areas of the class projects or points of focus for assessment of students, the students' work did directly support the migration to the new economic model and the early promotion of Pasaquan, Marion County, and the small town within it, which is prompting much of the subsequent growth. Data analysis indicates the students' initial work in both courses and through the internship provided foundational material for revitalizing the community and contributed to raising the profile of the primary engine for the community's economic growth: Pasaquan.

On October 22, 2016, Pasaquan opened to the public and was transferred to the university foundation. At the opening, 2,200 people attended the festivities from 34 states and 14 countries. In its first five weeks after the opening, 892 visitors came to Pasaquan, averaging 179 visitors a week on a 3-day weekly schedule. Visitors since the opening have traveled in groups from New York, Portland, Chicago, and Atlanta. Graduate students from Cornell University, University of Wisconsin, University of Georgia, and Georgia State University have conducted research on site, and it promises to host guest artists and provide source material in its archives to art students for years to come. In addition to several traveling exhibitions and a documentary on the restoration, the efforts of public relations campaigns, public relations management, and senior internship students helped the Department of Art solicit more than $16,000 in fundraising in the first five weeks after the opening. All promotional materials and the Web presence for Pasaquan were a direct result of advanced research and content development on the part of students in the public relations campaigns course and remain in use three years later. The service-learning efforts impacted Marion County and Pasaquan, and they also made an impact on university students.

Impact for the Students

The project work in Marion County and Pasaquan brought more than 28 public relations campaign students, eight public relations management students, and one senior intern to the region and helped them develop industry-relevant experience and portfolio materials. Looking at the larger collaboration, according to Pasaquan's director, 120 students enrolled at the university have helped to advance the work in Marion County and Pasaquan over the last two years. The students came from the public relations and integrated media production program in communication, art historians and studio students in art, students gathering information through oral history collection and archiving in history, students developing travel and tourism maps in geography, and creative writing students in English. The venue's plans for flexible use promise to bring a more diverse, interdisciplinary group of students for future class projects. The most obvious source of collaboration is within one of the university's colleges, which now produces several onsite exhibitions each year, most notably a collaborative composition of an opera about the artist and Pasaquan, first performed by faculty and students on the grounds in October 2017. In short, the project brought an intellectually diverse group of young talent together to facilitate solutions intended to help revitalize a community and elevate the profile of a unique cultural venue in the rural Southeast.

The direct impact of this project for public relations students continues to be improved marketability at graduation, as well as enhanced civic engagement. Mentioned earlier, the senior public relations student who took on the role of an intern at the Chamber of Commerce demonstrated the benefit of this approach to study for students. She did so largely because of her desire to gain more experience, but also because she was from the region and wanted to continue to help its growth. During the internship, she had a direct role in developing the marketing and promotion for the county and town. She also aided planning and executing the launch for Pasaquan and was the first ambassador for the new Pasaquan Welcome Center. The experiences she had in the internship made it possible for her to earn her first position as the communication director for a neighboring chamber of commerce, as well as maintaining her support role with the Marion County Chamber of Commerce two years after graduation. The intern's experience and ultimate career path represents an ideal model for the civic and professional benefit of service and experiential learning (see Bollinger, 2004; Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Wandel, 2005).

Discussion and Recommendations for Educators

As a single case, there are certainly conditions here that proved beneficial to faculty, students, and the community. The shared mission and vision for the project among faculty, students, community leaders, and appropriate state agencies have much to say about the access, opportunity, and outcome of the project. That said, none of this diminishes the level of commitment and professional attitude and ability demonstrated by 37 students throughout three public relations courses. It should also be noted that the researcher acknowledges the comprehensive body of work from the students in strategy and materials, while significant as source material for subsequent project work and grant funding, do not explain the entire impact. In fact, there are multiple factors that contributed to the ongoing economic improvement in the region over the past three years. That said, the project demonstrates value in adopting service learning for students, faculty, the university, and a community partner on multiple fronts.

This study contributes to the limited body of knowledge about the value of public relations education to economic development (Fraustino et al., 2019). These findings also reinforce the body of literature supporting the value of service learning, including impact on rural communities (Frazier, Niehm, & Stoel, 2012; Miller, 1991; Tonn, Ezzell, & Ogle, 2010). This piece should be seen as a preliminary step in exploring means of developing more sophisticated and nuanced models for assessing economic impact in future scholarship on the subject, particularly on matters of long-term impact and projects that extend beyond single-semester courses. The researcher acknowledges the limitations of this assessment and analysis, particularly in examining student perceptions, but also notes the potential for additional scholarship that develops service-learning models devoted to economic development projects, as well as tools specifically designed for assessing the economic impact that faculty, students, and community partners achieve in projects similar to this one.

Literature in service learning details the value of the practice to individual students (Allison, 2008; Muturi et al., 2013; Rentner, 2011; Todd, 2014; Toncar et al.,2006; Witmer et al., 2009) and educators (Fall &

Bourland-Davis, 2004; Wandel, 2005), and the larger view of the benefit to organizations, communities, and the university's original purpose and strategic mission (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Greene, 2006). This case offers a model for a project that helped advance the university mission by helping local economic prospects, raising the profile of a visionary art venue and strengthening a community's buy-in during the process. Furthermore, it creates opportunities for students to build portfolios that will make them marketable in the workforce.

The concerns posed about service learning as a time-consuming and labor-intensive process (Fall & Bourland-Davis, 2004; Fraustino et al., 2019; Wandel, 2005) certainly hold true here. The instructor invested the better part of a year in research and relationship cultivation on site in Marion County with community members, in meetings with faculty in other departments, and in the development of a project design that would provide students with the opportunity to meet community needs. The intent of this research, however, is to illustrate the long-term value of the preparation and effort to advancing the students, community, and the faculty member. This project prompts further inquiry into the measurable impact of competition on service learning (McCollough, 2018; Rentner, 2011), and further study of the ultimate impact of the service-learning projects on Marion County, the town, and Pasaquan. Further, the specific case offers an opportunity for educators to further explore situations in which a losing team's work ultimately contributes to the partner organizations.

Building and sustaining relationships through the two years of development and coursework speaks to relationship nurturing, a key component of stewardship in the ROPES PR model, which is commonly associated with fundraising (Kelly, 2001; Waters, 2009). The strength of the students' stewardship permitted the work to progress across three semesters. This is an example of the value of teaching stewardship in service learning public relations courses. It also suggests a potential alternative to leaving work partially complete for the professor or client to see through (Fraustino et al., 2019) and a potential approach to managing client expectations of student output and timeline for useful strategy and materials (Rogers & Andrews, 2015). It also suggests an argument for developing a curriculum that incrementally builds in service-learning coursework that culminates in a capstone course structure, strengthening student aptitude with service learning and providing sustained support for client partners.

For community leaders, academic decision-makers, and other interested parties, the study should also be an example of the potential value of integrating coursework with practical environments. For community leaders, the local university may be able to serve as an engine for growth and revitalization beyond enrolled students, faculty, and staff living in the region. Service learning offers an approach to teaching that engenders strong social and civic engagement from students that can facilitate change. For faculty members who are hesitant to engage in service learning for various reasons, time commitment among them, this offers an example of economic growth spurred in part at the foundational level by students working both in a classroom and in a real-world lab environment.

Limitations

A study of this nature has its limitations in assessing impact. The researcher learned about the potential economic and community impact of the collaborative partnership after the coursework began, and only started studying the impact of the project 15 months after the completion of the senior internship. This limited the study to a case analysis of student project work, student outputs, client responses to project outcomes, and review of economic development markers after the coursework was complete. Future scholarship on service-learning projects associated with economic development would benefit from quantitative or qualitative survey analysis that examines student perspectives, either from a follow-up survey (Werder & Strand, 2011) or a pre-test and post-test model (Fraustino et al., 2019). This would enrich the body of knowledge on the value of service learning in economic development to public relations students in addition to the case analysis presented here. Furthermore, in light of scholarship examining the challenges of service learning for faculty and students (Fraustino et al., 2019; Witmer et al., 2009), future studies in this area should examine the potential challenges service learning can pose for faculty and students alike.

Areas of Further Study

In considering the perspective of students, the students' holistic experience with and impression of projects of this nature is of benefit and should be an area of analysis in looking at future service-learning projects that focus on economic development and community revitalization of this nature. This presents an opportunity to leverage prior scholarship and models related to the subject (Muturi et al., 2013; Rogers & Andrews, 2015; Werder & Strand, 2011) to get a better perspective on students' responses to and benefit from service-learning projects focused on economic development.

Also valuable would be further assessment of economic impact that can be implemented at the outset of a public relations course. This study provides an example where the client partner indicates that the work of students across each semester developed strategy and materials that ultimately shaped and informed promotional materials for the arts venue, as well as background research and strategy that yielded grant support for economic-development projects. A more comprehensive instrument that would demonstrate economic performance at the outset and in the aftermath of the course project would offer a stronger argument that supports qualitative data akin to the findings in this case study.

Finally, another area of analysis is to explore the impact of embedding stewardship (Kelly, 1991, 2001; Waters, 2009) in the public relations curriculum to create service-learning partnerships that endure across semesters. The potential benefits for students in terms of sustained client partnerships and the long-term value to community partners demonstrated in this case suggest value in additional study to determine viability of embracing the practice in the public relations classroom.

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Students' Perceptions of Diversity Issues in Public Relations Practice

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Abstract

This study examined students' perceptions of race/ethnic issues in public relations practice and how they are influenced by students' level of diversity exposure. Data were gathered from students enrolled in mass communication courses ($N = 417$) at a Midwestern university, and PR and non-PR students were compared. Participants reported moderate diversity exposure and their level of knowledge about the public relations practice influenced how they perceived racial/ethnicity issues in the profession. Their perceived knowledge was also associated with diversity exposure and so was the number of mass communication courses taken. Public relations students were slightly more exposed to diversity compared to others and were less likely to agree with the negative perceptions of diversity issues in the field.

Keywords: diversity, ethnicity, race, public relations practice, public relations education

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Diversity and inclusiveness have increasingly become topics of interest in public relations education, research, and practice as the racial and ethnic makeup of the United States population becomes more diverse. Ethnic minorities account for about one-third of the U.S. population and are estimated to comprise more than half of the population by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). It is also estimated that about 43% of Millennials are people of color, and by 2020, most of the U.S. population under 18 years will be diverse (Elsasser, 2018). Rapidly growing ethnic diversity has prompted U.S. organizations, including academic institutions, to incorporate diversity and inclusion into the workplace (Brunner, 2005; Fiske, Ross, & Keenan, 2016; Qiu & Muturi, 2016). This is with the recognition of the contributions of a diverse workforce to the organization's productivity, competitiveness, responsibility, and overall success (Mundy, 2015; O'Dwyer, 2018).

Embracing diversity reflects how organizations value diverse groups in societies that they serve and the importance they attach to them in their work (Edwards, 2011). Many businesses have embraced diversity and multiculturalism to tap into fast-growing markets while acknowledging that diverse viewpoints promote innovation and creativity, which can improve organizational effectiveness (Brown, White, & Waymer, 2011). International corporations like Apple, Coca-Cola, AT&T, Facebook, and Nike, just to name a few, have published statements that recognize their value for diversity and inclusiveness (Mundy, 2015). As Mark Parker, CEO and president of Nike, stated, the company values the "unique background and experiences everyone brings and want[s] all [employees] to realize their fullest potential…because different perspectives can fuel the best ideas" (Nike, 2018, para. 1). Other organizations have invested extensively in diversity and inclusion. For instance, in 2015, Google announced a $150 million investment in diversity and inclusion (Mundy, 2015). Academic institutions in the U.S. have also taken a lead in embracing diversity through development and implementation of diversity plans, many of which are publicly accessible online with a simple search.

With a diverse environment comes an urgent need for organizations, both public and private, to adjust the way they communicate to relate to all stakeholders effectively and efficiently. Judith Harrison, a senior vice president of diversity and inclusion at Weber Shandwick, reaffirmed this urgency in a presentation at the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) General Session, noting that "if we are going to communicate with the rapidly changing world of stakeholders in ways that are authentic, resonant and relevant, it is imperative that we treat ramping up diversity in our industry as an urgent, hair-on-fire emergency" (Elsasser, 2018, p. 14).

According to the Commission on Public Relations Education (CPRE, 2015) diversity in the workforce starts at college campuses, where students learn about other cultures and how to work effectively with those different from them. In the 2016/2017 CPRE report, the diversity team noted, "In order to see [diversity and inclusion] within the public relations industry flourish, change must begin at the academic level through a more diverse student and educator base" (Mundy, Lewton, Hicks, & Neptune, 2018, p. 139). Similarly, Brown, Waymer, and Zhou (2019) have noted that "diversity must start at the classroom level for emerging scholars to embrace diversity at the professional level" (p. 19).

Routinely performing curriculum assessment to determine the level of exposure and integration of diverse content is part of the accreditation process in many academic institutions, such as documenting the number of speakers with diverse backgrounds, but limited empirical data exist on the extent to which that exposure to diversity influences students' perspectives on diversity and inclusiveness in the world of work.

The goal of this research, therefore, was three-fold: first, to understand how students perceive issues associated with diversity in the public relations field, second, to determine if there are differences between public relations and non-public relations students in their level of exposure to diversity within their academic programs, and third, to examine if that exposure played a role in their perceptions. Understanding students' perceptions can help educators identify gaps in the curriculum and prepare students for a diverse workforce. This study focuses only on cultural diversity, which entails race and ethnicity (Sha, 2006), two of the elements included in the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) diversity requirements, but with the understanding that diversity goes beyond these two elements. This study also contributes to the existing literature on diversity issues in public relations and provides a unique student perspective that can generate useful class discussions.

Literature Review

Although diversity has increasingly become part of organizations' everyday language and is addressed from various perspectives (Brunner, 2009), there has been no singular conceptual definition, which makes some organizations view it as a vague and amorphous concept when they attempt to adopt it (Austin, 2010). Several definitions have emerged that range from viewing diversity simply as the differences that exist among people, like race, ethnicity, and culture (Pompper, 2004, 2005; Sha, 2006; Turk, 2006) to a more complex multi-dimensional concept. PRSA's definition includes differences in cultures, disciplines, ideals, gender, disabilities, and sexual orientation in its conceptualization of diversity (Fiske et al., 2016). To simplify it, Turk (2006) suggested viewing diversity as having two dimensions: the primary dimension entails unchangeable characteristics (e.g., age, sex, nationality, race, and ethnicity), while the second dimension entails changeable ones (e.g., religion, geographics, marital status, and military service). Diversity has also been defined in terms of minority versus majority, where minorities are defined as a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment (Austin, 2010; Gibbons, L. Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2001). In the past three decades, scholars have viewed diversity within organizations as a public relations responsibility (Hon & Brunner, 2000; Kern-Foxworth, 1989; L. Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2000; Mundy, 2016). Mundy (2016) views this responsibility to include the development of internal policies that support individuals professionally while responding to the external cultural mandates from the communities that the organizations serve. Such responsibility requires the integration of diversity in public relations education and other forms of training for professionals to effectively carry it out. As Ki and Khang (2008) have suggested, an education that incorporates cultural diversity is likely to make students aware that diversity can be a key element for improved public relations practice.

Diversity Issues in the Public Relations Practice

Excellent public relations practice includes having diverse professionals included in all roles so that decisions and communications can have varying viewpoints (Bowen, 2009; J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992). As proponents of the excellence model of public relations (e.g., Dozier, L. Grunig, & J. Grunig, 1995; J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992; Roper, 2005) have emphasized, diversity is critical for the success of any organization, but this would require sensitivity of diversity issues among those in decision-making positions. However, as Mundy, et al. (2018) observe, it is the multicultural professionals who are more likely to view the importance of recruiting employees with diverse backgrounds compared to their white counterparts or those in management positions.

Scholars have also continued to examine the intersectionality of gender and race where few female minorities and those of different sexual orientation venture into the public relations profession (Brown et al., 2011; Mundy, 2015, 2016; Tindall, 2009; Tindall & Waters, 2012). Recent studies have also focused on men as the underrepresented gender in the public relations field (Brown et al., 2019; Pompper & Jung, 2013), although they earn more than women (Chitkara, 2018) and are more likely to get promoted and to occupy management positions. What is missing in public relations scholarship is studies about gay men (Tindall & Waters, 2012). The industry has gradually acknowledged this gap and made some efforts, albeit minimal, such as Fleishman-Hillard's "Out Front" program, which targets LGBT audiences (Tindall & Waters, 2017).

Issues related to cultural diversity in public relations education and practice range from underrepresentation and the status of racial/ethnic minorities to problems with career advancement and job satisfaction (e.g., Abeyta & Hackett, 2002; Elsasser, 2018; Ki & Khang, 2008; Pompper, 2004; Qiu & Muturi, 2016). Racial and ethnic underrepresentation in the public relations profession has been on researchers' radar for three decades (e.g., Austin, 2010; Brown et al., 2019; Kern-Foxworth, Gandy, Hines, & Miller, 1994; Len-Rios, 1998; Poindexter, Smith, & Heider, 2003; Pompper, 2004; Pompper & Jung, 2013). A survey by Business Planning and Research International (BPRI, 2005) found only 17% of practitioners considered themselves racial/ethnic minorities, although senior management felt the need for improvement in recruiting and hiring minorities at all levels. More than a decade later, only an estimated 19% of public relations professionals are non-white (Elsasser, 2018), which indicates room for improvement, particularly in providing access to management positions (Mundy, 2016).

Although the racial/ethnic makeup has gradually improved within organizations, issues related to the promotion of racial/ethnic minorities, especially women who rise to the senior management level, have consistently emerged (Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Pompper, 2004, 2005; Simpson, 2018). CPRE (2015) has observed that many racial/ethnic minorities fall out of public relations from their organizations or the practice entirely somewhere between earning a degree and staying long enough for promotion, which is about five years. Several reasons that prevent them from rising to senior management level include discrimination, limited opportunities for career advancement, being overlooked or underappreciated, and only being assigned to minority-related campaigns or public affairs projects (Brown et al., 2011; Pompper, 2004).

Cultural diversity in public relations education has also been a major concern. Despite its popularity compared to other mass communication areas (DiStaso, Stacks, & Botan, 2009), the public relations discipline has not been equally attractive to racial/ethnic minorities both among faculty and students (Brown et al., 2011). Part of this shortage has been associated with the lack of role models, mentors for young professionals or success stories about minorities in public relations (Maul, 2008; Qiu & Muturi, 2016). Studies have indicated the importance of career role models and noted cultural diversity at the senior level of management in the public relations industry as critical not only for current and prospective students but also for young professionals (Curtin & Gaither, 2006; Len-Rios, 1998; Qiu & Muturi, 2016).

Although professional organizations have provided some guidelines on how to diversify public relations education, there is a dearth of research that empirically examines barriers associated with diversification from the students' perspectives, specifically the level of exposure to diversity as they prepare to join the workforce. Mundy et al. (2018) suggested a focus on how diversity and multicultural perspectives are taught in the classroom and a commitment among educators to integrate diversity and inclusion-focused topics in the curriculum.

Perceptions of Race/Ethnicity Issues in Public Relations

How society views certain races/ethnicities reflects workplace perceptions and the nature of assignments given to them within an organization. Pre-existing racial/ethnic perceptions and stereotypes hinder hiring and progress in diversification. For example, all Hispanics are presumed to speak Spanish (Abeyta & Hackett, 2002) and Asian practitioners are seen as having a similar physical appearance—younger-looking, shorter, unable to speak English, and introverted (Ki & Khang, 2008). African-American stereotypes are associated with Black neighborhoods and with the physical appearance of males, which are based on misconceptions and ideas about male masculinity and sexuality (Tindall, 2009). The angry black woman and the welfare-mother stereotype are also consistent in media portrayals (Lind, 2013) and may have a strong influence on hiring decisions.

With limited racial or ethnic diversity, the public relations field has been a white-dominated profession where hiring culturally diverse professionals is an anomaly (Brown et al., 2019; Pompper, 2004), which led Layton (1980) to reference the field as the "last of the lily-white professions" (p. 64). Agencies were historically uneasy about matching people of color with white clients (Layton, 1980), an issue that has faced many organizations more than two decades later, where minorities are commonly hired exclusively to communicate to consumers or publics in their minority group or to fill quotas (Brown et al., 2011; Pompper, 2004; Qiu & Muturi, 2016). Scholars have referred to these as "show positions" for minorities with no real policy-making input or development of their talent and careers (Diggs-Brown & Zaharna, 1995; Tindall, 2009). This issue has contributed to job dissatisfaction and lack of progress among racially/ethnically diverse public relations practitioners.

In a documentary about being Black in public relations, professionals underscored the small number of racial/ethnic minorities and their everyday challenges, which include the lack of opportunities within their organizations to progress and advance their careers in the field, unlike their white counterparts (Simpson, 2018). Likewise, African-American students expressed discomfort about being assigned exclusively to campaigns aimed at their race, noting that "one of the reasons they were attracted to public relations, in the first place, was the potential for the variety of activities and they did not want to be pigeonholed or locked into any certain type of work" (Brown et al., 2011, p. 526).

Other challenges include discrimination and everyday racism, such as racial insensitivity in the form of comments, behaviors, and actions from colleagues and supervisors (Tindall, 2009). This implies that although hiring is important, retention is critical, and programs should address the specific needs of minority employees. Literature also suggests diversity-driven initiatives should go beyond recruiting and hiring a diverse workforce by focusing on determining ways to convey to stakeholders the benefits of a diverse workforce and by better integrating diversity values into organizational culture (Brunner, 2009; Mundy, 2015).

Public relations researchers have also identified gaps in the existing literature on issues that continue to hinder minorities' successes in the field. For example, in a study on framing diversity, Austin (2010) found that most studies focus primarily on Hispanic and Black populations, with only a limited focus on Asian Americans, Native Americans, the LGBTQ communities, and almost none on the Jewish community. Prior research has reported an absence of Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, both as subjects of news and as reporters (Poindexter et al., 2003). Overall, several gaps exist in the literature concerning public relations employees who have a diverse racial/ethnic, religious background, and/or physical ability.

Awareness and sensitivity to diversity-related issues in public relations are important and necessary for change to occur. The profession emphasizes the engagement of stakeholders and the critical role of research in understanding how to best meet their needs while building relationships. Public relations education is a step towards the necessary change in the profession, given that students are tomorrow's professionals. As one of the most promising majors for communication that provides students with ample career opportunities (DiStaso et al., 2009), public relations is an opportunity to sensitize students to these issues with the anticipation that they play a role in the needed change in the field.

Diversity Exposure in Public Relations Education

Diversity and inclusiveness in public relations education are addressed through recruiting a diverse faculty and student population and incorporating diversity-related topics within the curriculum (Brown et al., 2019; Brunner, 2005; Turk, 2006). ACEJMC (2018), the accrediting body of mass communication programs, has diversity as one of its standards to enhance diversity within the curriculum. The standard requires programs to develop diversity plans to address gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation; a curriculum that includes instructions on issues and perspectives related to diverse cultures in a global society; and an environment that is free of harassment and all forms of discrimination (ACEJMC, 2018). In achieving the curriculum requirements, ACEJMC recommends to either organize a stand-alone course or incorporate diversity in an array of courses. These requirements are set to help students understand how to communicate and work effectively in a diverse workplace and to keep pace with the changing demographics of the organization's external environment (Turk, 2006).

Professional organizations have also played a key role in facilitating diversity in public relations education by making recommendations and providing resources to the academy for higher education to expose students to diversity as they prepare to join the workforce. For example, ACEJMC (2018) requires programs to develop curriculum and instruction that educate faculty and prepare students with diversity and multicultural knowledge, values, and skills, and to document their efforts to ensure representation of diverse races and ethnicities among the faculty and student body. Additionally, CPRE has developed curriculum guidelines that emphasize diversity and globalization (Turk, 2006), while the PRSA Foundation has created a book titled Diverse Voices, which features diverse professionals' challenges and success stories to enable educators to familiarize public relations students with racial/ethnicity issues in the field (Elsasser, 2018). Scholars have also provided examples on how to integrate diversity into the curriculum, such as in research designs and methodologies that recognize diversity (Pompper, 2005) and using examples or choosing textbooks that include minorities' roles to make students aware of the fundamental role of diversity in improving public relations (Ki & Khang, 2008). Exploring diversity in communication strategies (Curtin & Gaither, 2006) would also enhance the understanding of diversity and how to incorporate it into public relations education and programming.

Recruitment and retention of diverse students and faculty are crucial in diversity exposure within academia, although studies have continually raised concerns about racial and ethnic disparities in public relations education (e.g., Brunner, 2005; Fiske et al., 2016; Kern-Foxworth, 1989; Ki & Khang, 2008, Len-Rios, 1998; O'Dwyer, 2018; Tindall, 2009). As research has demonstrated, a key reason for students to select a major is the influence from interpersonal relationships with advisors, faculty, family, and friends, as well as prestige and job value (Brown et al., 2011). Parents especially have an influential role in a student's career choice. For instance, Asian American communities stress prestigious careers, such as law and medicine, while discouraging their college-age children from seeking education in service-oriented jobs such as public relations (Ki & Khang, 2008; Qiu & Muturi, 2016). To enhance exposure, ACEJMC provided tips for the diversification of academic programs, some of which involve leadership talking about diversity regularly, forming diversity committees, aggressively recruiting minority students in high schools, creating student chapters, mentoring minority students, among other efforts (Ceppos, 2018).

Additional forms of exposure, which can be incorporated into the curriculum, include observances of public and diversity holidays celebrated by other cultures and populations. The PRSA Diversity and Inclusion toolkit lists several diversity holidays celebrated by various cultures and populations, such as Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday in January, Black History Month in February, Asian Pacific American Month in May, and Día de la Raza or Day of the Race in October, among others (Fiske et al., 2016). As Edwards (2011) argues, understanding diversity and experiencing it is important because public relations produces discourses that help constitute and sustain the relative positions of diverse groups in society, as well as in the profession itself. There are, however, gaps in evidence-based information on the effect of that experience on their perceptions of public relations and diversity-related issues.

Research Questions

RQ1: Do perceptions about race/ethnicity issues in public relations vary based on the participants' levels of diversity exposure?

RQ2: Does perceived knowledge about the public relations practice influence students' perceptions of race/ethnicity issues in the field?

RQ3: Is there an association between the level of diversity exposure and the perceived knowledge about the public relations profession?

RQ4: Does the number of mass communication courses taken have any influence on (a) diversity exposure and (b) race/ethnicity perceptions of public relations?

RQ5: Is there any significant difference between public relations students and those in other academic concentrations in (a) their perceptions of race/ethnicity issues and (b) diversity exposure?

Method

This study is based on an online survey administered to college students at a large Midwestern university (*N* = 417). The mass communication program has three sequences—advertising, journalism, and public relations—with approximately 600 enrolled majors and minors. All students enrolled in mass communication courses in the spring semester received the survey, which included majors, minors, and those taking electives or cross-listed courses between mass communication and other disciplines. Following approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for human subjects, the registrar's office provided the list of students with email addresses only. Each participant received an email generated from the Qualtrics survey system requesting them to participate in the survey. As indicated in the informed consent form, participation was voluntary, and only those who consented could proceed with the survey. The system sent three reminders to those who had not completed the survey after three, six, and nine weeks, respectively.

Measures

The main variable in this study was the students' perceptions of race/ethnicity issues in the public relations field. Other key variables included diversity exposure, perceived knowledge of the public relations profession, the number of courses taken in mass communication, and whether they were in mass communication and the public relations sequence. Demographic factors included age, gender, race/ethnicity, and year in college.

Perceptions of race/ethnicity issues in public relations were measured with 11 items adapted from several studies (e.g., Brown et al., 2011; Ki & Khang, 2008; Qiu & Muturi, 2016; Tindall, 2009). The items asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with a list of statements that scholars have addressed as race/ethnicity issues in the public relations field. Statements included perceptions of public relations as a white-dominated profession; racial/ethnic minorities being assigned only to technician roles and racially/ethnically-based assignments; earning lower salaries; putting more effort in for the same amount of achievement as their White counterparts, and not making career progress due to their race/ethnicity. A 5-point Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) measured the items in the scale, which also had a reliable internal consistency (Cronbach $\alpha = .82$).

Diversity exposure is the opportunity to interact with and learn from or about those with culturally diverse backgrounds in formal or informal settings. The scale was developed from reviewed literature, specifically from the ACEJMC diversity standards, PRSA recommendations, and several academic and professional publications (e.g., ACEJMC, 2018; Brown, et al., 2011; Brunner, 2005; CPRE, 2015; Diggs-Brown & Zaharna, 1995; Edwards, 2011; Fiske et al., 2016; Ki & Khang, 2008). The questions focused on various opportunities where students can receive exposure to cultural diversity, such as enrolling in stand-alone diversity courses; enrolling in other courses that address race and ethnicity issues; completing assignments that require a diversity component; working on class projects with members of other races/ethnicities; having instructors or academic advisors with diverse backgrounds; or participating in guest lectures, internships, or service-learning projects that involved some diversity aspects. The items in this dichotomous variable were coded as 1 (yes) and 0 (no) and summed to create one composite variable "diversity exposure" with a possible total score of seven points (range of 0 to 7, $M = 4.85$, $SD = 1.74$; median = 5). The variable was then categorized as low exposure (below 3 points), moderate exposure (3-5 points) and high exposure (above 5 points).

Participants' perceived knowledge about public relations practices was measured by asking students how much they believed they were familiar with the profession. Previous studies have indicated the lack of knowledge among students, professionals, and personal influencers is a key deterrent in the diversification of the public relations practice (Ki & Khang, 2008; Qiu & Muturi, 2016). This was necessary because the survey was conducted among all students enrolled in communication courses, some of whom were not in public relations but may have learned or had perceptions about the field from other sources. The one-item measure "How knowledgeable are you about public relations practice?" had three options (1) "not knowledgeable at all," (2) "mildly knowledgeable," and (3) "very knowledgeable."

The survey was validated in multiple ways. First, face validity was established through reading the questionnaire multiple times by the researcher and research assistant to ensure that all questions were appropriately worded. Second, the data were cleaned to remove incomplete cases and to label the values appropriately based on the survey variables; also, negatively stated questions were reverse-coded. Gathering data online eliminated human errors that often occur in manual entry. This was followed by running study descriptives (frequencies and means) to verify that the data were error free. Finally, reliability analysis for the race/ethnicity perceptions was performed to determine internal consistency with an acceptable Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 (Taber, 2018).

Sample Characteristics

The sample was composed of 39% males (n = 164) and 61% females (n = 253), with an age range of 18 to 38 years. The sample was evenly distributed across undergraduates with 22% freshmen (n = 93), 20% sophomores (n = 84), 26% juniors (n = 109), and 27% seniors (n = 111). Only about 5% were graduate students (n = 20). The sample was predominantly Caucasian (82.5%), while ethnic minorities accounted for about 18% (*n* = 73). About 68% of participants (*n* = 283) were in mass communication. Another 134 students (32%) were from other disciplines but enrolled in one or more mass communication courses. Among mass communication majors, 45% (*n* = 127) were in public relations and 55% were in other concentrations (advertising, journalism, or pre-majors).

About 228 students had taken fewer than three mass communication courses, and 216 (52%) had taken a mass communication course that had addressed diversity issues. Likewise, 290 students (70%) had taken a course outside of the mass communication discipline that had a diversity component. Among those who had taken fewer than three courses (*n* = 228), only 29% (*n* = 67) indicated a high diversity exposure. The majority of them (*n* = 129) were moderately exposed to diversity issues (3-5 points), while 32 students (14%) had limited exposure to diversity (< 3 points). Overall, public relations students had slightly more exposure to diversity (M = 5.13, SD = 1.58) compared to others in the mass communication field (M = 4.73, SD = 1.79). About 49% (*n* = 62) had moderate exposure, while 46% (*n* = 58) reported high exposure to diversity, and only 7 public relations students (6%) reported low exposure compared to 31 (11%) non-public relations student in that category.

Results

The first research question (RQ1) examined if the students' levels of diversity exposure affected their perceptions of race/ethnicity issues in public relations. Overall, students had low perceptions of racial/ethnicity issues in public relations (M = 2.31, SD = .724), which means they did not agree with the statements that reflected diversity issues in the field. Results show that diversity exposure was not a significant predictor of students' perceptions of race/ethnicity issues ($\beta = -.007$, $t = -.152$, $p > .05$). This means there was no relationship between students' perceptions about race/ethnicity issues in the field and their exposure to diversity. Those who were more exposed to diversity in various forms were not more likely to be aware or concerned about race/ethnicity-related issues in the public relations profession.

The second research question (RQ2) examined if participants' perceived knowledge about the public relations profession had any influence on their perception of race/ethnicity issues in the field. The majority (73%) of the students reported being mildly knowledgeable about public relations practices (n = 305), 14% indicated being very knowledgeable (n = 57), while (13%) were not knowledgeable at all (n = 55). A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed, and the results showed that their perceived knowledge about the profession significantly influenced how they perceived race/ethnicity issues in the field (F (2, 414) = 4.077, $p < .05$). A Bonferroni post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between those who perceived themselves as very knowledgeable and those who were not at all knowledgeable about the public relations profession ($p < .05$), but no other differences were observed.

The third research question (RQ3) examined the association between students' perceived knowledge of public relations practice and the level of diversity exposure. Pearson's Chi-Square analysis showed a significant association ($\chi 2 = 15.009$, $df = 4$, $p < .05$). Among those who perceived themselves as very knowledgeable about public relations (54%) were more exposed to diversity issues, whereas the majority of those who were mildly knowledgeable indicated low diversity exposure (63%).

The fourth research question (RQ4) focused on the number of mass communication courses taken by the time of the survey and how it affected students' diversity exposure and their perceptions of ethnicity issues in public relations. Results from one-way ANOVA show that the number of courses taken in mass communication also influenced diversity exposure [F (3, 413) = 11.069, $p < .001$]. A Bonferroni post-hoc analysis showed variation in diversity exposure among those who had taken one or two mass communication courses and all other groups. Similarly, there was variation in the perceptions of race/ethnicity issues in public relations based on the number of courses taken in the discipline [F (3, 413) = 2.960, $p < .05$]. A post-hoc analysis also showed specific differences in ethnicity perceptions between those who had taken one or two courses and those who had taken three or four courses ($p < .05$).

The final research question (RQ5) examined if public relations students' perceptions of ethnicity issues in the field and their exposure to diversity differed from all the other students. T-test analyses indicated a significant difference between those who were in public relations (n = 127) and other participants (n = 290) in their perceptions of race/ethnicity issues in public relations (t = -4.755, df = 291, $p < .001$). Participants in the public relations concentration were less in agreement with the statements on race/ethnicity perceptions (M = 2.08, SD = .610) compared to other students (M = 2.41, SD = .748), with a moderate effect size (Cohen's d = .49). There was also a significant difference between diversity exposure between public relations students and others (t = 2.318, df = 270, $p < .05$). Those who are in public relations reported more exposure to diversity (M = 5.13, SD = 1.58) compared to others (M = 4.73, SD = 1.79) but with a relatively small effect size (Cohen's d = .24).

Discussion

Most of the literature has explored diversity issues in public relations from a professional's perspective, specifically on the underrepresentation of racial/ethnic minorities, their experiences, and challenges for succeeding in the field. Extant literature has also focused on the need for diversity in public relations education, from recruitment and retention to curriculum adjustments to incorporate diversity-related content and experiences for students as they prepare for a diverse workforce. The current study focused on students' perspectives to understand how they perceive race/ethnicity issues in the public relations field and the extent of their exposure to diversity, which is important in determining gaps in the curriculum and other forms of diversity exposure. As one of the most popular mass communication disciplines (DiStaso et al., 2009), public relations attracts students from a variety of academic backgrounds (e.g., agriculture, marketing, fashion and design, tourism, public health), given its relevance and applicability across disciplines. Although they are likely to be exposed to diversity from other disciplines, it is equally important for them to understand the critical role it plays and the diversity-related issues in the public relations field prior to joining the workforce.

Despite the emphasis on diversity in the field, results from the current study did not find diversity exposure to significantly influence how students perceived race/ethnicity issues in public relations. Overall, students had moderate exposure to diversity and a low level of perceptions about race/ethnicity-related issues in public relations practice. This is possibly due to the lack of focus on discipline-specific diversity issues in the courses taken or informally through participation in diversity-related events and activities during their academic career. The current study found about 48% of all participants had not taken a mass communication course that focused on diversity, 35% had not participated in multicultural or diversity-related events, and about 28% had not worked an internship or other projects outside of class that included people with diverse backgrounds, all missed opportunities for experiencing diversity.

There was an association between the number of courses taken in mass communication and students' perceived knowledge about public relations practice. Previous research has associated the lack of knowledge about public relations with misconceptions about the profession (Bowen, 2009). As current results have shown, public relations students were more knowledgeable about the practice, as expected, and more exposed to diversity-related issues. They were also more likely to learn about the profession, including diversity-related topics. About 64% of public relations students had taken a course where the instructor addressed some aspect of diversity. They were also likely to learn about diversity issues through interacting with professionals and guest speakers, as well as participating in student activities and clubs, including Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) and internship programs that are likely to expose them to diversity issues.

Implications

This study has several implications for public relations education and, consequently, practices. First, there is a need to expose students to discipline-related diversity, focusing more on various elements organizations face in the diversification of the profession. Although institutions have made efforts to diversify through offering diversity-related courses, recruitment, and retention of culturally diverse students and faculty, it is also important not only to sensitize students about cultural diversity issues but also challenge them to develop workable solutions and strategies that they may apply once they join the workforce.

Second, diversity is a broad term with multiple meanings, and public relations education could focus on various aspects in a separate class to provide a clear understanding of various issues in the field. For instance, in addition to introducing a stand-alone course on diversity, which ACEJMC (2018) recommends, it is important to introduce discipline-related content at various academic levels and to focus on different aspects (race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and so on), so students are more sensitized throughout their curriculum. For example, CPRE recommends an ethics course for public relations programs (Bortree, Bowen, Silverman, & Sriramesh, 2018) and building a discipline-specific diversity unit into that course and other required courses would enhance exposure and understanding of how to ethically work with a diverse population.

Third, recruiting students from diverse backgrounds, retaining students, providing academic and career mentoring, and creating supportive environments where they can thrive would enhance diversity in public relations education. However, addressing diversity within the curriculum is not a walk-in-the-park for all instructors. To some, it can be a rather sensitive issue that requires a concerted effort and skill to incorporate effectively into existing curricula. This implies the need for policies and resources to support diversification not only at the institutional level but also within specific units to support faculty to develop skills for a diversity-focused education.

In addition to using textbooks and other professional materials as recommended in previous research (Ki & Khang, 2008), it is important to also provide opportunities for professionals from diverse backgrounds to contribute to public relations education within and outside the curriculum. With institutional support, this may take the form of guest speakers, job shadowing, career mentoring programs, internships, and getting involved in student clubs (e.g., PRSSA) and other organizations that attract a diverse group of students, all of which are likely to enhance students' understanding of diversity while sensitizing them to discipline-specific issues.

Limitations

This study had a few limitations that need to be taken into consideration in future studies. First, it was conducted in one school and, therefore, not generalizable to other public relations programs nationally. Second, the make-up of respondents who were predominantly Caucasian also affects generalizability. However, as CPRE (2015) indicated, ethnic and racial diversity is an issue on some campuses but not all, and a one-size-fits-all approach will not work. It is, therefore, important to examine different situations from each institution or similar institutions, especially in developing policies and strategies that apply to each situation. Furthermore, the study may have issues of external validity due to self-reporting, although reliable internal consistency was attained in all scales ($\alpha > .70$). The study also relied only on associations and, therefore, cannot assume any causal linkages. Despite these limitations, the study provides insights that may be useful in curriculum revisions as mass communication programs seek to incorporate diversity much better to meet accreditation requirements while preparing students for successful careers in a diverse workforce.

Conclusion

The need for organizations to cater to diverse publics becomes more evident as the U.S. population continues to diversify, and academic programs play a key role in meeting that need. With an emphasis on diversity, communication and public relations programs focus on strategies to reach and build strong relationships with a diverse customer more effectively. A lack of diversity within an organization and among key stakeholders may, therefore, be viewed as a public relations problem and may demonstrate gaps in training for public relations professionals.

Understanding and incorporating diversity within organizations is one of the key principles of excellence in public relations practice (Dozier et al., 1995; J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992). Excellence, however, can only occur when practitioners are well prepared to address all the necessary aspects, and diversity plays a significant role in creating it. This starts with understanding the existing gaps and addressing them using a multi-dimensional approach—research, education, and practice. The current study examined the issue from students' perspectives to provide insights for public relations education.

Further research to validate the survey used in the current study in different diversity contexts (cultural, geographical, socioeconomic), replicate it in racially diverse institutions, or conduct a comparative study in institutions across the country could provide useful insights for public relations education. Additionally, research that places focus on other aspects of diversity and different stakeholders is recommended. For instance, investigations into public relations managers' perceptions of diversity and the challenges they face in diversifying the workplace would be a valuable contribution. Given that diversifying the workforce is viewed as a public relations responsibility, it would be important to examine how employers view diversity, their likelihood of supporting it, and the role of public relations within organizations.

From an education perspective, mass communication faculty play a vital role in influencing perceptions about the public relations field. Understanding their perspectives about diversity in the discipline and how they incorporate it into their courses and the overall curriculum is an area that requires research. Other areas of diversity that require more empirical studies include ageism, classism, disability, sexual orientation, and other socio-cultural and ideological differences in public relations practice. As programs strive towards diversity as part of excellence in public relations, it is important to document success in diversification, such as job satisfaction, empowerment efforts, and the potential for career progression in the practice among ethnic minorities and other diverse groups.

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Empowering the Future Practitioner: Postmodernism in the Undergraduate Public Relations Classroom

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Abstract

Although academics have worked to integrate postmodernism and public relations scholarship, little research has been conducted into how to bring postmodern principles into the undergraduate public relations classroom. This study analyzed how public relations educators integrated postmodern concepts into a large, introductory undergraduate public relations class through a lecture and in-class activity for student groups to design a postmodern organization. Results of this study indicated that this lesson forced students to question—many for the first time—their underlying assumptions about organizational structures and to begin to deconstruct public relations metanarratives. Students gained a deeper appreciation for the complexity of public relations and opportunities for organizational activism. Findings indicated that these types of alternative perspectives should be integrated throughout undergraduate public relations programs.

Keywords: postmodernism, organizational activism, public relations, power, undergraduate education

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Although academics, such as Holtzhausen (2000, 2002, 2012), Mickey (1997), Radford (2012), and Tyler (2005), have worked to bring postmodern approaches to public relations scholarship, little has been published on how postmodern principles may enhance students' learning in the undergraduate public relations classroom. While postmodernism is decidedly complex, it offers students a way to deconstruct the assumptions made about public relations and to reimagine public relations roles and structures. Public relations pedagogy should not only impart technical skills, but it should also empower future public relations practitioners to consider the consequences of power and ideology in public relations theory and practice.

To that end, we introduced postmodernism to a large, introductory-level public relations class at a mid-Atlantic public university through a lecture on the basic tenets of postmodernism and an in-class activity for student groups to design a postmodern organization. Through a thematic analysis of instructor interviews, reflexive teaching memos, and students' reflections on the lecture and activity, we found four primary themes around understandings of postmodernism: (1) emphasizing values and ethics, (2) questioning underlying assumptions, (3) adapting to change, and (4) challenging existing theory. Challenges to this pedagogical approach also existed, including the need to integrate concepts throughout the semester, provide tangible examples, and focus on specific aspects of postmodernism. This new perspective, however, empowered students to question fundamental assumptions about organizational structure and public relations practice. This study provides insight for public relations educators around the challenges and opportunities for integrating postmodern concepts into an undergraduate class.

Literature Review

This literature review begins with an overview of foundational concepts of postmodernism and its distinction from modernism. Next, it focuses on postmodernism within public relations research. Finally, this review concludes with a discussion of postmodern insights into public relations pedagogy.

Modernism, Postmodernism, and Postmodern Tenets

Discussion of postmodernism is best understood when contrasted with modernism. Both perspectives are concerned with the ways that knowledge is created and justified, which formulates epistemological debates and inquiries about the creation, dissemination, and constitution of knowledge (Pritchard, 2009). According to Mumby (1997), four discursive positions encapsulate modernist and postmodernist approaches: (1) positivist modernism, (2) interpretive modernism, (3) critical modernism, and (4) postmodernism. Positive modernism focuses on the objectivity of knowledge, namely, the separation of the truth and the subject; interpretive modernism focuses on the consensus of truth, a socially constructive process where knowledge creation exists in matters of tensions; critical modernism raises suspicion about the assumptions of "a particular mode of rationality (such as capitalism) that has come to dominate the modernist project" (Mumby, 1997, p. 10); and postmodernism contextualizes knowledge in indeterminacy and paradoxes ubiquitous to human discourses (Cooper & Burrell, 1988).

Even though the boundaries between critical modernism and postmodernism may be blurry, it is important to note the differences before moving forward. Modernism is rooted in the Enlightenment Project, which is primarily concerned with reason and rationality (Cooper & Burrell, 1988). In this sense, critical modernism challenges and exposes assumptions about the societal structure and systems that "limit the possibilities for the realization of a genuinely democratic society" (Mumby, 1997, p. 9), but it preserves the connection to the Enlightenment Project through its emphasis on emancipation and freedom. In other words, critical modernism is not a radical overhaul of the fundamental debates about reason and rationality but rather a question of the legitimacy of an overarching approach to achieving outcomes related to equality, democracy, and freedom.

Postmodernism encompasses too many perspectives to have a simple and united definition, and finding a unified definition is antithetical to postmodernism in the first place (Rosenau, 1992). Therefore, postmodern tenets identified by Mumby (1997) are summarized here to explain its major differences from modernist approaches. First, the understanding of a knowing subject is decentered and deconstructed. This tenet is intricately connected to the question of who the knowing subjects are and what represents knowledge. Second, postmodernism emphasizes that knowledge and power are inseparable concepts. The interrelation between knowledge and power is termed as the power-knowledge regime by Foucault (1980), where knowledge is the epistemological container of power and the very representation of power. Therefore, consensus is inherently problematic because coercion is unavoidable in this process. However, postmodernism considers power as "part of everyday life" (Hatch, 2006, p. 275) and not inherently positive or negative. Third, postmodernism posits that meaning emerges not only from the interactions of individuals and texts but also different discourses. More specifically, "meaning is never fully present in a text but rather is the product of a system of difference that is constantly deferred" (Mumby, 1997, p. 15).

These tenets can be helpful to make a distinction of postmodernism from critical modernism (and as an extension, critical theories). Critical theories are mostly concerned with assumptions made regarding various institutional discourses and power dynamics created by systems and social structures (e.g., Berger, 2005; Rakow & Nastasia, 2009), with the goal of creating knowledge that is liberating and emancipatory. They still abide by the fundamental principles of the Enlightenment Project. In comparison, postmodernism problematizes and deconstructs the ways knowledge is represented and created, how discourses and structures are volatile, and how meaning can be only derived by relative references to other discourses.

The power of postmodernism lies in its focus on rupturing current knowledge systems. Knowledge is institutionalized in a way to make salient certain group's knowledge and silence others. Postmodernism highlights that the very production of knowledge is political and value-laden (Holtzhausen, 2012). The postmodern deconstruction process exposes implicit power relations in the knowledge structure and seeks alternatives. The value of postmodernism to public relations education lies in its ability to not only question assumptions taken for granted, as many critical theories do, but also encourage a learner of this perspective to be more conscientious about the very knowledge that is attached to structures and systems. In fact, many lessons in the undergraduate curriculum focus on institutionalized knowledge (Liinason, 2010). The purpose of engaging postmodernism in both research and education is to challenge the very existence of the field by pointing out its service to power, clarifying the subjective nature of the practice, demythologizing the representative "Truth" (Bardhan, 2003) and offering alternative representations and articulations.

Postmodernism and Public Relations

A postmodern approach to public relations challenges the powerful discourses that shape dominant ways of understanding, studying, and practicing public relations. As Radford (2012) explained, "a postmodern perspective allows one to consider PR as a narrative, a way of talking about the world, the people in that world, and PR's relationship with those people" (p. 50). Postmodernism in public relations sheds light on where to position empowerment in the intersection of research, praxis, society, and organizations (e.g., Edwards, 2006; Holtzhausen, 2000; L'Etang, 2009).

Postmodern public relations scholars have pushed back against the acceptance of a functionalist approach to public relations that is rooted in capitalism (Radford, 2012). For example, Weaver (2001) challenged the assumption that public relations should only be examined as a tool of capitalism when public relations can and is used by those seeking to resist, disrupt, and dismantle capitalism and other systems of oppression. Furthermore, Bardhan (2003) critiqued the practice of universalizing Western public relations principles and theories and the application of them to non-Western contexts.

Although public relations can create, maintain, and reproduce powerful governing discourses, Holtzhausen (2000, 2002, 2012) argued that public relations can also resist and disrupt such discourses. As public relations practitioners are themselves subjected to exploitations from top-down capitalist organizational structures, these two dimensions of connection position the practitioners on two vectors that sometimes impose disturbance and inconsistency on their public relations practice. Through her work on postmodernism in public relations, Holtzhausen (2000) primarily focused on (1) postmodernism's interpretation of power and how it opens paths to dealing with a reality of public relations in society; (2) postmodernism's guidance on how to conceptualize institutional public relations practitioners (or public relations professionals in general) as activists; (3) how public relations practitioners are activists themselves in organizations; (4) postmodernism's guidance on why and how we deconstruct the construction of knowledge in the public relations discipline; and (5) postmodernism's insights on how to embrace diversity and dissidence, especially its implications on real-life public relations practice.

Public relations education needs to consider the impact of engaging postmodernism in the undergraduate public relations curricula, as explained by Holtzhausen (2000):

> The only obstacle in the way of public relations practitioners operating as activists is located in the classroom. The field's case studies, texts, and research give preference to public relations as a management function of capitalist organizations, including state organizations. Even non-profit organizations, an important area of study in public relations, function on the close liaison between themselves and the corporations that fund them. Few have yet explored the possibility of studying the role, or the potential role, of public relations in activism, even while the knowledge and skills of public relations practitioners make them particularly suitable to become activist leaders in communities. This might mean that public relations practitioners line up on opposite sides of the trenches, but so do legal practitioners, marketing experts, and many other professionals every day. (p. 100)

Therefore, it is worth investigating how postmodernism might assist students' learning of public relations from a pedagogical standpoint.

Postmodern Insights Into Public Relations Pedagogy

Despite the call to integrate the postmodern perspective into public relations theory and practice by many scholars (e.g., Holtzhausen, 2002; L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006), little attention has been paid to public relations pedagogy within this growing body of research (Duffy, 2000). Scholarship in general has taken the turn to recognizing the value of postmodernism (e.g., Marsh, 2008), but in the classroom, these same calls seem to be abandoned for more traditional, pragmatic, and functionalist approaches (DiStaso, Stacks, & Botan, 2009; Stacks, Botan, & Turk, 1999; Stokes & Waymer, 2011). The idea of offering students practical applications of postmodern theory might seem counterintuitive (Toth, 2002). This, to a certain degree, reflects the fact that both critical and postmodern scholars have difficulties defending their positions as not contributing to the "cash value" of corporations (Mumby, 1997, p. 23). As Boyd and VanSlette

(2009) wrote, “a purely postmodern approach to almost anything is inconceivable” (p. 329). However, the ability to expose and challenge assumptions rooted in knowledge and social structures is paramount to a person’s educational experience (Rieckmann, 2012; Stokes & Waymer, 2011).

Deconstruction refers to a method that “not only exposes the limitations or inconsistencies of any particular set of conceptual oppositions and priorities in a text, but also shows how the text’s attempt to maintain this system undermines the very principles of its own operation” (Caplan, 1989, p. 267). Through engaging with deconstruction, Duffy (2000) showed that major public relations textbooks present a simple progression from the press agentry model, which is heavily focused on publicity, to the two-way symmetrical model, which argues for mutual understanding between an organization and its publics (see Grunig & Hunt, 1984). In addition, public relations textbooks “offer a totalizing metanarrative of harmony and organizational success using instrumental communication and an evolving and ever-improving body of public relations knowledge and practices” (Duffy, 2000, p. 296). Duffy’s deconstruction of public relations textbooks illustrated that the knowledge construction of public relations follows the implicit notion of natural progression and glorification. Public relations is portrayed as ethical and socially responsible, based on the normalized conceptualization of public relations as two-way symmetrical communication. In the meantime, the emphasis on stability and maintaining status quo conforms to the interests of corporations that benefit from a stable environment (Duffy, 2000). When undergraduate textbooks are constructed in such a way that downplays or completely ignores the possible detrimental effects of public relations, it is not hard to imagine that students will take knowledge as it is presented in the textbooks without any reflection, impressed by the very power of public relations, but without realizing the potential perils of such power.

Educators must encourage students to carefully and critically assimilate knowledge. The postmodern deconstructionist approach to delivering knowledge encourages students to have a more complete understanding of public relations. This also equips them with the necessary knowledge to make informed decisions about the impact of their actions in the future. In fact, Holtzhausen's (2012, 2015) idea of public relations as activism and practitioners as activists hinges on the awareness of power and control and the ability of practitioners to find their own voice. Presenting the knowledge as a determined fact without exposing the hidden tensions and assumptions aggravates the ethical crisis that has plagued the industry since its formation. Students in today's classrooms have the power to influence discourses that affect meaning making in society. Preconditioning students to postmodernism's fundamental idea of challenging and deconstructing metanarratives is not only our responsibility for a student's intellectual growth but also a moral obligation.

To truly position public relations as a contributive force to a democratic society, it is imperative to integrate postmodern thinking into public relations pedagogy. As Duffy (2000) argued, "the challenge is to encourage students to question their assumptions, to become self-reflexive, and to challenge the totalizing statements of their textbooks and teachers" (p. 312). Engaging postmodern thoughts into public relations classrooms helps educators rise to that challenge. With this in mind, we posed two central research questions:

> RQ1: How, if at all, does introducing postmodern theory in the introductory public relations course encourage students to think critically about public relations practice?
>
> RQ2: What, if any, challenges exist to introducing postmodern theory in the introductory public relations classroom?

Methods

Researchers designed a lecture and corresponding assignment to be implemented in an introductory public relations class at a flagship mid-Atlantic public research university. This assignment allowed students to apply postmodern concepts to public relations by having them deconstruct basic assumptions about public relations theory and practice and imagine new ways to define the role of public relations. The lesson comprised three major components: (1) giving a lecture that provided an overview of modernism and postmodernism and their relevance to public relations; (2) having students design an organization grounded in postmodernist principles; and (3) allowing students to ruminate on the experience through an optional brief, written reflection.

The two instructors (both of whom are also researchers) worked together to design a 50-minute lecture that consisted of an overview of modernism and postmodernism, as well as a discussion of the intersections of public relations, postmodernism, and modernism. Instructors emphasized the utility of postmodernism in public relations in the context of organizational theory and structure, public relations roles, different understandings of strategy and strategic planning, and leadership styles.

This introductory-level public relations class was structured in such a way that students met for 50-minute lectures twice per week. They also met in smaller lab sections once a week for 50 minutes. This postmodern activity was completed during the lab section immediately following the previous session's lecture. Students were divided into small groups of three to four students and asked to design an organization grounded in postmodern principles, articulating public relations' role within the organization, an overview of public relations structure and roles, strategic planning approaches, and leadership styles. They were given full creative license to develop the organization's name and mission statement. Groups were given approximately 20 minutes to complete this exercise; then, they briefly presented their organization to the class. Finally, the instructor led a 10-minute debriefing session on the challenges of designing postmodern organizations. This study received IRB approval and the full details of the activity can be found in Appendix A.

Data Collection

Data collected for this study included written student reflections, teaching reflections from each instructor, and two in-depth, open-ended interviews with the instructors.

Written student reflections. Instructors gave students one week to complete an optional written reflection about their experiences with the postmodernism lesson for extra credit. Students who chose to participate uploaded their reflections to the course digital space. Instructors provided questions to prompt the students in their reflections that revolved around their understanding of postmodernism in the context of public relations and experience with designing a postmodern organization through the activity. The full list of questions can be found in Appendix A. In total, 51 out of 110 students submitted reflections to the instructors.

Teaching reflections. Both instructors memoed about their experience with designing the lecture, facilitating the lab activity, and assisting students in understanding postmodern concepts and applying them to a public relations context. The non-instructor researcher on the team recorded field notes from observing the lecture but did not attend the lab sessions.

Interviews. The non-instructor researcher conducted in-depth, open-ended interviews with both instructors. Questions asked included, "What were students' responses to the postmodernism lecture? What were students' responses to the assignment to create an organization? What would you change or improve about this assignment?" Interviews lasted for approximately 30 minutes and took place at a coffee shop on campus where the researcher audio recorded the interviews for accuracy. The non-instructor researcher then listened to and transcribed the interviews.

Data Analysis

Researchers used the six-phase thematic analysis process detailed by Braun and Clarke (2006) to identify patterns and themes within the data. The first phase of analysis involved familiarizing ourselves with the data by reading through the same five student reflections, the teaching reflections, and both interview transcripts. The second phase involved generating initial codes from the data and meeting for peer debriefing. After discussing the initial codes and interpretations of the data, we divided the remaining student reflections evenly between the group for analysis. The third phase involved collapsing initial codes into broader themes and finding representative quotes. We organized this in a shared Google Drive spreadsheet. Furthermore, we kept memos throughout the process and engaged in extensive peer debriefing throughout the data analysis process in person and through email. The team then reviewed the themes and met to define and name the final themes, which are recorded in the following results section.

Results

Critically Evaluating Public Relations Practice Through Postmodernism

We identified four key themes for how students critically evaluated public relations practice through postmodernism, which were a focus on value and ethics, a need to question underlying assumptions, the necessity of adapting to change, and challenging existing PR theories.

Value and ethics. Students felt that postmodernism offered a way to integrate discussions of value and ethics into public relations. One student wrote, “There are many aspects that need to be fixed in PR in the value and ethic portion,” and postmodernism was seen as a way to “change the way people believe and think about a situation.” For example, because of postmodernism’s focus on deconstructing current systems, students brought in the example of gender-neutral bathrooms as challenging the way people think about current practices. In the same way, postmodernism in public relations is about understanding what systems are keeping people out and how to align public relations values and ethics with this focus on inclusion. Another student reflected that "the majority of structures in the workforce do not promote equality, gender fairness, and a non-hierarchy [sic] system."

Students also understood the idea of value and ethics within the context of organizational activism. To students, "being an organization activist means having a strong understanding of ethical decision-making and a resistance to dominant power." The idea of ethical decision-making included "fighting for the rights of both the employees and customers of a company." Therefore, students embraced postmodernism as a way that organizations can maintain fair and ethical practices. Because of the focus on organizational activism, there was a missed opportunity for students to be more self-reflexive about their own positions related to power and privilege. Students were only seeing dominant power structures as something to be resisted rather than something they may contribute to and actively benefit from within an organization.

Question underlying assumptions. Through this lesson, students learned to question the underlying assumptions of how society operates. One student noted, "The whole idea and concept of postmodernism made me question a lot of things in today's society, and why they are the way they are." Several students noted that this activity took them out of their "comfort zones" as it made them "question everything." Students recognized how ingrained modernism was in their worldview because it was challenging to think of another way of creating organizational structures, developing organizational roles, or implementing different leadership practices. One student wrote, "Trying to divert from these preconceived notions of organizational structure in order to form a postmodern organization was difficult. Yet, it was also the best part of the assignment." Others recognized that the assignment was difficult for them because thinking against the modernist training they had received required them to unlearn a lifetime of cultural knowledge. Students also recognized that postmodernism was not just about pointing out these underlying assumptions, but to "challenge and change those systems."

Adapting to change. Students took away from this lesson that "postmodernism is all about change; it argues that there is no absolute truth." This idea of embracing and adapting to change was "the aspect that has the greatest use in the PR world." In addition to adapting to change, public relations practitioners can be agents for change. One student recognized how "societal and organizational structures can be reinvented," and the role that public relations can play in that. Another student noted, "Public relations practitioners have to work with the company and the public as well as from managers to employees to relay certain messages to implement the changes." In recognizing the need to adapt to change, students also recognized the utility in postmodernism to help organizations and public relations practitioners deal with unpredictability. This was most commonly articulated as the unpredictability presented by crisis situations. For example, one student reflected, "By incorporating postmodern principles you are preparing your organization or company's public relations team to know how to deal with a crisis that was not a predicted outcome."

Challenging existing PR theories. Given that postmodernism was presented in an introductory public relations course, many students had just begun learning about public relations theories rooted in systems theory and other modernist principles. Therefore, introducing a completely different paradigm from what they had previously been learning in the class was jarring. One student noted, "The utility postmodern principles have on public relations is that it questions and challenges PR theories, which allow us to discover different forms of PR in each setting." Interestingly, although not explicitly taught, the instructors for the class noted that students inherently thought that postmodernism principles were antithetical to profit making. Students interpreted the previous theories taught in the course as corporate and profit-driven. One instructor noted that the organizations that students designed as postmodern were all nonprofit:

> When we were talking about postmodernism, we didn't say that postmodernism is nonprofit. Or postmodernism is not about profit. But at the end, after the activity, basically all the organizations are nonprofit. They didn't come up with any for-profit organizations. So, I'm thinking they might see a fundamental contradiction between for-profits and postmodernism.

Challenges to Introducing Postmodernism to Undergraduate Students

Given the abstract nature of postmodernism, especially to an undergraduate audience, it can be difficult to conceptualize where to even start with integrating basic postmodern principles. Three primary challenges emerged, which were the need to *integrate concepts throughout the semester, provide tangible examples, and focus on specific aspects of postmodernism.*

Integrate concepts throughout the semester. One of the main challenges for instructors in integrating postmodern principles into an introductory public relations class was that it felt disconnected from previous content. Students need to first have a grasp of modernism before they can even begin to comprehend postmodernism. As one of the instructors said, "The first thing is that we need to ask students to think about the modern assumptions. They have to understand what the modern assumptions are." Helping students understand the dominant paradigm in public relations as modernism through the semester can make the transition to talking about postmodernism smoother.

Rather than focusing on postmodernism in only one 50-minute lecture and then following up with an activity during the discussion lab, instructors felt it would have been beneficial to integrate concepts throughout the semester. Taking a more critical bent in an introductory public relations class would encourage students to consider their underlying assumptions about public relations earlier in the semester. One of the participating instructors noted incorporating deconstruction principles into a news report assignment throughout the semester. For this instructor, integrating postmodern principles served a larger purpose in the classroom:

> I think it should be, we give lip service to this whole diversity, this and that, this is what it's actually about. Actually trying to understand people and why they are offended by this or why this becomes a crisis. Or why it becomes an issue. Or why somebody is going to like this. And the whole idea of corporate responsibility. All of that we get at in these news reports, and I think that should be integrated throughout the semester.

Provide tangible examples. Even before talking about the application of postmodernism to public relations, it was helpful to give students examples of modernistic practices in their everyday lives. For example, one instructor had students deconstruct principles of modern architecture to understand why buildings followed a certain design, such as having a blueprint and room number. This example helped students to understand that "modern assumptions are about efficiency; they're about this idea of regulation or organizing." In the lecture on postmodernism, the instructor also used the actual class structure to get students to think about how certain organizational structures can limit the free flow of information and disempower certain people. In the large lecture course, students have to work through the two course teaching assistants to get their questions answered and have limited interaction with the professor. However, for a class of 120 students, this type of format makes it easier for an instructor to manage.

In addition to providing tangible examples of modernism in practice, instructors also offered alternative perspectives on public relations practice to help students think outside of the box. For example, in the lecture on postmodernism, the instructor discussed how one single person can be an organization. The example used was of a public relations practitioner who depended on her networks to set up her own business to consult organizations. A student group generated the example of a co-op structure as operating under postmodern principles.

Focus on specific aspects of postmodernism. Given the complexity of postmodernism, it is important to choose specific areas to focus on in the undergraduate public relations classroom. For this activity, one instructor noted, "We were overly ambitious in asking them to look at structure, leadership styles, and practitioner as activist." Rather than trying to cover all these different aspects, the instructor explained that "if we had just focused on structure, we would have had a better time of really getting them to think in depth on the ways in which structure affects you." Structure and roles were discussed as the potentially most important topics to cover in an undergraduate public relations course. Other topics, such as leadership style and practitioner as activist, may be more appropriate in subsequent public relations courses after students have a firmer grasp on the foundational concepts of the discipline.

Discussion

One of the main aims of this project was to empower the future practitioner by giving students the tools to become critical consumers and producers of public relations knowledge and practice. Despite the challenges faced in implementing this lesson for the first time, students walked away with a newfound postmodern orientation towards public relations. Repeatedly, students articulated that the "most important thing they learned" was, as one student put it, "to not accept things just because they have always been that way. Society is the way it is because of social constructs; it is not the absolute truth." This is an encouraging result, given the focus on a modernist and functionalist perspective on public relations in public relations pedagogy (DiStaso, Stacks, & Botan, 2009; Stacks, Botan, & Turk, 1999; Stokes & Waymer, 2011) and the difficulty scholars have faced in integrating the critical perspective in undergraduate public relations classrooms (Duffy, 2000; Hodges, 2013).

The goal of this project was not to diminish or deny the importance of technical training in undergraduate public relations pedagogy but rather to caution against the consequences of building public relations education solely around these approaches. It is important to relentlessly reflect on the current state of public relations education and devote time and effort to developing public relations pedagogy that better prepares students for future challenges. Integrating postmodernism into public relations education can add much needed nuance to the classroom experience and enrich the training and coursework already in place. Pushing students to identify and then to go beyond the underlying assumptions of dominant understandings of the practice of public relations and its role in society opens up incredible possibilities for the intellectual and professional growth of the student. As we foster this sort of growth in students, we are working to equip the public relations workforce with those same skills, which can have a profound impact on the practice of public relations itself.

Students who do not develop critical skills are less able to understand and meaningfully contribute to important social, political, and economic conversations (McKie & Munshi, 2009). Integrating a postmodern perspective throughout public relations education better enables students to understand how organizational culture and structure benefit some individuals and groups while marginalizing others. To overcome the realities of a flawed system and to change the system itself, public relations practitioners must be equipped with the ability to identify and locate injustice and the skills necessary to reimagine the practice of public relations in ways that overcome these issues. Lessons like the ones highlighted in this essay have the potential to build that sort of practitioner. A postmodern perspective provides students with valuable insight and skill necessary to not only effectively deal with change but to also become instruments of organizational change.

In that vein, another aim of the project was to introduce students to the possibilities of public relations in the context of activism, and the public relations practitioner as organizational activist. This was a less successful endeavor for several reasons. Instructors struggled with fitting the entire lesson into the allotted time, which led to certain topics getting shortchanged. Future iterations of this activity should designate more time to introduce students to Holtzhausen's (2012) conceptualization of public relations practitioner as activist and to public relations in the context of activism and social change. In addition to providing them with critical skills, increasing the visibility of public relations jobs that fall outside of the corporate realm is an important part of providing a well-rounded public relations education.

A postmodernist approach in the classroom also allows for students and educators to confront the complexities of public relations practice (Boyd & VanSlette, 2009). This makes for practitioners who, put simply, can do their jobs better. Instructors encouraged students to question underlying assumptions and metanarratives of public relations to better understand their audiences and publics, design more effective materials and campaigns, and facilitate more meaningful and just relationships. Students repeatedly articulated ways in which postmodernist ideals could help them as public relations practitioners in ensuring a focus on values and ethics, as well as adapting to change.

What we are proposing here is not simply the introduction of one or two isolated lessons on postmodernism into public relations classes, although that is certainly a place to start. Activities like this one can serve as an introduction to this sort of thinking about public relations, with more advanced classes offering additional critical training. The students who participated in this exercise walked away from an introductory public relations course with basic critical skills and an intellectual curiosity about public relations that should continue to be nurtured throughout their education. We are advocating for a commitment to integrating alternative perspectives as part of students' critical training throughout undergraduate public relations programs. One way to do this is to rely less heavily on textbooks in introductory public relations courses. Duffy (2000) demonstrated how textbooks contribute to public relations metanarratives and obscure the diversity of thought happening within public relations scholarship and practice. Reviewing the syllabi for introductory public relations courses is a practical place to start. Are all the readings for the course chapters from one textbook? If so, how can different readings and media supplement or even replace the textbook chapter materials? Instructors should include blog posts, podcasts, and even videos that center non-Western, non-white, and non-male perspectives in an effort to confront public relations metanarratives. This type of content not only engages students but also provides a richer overview of public relations practice.

Limitations and Future Research

There were several limitations of this study. First, the written reflection was not a required exercise, which may have skewed the data to overrepresent or underrepresent certain perspectives. Second, we acknowledge a heavy reliance on the work of Holtzhausen (2012) as the basis for both the lecture and activity, which is only one perspective on postmodernism within public relations. Finally, time constraints forced instructors to trim the lesson, giving students less time to absorb the material, design the organization, and debrief the activity.

Continuing with this project, we intend to teach this lesson again within another introductory public relations class with additional time allotted. We will again ask students to produce in-class and written reflections but will also conduct follow-up interviews and focus groups with students to better understand how students experienced this activity and examine whether or not they met our learning outcomes. Future research should adapt this lesson to study it in the context of other public relations courses at other colleges and universities. It is our hope that public relations scholars will continue to design lessons and activities that integrate postmodernism and critical theory into public relations undergraduate programs. The impact of these exercises on public relations students should be further studied. A longitudinal study could also be conducted with students who had postmodern principles integrated into their public relations courses to see if and how this may influence the way they practice public relations.

Conclusion

As the educators of future generations of public relations practitioners, we must reflect on the assumptions that govern our own teaching. We must find ways to meaningfully disrupt pedagogical processes that limit our students in public relations theory and practice. As such, we must help our students deconstruct public relations metanarratives by questioning the underlying assumptions and seeking out alternative articulations. In these alternatives lie the great power to reimagine and expand the role of public relations in society.

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Appendix A
Postmodernism in the Introductory PR Class Activity Description

This lesson is designed to provide students in an introductory public relations course with an alternative perspective on public relations theory. We suggest these issues be brought into the classroom midway through the semester after students are familiar with the basic theoretical approaches of public relations. Although not required, we suggest assigning students part or all of chapter 5 from Holtzhausen's (2012) work Public Relations as Activism: Postmodern Approaches to Theory and Practice to read for the day of this lesson. This chapter details the postmodern turn in organizational theory as it relates to public relations.

We recommend devoting at least one full class period to lecturing on the basic tenets worked of modernism and postmodernism, which is adaptable to a 50- or 75-minute class format. It is important to emphasize the utility of postmodernism in public relations within the context of organizational theory and structure, public relations roles, different understandings of strategy and strategic planning, and leadership styles. Instructors should focus on the differences between the modern and postmodern perspectives on these issues. For example, modernist approaches focus on strategy from a top-down perspective while postmodern approaches focus on a bottom-up emergent strategy. One tangible example for students that worked well was to use the class structure to encourage students' reflection on how certain organizational structures can limit the free flow of information and disempower certain people. In a large lecture course, students must often work through course TAs to get their questions answered and have limited interaction with the professor. But, for a class of 120 students, this type of format makes it easier for an instructor to manage, highlighting modernist assumptions of efficiency and control.

During the next class (or lab) period, briefly review the main ideas about modernism and postmodernism that were articulated during the previous session. After this, you can have students form groups of 3-4 to design a postmodern organization for 30-40 minutes. Students are instructed to focus on deconstructing underlying assumptions of organizational structure, public relation's role within an organization, strategic approaches, and leadership styles. Students will develop their own organization grounded in postmodern principles. Students should be given creative license to develop a name for their organization, as well as a mission and vision statement. After completing the exercise, student groups should briefly present their organization to the class.

Debriefing

Debriefing after the activity is one of the key components of this lesson and should be allocated for at least 10 minutes. This debrief should focus on the challenges of designing a purely postmodern organization.

Was this even possible for your students? What aspects were hardest to conceptualize through a postmodern lens? What balance should postmodern approaches strike with modernism? What tools can either perspective offer to future practitioners when faced with workplace challenges? How can the postmodern perspective help to facilitate organizational change? What does it mean to be an agent of organizational change? Why is it important?

Students often find it difficult to start this activity as modernist assumptions are so ingrained in our ways of thinking. Once students start to brainstorm, though, ideas such as a worker-owned coop and gender-neutral bathrooms emerged. Students also thought that a postmodern organization would be one that fought for the rights of employees and customers of a company.

We also suggest assigning a short written reflection due a week after the activity so that students can further consider their experiences with the postmodern lesson. Reflection questions revolved around their understanding of postmodernism in the context of public relations and experience with designing a postmodern organization through the activity. The four questions asked were: (1) What aspects of the activity were hardest to conceptualize through a postmodern lens?; (2) What, if any, utility do you think postmodern principles have in public relations?; (3) What is the most important lesson you learned from this activity?; and (4) What does being an organizational activist mean to you?

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PRD GIFT Winner AEJMC 2019

"Think Different": How to Incite Creativity with a Two-word Campaign Challenge

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Editorial Record: Submitted to AEJMC-PRD GIFT Competition by Feb. 22, 2019. A blind copy was peer reviewed by the PRD Teaching Committee, led by Chair Brigitta Brunner, and selected as a Top GIFT. First published online on August 17, 2019.

Rationale

Public relations students at Virginia Commonwealth University plan an advocacy campaign for a client in their service-learning capstone class. Students develop their campaigns following the ROPES PR model (research, objectives, programming, evaluation, and stewardship). This two-word challenge is assigned during the campaign programming stage. I use this assignment to promote creativity and to help students understand how their client's mission can inform campaign messaging. Students work in teams to create a series of two-word messages using Photoshop. Based on available class time, students are given 30-45 minutes for content creation. Then, the client judges and provides feedback on the final messages.

The client is invited to class for a mid-semester check-in and students are informed that the meeting will involve a competition. In class, students are separated into small teams and they are tasked with the two-word challenge. The class structure is as follows:

- Analyze past two-word campaigns, including REI's Opt Outside, Apple's Think Different, and Emerald Nuts' Yes Good
- Review theoretical concepts from the elaboration likelihood

model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986)

- Provide evidence for why simple, repetitive messaging enhances information recall
- Discuss the client's mission statement and use it to brainstorm two-word messages
- Work in teams to create a series of three messages in Photoshop
- Pitch the messages to the client and receive feedback

This is an interactive assignment that gives students an opportunity to receive feedback on their campaign ideas before refining their strategies and tactics. Additionally, students in service-learning classes benefit from a mid-semester client meeting.

Student Learning Goals

Students will (1) enhance their teamwork and client communication skills in a fast-paced, deadline-driven environment, (2) recognize the importance of consistency in expressing a client's visual identity, and (3) demonstrate their abilities to use Adobe Photoshop to create digital content.

Connection to Public Relations Practice

Working with community partners is demanding and the greatest successes from this assignment come when clients challenge students' ideas. For instance, one team used emotional appeals to create two-word messages for their client, the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (Figure 1). After the students shared their messages, the client stated they prefer messages that communicate hope rather than despair. The students welcomed this feedback and they changed their message strategies moving forward (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Initial two-word messages created by students for Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance

Figure 2: Modified message strategy based on client feedback

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Appendix A
Assignment Description

Design a series of three messages that each contain only two words. These messages should aim to exemplify your client's mission and communicate their visual identity.

Step 1: Write down the client's mission statement and underline all words that you deem important, powerful, and action-oriented. List associated words and phrases using the word storm technique (Kolowich, 2019)

Please keep in mind the four basic rules of brainstorming from Oxley, Tettelbach, Eubanks, and Papkin, 2006:

- "list as many ideas as possible
- no idea is out of place
- innovation is welcome

- combine and improve ideas"

Step 2: Determine which word combinations you plan to use in your messages.

Step 3: Choose photos from the client's website or select royalty free images from https://unsplash.com.

Step 4: Create a Photoshop template with a consistent font (typeface, color, size) and photo filter. Remember to use the transformation controls to avoid distorting your pictures when placing them in the template.

Step 5: Export your messages to your Google Drive as .png and .psd files.

Step 6: Upload the .png files to the shared Google Slide for presentation.

Step 7: Designate one member of your group to present your messages to the client.

Step 8: Take note of the client's feedback and, if necessary, revise the messages by next class.

Student Learning Goals

- Enhance your teamwork and client communication skills in a fast-paced, deadline-driven environment
- Demonstrate your ability to use Adobe Photoshop to create digital content
- Recognize the importance of consistency in expressing your client's visual identity

Assessment

The client and I will give you feedback based on the following questions:

- Do these messages clearly communicate the client's mission?
- Is the visual design aesthetically pleasing, professional, and consistent between messages?
- Does the team clearly communicate their campaign ideas to the client?

Class Time Allocation

Timing	50-minute class	75-minute class
Introduction lesson	5 minutes	15 minutes
Content creation	30 minutes	45 minutes
Presentations	15 minutes	15 minutes

Equipment

Students can use Canva as a substitute for Photoshop if the class is taught in a room without access to Adobe Photoshop.

Appendix B
Student Examples

Client: Orchard House School

Mission: Orchard House School educates and inspires middle school girls in a responsive, academically engaging community that fosters each girl's intellectual curiosity, social responsibility, emotional integrity, and physical well-being.

Figure 3: Example messages for the Orchard House School

Client: Backyard Harvest

Mission: Backyard Harvest works in partnership with our community to connect those with extra fresh produce and those who need it most.

Figure 4: Example messages for Backyard Harvest

Client: Kade & Vos

Mission: At Kade & Vos, we actively participate in advocacy for equality and inclusive sizing in the fashion industry. Women of all sizes deserve a comfortable, luxurious, versatile, and sustainable cotton underwear that they can wear all day every day, no matter their size.

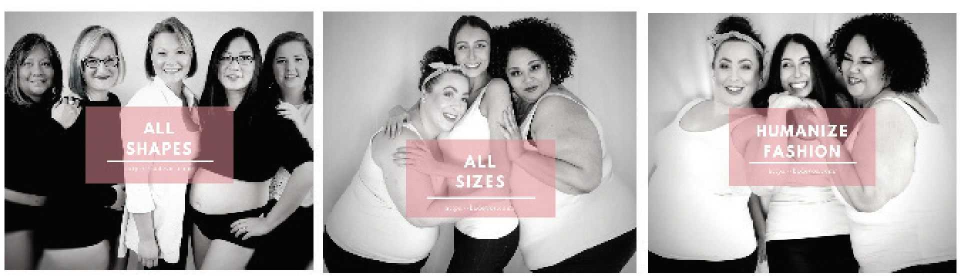

Figure 5: Example messages for Kade and Vos

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Mining the Gap: Research to Guide CSR Communications Strategy

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Editorial Record: Submitted to AEJMC-PRD GIFT Competition by Feb. 22, 2019. A blind copy was peer reviewed by the PRD Teaching Committee, led by Chair Brigitta Brunner, and selected as a Top GIFT. First published online on August 17, 2019.

Rationale

CSR communications have become an increasing responsibility for PR practitioners, as corporations have now recognized CSR as essential to their operations and their reputations. This lesson is designed to prepare students for this growing, essential practice in corporate public relations through analyzing industry research to find gaps between the "good works" companies perform and their "good works" reputation among the general population—gaps that can be filled through the use of strategic communication. According to the Reputation Institute:

> Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a highly important driver of reputation. Although companies are increasingly becoming more sustainable, the public often does not know or recognize a company's CSR commitment. Consequently, a company's actual and perceived CSR is frequently misaligned. Aligning CSR minimizes reputational risks and can improve reputation significantly. (Verheij, 2017, p. 1)

Student Learning Goals

By engaging in this assignment, students will understand that a strategic CSR program is only as strong as a company's ability to communicate its strengths, values, and impacts to a wide array of internal and external stakeholders. They will diagnose the need for a CSR communication strategy by evaluating gaps between performance and reputation. They will also gain insight on excellence in CSR communication by evaluating communication tactics of high-performing companies with high-perceived reputations. Guided by this research process, they will recommend a strategic communication plan to support CSR engagement to close the reputation gap between public reception and reality.

Connection to Public Relations Theory

This lesson connects to relationship management theory. An organization's survival depends on mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and its publics. According to Ledingham (2003), "Successful organization-public relationships develop around common interests and shared solutions to common problems" (p. 188). Among the relational factors is trust that the organization lives its values. Consumers consider CSR efforts when judging the reputation of a company, and CSR is a key public relations tool for communicating norms and gaining legitimacy (Aksak, Ferguson, & Duman, 2016). CSR engagement, when done correctly, is tied to the purpose and values of the corporation and should be communicated accordingly. Recognizing and addressing a misalignment of actual and perceived CSR is one means for corporations to build a sustained and authentic relationship with its publics.

Evidence of Learning Outcomes

This lesson has been successfully taught multiple times in an online graduate program using data from two respected industry sources: an annual ranking of U.S. corporations' CSR activity conducted by Corporate Responsibility magazine (CR Magazine, 2019) and an annual ranking of U.S. corporations' CSR reputation conducted by the Reputation Institute (2019). Positive achievement of outcomes has been measured by students' engagement with industry data that reveals a company's "gap"—and students' subsequent written justifications for selecting a company in need of a CSR communications plan. Student analysis also has determined the company's strongest CSR programs most worthy of better messaging. Finally, student communications plans are influenced by the strategy and tactics of companies ranking high in both performance and reputation, as well as by best practices in CSR communication.

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Appendix A
Assignment

Mining the Gap: Research to Guide CSR Communications Strategy

This lesson is designed to prepare you for a growing, essential practice in public relations: managing communication of corporate social responsibility (CSR) engagement. You will analyze industry research to find reality/perception gaps: Companies that are performing excellent CSR but are lacking the reputation they deserve. Through industry data, you will identify one company with a reality/perception gap and recommend how its reputation can be enhanced with a strategic communication plan.

Reality

Corporate Responsibility magazine annually recognizes companies that are good corporate citizens, excelling through their performance in multiple dimensions. Its 100 Best Corporate Citizens 2019 ranking is derived from the Russell 1000 stock market index, which measures the largest U.S.-based companies. It uses a database that tracks publicly available data in seven categories: environmental, climate change, human rights, employee relations, corporate governance, philanthropy, and financials. Beyond an overall company ranking, these categories are also ranked within each company.

Perception

The Reputation Institute annually recognizes companies perceived by the public as good corporate citizens due to their reputation. Its 2019 ranking, US RepTrak 100, presents results from a survey based on more than 167,000 ratings from the general public of 390 eligible companies (the largest U.S.-based survey in this area). The survey quantifies the public's perception of citizenship (supports good causes, positive societal influence, environmentally responsible), governance (open and transparent, behaves ethically, fair in the way it does business), and workplace (fair employee rewards, employee well-being, equal opportunities), as well as leadership, products/services, innovation, and performance.

Examples of the Gap

In Corporate Reputation magazine's 100 Best Corporate Citizens 2019 ranking, companies that ranked relatively high in actual CSR engagement were ranked in the Reputation Institute's 2019 US RepTrak 100 as relatively low (or not at all) in CSR perception. Here are just a few examples:

Company	100 Best Corporate Citizen Ranking "CSR Engagement"	US RepTrak 100 ranking "CSR Perception"
General Mills	#3	#29
Campbell Soup	#4	#26
HP	#5	#57
Microsoft	#6	#31

Instructions

Part 1:

1. Based on these two reports, explore and choose a company ranked high as a good corporate citizen but ranked low in reputation.
2. Justify your choice. What is the disparity between good citizenship and reputation?
3. In the 100 Best Corporate Citizens report, explore the detailed summary showing which type of CSR engagement ranks highest for that company.
4. On the company's corporate website, find the CSR initiatives in the high-ranking category you identified in step 3. Choose one initiative for which you will recommend a communication plan. Provide a URL.
5. Explain your choice – why did you choose this initiative to help

improve the company's overall CSR perception and reputation?

6. To help inform your recommendations, identify companies ranking high in both performance and reputation, and then explore their CSR communication strategies.

7. Other considerations for your communications plan:
    a. Beware empty boasting and greenwashing; focus on authenticity
    b. Be transparent; simple, direct communication is more authentic
    c. Know the audiences and the likely impact on each
    d. Create an ongoing dialogue
    e. Collaborate with friends and foes
    f. Partner with an NGO for credibility
    g. Focus on employee engagement and enhancing morale, image and loyalty
    h. Be consistently credible

Part 2:

Based on completion of Part One, prepare a CSR communications plan that you will recommend to the company. Follow the steps in the "Key Elements of a Strategic Communications Plan" template provided below. For this deliverable, you will play the role of a consultant assigned to analyze the CSR initiative and make recommendations in a presentation to the chief executives of the company.

Deliver your plan (as if you were presenting and speaking to the executives) in a professional PowerPoint presentation with recorded voice narration. For guidance, search online for Microsoft's instructions, "Record a slide show with narration and slide timings." Your PPT should have no more than 12 slides and be approximately 5-7 minutes in length. Regarding slide appearance, use type no smaller than 30 points and incorporate good slide design: visually pleasing, clean, and concise (don't put all your speaking points onto the slides).

Submit your plan as a voice-narrated PPT or export it to a video file (with the PPT opened, select File/Export/Create Video). If exported to a video, you may submit the video or upload it to a YouTube account and simply provide the URL.[1]

You will be assessed based on the quality and depth of your analysis and recommendations as well as the overall quality of the presentation itself.

Key Elements of a Strategic Communication Plan

1. Executive Summary	Overview of the entire plan.
2. Situation Analysis	Succinct breakdown of the issue addressed by the plan (high performance, low reputation, need for CSR communications).
3. Target Audiences	Concerned stakeholders addressed by the communications.
4. Goal	Overarching end purpose of your plan.
5. Objectives	Building blocks to meet your goal: informational, attitudinal, behavioral.
6. Strategy	Plan of action designed to achieve objectives.
7. Tactics	Steps to be taken to achieve objectives.
8. Theme and Key Message(s)	Theme: Broad statement of the vision guiding all communication. Message(s): Concise and value based.
[Budget and Timeline are optional]	
9. Evaluation	Methods to measure how effectively tactics met objectives.
10. References	The last slide in your presentation must display all of your sources.

[1]*Teaching note:* This assignment was developed for an online class. As an alternative to a voice-narrated PPT, the plan can be presented in a classroom setting to fellow students acting as board members, providing follow-up questions for discussion. Also, as an alternative to a PPT, the assignment's end deliverable could be a detailed memo to the CEO.

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PRD GIFT Winner AEJMC 2019

What Are Your Students Doing Over Spring Break? Using Disaster Relief Work to Teach Students About Crisis Communication

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Editorial Record: Submitted to AEJMC-PRD GIFT Competition by Feb. 22, 2019. A blind copy was peer reviewed by the PRD Teaching Committee, led by Chair Brigitta Brunner, and selected as a Top GIFT. First published online on August 17, 2019.

Rationale

Public relations instruction does not need to be limited to classroom dialogue and textbook lectures, such as discussing theory or case studies. Adding service learning to the curriculum allows students to apply a meaningful experience to their education. By combining service learning with disaster-relief work, students are able to see a direct connection to the definition of public relations and how building good relationships benefits society. This experience is even more powerful when the disaster hits close to home.

Student Learning Goals

The service-learning project contributed to the following course goals noted in the syllabus:

- Understand the processes involved with crisis communication.
- Understand the roles the media, relief agencies, and first responders play in crisis situations.
- Understand effective communication techniques.
- Employ critical-thinking skills to crisis communication.
- Use teamwork skills to assist in disaster relief.
- Use storytelling skills to share experiences.
- Develop materials suitable for inclusion in portfolios.

Connection to Public Relations Practice and Theory

This service-learning project supports the theory that the public relations profession "involves a combination of practical experience and expertise, balanced with a solid grounding in the history of the practice and the social science that informs it" (Gleason & Violette, 2012, p. 281.) By assisting disaster survivors and meeting with community leaders who employ PR methods to address a crisis, students are able to connect history and information to application. The requirement that students produce a publishable artifact provides tangible evidence of their ability to create a product used in the practice of public relations.

Evidence of Student Learning Outcomes

Students write a reflection paper and produce a publishable artifact that shares highlights from their service-learning experience. The artifact projects are presented at a showcase and reception open to the university community, public, and local media. The media reported on the service-learning experience both years, thus helping the students see how positive public relations efforts can enhance goodwill. Additionally, the 2018 team was featured in the university magazine and presented at the President's State of the University address. In his showcase presentation, one student summarized it well:

> For me, the trip was absolutely life changing. It gave me a new perspective on how I should appreciate things I previously took for granted: Electricity, fresh water, sewage, and shelter to name a few. Listening to the mayor and the survivors' stories shows me just how amazing humanity can be when we come together to help those in need.

Sample projects students have presented (shared with permission):

- https://hannahsquared.wixsite.com/hannahstake
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEHkr_i4k40&t=217s
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_SEU097Nkbw&list=PLR9OTGBg
- Ge1UsKPAZW1nsN5WuNt8UphVf&index=2&t=18s

References

Fink, S. (2013). *Crisis communications: The definitive guide to managing the message*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.

Gleason, J. & Violette, J. (2012). Integrating service learning into public relations coursework: Applications, implications, challenges, and rewards. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 24*(2), 280-285. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ996274.pdf

Appendix A
Description and Assessment

As part of a hybrid crisis communication course, a team of students and faculty members spent their spring break in Rockport, Texas, assisting in the ongoing rebuilding efforts following Hurricane Harvey. During the day the team partnered with a disaster-relief agency to help rebuild homes. In the evening, they met with survivors, community leaders, first responders, and disaster-relief workers and learned about their experiences. Leading up to the service-learning project, students studied crisis communication strategies and public relations theory and practices. After they returned, they shared what they learned from serving in a disaster region and applied it to the class discussions, readings, and projects. When the idea for a course on crisis communication was being developed, Hurricane Harvey had hit the Texas Coast—not far from where some of the students call home. This course (specifically the service-learning project) has created a positive response to a tragedy while enhancing the learning environment.

Prior to the Service-Learning Experience

For the first seven weeks of the semester, the class met face-to-face once a week. During that time, students read and discussed Crisis

Communication: The Definitive Guide to Managing the Message, which served as the course textbook. They also assessed case studies on public relations strategies and participated in team-building activities and assignments. This grounding helped prepare them for the disaster-relief service-learning experience.

Over spring break, the class traveled to Rockport, Texas, where we helped survivors of Hurricane Harvey clean up and fix their homes. For this, we partnered with Samaritan's Purse—a relief agency that assists with rebuilding efforts following natural disasters. Samaritan's Purse has a volunteer application process that takes four to six months to complete, so the paperwork had to be started the September prior to spring break.

During the Service-Learning Experience

After volunteer teams are approved and assigned a site to work, Samaritan's Purse provides meals, lodging, construction materials, resources, training, and supervision. The students' cost for the week-long service-learning project was minimal, as volunteers are only responsible for transportation and personal necessities. The fact that students can spend spring break doing something productive and educational without spending a lot of money adds to the popularity of this course and the appeal of the service-learning project.

While volunteering, the team painted, caulked, landscaped, and removed and installed doors, windows, siding, drywall, cabinets, and countertops for residents whose homes were being rebuilt by Samaritan's Purse. When we returned from the worksites, we had dinner with the Samaritan's Purse staff and fellow volunteers. After showering and eating, the students were encouraged to tour the area and visit with residents, business owners, and others affected by the hurricane to find content for their showcase project and reflection paper assignments. Additionally, while in Rockport, we had the privilege of visiting with local mayors, first responders, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Long-Term Recovery

Team. Not only did the students learn from these meetings, but the meetings also allowed the speakers to personally express their gratitude for the volunteers who helped rebuild their community—a PR gesture that was not lost on the students.

Post Service-Learning Experience

After the students returned, they met online discussing what they learned while working on their reflection paper and project. At the end of the semester, they presented their projects at a showcase where they were evaluated by outside professionals. The students have used photography, video, and essays to share their experiences. They are free to choose the medium and topic, but their projects must be approved before the showcase. Projects have focused on survivors, businesses, pets, and the service-learning experience, along with the role disaster-relief agencies play in the recovery efforts and the ongoing need for volunteers.

Assessment

Participation in the service-learning experience accounts for 30% of the course grade. The reflection paper and showcase project count for 20% each. Other assignments and an exam make up the remaining 30%.

Appendix B
Assignment Examples

Pre-Trip Example

For this assignment you are to find two news stories about recent hurricanes or another natural disaster. For each article, provide the link, briefly summarize it, and reflect on it. Is it enlightening? Does it provide adequate information? Does this story benefit survivors? Is there any PR value? Post each article as a separate discussion so that you have two entries.

Post-Trip Example

For this discussion you are to share what you are doing for your showcase project. Make sure you include the following information in your post:

- What you are doing. Is it a solo or partnered effort?
- Why you chose that project.
- Project status.
- Any assistance or guidance you need from me.
- What technology or display items will you need to present your project?

Appendix C
Service-Learning Experience Grading Rubric

_____/10 You showed up!

You get points for being there!

_____/20 You worked hard!

Did you put your heart and soul into the work? Did you whine? Did you go above and beyond?

_____/10 You're a team player!

This score assesses your ability to follow directions and work as a team.

_____/10 Your engagement showed!

This score assesses how well you engaged guest speakers and sought information for your project.

Additional Comments

____/50

Appendix D
Reflection Paper Instructions and Prompts

Reflection Paper Instructions

You are to reflect on the service-learning experience and summarize/share your experiences. This paper needs to be reflective and worthy of inclusion in your portfolio.

Please respect the following directions:

- Use the Reflection Paper Prompts document as your writing guide.
- Upon completing all of the required elements, provide a word count at the bottom of your paper.
- Since this should be a portfolio artifact, you need to have it reviewed by the Writing Center. Please plan accordingly to allow time for that requirement.
- Follow the syllabus guidelines regarding font and spacing re quirements. Attached is the grading rubric to help you assess your work.

Make this a valuable experience and find joy in reflecting. I look forward to reading these and learning from your reflections.

Reflection Paper Prompts

For your Applied Learning Experience reflection paper, address and respond to each of the areas noted below. Please label each section of your paper accordingly.

OVERVIEW

- Your name
- Description and dates of your service-learning experience
- Rationale for choosing your service-learning experience

SECTION 1 – Application of College Courses
What skills did you learn in this course and/or other college courses that helped you on this learning experience?

In 3-4 paragraphs be descriptive as you analyze the knowledge and skills you acquired in your college courses that you utilized in this experience.

SECTION 2 – Student Involvement and Life Experience Skills
What skills did you learn in your student organizations or other college employment that helped you with this service learning experience?

In 1-2 paragraphs be descriptive as you analyze the essential knowledge and skills acquired in experiences outside the classroom that were utilized in this experience. Provide specific examples.

SECTION 3 – Global Awareness
Share how this service-learning experience impacted your view of cultures and society.

In 1-2 paragraphs analyze and describe how this experience enhanced your awareness of the diverse world and society around you.

SECTION 4 – Implications
Share how this service-learning experience impacted your view of crisis communications and disaster-relief efforts.

In 2-4 paragraphs be descriptive as you analyze the impact this service-learning project had on understanding of public relations and the role disaster-relief agencies play in assisting disaster victims.

SECTION 5 – Putting It All Together

Drawing on your responses to the above prompts, share your service-learning experience story.

This section needs to be 5-10 paragraphs and demonstrate reflection and application.

Appendix E

Showcase Project Grading Rubric and Examples

_____/30 Content

This score assesses the depth of your project and presentation. Do you demonstrate passion and interest in your project?

_____/30 Clarity and Professional

This score assesses the clarity of your project and your presentation professionalism. Can we understand your objective? Are you professional?

_____/30 Creative and Interesting

This score assesses your creativity and presentation skills. Is it creative? Interesting?

_____/10 Proofing skills

This score assesses your grammar and how well you proofed your presentation.

Additional Comments:

_____/100

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PRD GIFT Winner AEJMC 2019

Applying Industry Standards to Public Relations Evaluation: Barcelona Principles (2.0) vs. Award-Winning Cases

Zifei Fay Chen, University of San Francisco

Editorial Record: Submitted to AEJMC-PRD GIFT Competition by Feb. 22, 2019. A blind copy was peer reviewed by the PRD Teaching Committee, led by Chair Brigitta Brunner, and selected as a Top GIFT. First published online on August 17, 2019.

Rationale

As an important step in the ROPES (Research Objectives Programming Evaluation Stewardship) process, evaluation is crucial for the success of public relations campaigns. However, although progress has been made both in academia and the profession, evaluation is still a step that is often glossed over in practice, even in many award-winning cases (Schriner, Swenson, & Gilkerson, 2017). This in-class activity is an integral part of instruction on the evaluation of public relations campaigns/ programs for an introductory level class. It provides an interactive and active learning environment where students collaboratively apply industry evaluation standards from the Barcelona Principles 2.0 (AMEC, 2015) through critiques of an award-winning campaign's evaluation section in class. It sets up the standards of excellence as students continue their public relations education and prepare for a career in the industry.

Student Learning Goals

Upon completion of this in-class activity, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of the industry standards in public relations evaluation;

- Critically analyze the evaluation section of award-winning public relations cases following the guidance from the Barcelona Principles 2.0;
- Effectively apply industry standards to the evaluation of public relations campaigns and programs in the final case study project.

Connection to Public Relations Theory and Practice

This in-class activity provides students with an active learning experience to understand and apply the Barcelona Principles (2.0) to the evaluation of public relations campaigns and programs. Furthermore, by critically analyzing the evaluation part of an award-winning campaign, it allows students to identify the current gap in public relations measurement and evaluation and to reflect on how they may improve the practice of public relations evaluation in their upcoming advanced-level courses (e.g., public relations campaigns) and career.

Evidence of Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes may be assessed via the in-class activity and in students' subsequent analyses of a public relations campaign case for their final project. In the in-class activity, the same prompts were asked twice—at the beginning of the class and after the lecture on the Barcelona Principles 2.0 (with an additional question at the end; see the Appendix for the specific prompts). First, students' learning outcomes were demonstrated in the contrast between their answers to the prompts before and after the lecture. As shown in previous activities, students were likely to be primed with the halo effect of the award-winning cases and tended to emphasize what the campaign did well, instead of providing critiques when they first attempted to answer the prompts, even after they had completed the readings prior to the class. As they obtained more in-depth understanding of each principle via the lecture and further discussions, they felt more comfortable using the principles to critique the case and propose ideas of their own.

Subsequently, students were asked to apply the Barcelona Principles (2.0) to their final projects, where they were asked to provide in-depth analysis following the ROPES process for a public relations campaign case of their choice. The learning outcomes then may be assessed again by their analysis of the evaluation part. Students were able to provide critiques on campaign evaluation and propose revised measurement and evaluation plans following the industry standards. In the course feedback, students indicated that this in-class activity prepared them well for the final case analysis paper.

References

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Appendix

In-Class Activity Instructions and Notes

Prior to the class, students are assigned to read a Public Relations Society of America Silver Anvil Award case. The case may be changed from year to year to reflect the most recent practices. As the class starts, the instructor may remind students about the case via visual presentation, such as pictures and videos of the campaign materials.

After presenting and reviewing the case, the instructor could provide the students with a handout detailing the prompts. The following prompts can be printed on each side of the handout and answered at the beginning of the class and then again after the lecture on public relations campaign evaluation and the Barcelona Principles:

- If you were an executive at (client organization), what questions would you ask the public relations team when you are presented with this campaign evaluation report?
- Do you think this is a good evaluation report? Why or why not?

Note on instruction: Have students form into groups of three or four depending on class size after reviewing the case. Provide them with time to work on the prompts individually first and then discuss them as a group. Students should write down their answers on the front page of the handout. Following the activity, the instructor may ask students to keep the questions in mind and deliver a lecture explaining public relations evaluation and the Barcelona Principles (2.0). After the lecture, ask students to discuss the same prompts again and write down their answers on the back page of the handout.

During the discussion after the lecture, the instructor may walk around to facilitate students' discussions by pointing them to certain principles. For example, after pointing out the differences between outputs and outcomes (Principle 2 "measuring communication outcomes is recommended versus only measuring outputs"), students may start to question what "coverage" and "impression" would entail. They may also start making connections between the campaign results and business performance (Principle 3 "the effect on organizational performance can and should be measured where possible"). After pointing out the importance of transparent reporting and validity of measurement (Principle 7 "measurement and evaluation should be transparent, consistent and valid"), students may start questioning what the metrics (e.g., "impression," "sentiment," "engagement") mean and how they were obtained. After discussions, the instructor may bring the questions up to the whole class for the groups to bounce off each other's insights. The instructor could then write each group's answers on the white board to compare and contrast.

Finally, the following prompt can be provided after the second round of discussion: Based on what we learned from the Barcelona Principles (2.0) and previous discussions, how would you improve the evaluation plan of this campaign?

Note on instruction: Depending on class size and time, the instructor may assign each group a specific principle to apply as they brainstorm ideas to improve the evaluation plan. Provide time for groups to discuss and walk around to facilitate discussion. After individual group discussion, bring the question to the whole class and write answers on the white board. Summarize and revisit the key learning points to conclude the class and indicate their application to the final case analysis project (if applicable) and future practice.

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PRD GIFT Winner AEJMC 2019

5-Minute Case Talk Assignment in Crisis PR Classes: Empower Students to Explore and Present

Hyun Ju Jeong, University of Kentucky

Editorial Record: Submitted to AEJMC-PRD GIFT Competition by Feb. 22, 2019. A blind copy was peer reviewed by the PRD Teaching Committee, led by Chair Brigitta Brunner, and selected as a Top GIFT. First published online on August 17, 2019.

Rationale

Studying real-world crisis episodes can help students expand their ability to speculate how real-life public relations incidents and planning operate and how decisions are made within PR practices. Particularly in the digital media landscape, as crises escalate at an unprecedented speed, often going beyond crisis scenarios, it is important to expose students to a variety of crisis cases in the learning environment.

In this teaching brief, I suggest a seemingly obvious but largely undiscovered teaching idea—give each student 5 minutes to explore a specific case and present it to the class. Born and raised as "digital natives," today's students have developed inherent interests in crises within their own digital territories (Prensky, 2001). Thus each semester, I request each of the students in my class to bring a case of their choice and present it. If there are 30 individual students in class, the class, as a whole, will learn their course topics based on at least 30 different recent crisis cases. This simple assignment can bring an exciting and critical-learning experience to the class, ultimately leading students to articulate their own findings through collaborative in-class discussion.

This assignment can benefit not only students but also instructors. The mini-cases brought by students can become teachers' assets, helping them develop another novel and innovative teaching strategy for student engagement. The cases can be easily adopted as an interactive teaching tool through video notes and small-group discussions (Morris, 2018). If a student brings "Lady Doritos" (2018), and the teacher finds that they need more practice applying ethical standards to real-world scenarios, the teacher can plan the next class exercise about the PRSA ethical principles; if a case is about the John Schnatter/Papa John's Pizza scandal (Aulbach, 2019), plan the next in-class activities for stakeholder mapping (see Evidence of Learning Outcomes and Appendix).

Student Learning Goals

The 5-minute case talk encourages students to examine a case critically and independently so they can learn how to utilize specific knowledge and skills when handling real crisis PR cases. Students are asked to look into diverse but interrelated cases and compare all of them under one single parameter of PR practices (e.g., employee crisis). They then explore relevant information for each case until they are able to identify the best case to present. To execute this assignment successfully, it is advisable for instructors to arrange the students' presentation dates and check the appropriateness of each proposed case (e.g., two students could bring the same case), as well as the depth of student understanding regarding each case (e.g., requesting more studies about a case) ahead of time.

By setting the time limit to 5 minutes, students learn how to design a compelling presentation and condense core ideas of their cases into a short time span. Students also learn how to interact with the audience through good discussion questions and group dynamics. As the talk is usually presented for the first 5 minutes of each session, it is also the perfect opportunity to create rapport with an individual presenter, as well as with other students in the class, which is necessary to build a positive and comfortable learning environment (Buskist & Saville, 2001).

These learning outcomes are lined up with the Program-Level Learning Outcomes: "Students will demonstrate the ability to think critically and independently; Students will communicate effectively in written and visual formats appropriate to the ISC profession with an understanding of diverse audiences" (UK, 2017).

Connection to Public Relations Theory/Practice

The incorporation of casework in student learning materials enhances their overall learning through heightened engagement and interest. This assignment also asks students (and instructors) to be more familiar with "what's new" and "what matters" within fields by closing the gap between the classroom and the real world. Given the fact that PR is a fast-growing profession and area of study, this teaching idea can be adapted for other PR courses (e.g., PR case studies, PR ethics), even though it is specifically encouraged for the crisis PR class in this brief.

Evidence of Student Learning

Students have assessed this learning method with strong positivity in their course evaluations. The engaging learning experience provided through the 5-minute case talk has most frequently been commented on in positive course evaluations over the years (i.e., accounting for 40-42% of positive comments on courses). Listed below are selective comments about this assignment:

"I found that the most helpful parts of the course were 5-minute talks. This allowed us to take real-life scenarios and types of public relations practices and see how they were handled and learn what to do and what not to do in potential future situations."

"It was helpful with regards to learning more about public relations. Our 5-minute talks were fun and interesting. Having plenty of examples that went with the topic we were discussing usually made the material easier to take in."

"The case studies were very interesting and helped me understand the topic through example and experience."

"The presentation of actual PR cases was interesting and helpful in learning to navigate the PR field."

Listed below are examples of the 5-minute crisis presentation slides submitted by students based on the assignment instructions:

Fyre Festival Crisis (2017):

https://drive.google.com/file/d/14TKdDb8HHK_gwBBuJot-kcUummurvZ_0/view?usp=sharing

Crock-Pot/"This is Us" Crisis (2018):

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vgiQ25z_5GBtkeAW3A7ziOe2acOt3JLr/view?usp=sharing

KFC Chicken Storage Crisis (2018):

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fvnuQMQLA0i2CQ0pxtSmZbruZkBpcfAo/view?usp=sharing

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Appendix
Assignment Instructions for 5-Minute Case Talk (Individual Assignment)

We are never going to be able to eliminate the possibility of a crisis perfectly in the workplace and in real life, but many corporate crises are likely to be caused or worsened by the failure of organizations to anticipate and plan for them ahead of time. When a crisis is neither planned for nor managed properly, even major organizations have found themselves facing PR disasters. As a PR student, it is important to be familiar with real-world examples of crisis PR–whether they were successful or failures. In this assignment, you are asked to find one of the most recent crisis PR cases (between 2017 and 2019) and present it to the class.

You begin by finding a case from various news article providers (e.g., Google News: Business, PR Daily, PR Newswire) and PR trade publications (e.g., *PR Week*, *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, *MarketingSherpa*, *AdAge*). Be sure that the case you select for this assignment is "totally new." In other words, it hasn't been introduced in class through any course requirement (e.g., the course textbook and reading materials, in-class exercises, previous 5-minute talks). Then, study the case. When completing this part, please use multiple resources to fully understand all aspects of the case. Do not rely on Wikipedia or individually owned blogs to grasp key information. Be sure to check multiple resources for fact-checking.

While you are responsible for finding a case for your talk, feel free to discuss the appropriateness of a case and confirm it with me ahead of time. Then, you need to present your case to the class for 5 minutes using a presentation slide, either PPT or PDF.

When presenting:

(1) Brief Summary (1 page): Summarize a case with when, what, who, how and/or why information.

(2) Identifications of Crisis and its Significance (1 page): Define a major crisis; identify clients and audiences in crisis communication; discuss why this crisis or crisis communication matters in PR; if possible, limit your discussion to a single PR practice to specify your argument, but do not forget to make your own discoveries.

(3) Pre-Crisis and Background (1 page): Find a proactive plan if any; identify internal and external risks or issues influenced by or influencing the crisis.

(4) Response (1-2 page): Identify and evaluate reactive strategies and tactics (e.g., response speed, key message, spokespeople, media relations, other crises following).

(5) Q&A (1 page): Generate two questions to activate the in-class

discussion on the case.

The talk is limited to 5 minutes. While making the presentation slide, avoid plagiarism through proper citations. Include a bibliography. The grade of this assignment is based on the following distribution: 50% for the oral presentation; 30% of the Q&A; 20% of the presentation slides.

You must upload your presentation slides directly to Canvas before 5 p.m. on the day before your presentation date. Your presentation schedule will be randomly decided by the instructor, but it is flexible. The first talk will be delivered after the first two weeks of the semester.

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Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainability, and Ethical Public Relations: Strengthening Synergies With Human Resources

Reviewed by
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Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainability, and Ethical Public Relations: Strengthening Synergies With Human Resources
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Fortune 500 corporations reportedly spend an excess of $15 billion a year on corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, with that number expected to rise (O'Keefe, 2016). Still, much debate remains about the home of CSR and sustainability in the corporate hierarchy. Specifically, debate between the home of CSR as a human resources (HR) initiative or as a public relations (PR) effort remains stagnant with little directional movement toward either field.

Donnalyn Pompper, editor of the volume *Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainability, and Ethical Public Relations: Strengthening Synergies with Human Resources*, says now is the time to re-examine the place of CSR and sustainability in their conflicting relationships with public relations and human resources (Pompper, 2017, p. 21). In the book, Pompper addresses the debate by arguing for HR-PR departmental cohesion in order to work as the "organizational conscience" of the company or nonprofit to further support CSR and sustainability efforts and thereby enhance the organization's reputation (Pompper, 2017, p. 17). Throughout this collection, the authors provide a clear argument with evidence in the form of various case studies, interviews, and content analyses for the cooperation of the two departments.

Composition and Organization of this Book

The collection of work includes articles covering how CSR/sustainability measures can help with a wide range of business challenges, including those faced by HR departments. Several of the chapters mention how successful CSR initiatives can enhance hiring practices, particularly Chapter 4 by Heinrich, "Overcoming Regional Retention Issues: How Some Michigan Organizations Use CSR to Attract and Engage Top Talent" and Chapter 9 by Howes, "Hiring Programs for Military Veterans and Athletes Use HR and PR to Demonstrate Human Dimension of Corporate Social Responsibility." Other chapters focus on how CSR already enhances the overall organization, including Chapter 5 by Wood, Berger, and Roberts, "Corporate Social Responsibility, Volunteerism, and Social Identity: A Case Study of Cotopaxi" and Chapter 7 by Oshin-Martin, "Corporate Social Responsibility: Johnson & Johnson Creating Community Relations and Value through Open Social Innovation and Partnership across Sub-Saharan Africa."

In Chapter 2, "Organizations, HR, CSR, and Their Social Networks: 'Sustainability' on Twitter," Lipschultz explores how these topics are discussed on Twitter to understand how employees can become advocates or brand ambassadors for their companies, while the authors of Chapter 6, Dusingize and Nyiransabimana, interviewed internal and external university publics for their project, "A Study of University Social Responsibility Practices at Rwanda's Institut Catholique de Kabgayi," to find the definition to the vague term "university social responsibility." Recognizing the importance of engaging future potential employees, Chapter 3 by Bradford, "Nonprofit Social Responsibility and

Sustainability: Engaging Urban Youth through Empowerment," utilized a content analysis to provide evidence for how existing nonprofits empower youth through CSR.

The book even includes a case study wherein the failure to integrate CSR/sustainability and corporate values throughout the entire corporation led to disaster, which is discussed in Chapter 10 by Stokes, "Failure to Activate: EpiPen, Legitimacy Challenges, and the Importance of Employee CSR." These in-depth studies of how specific organizations used CSR/sustainability within their organizations and how CSR/sustainability is discussed online provide the growing field of PR literature with key examples that may be useful for future theory development or for classroom instruction.

The chapters provide positive examples of companies whose CSR initiatives are cohesive from top to bottom including Cotopaxi (Chapter 5), Johnson & Johnson (Chapter 7), and MGM Resorts International (Chapter 11). While the inclusion of a variety of companies of differing size and business structure provides evidence for how this proposed mix of HR and PR works on various scales, the companies have one major ideal in common—they are led by their ethical integrity. Presumably, their internal communications and CSR/sustainability efforts are not led by only their HR or PR departments but by their organization as a whole.

Similarly, in Chapter 8, "Examining Public Relations' Role in Shaping Organizational Culture, with Implications for PR, HR, and CSR/Sustainability," Bourland-Davis and Graham provide a case study wherein findings indicate that "CSR/Sustainability can be an organizational value in and of itself, and that corporate culture can be strengthened with the coordination of PR and HR efforts" (Pompper, 2017, p. 214). Stating that the corporate culture will be strengthened by the coordinated efforts implies that the culture must be pre-established, further pointing to the need for direction from the top of the organization in order to develop a

CSR/sustainability mission within the organization.

Pompper provides a well-developed collection of work that successfully points to the need for cooperation between HR and PR departments by examining CSR/sustainability from a wide variety of organization types and sizes. This book raises more questions than it answers, which matches the nature of a developing research field. Authors do not offer a CSR or sustainability theory, rather they utilize various theories, including excellence theory and social exchange theory, among others. Additionally, nearly every chapter mentions the difficulty in defining CSR and sustainability, but no chapter seeks to thoroughly define the two terms. The chapters primarily use the two terms interchangeably. For this reason, the book points to the need for a universally accepted definition of the two terms in order to provide corporations with information that may assist in their efforts to distinguish between those two programs internally.

This collection would also benefit from quantitative studies as a means of providing an example of the return on investment that organizations can expect from having these programs. Nearly every study included either a content analysis or a series of interviews, which are appropriate for the intended purpose of this collection; however, future research should develop measurements for these initiatives. Additionally, the book points to a need for suggestions for organizational structures that will encourage this type of synergy between departments, in addition to further research into how to build a clear framework for organizations to use in establishing CSR/sustainability practices throughout their businesses.

Who Would Benefit from Reading this Book?

This book offers a variety of practical and theoretical insights, and as such, it would be an appropriate text for a course that covers CSR and/or sustainability topics. Because the discussion situates itself between the business world (HR) and the communications world (PR), it would also be appropriate in a business school course, particularly within an HR or a marketing communications curriculum. Practically, the insights offered would be useful to organizational departments that have responsibility for corporate social responsibility or sustainability initiatives. This may be the traditional HR or PR department, but it could also be a sustainability department, a marketing department, or a public information office. The findings from the studies offer insights into how to more effectively integrate initiatives into the organization to maximize effectiveness, regardless of the initiative's home. Of course, like Pompper's other books on sustainability communication and CSR (e.g., Pompper, 2015), this is a must-read for anyone who researches this area. Overall, this is an interesting book that fills a need to explore how CSR and sustainability are managed within organizations and how different departments can uniquely contribute to their success.

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Spin

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Spin
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Content and Scope

The novel *Spin* follows a crisis through the eyes of a fictional veteran crisis management expert named Jonathan Keaton as he is brought into BeeLine, an Apple-like technology company, when its CEO Bradford Sisley becomes embroiled in a sexual harassment complaint. Readers need only enjoy a compelling story and lively narrative to appreciate the book's content. They should also appreciate punchy dialogue. The book is written in first-person, and the conversational style makes readers feel like confidants with Keaton throughout the duration of the crisis.

The first-person narrator spends quite a bit of time on his personal life, allowing the reader to identify with him. Indeed, as *Spin* opens, Keaton reflects on his decision to work for a client whom he knows to be problematic. We learn later that Keaton's primary motivation is financial, and that he is typically paid handsomely for his work. If money is an indication, Keaton has a well-earned reputation as a crisis management expert.

It is evident early on that the author is a former senior public relations counselor. He weaves real-life individuals who were outed during the #MeToo movement (Bennett, 2017)—Bill Cosby (Bowley, 2018), Matt Lauer (Nark, 2017), and Harvey Weinstein (Cooney, 2017)—situating the fictional universe of *Spin* within the present socio-political environment. Moreover, mentions of the corporate crises of BP Amoco (Shogren, 2011) and Enron (Reber & Gower, 2006) suggest a shared history.

Organization of Book

Formatting each chapter to correspond with days of the week affords an easy-to-navigate narrative. The eight chapters of the book are laid out chronologically according to the roughly 10-day duration of the crisis. The narrative centers on three main characters: crisis management expert Jonathan Keaton, BeeLine CEO Bradford Sisley, and BeeLine vice president of public relations, Wendy Smith-Kenyon.

The book opens on a Thursday as Keaton arrives to meet Smith-Kenyon. As the chapter continues into BeeLine headquarters, the CEO explains to them that the woman who has accused him of sexual harassment has hired a media-savvy attorney—one with more than a passing resemblance to Gloria Allred (Tolentino, 2017) in passion and press appeal. Readers quickly learn how a hostile client can derail a plan, choosing a course of action that is not only unhelpful but also overtly harmful (e.g., Bruning & Ledingham, 2002). The CEO insists that (1) he is innocent, (2) he would never settle any lawsuit, and (3) he intends to be the voice of men who are falsely accused.

With their crisis management strategy in full swing, Keaton and Smith-Kenyon sync media lists, while he crafts a media statement and she begins planning a press conference. Readers get a front-seat view of carefully planned media interactions, "overhearing" one of the calls Keaton has with a long-time media contact about the pending story. As the story is picked up by news media, readers also witness real-time media monitoring as they analyze the content and tone of coverage to provide strategic counsel to the CEO (e.g., Veil, Buehner, & Palenchar, 2011; Wigley & Zhang, 2011).

As is typical of crises in the #MeToo era, this crisis gets worse before it gets better. On Tuesday, a disgruntled former employee impugns the CEO's character on a morning talk show while late-night talk-show hosts use sharp-edged comedy to ridicule him about the harassment claim. Without revealing too much of the plot, suffice it to say that the CEO tries to manage his own media appearances with disastrous consequences. As expected, the story continues to gain traction, hitting national airwaves.

Wednesday is split into two chapters, with chapter four taking place in the morning. What begins as a strategy session with Keaton, Smith-Kenyon, and CEO Sisley, quickly devolves as the CEO continues to ignore their advice. Soon thereafter, the company is publicly outed by a BeeLine insider as a "poisonously hostile work environment" whose leadership is deemed "sexist, racist, homophobic, ageist, and dictatorial" (p. 126). Given that BeeLine is a public company, when the story hits the business news, its stock price takes a hit. We learn here just how interconnected public relations and investor relations are to a company's industry status.

A member of the BeeLine internal communications team emerges on Wednesday afternoon. She holds particular prominence in the company because of her status as the daughter of the company co-founder, and she quickly asserts her power. From her, readers learn that employee morale has also taken a hit, adding internal communications to Keaton's concerns. Here, the book casts a clear-eyed view of the inherent challenges of internal and external public relations teams working together, sometimes at cross-purposes (e.g., Cardwell, Williams, & Pyle, 2017).

The Thursday of the crisis is when the twist of the story occurs, articulating for the reader the true origins of the crisis. The "Final Days" cannot be shared without revealing a spoiler, but it is worth noting that the reader will come to understand why Keaton has been largely unable to control the media narrative surrounding the harassment complaint. Those seeking a happy ending can be assured that a perfectly worded statement about upcoming company changes could very well find its way to the media at precisely the right time.

Ideally, Spin would include information about the narrator's educational background. Readers are left to assume whether his extensive experience includes a particular degree, professional practice, or a mixture of both. Too, the book only conveys the narrator's expertise in the past tense. The reader learns about Keaton serving as a consultant for several other clients and companies, additionally, characters repeatedly reference his reputation as an industry expert.

Another area that seems out of place is the repeated references to the lead character's physical attributes that sometimes distract from the story. Negative self-talk focuses extensive attention on his weight and propensity to overeat. However, the fact that his sardonic humor is reflected in characterizations of others suggests this is merely a personality quirk. More notable is the fact that his limited knowledge of digital media seems incompatible with his status as a crisis management expert.

Contribution to Public Relations Education

Although *Spin* is written for entertainment purposes, the novel does contribute to public relations education. As an educator whose research interests include media representations of public relations, I have facilitated robust classroom discussions about the differences between how Olivia Pope handles a crisis versus her real-world counterparts. Film-based public relations characters hold similar value as a teaching tool (Lambert, 2011). It would be difficult to overstate how much depictions of client relations and corporate communications in this book align with real-world issues public relations professionals encounter. Educators who are seeking a creative approach to teaching corporate or crisis communication could supplement coursework with this book. Also, discussing the morally ambiguous actions of some of the public relations characters in *Spin* could help students think critically about questions of ethics versus effectiveness in public relations. Finally, the public relations specialties showcased in *Spin* remind readers about the many sectors available to industry professionals. Students can only benefit from knowing about the variety of career opportunities in the field.

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Social Media and Crisis Communication

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At a time when an increased amount of reputational issues pop on social media platforms and organizations' constituents are more willing to take them to task publicly, the window for public relations professionals between *getting it right* and *getting it right now* continues to narrow. For many professionals, this calls for a need to reset leadership and constituent expectations while rethinking their approach to issues and crisis planning and online engagement strategy, especially as the two areas continue to merge.

In the book *Social Media and Crisis Communication*, book editors Lucinda Austin, assistant professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Yan Jin, associate professor at the University of Georgia, take a comprehensive look at the state of crisis communications research and the implications that the rise of social media has had on the field. This book couldn't have come at a more important time as the quick and public nature of social media allows anyone with a handle to more easily challenge organizations, causing many public relations professionals to rethink their issues and crisis response strategies and approach to online reputation management.

This is the first book that explores the nexus of social media and crisis communications research and the new challenges that have emerged. For example, Chapter 2 author Timothy Coombs notes how social media has pushed many prevention and mitigation efforts by organizations in the traditionally private pre-crisis phrase into the public eye (p. 25). This public challenge by a stakeholder, organizational faux pas, or angry customer complaint is referred to as a paracrisis. In Chapter 4, Valentini et. al. note that "social media have become the milieu in which many crises are discussed, if not formed" (p. 57).

Structure

The book covers a large body of research and is divided into themed sections, including current and emerging issues of social media and crisis communication, overviews of dominant research streams, emerging theories and frameworks, areas for special consideration, future directions, and applications in specific areas of crisis. Additionally, the editors note that the book addresses some themes throughout different chapters, including the need for more dialogic approaches to crisis communication via social media and measurement of social media engagement in crisis communication response. These recurring ideas show a consistent need for implementation in public relations strategies and potential ideas for future crisis research.

The Dialogic Approach

Because of the interactivity and user-generated nature of social media, multiple chapter authors argue that crisis communication practices need to shift away from typical stakeholder-informing communications toward a more dialogic approach. For example, Valentini et al. say that little research currently exists, but it is needed to understand organizations' potential use of dialogic communication with stakeholders via social media. They argue that two-way dialogic communication is an important step toward establishing credibility and trust and that stakeholder interactions can also be leveraged to add third-party voices to the mix.

The book also covers the shift over the past decade from organizational approaches to audience-oriented and public-centered approaches for crisis communications, focusing on dialogic communication and stakeholder engagement. In Chapter 19, Guidry and Messner acknowledge that social media opens up two-way communication opportunities, but many organizations have been hesitant to embrace the possibilities and continue to use the platforms ineffectively as a "one-way megaphone" (p. 270).

In Chapter 9, Fraustino and Liu surmise that in crisis scholarship and, to some extent, social media crisis scholarship, a focus on an audience's perspective is on the rise, placing an emphasis on ethical communications. They add that some gaps remain as the scholarship shifts, including the need to consider publics and outcome measures that aren't just focused on the organization's short- and long-term survival, but more so on the social good—the audience response during a crisis as a whole. In Chapter 5, Hung-Baesecke and Bowen add that organizations need to consider the ethics of engaging with stakeholders on social media when planning crisis strategies, including the fact that being "authentic" helps organizations in the long-run (p. 74).

Measurement of Social Media Engagement in Crisis Communication Response

Along the theme of measurable goals, Austin and Jin suggest more research is needed to continue to assess the effectiveness of crisis communications messaging, especially on different social media platforms. In Chapter 3, Goodman, for example, explained that the quality of proactive issues management (monitoring for issues, building and maintaining relationships, and implementing an effective issues-response system) is "usually a direct result of how rigorously those efforts are measured" and how specific goals are defined, especially in the "issues mapping" process (p. 65). In other words, the more you can show the value, the more support organizational leadership will have for proactive prevention. Conversely, as evidenced by Fraustino and Liu, the value to the organization should not be the only consideration. Ethically, organizations should have a concern for the effectiveness of communications on directing audiences during a crisis, to create not only a good organizational image but also to benefit the public.

Social Media Crisis Communication Models

The book explores the development of different types of crisis communications models, including Coombs' situational crisis communications theory (SCCT), Benoit's image-repair theory, and Cameron and colleagues' contingency theory of strategic conflict management, in conjunction with the role of social media in crisis communications. It also explores the only social-media specific crisis communications model, Austin and Jin's social-mediated crisis communications (SMCC) model.

The authors did a nice job of explaining these models and showing examples of putting them into practice. Austin and Jin identify the need for a focus on developing better theories and frameworks specific to communicating a crisis on social media platforms, instead of attempting to adapt the existing theories. Austin and Jin suggest this approach for future research, citing the need for "prescribing strategic solutions and recommendations for crisis managers who look for science-based insights tailored for a relatively focused and specialized crisis communication arena" (p. 450).

Visual Elements and Social Media Crisis Communication

The book also addresses the visual nature of social media, including the potential benefits of integrating images and graphics into crisis responses. In Chapter 19, Guidry and Messner show how the more visually focused platform Pinterest contributes to pro- and anti-vaccination health communications. Janoske expands on the benefits of visuals in Chapter 22, writing about how natural disaster images help the public understand and emotionally cope in recovery. She shows how social media allows members of the public to form communities when sharing emergency information and photos during a crisis and how crisis communicators can use these online visual communities to better understand the situation and inform their communications strategies for the publics they serve.

Austin and Jin conclude the book by acknowledging new areas of research opportunities, noting the fact that social media technology is so rapidly changing calls for continued research as crisis communications adjusts to developing platforms.

Recommendation

This is an excellent, informative, and well-researched book with contributions from many well-established authors in both the crisis communications and social media research fields. The book gives a comprehensive overview of the current state of research and offers suggestions for the future as these two areas continue to overlap. It thoroughly covers the emergence of crisis communications theory and its increasingly common intersection with social media, and, I would argue, will serve as a bedrock resource for the next wave of research.

The book is valuable for academics and professional practitioners alike. The variety of examples of organizations and types of crises studied in the "application" section makes it a great tool for public relations practitioners, in particular. At 461 pages, this book is expansive, but its thoughtful organization and high-level approach lend it to easily be used as a textbook for a graduate course on the topic.