

Teaching Integrated Marketing Communication Campaigns

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Despite the ascendance of integrated marketing communications (IMC) in the professional sector and the academy, surprisingly little scholarly work addresses the teaching of integrated marketing campaigns or implementation of the theory and practice of integration in the teaching of those courses. The present study addresses these gaps. Quantitative and qualitative content analyses were conducted on 39 integrated communication campaign plan books developed by students taking courses in the small strategic communication sequence housed in the communication department of a large university. While the majority of the campaigns evidenced integration of multiple IMC tactics, the degree and nature of integration were inconsistent. Additionally, there were significant differences in campaign content, inclusion and implementation of IMC tactics, and adherence to theoretical and/or ethical underpinnings, depending upon the instructor's prior professional background.

TEACHING INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS

Since at least the 1990s, scholars and practitioners have recommended ways to incorporate the principles of integrated marketing communications (IMC) into the college classroom. The

majority of the available scholarly work on IMC education has addressed a range of curricular and theoretical issues. However, while academics and professionals are in agreement that a campaigns course is an essential component of an IMC curriculum, and despite the increasing number of

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journals and conferences that focus on teaching IMC or its component parts (e.g., *Teaching Journalism & Mass Communication*, *Journal of Public Relations Education*, *Journal of Advertising Education*, *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, the American Management Association's Educators' Conference), surprisingly little scholarship directly addresses the teaching of IMC campaigns or offers advice to educators on how to apply the principles of integration in their campaigns courses.

The present study seeks to address these gaps in the IMC education literature and, in doing so, to provide practical guidance that can be used by instructors teaching in small IMC and/or strategic communication programs. In order to assess our course's learning objectives, tactics, and student learning outcomes, particularly in regard to campaign integration, we conducted quantitative and qualitative content analyses of 39 campaign plan books developed by teams of students enrolled in different sections of the strategic planning and positioning course and in the campaigns course taught as the capstone to the four-course strategic communication sequence housed in the communication department of a public research university. The analyses focused on (a) the degree and nature of *integration* evidenced in the students' campaign plan books and (b) the *content differences* in the campaigns produced by students taking the class sections taught by a professor who was a former advertising professional versus those produced by students whose professor was a former public relations and journalism professional. Our findings provide important insights regarding the teaching of IMC courses, including the relationships between course objectives and outcomes, the relationships between instructors' prior industry backgrounds and their teaching approaches, and the understanding of the theory and practice of communication platform integration in the IMC classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Practitioners' and Educators' Insights on IMC Curricula

There is considerable debate over how best to bridge the divides between the professional practice of IMC and its teaching. However, most of the scholars who publish in this area, and whose work will be discussed throughout this literature review, appear to agree with at least the *logic* of IMC, as summarized by Griffin and Pasadeos (1998, p. 4):

Conceptually, IMC suggests that advertising and public relations efforts achieve their greatest impact when coupled together and with other marketing elements such as direct marketing and sales promotion to communicate with consumers through multiple channels. In practice, IMC rejects past mass-media strategies by citing the increasingly segmented audiences of today.

Building on these principles, in 2005, the *Journal of Advertising* devoted an entire issue to scholarship focused on "improving the learning and teaching of IMC" (Patti, 2005, p. 7). As noted by Charles Patti, one of the issue's guest editors, educators in the field share a number of common questions and concerns:

As we prepare students to be IMC practitioners and researchers, how well do our curricula reflect what we believe are the most important dimensions of IMC? Is what we teach truly reflective of the state of IMC's ongoing development as a discipline? Are we teaching industry best practices? (2005, p. 7)

Patti, his fellow guest editors, and the various contributors to the issue identified a shared "need for an integrated, interdisciplinary approach" to IMC education (2005, p. 8).

Perhaps not surprisingly, in the quest to specify what an integrated approach to IMC education might look like, scholars in the field frequently turn to marketing communication practitioners for advice. Rose and Miller (1994), for example, acknowledged the industry's embrace of IMC and, in light of the professional move toward greater integration of marketing communication platforms, posed these questions:

Given that there is a perceived need for advertising and public relations functions to become more aligned, what sorts of programs should institutions of higher education offer? Should there be separate curricula or an integrated one? Should IMC programs be degree-granting or executive seminars? (p. 53)

Rose and Miller conducted a mail survey of advertising and public relations practitioners, soliciting those professionals' insights about what they felt should be taught at the college level. The researchers discovered that, despite the marketing communication industry's endorsement of greater integration, there were substantial differences between what advertising professionals and PR professionals thought should be stressed in the IMC classroom: Advertising practitioners felt that IMC classes should focus more on direct marketing, promotions, and event planning, while PR practitioners recommended greater emphasis on strategic planning, communication management, and client consulting.

Several subsequent studies have taken a similar approach, soliciting marketing communication professionals' opinions about how best to teach IMC. Kerr (2009), for example, assembled a panel of "IMC champions" and asked them for their advice on the perfect "recipe" for IMC education—and, like Rose and Miller (1994), discovered a rather chaotic mix of opinions and obstacles, discipline-specific biases, and even turf wars. Importantly, though, Kerr and the professionals she canvassed noted that many so-called

IMC courses are actually retrofitted advertising or public relations classes, with a patina of "integration" only superficially applied. In order to make IMC courses more truly integrated, several of Kerr's "champions" suggested assigning "a capstone or a client project that demands an integrated solution" (2009, p. 131). However, neither Kerr nor her "champions" provided advice on how to specifically structure such a capstone or project or how to integrate its solution. A very similar study conducted by Battle et al. (2007) also collected helpful suggestions from IMC practitioners about integration in general but offered no recommendations regarding campaigns specifically.

Continuing in the tradition of soliciting practitioners' insights, Beachboard and Weidman (2013), both of whom teach at institutions in the rural northwestern United States, asked the managers of several small local IMC agencies to describe the sorts of skills and knowledge they look for in recent college graduates. Again, the professionals they surveyed offered a wide range of suggestions, but only one specifically pertained to the teaching of campaigns: "Don't limit the capstone campaigns class to preparing and presenting the creative; also address media and production budgets. Teach teamwork but not to the extent that grading of individual students' writing is neglected" (Beachboard & Weidman, 2013, p. 23).

Despite the useful and plentiful advice offered by professionals to IMC scholars and educators over the last two decades, it appears that IMC curricula are inconsistent and woefully deficient in theoretical foundations, a sentiment expressed at least as early as 2000 by Yorgo Pasadeos in an opinion piece written for *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*. As Pasadeos put it, "IMC instruction may be easier said than done" (p. 73). This claim was confirmed empirically in a pair of 2007-2008 articles by an international group of scholars. As reported in the *Journal of Advertising Education* in 2007, Schultz, Kerr, Kim, and Patti (2007) analyzed 87 IMC course syllabi from six

countries around the world. They noted that while the scholarly literature regularly identified nine key IMC constructs, including strategic integration, message integration, synergy, brand equity, and relationship building, “none of these constructs were readily apparent in the curricula” of the courses they analyzed (p. 11). In a follow-up piece published in the *International Journal of Advertising* (Kerr, Schultz, Patti, & Kim, 2008), these same scholars offered an even more pointed indictment of the state of IMC teaching:

The evidence from this study suggests that many IMC courses are simply reincarnations of previously existing promotional strategy or advertising management courses. In the U.S., it often appears that what is called IMC is simply a restructured advertising management course with a few terminology changes . . . It commonly appears to be a promotions strategy or advertising management or marketing communication course or curriculum under the guise of an IMC approach. For the most part, the syllabi we evaluated neither drew from the key constructs of IMC, nor were the key writers and disciplinary research considered or found in them. (pp. 537, 544)

While this group of scholars identified serious problems in IMC curricula, they did not offer specific solutions that could be applied to the teaching of integrated campaigns. A similar study, by Stanaland, Helm, and Kinney (2009), recommended that instructors diversify their course content so as to cover a greater variety of IMC platforms, but had nothing to say about teaching campaigns, specifically.

Scholarship on Teaching Communication Campaigns

Given that the campaign is the ultimate manifestation of the principles and practices of integrated marketing communication and its component platforms, it is surprising that the scholarly literature on IMC education has produced relatively little work that focuses on teaching campaigns or on structuring campaigns courses. In this section of the literature review, we will discuss the few studies that have addressed these topics.

One of the earliest such publications we were able to locate was Parente and Applegate’s unpublished manuscript titled “An Assessment of the Resources Used in Teaching Advertising Campaigns” (n.d.).¹ To conduct their study, Parente and Applegate sent a mail survey to more than 200 instructors of advertising campaigns courses, asking them about their academic rank, industry experience, years of teaching, textbooks and other teaching materials used, and problems they encountered while teaching their classes, among other topics. Unfortunately, Parente and Applegate did not solicit suggestions on how to actually structure or teach the campaigns course, what to focus on, or how to integrate other marketing communication platforms with advertising.

Several other articles provided advice relevant to the campaigns course without discussing specifically how to develop such a course or incorporate into it the principles of integration. Both Beard (1997) and Roy (2008), for example, offered practical advice for preparing students to work in groups; Beard’s article, which appeared in the *Journal of Advertising Education*, focused on the advertising campaigns course, while Roy’s paper, which was presented at a Marketing Management Association conference, addressed marketing classes more generally. While both of these studies provided useful methods for enhancing cooperative learning, group behavior, and team selection, neither spoke to the ways that students might integrate IMC’s various components in

¹Based on the dates of other scholars’ citations of the manuscript, it appears to have been written in 1996 or 1997.

their final projects. Similarly, Werder and Strand (2011) developed an instrument that assessed various service-learning-related skills that could be developed in public relations campaigns courses, but did not comment on how or why to integrate PR with other IMC elements. Still, Werder and Strand, whose article was published in *Public Relations Review*, did make a persuasive argument for the inclusion of a campaigns/capstone course in a public relations curriculum:

Future practitioners must possess real-world communication and business skills. They must demonstrate the ability to develop strategic communication plans based on substantive case studies, sound secondary and primary research, and appropriate theory. Thus, students in the campaigns course need to experience real organizational situations in order to more effectively manage publics and develop communication strategy as professionals. (2011, p. 479)

The campaigns literature contains a number of other articles devoted specifically to *public relations* campaigns courses, if not IMC courses. Benigni and Cameron (1999) outlined the approaches that PR campaigns instructors take most frequently in their course development; a follow-up study, conducted with a third author (Benigni, Cheng, & Cameron, 2004), focused on the roles played by, and advice offered by, actual clients in PR campaigns course development and teaching. In a similar vein, Worley (2001) provided practical suggestions for the structuring of the PR campaigns course. However, none of these studies discussed integrated marketing communications or the need to integrate PR with other strategic communication platforms.

Interestingly, the one article we located that did discuss how to structure and teach a truly integrated campaigns course appeared in a journal devoted to public relations education, not IMC or IMC education. Robert Carroll's (2000)

study "Preparing Public Relations Students for the IMC Environment," which was published in *Teaching Public Relations*, described the campaigns course that the author and two of his University of Southern Indiana faculty colleagues—one in advertising, one in marketing—co-created and team-taught. Carroll discussed the IMC philosophy informing the course, described the course's topics (personal selling, advertising, PR, promotions, special events, direct marketing, etc.), outlined the processes of forming student teams and pairing them with local clients, and detailed the required elements of the campaigns and the accompanying plan books and live presentations that students were required to develop. Equally important, Carroll addressed the challenges he and his co-teachers faced in achieving integration in the course structure:

Developing and teaching the IMC class has not been without its problems. The three professors have experienced some difficulties with the integration of their presentations into one smooth-flowing course. Students, in their course evaluations at the end of the semester, have said that often the transition from one instructor's topic to the next was unclear. The faculty team continues to work to improve coordination of their presentations to the class. (2000, p. 5)

Interestingly, however, Carroll did not suggest that his students had any trouble integrating public relations, advertising, and other marketing communication forms in their campaigns. We return briefly to this issue below.

Teaching the Integration of Social Media

As social media have become increasingly indispensable IMC components in recent years, several studies have addressed how to integrate these platforms into communication campaigns classes.² Pentina (2011) reported on an MBA-level IMC course that emphasized the incorporation of social

media into the course's teaching and learning processes. Among other requirements, students had to join IMC-related professional networks on the social networking site LinkedIn, and plan and create an IMC campaign using at least one social media platform. However, Pentina did not discuss how (or if) social media were integrated with traditional media, and did not advocate for, or even mention, the integration of public relations and advertising. Similarly, Cronin (2011), in the *Journal of Advertising Education*, provided a portfolio of "experiential exercises" that could "be used by advertising educators to develop students' ability to integrate communication on social networks" (p. 16). Cronin recommended a three-phase process involving blogs, Facebook, and Twitter, showing how to integrate campaign messages across those three platforms—but, like Pentina (2011), failed to discuss how social media could or should be integrated with public relations, traditional media advertising, or other IMC elements.

Faculty Backgrounds and their Impact on Student Performance

To our knowledge, no existing scholarship has focused primarily on the relationship among instructors' prior professional backgrounds in the strategic communication industries, their approaches to teaching IMC courses, and the student learning outcomes in those courses. However, several of the studies mentioned earlier in this literature review did touch on this issue in passing. As noted above, Carroll (2000), a former public relations professional, designed an IMC course jointly with an advertising colleague and a marketing colleague with the intention of rotating teaching responsibilities from semester to semester. While Carroll noted that the three instructors "experienced some difficulties

with the integration of their presentations into one smooth-flowing course" (p. 5), he did not address how or if various offerings of the course differed in practice—or how their students' work may have varied from semester to semester—as a reflection of each instructor's specific professional background. Similarly, Kerr's (2009) panel of "IMC champions" noted that the "main obstacle" to successful IMC curriculum development was the faculty, and particularly the seemingly insuperable problem of "turf wars" between instructors with different professional backgrounds such as advertising and public relations (p. 129), but did not explore how those turf wars might manifest in qualitative or quantitative differences in student performance depending on precisely which "turf" was being protected in a given classroom. Studies such as those by Rose and Miller (1994) and Patti (2005) also acknowledged the centrality of IMC educators' commitments to engaging with current professional practices and to truly embracing both the philosophy and the praxis of integration, but stopped short at considering how an instructor's own prior professional training might differentially impact student deliverables.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Despite the continuing—indeed, increasing—importance placed on the integration of advertising, public relations, social media, and other marketing communication forms, both in the professional practices of integrated marketing communications and in the IMC classroom, there is a surprising lack of scholarship devoted to teaching integrated communication campaigns. To address this gap, the present study seeks to answer the following research questions:

²Anecdotally, the authors of the present article have found that virtually all of the strategic communication organizations that take on their departments' students as employees or interns expect those students to have or to develop mastery of the use of social media as campaign vehicles—and they therefore expect the strategic use of social media to be covered in our courses.

- RQ1.** Which learning objectives do students meet through the creation of integrated marketing communication campaigns?
- RQ2.** Which tactics do students include in their integrated campaigns?
- RQ3.** How are the learning outcomes evidenced in students' integrated campaigns associated with the prior professional backgrounds of their instructors?
- RQ4.** How are the tactics used in students' integrated campaigns associated with the prior professional backgrounds of their instructors?
- RQ5.** How, and how well, do students integrate various communication platforms and tactics in their campaigns?

METHOD

In order to understand what students are (or are not) learning through the creation of IMC campaigns, this study employed both quantitative and qualitative content analyses of plan books created by students in strategic communication classes. This section describes how data for this study were collected and analyzed.

Data Set

The data set for this study was developed by coding 39 campaign plan books created by students enrolled in the small strategic communication sequence housed in the communication department of a public research university. The communication department within this university had recently replaced its separate advertising and public relations sequences with one four-course integrated strategic communication sequence emphasizing integrated marketing communications principles and practices. The first course in this sequence, "Introduction to Strategic Communication," covers basic principles of advertising, public relations, and IMC. It also introduces students to various types of strategic

writing. The second course, "Creative Concepts," addresses principles of layout and visual design, and it offers training in the Adobe Creative Suite. The third course, "Strategic Planning and Positioning," emphasizes theories of branding and media planning. It focuses on using research to develop strategic campaigns and requires students to develop marketing plans for hypothetical clients. In the fourth and final course, "Strategic Communication Campaigns," students apply what they have learned from the previous courses to develop marketing plans for real-world clients.

The plan books for the present study came from the third and fourth courses in this sequence. Books from two sections of Strategic Planning and Positioning and four sections of Strategic Communication Campaigns were analyzed. Although the Campaigns classes used actual clients and the Strategic Planning classes did not, all classes used the same basic criteria for their marketing plan assignments. The rubrics used in each class emphasized (1) creativity, (2) effective research on the client and target audience, (3) integration of tactics, (4) logical and efficient strategies, and (5) overall quality of plan books. Students worked in teams of four to six to design their plan books. Books were required to contain a situation analysis, branding or positioning statement, description of target audience, outline of strategic plan, schedule, budget, examples of creative elements, and evaluation plan. Books were created for a total of ten organizations representing the retail, tourism, restaurant, and technology sectors.

The classes whose books were analyzed for this study were taught in 2012 and 2013 by either a professor with a prior career in public relations and journalism or by a professor with a prior career in advertising. Twenty-two books (56%) were created in classes taught by the former public relations professional, and 17 books (44%) were created in classes taught by the former advertising professional. At the time the courses were taught, these two professors were the only full-time faculty members teaching

in their department's strategic communication sequence.

Quantitative Coding

Four coders, who were all faculty members in the same communication department, analyzed the 39 plan books and coded them for evidence that students had met certain learning objectives and had incorporated certain communication tactics. The learning objectives, which were included in all course syllabi, were the same for all six classes. They were:

1. Exercise creative and analytical thinking and use conceptualization skills to develop a content-driven integrated campaign.
2. Develop professional editing and writing standards in truth, accuracy, fairness, objectivity and producing to deadlines.
3. Build awareness of the diversity of audiences through content-driven public relations, advertising, promotions and other marketing communications.
4. Develop an understanding of the importance of research and critical evaluation skills when writing a plan book for a fully integrated campaign.
5. Build awareness of ethical ways of thinking through the study and practice of public relations/advertising production.
6. Learn to apply image and information theories when developing content for a fully integrated campaign.

The unit of analysis was the plan book, so the coders analyzed each book and coded it 0 (no) or 1 (yes) based on whether there was evidence of each learning objective being met. Five categories of communication tactics were also coded: public relations, traditional advertising, out-of-home advertising, new/digital media, and "other IMC elements." The public relations category included tactics such as news releases, events, and personal contacts. The traditional advertising category encompassed paid advertising via mass media such as television, radio, or newspapers. The out-of-home category included tactics

such as billboards, point-of-purchase displays, and outdoor/transit advertising. The new/digital media category comprised online ads, web sites, and social media. Finally, the "other" category encompassed tactics such as guerrilla marketing, sales promotion, and direct marketing. Each plan book was coded for the presence (1) or absence (0) of each tactic.

The data were entered into SPSS 22 and Krippendorff's alpha (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007) was calculated for each variable to ensure reliability of the categories. Krippendorff (2013) has argued that reliable variables should have an alpha of .8 or higher, although scholars can draw tentative conclusions based on variables with an alpha between .67 and .8. In this case, 10 of the 11 variables had alphas of .866 or higher. The variable for "other IMC" tactics had an alpha of .724, indicating a lower level of agreement among coders on which tactics belonged in this category. All disagreements were ultimately resolved by the first author.

Qualitative Coding

In addition to the quantitative coding, thematic coding was also used to analyze the way students integrated various communication tactics in their campaigns. This analysis used Strauss & Corbin's (1990) grounded theory approach, often referred to as the "constant comparative method" (p. 62). There are three steps to this method: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

In the open coding portion of the analysis, the researchers examined each plan book line-by-line and inductively generated a list of tactics used in each campaign. The researchers also listed the different ways in which these tactics were integrated. Next, in the axial coding step, the different tactics and types of integration were analyzed for common themes and combined into categories. Lastly, in the selective coding part of the process, the categories were studied for central core themes. The results of both the quantitative and qualitative analysis are reported next.

RESULTS

RQ1-4 were answered using data from the quantitative content analysis. RQ5 was answered based on the findings of the qualitative analysis. This section addresses each research question in turn.

RQ1 Results

RQ1 asked what learning objectives students were meeting through the creation of their integrated campaign plan books. Most of the books (92%) gave evidence that Objective 4 (developing research and critical evaluation skills) was met. A majority of the books (54%-74%) also showed evidence that Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 6 were met (see Table 1). However, only 31% of the books provided evidence that Objective 5 (awareness of ethical ways of thinking) was met. This finding will be examined in the discussion section.

RQ2 Results

RQ2 asked which communication tactics students included in their integrated campaigns. Every campaign employed tactics from multiple

categories. Almost all of the campaigns included some form of new media (97%) as well as “other IMC tactics” (92%). As seen in Table 2, a majority also incorporated traditional advertising (72%), public relations (69%), and outdoor advertising (67%).

RQ3 Results

RQ3 asked how the learning outcomes evidenced in students’ integrated campaign plan books might be associated with the backgrounds of their instructors. As mentioned previously, 22 plan books were created in classes taught by a professor with a previous public relations background, and 17 books were created in classes taught by a professor with a previous advertising background. Chi-square tests of independence were performed to examine the associations between the background of the instructor and the learning objectives. Significant associations were found for four of the six objectives.

Of the plan books created in the classes taught by the former advertising professional, 100% showed evidence of Objective 1 (developing a

Table 1
Percentages of plan books that showed evidence of meeting learning objectives

Learning Objective	% of Plan Books Showing Evidence that Objective was Met		
	Former PR Professional (<i>n</i> = 22)	Former Advertising Professional (<i>n</i> = 17)	Total (<i>N</i> = 39)
1. Exercise creative and analytical thinking and use conceptualization skills to develop a content driven campaign.	36%	100%	64%
2. Develop professional editing and writing standards in truth, accuracy, fairness, objectivity and producing to deadlines. .	68%	65%	67%
3. Build awareness of the diversity of audiences through content-driven public relations, advertising, promotions and other marketing communications..	86%	59%	74%
4. Develop an understanding of the importance of research and critical evaluation skills when writing a plan book for a fully integrated campaign. .	100%	82%	92%
5. Build awareness of ethical ways of thinking through the study and practice of public relations/advertising production.	54%	0%	31%
6. Learn to apply image and information theories when developing content for a fully integrated campaign.	23%	94%	54%

content driven campaign). However, only 36% of the books created in the former public relations professional's classes showed evidence of Objective 1. The association between Objective 1 and the instructor's background was statistically significant, $\chi^2(1) = 16.88, p < .001$ (see Table 3).

There was also a significant association between Objective 4 (developing research and

critical evaluation skills) and instructor's background, $\chi^2(1) = 4.21, p = .04$ (see Table 4). Evidence that Objective 4 had been met was found in 100% of plan books created in the former public relations professional's classes, compared to 82% of books created in the former advertising professional's classes.

Table 2

Percentages of plan books that included different communication tactics

Tactic Categories	% of Plan Books Using Tactics		
	Former PR Professional	Former Advertising Professional (n = 17)	Total (N = 39)
1. Public relations (e.g., news releases, events, personal contacts for relationship building)	86%	47%	69%
2. Traditional advertising (e.g., TV, radio, newspaper, magazines)	72%	71%	72%
3. Out-of-home advertising (e.g., billboards, transit, aerial, point-of-purchase).	59%	77%	67%
4. New/digital media (e.g., online ads, websites, social media)	100%	94%	97%
5. Other IMC elements (e.g., sales promotions, direct marketing, guerrilla marketing)	91%	94%	92%

Table 3

Contingency table showing how many plan books created for different instructors included evidence that Objective 1 was met

		Instructor's Background		
		Public Relations	Advertising	Total
Evidence of Objective 1?*	Yes	8	17	25
	No	14	0	14
	Total	22	17	39

* $\chi^2(1) = 16.88, p < .001$

Table 4

Contingency table showing how many plan books created for different instructors included evidence that Objective 4 was met

		Instructor's Background		
		Public Relations	Advertising	Total
Evidence of Objective 1?*	Yes	22	14	36
	No	0	3	3
	Total	22	17	39

* $\chi^2(1) = 4.21, p = .04$

When plan books were created in the former PR professional's classes, 54% showed evidence of Objective 5 (ethical ways of thinking), but no evidence of Objective 5 was identified in any of the books created in the former advertising professional's classes. This finding was statistically significant, $\chi^2(1) = 13.39, p < .001$ (see Table 5).

Finally, there was a significant association between Objective 6 (applying image and information theories to the campaign) and the instructor's background, $\chi^2(1) = 19.67, p < .001$ (see Table 6). Students of the former advertising professional showed evidence of meeting Objective 6 in 94% of their plan books. However, students of

the former public relations professional showed evidence of meeting this objective in just 23% of their plan books.

RQ4 Results

RQ4 asked how the tactics used in students' integrated campaigns were associated with the instructor's background. The category of public relations tactics was the only one significantly associated with the instructor's background, $\chi^2(1) = 6.96, p = .008$ (see Table 7). When plan books were created in the former PR professional's classes, 86% included public relations tactics. However, when plan books were created in classes taught by the former advertising professional,

Table 5

Contingency table showing how many plan books created for different instructors included evidence that Objective 5 was met

		Instructor's Background		
		Public Relations	Advertising	Total
Evidence of Objective 5?*	Yes	12	0	12
	No	10	17	27
	Total	22	17	39

* $\chi^2(1) = 13.39, p < .001$

Table 6

Contingency table showing how many plan books created for different instructors included evidence that Objective 6 was met

		Instructor's Background		
		Public Relations	Advertising	Total
Evidence of Objective 6?*	Yes	5	16	21
	No	17	1	18
	Total	22	17	39

* $\chi^2(1) = 19.67, p < .001$

Table 7

Contingency table showing how many plan books created for different instructors included public relations tactics

		Instructor's Background		
		Public Relations	Advertising	Total
Did the plan book include public relations tactics?*	Yes	19	8	27
	No	3	9	12
	Total	22	17	39

* $\chi^2(1) = 6.96, p = .008$

only 47% of the books incorporated public relations tactics.

RQ5 Results

RQ5, a question designed to be answered qualitatively, asked about how, and how well, students integrated various communication platforms and tactics into their campaigns. The coders wrote descriptions of the integration in each plan book and then analyzed these descriptions for common themes or patterns. Several patterns did emerge, as described next.

Student approaches to integration.

Because all plan books were developed in classes that emphasized an integrated marketing perspective, we assume that each of the student teams tried to create integrated campaigns. However, these efforts were not equally successful. We identified five types of integration in the plan books: little/no integration, visual consistency, message consistency, channel reinforcement, and full integration.

Little/no integration.

Some plan books showed little or no integration across the various communication platforms and tactics that the students recommended. Although the campaigns included multiple tactics, these tactics appeared to have separate styles and messages. For example, one campaign created for a pizza restaurant proposed a community event with food, games, and costumed characters. The campaign also proposed that the restaurant's web site ask visitors to share their favorite memories of the restaurant from the past 35 years. Both of these recommendations were offered in the same plan book, but they were not integrated in any meaningful way.

Visual consistency.

Perhaps the most rudimentary form of integration in the plan books was visual consistency. Many of the student teams recognized the importance of using the same logo, colors, and typefaces across different media platforms and communication

tactics. These tangible elements are part of what Wheeler (2013) has called "brand identity" (p. 4).

Message consistency.

A more developed type of integration found in the plan books was message consistency. This type of consistency comes from what marketers often refer to as a "unique selling proposition" or a "big idea" (Blakeman, 2007, pp. 48-49). Campaigns built around one central idea have consistent messages regardless of the media vehicles or tactics they employ. For instance, another campaign to promote the pizza restaurant mentioned previously focused on customers' ability to customize their pizza with multiple dipping sauces. This campaign used radio and print (traditional advertising), as well as t-shirts (merchandising/collateral), to spread the slogan "Dress Your Slice."

Channel reinforcement.

Along with message consistency, another more sophisticated form of integration was channel reinforcement. By channel reinforcement, we mean that various media channels bolster one another by encouraging stakeholders to connect with the organization in additional ways. The most common example was that of a community event publicized via social media, paid advertising, and/or news releases. However, there were also campaigns that used radio or social media to invite people to participate in online contests, and one campaign that asked customers to post pictures to Instagram and then used those pictures to create a direct mail piece. In each case, media channels were used to send stakeholders to other media channels where they would encounter the organization again.

We found that channel reinforcement strategies did not guarantee message consistency. For instance, one campaign for a local tourist attraction included a street team of people to meet potential visitors and hand out bumper stickers. Although the first point of contact (the face-to-face interaction) created the potential for additional contacts (the bumper stickers), there were

multiple bumper stickers with different messages on them. Thus, the campaign was integrated in terms of channel reinforcement, but not in terms of message consistency.

Full integration.

The best plan books incorporated visual consistency, message consistency, and channel reinforcement to achieve full integration. One example was a campaign for the pizza restaurant based on the message “Put ranch on everything.” The plan book called for this message to appear on billboards, buses, and web sites. The campaign also used a street team to give away free samples of the restaurant’s ranch dipping sauce so that people who saw the message could try the product. Furthermore, customers were challenged to share stories via social media about the most unusual things they had put ranch on. The different media all used consistent colors and typefaces, and most of them complemented and reinforced the other media in the campaign.

These five approaches provide insight into two core aspects of integration that we believe students need to understand. These two aspects are explained next.

Two aspects of integration.

Scholars have offered many definitions of integrated marketing communication over the years, but Kliatchko (2005) argues that all of these definitions require both coordination and consistency in terms of both messages and channels. We believe consistency is vital to the concept of integration. We also agree that coordination is an important aspect of all strategic communication, including IMC, but the word coordination can be used broadly to refer to any part of the planning or execution process in a campaign. Instead of coordination, we think that the word complementarity (along with consistency), is helpful when conceptualizing integration. Brief discussions of each term follow.

Consistency.

We have already described how campaigns can achieve visual consistency by using standard colors, typefaces, and images. We have also addressed the idea of message consistency, where all messages in a campaign flow out of one underlying insight or idea. Consistency implies a certain degree of sameness. No strategic campaign can be fully integrated if its elements are completely different from each other.

Complementarity.

While consistency implies sameness, complementarity implies mutually beneficial differences. Marketers have long recognized that different media channels reach different audiences, and some media are better than others for achieving objectives such as evoking emotion, demonstrating product features, or fostering dialogue with stakeholders (Blakeman, 2007). An integrated campaign is one that uses different media to achieve different strategic objectives—but always in service to the same one overall goal and strategy.

Our analysis of student campaigns found that some campaigns had neither consistency nor complementarity. These campaigns were examples of little/no integration. Other campaigns had consistency without complementarity. Some of these campaigns had visual consistency, some had message consistency, and some had both. Still other campaigns had complementarity—that is, the media tactics reinforced one another—but no consistency. Only the campaigns with both consistency and complementarity could be considered fully integrated (see Figure 1). The next section discusses the implications of these findings for teaching strategic communication campaigns.

DISCUSSION

This study fills a gap in the research literature and suggests some important considerations for teaching IMC campaigns courses, particularly in small programs where course offerings and faculty size may be limited. The most salient findings

		Consistency	
		No	Yes
Complementarity	No	Little/No Integration	Visual Consistency Message Consistency
	Yes	Channel Reinforcement	Full Integration

Figure 1. Aspects of integration in IMC campaigns

concern the teaching of integration strategies and tactics, using plan books as a method of teaching to course objectives, and the implications of instructors' professional backgrounds.

Teaching Integration Strategies and Tactics: Consistency and Complementarity

Student campaign books analyzed for this study revealed that while students tried to embrace the overall idea of integration as stressed in the classroom, in actuality they thought of integration in terms of either consistency or complementarity, but rarely both. For example, some of the most effective campaign books we analyzed showed *visual consistency* by using standard colors, typefaces, and images, or *message consistency* as evidenced by having all messages flow out of the same underlying insight, idea, or theme.

Similarly, other effective campaigns showed an understanding of the idea of mutually beneficial differences (*complementarity*). That is, these campaigns built on the idea of using different media to address audience segments or for performing different tactical tasks, such as evoking emotion, demonstrating products or dialoging with stakeholders (*channel reinforcement*).

The “best” plan books combined visual consistency, message consistency, and channel reinforcement to achieve *full integration*. It is

important to note, however, that some students missed the point of integration almost entirely, resulting in little or no integration. This result may have been due to several factors, including the obvious one that some students did not work as hard or as effectively as others to produce quality plan books. However, another contributing factor may have been that practical implementation of instructors' explanations of integration—especially the rather broad concepts of consistency and complementarity—were not sufficiently clear to all students. Such concepts may become more easily grasped if instructors take care to break them down into “bite-sized” pieces comprehensible to students of all ability levels.

Certainly, the inclusion of such integration in many of the plan books we analyzed supports contentions in the literature that teaching IMC calls for “a capstone or client project that demands an integrated solution” (Kerr, 2009, p. 131). This study also addresses the call by Battle et al. (2007) for teaching students about integration and shows that at least some of the students in our study had absorbed such teaching and attempted to put it into practice. Indeed, the course products analyzed here suggest students had been exposed to instruction that addressed at least three of the nine key IMC constructs identified by Schultz, Kerr, Kim, and Patti (2007): strategic integration, message integration, and synergy. No past studies, however, addressed how to help students learn to integrate the various IMC components into final projects; thus, the findings of this study with regard to the dichotomy in students' minds between consistency and complementarity has potential for use in designing course content aimed to unite these two aspects of integration.

Teaching to Course Objectives

The six objectives used by both instructors in their courses were derived from the standards of excellence put forward by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC), which had just re-approved

the program offering the strategic communication courses in which the analyzed plan books were produced. Evidence of only three of these six objectives was found in a majority of the plan books for both instructors. Statistically significant differences between instructors were found with regard to four objectives: teaching students to develop a content-driven integrated campaign, developing research and critical evaluation skills, emphasizing ethical ways of thinking, and applying image and information theories to the campaign.

Obviously, the content areas emphasized in the learning objectives are important ones for students to master. The literature reflects the importance of these issues but also shows that most IMC curricula do not fully address them (Kerr, Schultz, Patti, & Kim, 2008; Pasadeos, 2000; Stanaland et al., 2009). Other authors concentrate on the need for practical/professional skills to be taught in the IMC curriculum (Beard, 1997; Benigni et al., 2004; Carroll, 2000; Roy, 2008; Werder & Strand, 2011), but do not touch on the more theoretical aspects of IMC.

Certainly, then, an analysis of the attempt to include content-driven campaign design, research and critical evaluation skills, ethics, and theory in IMC-oriented strategic communication courses, especially in the often client-focused and skills-driven campaigns capstone, contributes to the literature about actually teaching students how to build an effective IMC campaign and about how instructors should evaluate such campaigns. That the student products analyzed in this study do not uniformly demonstrate achievement of these learning objectives may be attributable to several factors, including, perhaps most important, omissions in the instructor's explanations of integration concepts which contribute to successful plan books (such as consistency and complementarity), as well as lack of clarity in detailing the measurement tools or rubrics with which the instructor will evaluate student campaigns. Again, instructors should take care to break explanations of such essential campaign

components into "bite-sized" pieces comprehensible to students of all ability levels.

The ACEJMC-inspired learning objectives are rather general and do not specify outcomes within the campaigns course which demonstrate achievement of each objective. Thus, it is difficult to analyze a particular plan book and trace the extent to which its creators have mastered each objective. Solutions for better evaluating achievement of learning objectives may include modifying instructors' syllabi, assignments, and lectures to more explicitly teach concepts and skills—particularly those concerning integration—that are related to each objective; specifying to students which plan-book features demonstrate achievement of which learning objective(s); and/or rewriting the objectives themselves to be more explicit as to the competency necessary to demonstrate achievement. If an instructor elects to adopt ACEJMC-inspired learning outcomes as evaluative tools, the instructor might also consider developing a separate set of IMC-campaign-inspired performance outcomes based on specific behaviors he/she would like students to exhibit when producing their plan books.

Implications of the Instructors' Different Professional Backgrounds

Two instructors taught the courses in which the plan books analyzed were produced. Both instructors hold the doctorate, have more than 10 years of teaching experience, and are tenured or on a tenure track. The two, however, are from different professional backgrounds: One instructor spent 17 years as an advertising executive, while the other spent seven years as an institutional public information officer and another 12 years as a journalist and career consultant.

Statistically significant differences were found between plan books from the two instructors with regard to evidence of four of the six learning objectives specified for the campaigns course. Particularly striking were the differences in content-driven campaign (100% of the books from the former advertising professional's classes

showed evidence of meeting the objective; 36% of the former PR professional's did so), ethics (54% of the books from the former PR professional's classes showed evidence of meeting the objective; none of the former advertising professional's did so) and theory (94% of the books from the former advertising professional's classes showed evidence of meeting the objective; 23% of the former PR professional's did so). Similarly, there was one difference in tactics used between students of the two instructors: Almost all of the books from the former PR professional's classes included public relations tactics, while fewer of those of the former advertising professional's did so.

The study authors do not claim that these findings would necessarily apply to other professors with PR or advertising backgrounds, although the findings might not be unusual among IMC/strategic communication programs employing a very small number of faculty members, each of whom is tasked with teaching a variety of courses, including several that might not comport perfectly with a given instructor's prior professional experience. The study sample included only two professors, and there may be many other factors that contributed to these findings. However, these findings do suggest the possibility that even strategic communication classes explicitly designed in order to teach the principles and practices of integration that are the foundations of IMC will skew more toward advertising or more toward PR depending on the specific faculty member who teaches them. As noted above in our literature review, several studies suggest that this is often the case (Carroll, 2000; Kerr, 2009; Rose & Miller, 1994) and therefore call for a more integrated and interdisciplinary approach to teaching IMC (Patti, 2005).

The authors of the present study suggest that if faculty members teaching in small programs want to make sure their students get a sufficiently broad perspective on IMC/strategic communication, they can do several things: (a) make sure their faculty is as diverse as possible, including

diversity in professional experience; (b) encourage professors to be more aware of their own biases; (c) encourage professors with advertising backgrounds to get feedback on their syllabi from those with PR backgrounds, and vice versa; (d) encourage professors to bring in guest lecturers, both in-person and via Skype, from diverse professional backgrounds and geographic locations, thus "extending" the faculty and providing students with a broader range of perspectives; (e) consider team-teaching some courses; (f) exercise care in choosing the "client" for the capstone course—choosing a client whose own promotional materials exhibit an integrated approach would go a long way in demonstrating the value of integration and exemplifying relevant examples of integration techniques; and (g) encourage faculty to engage in self-directed or formal learning that helps them to more fully integrate ethical thinking and theory into their IMC/strategic communication courses. Further, should it be possible and desirable to do so, professors may also wish to develop their own course packs—or publish their own original textbooks—with articles or chapters chosen expressly to offer a balance of content from the fields of public relations, advertising, direct marketing, social media, and other strategic components.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study focused on identifying differences among plan books produced by students of instructors from different professional backgrounds. Future research might explore (a) correlations among particulars of instructor backgrounds—type of employer (public institution, governmental agency, private corporation, etc.), number of years of professional experience, and so forth—and plan book content, including degree of success of students' inclusion of integration elements; (b) correlations among composition of student project/work groups (including student demographics, method used to constitute groups, etc.) and the design and development of IMC campaign books; (c) the effect of

using desired learning outcomes to assess student performance throughout the duration of the course, rather than only at the end of the course; and (d) the impact on student learning outcomes of using existing tools to assess ethics as an element of campaign development.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited by its small sample size: 39 campaign plan books developed in courses taught by only two instructors. It was also confined to the content examination of artifacts (i.e., the printed plan books themselves). Syllabi and other course materials, including instructor lectures, were not examined, nor were instructors, students, or area IMC professionals interviewed. A study of broader scope, which examined such additional information sources, would undoubtedly yield a wider range of useful data about effectively teaching the IMC campaigns course.

CONCLUSION

This study addresses an important gap in the literature about teaching integrated marketing communication courses, particularly those offered by smaller programs. No previous studies focusing on teaching the campaigns class were found. Thus, the above recommendations, embedded in the discussion of salient findings, may prove useful to those seeking to develop more effective ways to teach the principles and practices of designing truly integrated strategic communication campaigns.

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