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Student-run Agencies and the Future of Work: Pedagogical Applications from Dynamic Capabilities and Internal Communication

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Abstract

The future of work has been changing with a significant shift of the United States workforce moving to remote work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Utilizing the theory of dynamic capabilities and the internal communication constructs of trust and control mutuality, it is possible better understand how leaders can better engage their online workforce through stronger communication practices. The study suggests that there is a significant difference in the experience of trust and control mutuality between managers and their employees. Furthermore, this study shows that there is a greater positive effect observed by those workers identifying as management as opposed to those who do not identify as management. Educators can use the findings to train and provide insights to students who are seeking to find their own place in the increasingly changing workplace dynamics. This study also suggests that student-run agencies provide the proper channels through which this kind of real-life training can be simulated to better prepare students for the realities of the work world.

Student-run agencies (SRAs) provide valuable out-of-classroom educational experiences to aspiring public relations professionals (Maben & Whitson, 2013; Swanson, 2011). This kind of experiential learning is often tied back to Dewey, who suggested that for knowledge to be usable, it has to "be acquired in a situation; otherwise, it is segregated from experience and is forgotten or not available to transfer to new situations" (Giles & Eyler, 1994, p. 79). As such, it is important to provide students with applicable real-life educational experiences that reflect the industry that has been marked by dramatic change. In recent years, as a direct result of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the shift toward online work has been significant.

The ability to work from a location other than the office for knowledge-based workers has been increasing for many years (Lund et al., 2021). However, this shift to an online-work environment was not fully embraced until the COVID-19 global pandemic threatened the shutdown of the global economy

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and saw many industries shift to a work-from-home system (Choudhury, 2020). Whereas many studies sought to understand the online workplace (e.g., Nagel, 2020), especially since many individuals who otherwise would not have been allowed to work remotely were forced to do so as a result of the pandemic (e.g., Maurer, 2022), there has not yet been an examination of the trust and control mutuality that employees have in light of the construct of dynamic capabilities and the lessons that can be learned for educators as a result.

Organizations that display dynamic capabilities strategically engage in sensing, seizing, and transformation activities to assess their situation, effectively navigate change, and transform organizations to be at the industry apex in the midst of volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) situations (Teece et al., 1997; Helfat et al., 2007). Understanding dynamic capabilities in light of internal communication practices and their impact on trust-building and control mutuality are increasingly important as studies have shown significant changes to the workplace that are likely to stay after the pandemic is over. A study by PwC (2021) on remote work, for example, found that 83% of employers found their shift to remote work has been successful. Employees, however, were not as positive about the shift to remote work, with 12% less (a total of 71%) calling the shift a success (PwC, 2021). With this changing landscape of the work world, it is important to also equip students with the relevant skills, knowledge, and abilities to thrive. This study sought to, therefore, understand the best practices of internal communications incorporating dynamic capabilities and their connection to building an environment of trust and control mutuality with online and remote workers and provide recommendations for faculty advisers and pedagogical insights. The application of these findings is especially highly applicable to student-run agencies that seek to engage in "real-life" experiences.

Literature Review

The Impact of COVID-19 on the Workforce and Education: The coronavirus pandemic that appeared in early 2020 resulted in major disruptions in global society, including the business world, and higher education. Proving to be a significant disruptor of the workforce in the United States and elsewhere in the world (Parker et al., 2020), there was an immediate impact of knowledge-based organizations hastening toward online and remote work (Choudhury, 2020). Consequently, Lund et al.'s (2021) McKinsey Global Institute study found that the pandemic accelerated previous trends in remote work, e-commerce, and automation. As a result, up to 25 percent more workers needed to switch occupations. Scholars and organizational researchers from around the world found that the pandemic modified the physical workspace (Hou et al., 2021; Kane et al., 2021) and changed the work-from-home dynamic (Alipour et al., 2021; Green et al., 2020; Kaushik & Guleria, 2020; Guler et al., 2021). Nagel (2022), for example, investigated the extent the COVID-19 pandemic led to an acceleration of digital transformation in the workplace. The study that lasted between March to April 2020 found that the COVID-19 situation accelerated many workers' migration to a technology-enabled working-from-home. Respondents generally indicated a preference for digital employment, suggesting it is a more secure work source than traditional jobs requiring workers' presence in physical locations. The work-from-home environment, however, also required a new set of skills and abilities from managers. Lee (2021), for example, found that there is a direct connection, in a health crisis, between the sense of psychological safety and how an organization cares for their well-being. This study of emotional reactions to management practices found that managers that provided autonomy, trust, and empathy resonated with workers, whereas micromanaging and control was not received positively (Lee, 2021).

Similarly, the higher education landscape moved from in-person teaching to online environments. This sudden shift to online learning from the traditional classroom caused emotional distress for educators (Augier & Formentin, 2021) and proved to be a disruptive experience for U.S. college students (Zhou & Zhang, 2021). Faculty had to prepare and engage students through a new medium that presented new problems. Auger and Formentin (2021), for example, discussed the challenge of providing a "real world" environment for their capstone students as they worked with clients. This was the same finding by Bayerlein et al. (2021) who suggested that "it is not clear if all higher education providers are ready to assume this new responsibility" (p. 422) of training students to be adaptive and responsive. It is critical, therefore, for higher education institutions to examine their "curricula for post-pandemic work environments" (Bayerlein et al., 2021, p. 425). In a similar vein, Bowen

(2020) highlighted the importance of remote working experiences to give students a competitive edge in the job market as a result of the "changing nature of work and work placements … in an ever-shifting world" (p. 377).

Public relations educators need to constantly identify courses and competencies that best prepare graduates with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to enter the modern workplace (C. Kim, 2022). As Attansey et al. (2008) argued, public relations educational programs and teaching methods are not "immutable to change ... problem-based learning has an important place in our contemporary approaches to teaching public relations" (p. 37). Echoing this perspective, C. Kim (2022), highlighted the importance of "ensuring that PR education is a microcosm similar to professional practice, mirroring expectations" (p. 5), especially important considering the shift in the new norms in the workplace that highly favor online and remote work, especially for the knowledge industries. Therefore, in providing recommendations for the future of public relations education, C. Kim (2022), suggested that there is a need to develop students' ability to work, engage with others, and deliver on projects within a remote and online environment. With growing numbers of students enrolling in online courses (Seaman et al., 2018), there is also a growing student population that needs to be included in all educational opportunities that the university is providing. The Commission on Public Relations Education (2018), however, found that there is a lack of new technological, business, and global landscape training for public relations students. The challenge is that public relations is a complex and ever-changing industry: there is "no one-size-fits-all list of knowledge, abilities, and skills that is applicable for every job in every public relations setting" (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2018, p. 25). Facing the challenges of a constantly changing society and work landscape, public relations educators have found ways to successfully transition students into the profession. One of these methods includes the student-run agency.

Student-run Agencies Preparing Students for the Future of Work: Student-run agencies provide students with a unique opportunity to gain critical thinking and responsibility that is unlike that of a typical classroom (C. Kim, 2015). More specifically, a student-run agency gives students a professional environment in which they "must apply disciplined process and critical thinking to new and continually changing situations" (Bush, 2009, p. 32). Describing the benefits of a student-run agency, Ranta et al. (2021) highlighted that it is an "excellent springboard that bears closer study in terms of best practices and as an outlet for fostering professionalism" (p. 107). The SRA environment fosters the development of soft skills such as collaboration, time management, and interpersonal communication required in the workplace (Robles, 2012). A recent study by Ranta, Davis, and Bergstrom (2019) found that participants attributed their time in a student-run agency for their strong confidence to execute tasks with 23 separate communication-related variables. Similarly, SRAs require participants to engage in "real-life" and thus there are recommendations that SRAs also mimic professional agencies and their business processes and protocols (Bush, 2009).

Experience in student-run agencies and other similar opportunities that allow students to manage their relationships without university administrative coordination encourage the development of innovation and diverse skill sets while simultaneously providing exposure to different business practices (Bush, 2009). Additionally, as the gig economy expands and is changing by providing an alternative to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (Katz & Krueger, 2016), SRAs can help provide authentic work experience that is based on a per-project-based construct.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory in a VUCA World: The world as we know it can be volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) at times. Of course, one of the more recent unexpected dynamics that was globally experienced is the COVID-19 pandemic. Organizations trying to survive the pandemic were then required to manage new and challenging demands of "redeploying talent, establishing remote workforces, building needed capabilities, propping up distressed supply chains, contributing to humanitarian efforts, choosing among firing/furloughing/retaining employees, and planning for reopening amid uncertainty" (Worley & Jules, 2020, p. 279). The construct of dynamic capabilities (DC) suggests that there are certain organizations with higher-order abilities that seem to have a unique way of sensing, seizing, and transforming their organization in response to external and internal VUCA environments in successful ways (Day & Schoemaker, 2016; Teece et al., 1997). This foundation helps provide a framework for further study of organizations operating in VUCA environments.

The three main factors of dynamic capabilities

are sensing, seizing, and transformation (Kump et al., 2019; Teece et al., 1997), and these areas have been studied extensively since Teece et al. (1997) introduced dynamic capabilities into the academic literature (de Araújo et al., 2018). For example, dynamic capabilities have been studied in business strategy and management (e.g., Augier & Teece, 2009), operational abilities development (e.g., Cepeda & Vera, 2007), the management of technology and innovation (e.g., Cai & Tylecote, 2008), supply chain management (e.g., Cheng et al., 2014; Clifford & Fugate, 2010), project management (e.g., Davies & Brandy, 2016), entrepreneurship (e.g., Townsend & Busenitz, 2015), knowledge management (e.g., Denford, 2013), and human resources (e.g., Festing & Eidems, 2011), among many other areas. Recently, scholars have worked to unify the scholarship with a singular scale that would allow for the measurement of dynamic capabilities (de Araújo et al., 2018; Kump et al., 2019). The study by Kump et al. (2019) underwent a rigorous process allowing for the design and creation of a scale that has high levels of reliability and validity as a "solid predictor of business and innovation performance" (p. 1149). This 14-factor scale builds on the framework of sensing, seizing, and transforming.

In recent years, scholars have concluded that the definition of dynamic capabilities needs to be updated to include the larger scope of scholarship. Whereas the original definition for dynamic capabilities was "the firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environments" (Teece et al., 1997, p. 516), Helfat et al. (2007) suggested the dynamic capabilities could now be defined as "the capacity of an organization to purposefully create, extend, and modify its resource base" (Helfat et al., 2007, p. 4). The resource base itself has to be understood as the "tangible, intangible, and human assets (or resources) as well as capabilities which the organization owns, controls, or has access to on a preferential basis" (Helfat et al., 2007, p. 4). This modernized definition proposed for dynamic capabilities suggests that top and middle management are primarily responsible for the ability to create, extend, or modify resources purposefully (e.g., Helfat & Martin, 2015). In support of this view, Helfat and Martin (2015) found 34 theoretical and empirical studies in which dynamic managerial capabilities were either central or played a supporting role in sensing, seizing, and transforming activities.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory and Public Relations Pedagogy: To date, there is only one study that has examined the intersection of dynamic capabilities and public relations pedagogy. In this study, K. Kim (2021) found that educators and professionals emphasized the need for students to be equipped in "high-change situations" and have real-world practice. Highlighting the VUCA environment and the need to maintain relevance for students, the study suggests an integration of the constructs of dynamic capabilities within the curriculum would benefit students. Additionally, K. Kim (2021) highlighted the impact of student-run agencies as a tool to help students engage in VUCA environments and provide a tangible yet safe environment in which gaps in skills and knowledge can be identified.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory and Internal Communication: One of the most important stakeholders that are often overlooked in organizations is the employees. Employees, the "best ambassadors and influencers for an organization" (McCorkindale, 2019, p. 180), are a key public that influences the creation of goods, management of services, and is essential to the success of organizational objectives. Internal communication, "the strategic management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders at all levels within organizations" (Welch & Jackson, 2007, p. 183), therefore, has become one of the fastest-growing public relations communication management specializations (Verčič et al., 2012). Lee and Yue (2020), for example, found that internal communication research has experienced exponential growth since 2011 and the scope of research was found to be highly diversified since 2000. Internal communication has also been an area that has been closely examined as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For example, Qin and Men (2022) examined the impact of internal communication on employees' psychological well-being and found that supportive peer communication was a positively significant factor in one's sense of mental wellness. This same study also found that "increased organizational trust positively mediated the effects of both corporate symmetrical communication and supportive peer communication on employee psychological well-being" (Qin & Men, 2022, p. 1). Another study by Bojadjiev and Vaneva (2021) found that the models and practices of internal communication shifted to adapt to the online work environment, leading to changes in leadership and followership practices and expectations. The study by Bojadjiev and Vaneva (2021) also suggested that it is

not only the adaptation to virtual forms of communication that is of importance, but also the collaborative planning, shared decision-making, presentation of a vision to employees, role modeling of behavior, and helping make followers feel like they belong that is of utmost importance.

Therefore, the public relations practice of internal communication helps set the groundwork for understanding and engaging in studies that help managers gain insight into the impact and dynamics that surround the dissemination of management decisions and actions within an organization. Grunig (1992) recommended that internal communication should be symmetrical, transparent, and characterized by "trust, credibility, openness, relationships, reciprocity, network symmetry, horizontal communication, feedback, adequacy of information, employee-centered style, tolerance for disagreement, and negotiation" (p. 558). Following up on this study, Hon and Grunig (1999) published a paper that provided guidelines on how to measure relationships in public relations, an important area given that "fundamental goal of public relations is to build and then enhance on-going or long-term relationships with an organization's key constituencies" (p. 2).

The six areas that Hon and Grunig (1999) suggest can be measured in relationship management are (1) control mutuality, (2) trust, (3) satisfaction, (4) commitment, (5) exchange relationship, and (6) communal relationship. The two areas that are examined in this study are control mutuality and trust. Control mutuality is defined as the "degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another. Although some imbalance is natural, stable relationships require that organizations and publics each have some control over the other" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 3). On the other hand, trust is defined as "one party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 3). These two areas are important as it determines the level of an employee's organizational relationship that relates directly to internal communication efforts. Place (2019) found that listening doesn't only promote effective public relations practices but also develops trust. Similarly, Dewhurts and FitzPatrick (2022) found that internal communication creates an important sense of "shared context in an organization" (p. 3), which relates to control mutuality.

Even within this broad field, it could be argued that scholarship on internal change management communication still has many areas which can benefit from future studies. Summarizing the results from a survey that explored the management experience and attitudes concerning organizational development and change, Buchanan et al. (1999) found that the "views, attitudes and 'lived experience' of practicing managers, and of change agents, in particular, appear to have attracted little or no direct attention" (p. 20). This sentiment was echoed by Eisenberg et al. (1999) who found that despite the recognition that internal communication is an integral part of change management, there is only a small body of communication-specific research is available. In recent years, scholars have continued to argue that there is a lack of scholarly public relations research in this area (e.g., Luo & Jiang, 2014; Neill, 2018; Verčič et al., 2012).

Nevertheless, we can point to a few studies that bridge dynamic capabilities with internal change management communication practices. For example, a study by Gómez and Ballard (2013) proposed two essential communication practices, "information allocation" and "collective reflexivity," as ways to bolster dynamic capabilities to support an organization's long-term viability. Similarly, concerning knowledge management practices, Villar et al. (2014) suggested that "managers must provide mechanisms to create, disseminate, and store knowledge within the organization, and establish systems to apply and reconfigure the relevant knowledge" (p. 43) in order to engage in dynamic capabilities activities. There was also a suggestion by Bundy et al. (2017) that dynamic capabilities and crisis communication should be studied together as they have similar processes. However, to the authors' knowledge, there have been just three studies (Kaltenbrunner & Reichel, 2018; K. Kim, 2021; Mansour et al., 2019) that have examined real-life crises in light of dynamic capabilities. In general, however, it can be seen that there is limited research on how dynamic capabilities relate to internal change management communication practices. In light of this, this study seeks to understand how internal communication dynamic capacities can be a mediating influence on trust and control mutuality resulting in the research questions:

RQ1: How does internal communication of dynamic capabilities impact organizational trust in online or virtual work teams?

RQ2: How does internal communication of dynamic capabilities impact organization-

al control mutuality in online or virtual work teams?

Method

This study utilized a quantitative and qualitative multimethod approach (Brewster & Hunter, 1989) to explore the connection between dynamic capabilities, trust, and control mutuality. The online questionnaire collection platform, Survey Monkey, was utilized to design and collect the responses. Utilizing a panel purchased through Survey Monkey's system to find a sample of respondents representing the United States census for fully-employed individuals, 178 people responded with a total of 106 completed surveys.

Sample: The initial screening question addressed whether or not individuals were working remotely at least 20% of the time, which is the same as working remotely one day in a five-day workweek. A majority, 59.55% (n=106) of respondents stated that they work remotely at least one day a week, whereas 40.45% (n=72) responded negatively to this question and were not invited to continue with the study. Of the remaining 106 respondents who qualified for this study, there was an almost even split between those who are in managerial positions (52.83%, n=56) and those who are not (47.17%, n=50). The respondents represented many different industries including information technology, health care, education, finance, sales, transportation, construction, and insurance. Regarding the length of time worked at an organization, 80.19% (n=85) worked for at least one year. The largest grouping was with those who worked more than five years but less than 10 with 27.36% (n=29) followed by those with 10 or more years working for the organization with 21.70% (n=23).

When it came to the completed responses, 60.19% (n=62) identified as female, and 39.81% (n=41) identified as male. Regarding age, the largest grouping of the population was between the ages of 30 to 44 with 39.80% (n=41), followed closely by the 45-60 age group with 31.07% (n=32). Those in the 18-29 age range represented 18.44% (n=19) of the total, with those in the 60-plus age range next with 10.68% (n=11). There was representation from each of the regions in the United States making this a national study.

Quantitative Data Collection: The survey had an initial qualification question, asking whether the respondents were at least 18 years of age. This first question also informed respondents that participation in the survey is voluntary. A second filter question asked respondents if they worked online or remotely at least 20% of the time. Finally, in addition to the scale questions for internal communication of dynamic capabilities, trust, and control mutuality, two open-ended qualitative questions were asked to understand the kind of communication provided by the organization when there was a change to remote work and how a manager may have built trust during the transition to remote work.

The dynamic capabilities scale was adapted from the 14-point scale by Kump et al. (2019) to measure the three areas of dynamic capabilities: sensing, seizing, and transforming. Adding the term or construct of internal communication into the scale, there were 14 Likert-scale items ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree*. The study was coded so that the higher scores represent a higher individualized level of competency for dynamic capabilities. The scales for trust and control mutuality were pulled from Hon and Grunig's (1999) report that highlighted the best practices for organizational communication. The organizational trust instrument had a six-item, five-point Likert-scale scale where the higher scores represent a higher level of organizational trust. The third and final scale, control mutuality, had five questions using a five-point Likert scale. This control mutuality scale was coded so that the higher scores represent a higher level of organizational control mutuality.

Qualitative Data Collection: Two qualitative questions were asked of respondents in order to collect additional information on their personalized experience of remote work and the development of trust in the transition to remote work. The first question sought to understand the ways in which an organization collaborated with their employees in the transition to remote work and tried to understand the construct of control mutuality with an open-ended question: "How did your organization collaborate with you and your colleagues to change to remote work"? The second question was designed to understand the interaction between an employee and their manager in regard to the construct of trust: "In what ways did your manager build trust through communication during the transition to remote work?" These two opened-ended questions were simply designed to encourage participation and honest feedback.

Results

Quantitative Analysis of Dynamic Capabilities, Organizational Trustworthiness, and Control Mutuality: The way in which an organization engages in internal communication dynamic capabilities practices could influence the trust and sense of control mutuality that an individual has with their organization. To test this, a compound scale for each of the three factors of dynamic capabilities scale of sensing, seizing, and transformation was created. Additionally, compound scales for both trust and control mutuality were created. Linear regressions were run with the dynamic capabilities scales (sensing, seizing, and transforming) as independent variables and the trust and control mutuality scales as dependent variables in order to measure the relationship between these factors.

Sensing and Organizational Trustworthiness: A simple linear regression was carried out to test if internal communication sensing abilities significantly predicted the perception of organizational trustworthiness with the organization. The result established that the perception of sensing abilities explained 37.6% of the variation in the perception of organizational trustworthiness with adjusted R^2 = 37.0%. The influence of internal communication sensing was statistically significant in predicting the perception of organizational trustworthiness, $F(1, 101) = 60.978$, $p<.001$.

Sensing and Control Mutuality: A simple linear regression was carried out to test if internal communication sensing abilities significantly predicted control mutuality with the organization. The result established that the perception of sensing abilities explained 36.7% of the variation in the perception of control mutuality with adjusted R^2 = 36.1%. The influence of internal communication was statistically significant in predicting control mutuality, $F(1, 102) = 59.072$, $p<.001$.

Seizing and Trust: A simple linear regression was carried out to test if internal communication seizing abilities significantly predicted trust with the organization. The result established that the perception of seizing abilities explained 28.4% of the variation in the perception of organizational trustworthiness with adjusted R^2 = 27.7%. The influence of internal communication seizing was statistically significant in predicting the perception of organizational trustworthiness, $F(1, 101) = 40.009$, $p<.001$.

Seizing and Control Mutuality: A simple linear regression was carried out to test if internal communication seizing abilities significantly predicted control mutuality with the organization. The result established that the perception of seizing abilities explained 34.0% of the variation in the perception of control mutuality with adjusted R^2 = 33.3%. The influence of internal communication seizing was statistically significant in predicting control mutuality, $F(1, 102) = 52.522$, $p<.001$.

Transformation and Organizational Trustworthiness: A simple linear regression was carried out to test if internal communication transformation abilities significantly predicted a sense of organizational trustworthiness. The result established that the perception of transformation abilities explained 34.8% of the variation in the perception of organizational trustworthiness with adjusted R^2 = 34.1%. The influence of the internal communication of transformation was statistically significant in predicting the perception of organizational trustworthiness, $F(1, 101) = 53.837$, $p<.001$.

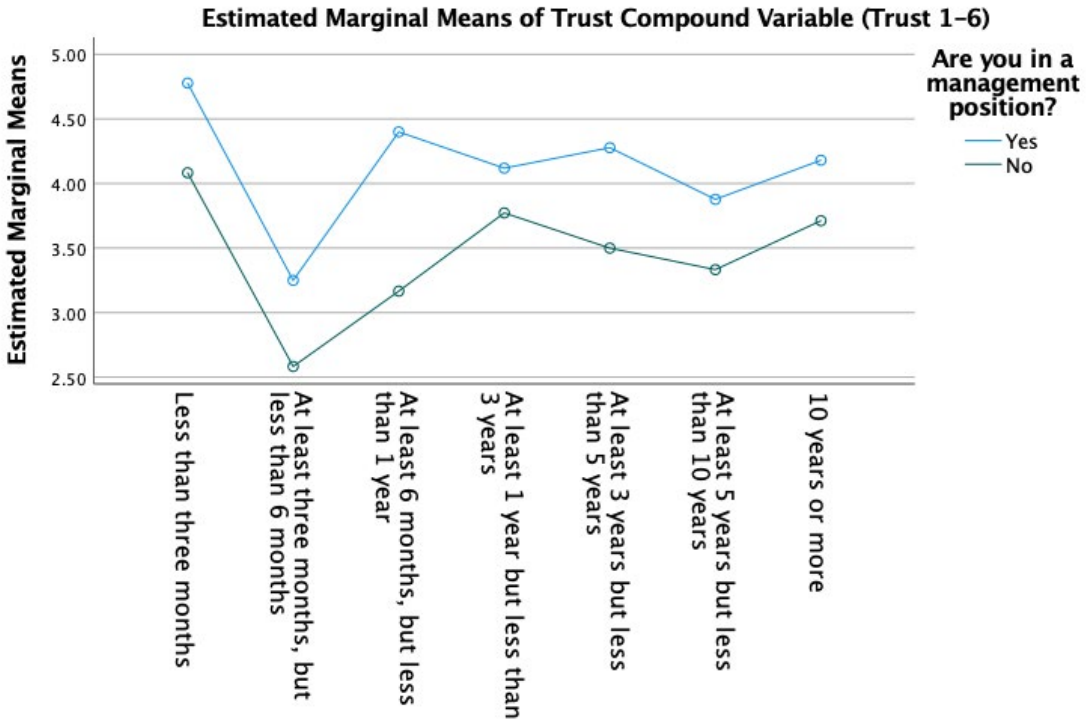
Transformation and Control Mutuality: A simple linear regression was carried out to test if internal communication transformation abilities significantly predicted control mutuality within the organization. The result established that the perception of transformation abilities explained 37.0% of the variation in the perception of organizational control mutuality with adjusted R^2 = 36.4%. The influence of internal communication transformation was statistically significant in predicting control mutuality, $F(1, 102) = 59.831$, $p<.001$.

The Impact of a Management Role on Organizational Trustworthiness and Control Mutuality

One of the questions that were asked of the participants was whether they were in a management role with almost an even split with 51.9% in management and 48.1% identifying as non-management. In order to understand whether the management role influenced their perception of the development of organization trustworthiness and control mutuality over time, a two-way ANOVA statistical analysis was conducted. In order to measure this, the organizational trustworthiness and control mutuality compound scales that comprised their items was used as a dependent variable. This was compared against the questions of whether an individual was a manager or not and the length of time they have been in their current role.

Management/Trust: There was a statistically significant main effect of the management role within an organization for the organizational trustworthiness

Figure 1: Trust as a Function of Position and Length of Time



score, F(1, 89) = 10.108, p = .002, partial η2 = .102. There was not, however, a significant main effect of the length of time on the organizational trustworthiness score, F(6, 89) = 1.598, p = .157, partial η2 = .097. Furthermore, in every time length that the employee was at the organization, there was an average 0.61 point difference between those in management versus those who were not, with management having a higher view of trust.

Management/Control Mutuality Marginal Means: There was a statistically significant main effect of the management role within an organization for the control mutuality score, F(1, 90) = 18.132, p = <.001, partial η2 = .168. There was not, however, a significant main effect of the length of time on the control mutuality score, F(6, 90) = 1.608, p = .154, partial η2 = .097. Furthermore, in every time length that the employee was at the organization, there was an average 1.14 points difference between those in management versus those who were not, with management having a higher view of control mutuality.

The Impact of a Management Role on Dynamic Capabilities: Additionally, in order to understand whether the management role influences the perception of internal communication dynamic capabilities over time, two-way ANOVA statistical analyses were conducted. In order to measure this, the internal communication dynamic capabilities compound scales for sensing, seizing, and transformation were used as dependent variables. This was compared against the questions of whether an individual was a manager or not and the length of time they have been in their current role.

Management/Sensing: There was a statistically significant main effect of the management role within an organization for the sensing compound scale score, F(1, 92) = 12.876, p = <.001, partial η2 = .123. There was not, however, a significant main effect of the length of time on the control mutuality score, F(6, 92) = .931, p = .477, partial η2 = .057. Furthermore, in almost every time length that the employee was at the organization, there was an average 1.14 points difference between those in management versus those who were not, with management having a higher view of sensing abilities. The only difference was with the employees who were at the organization between three to six months. The most significant difference was found with those in a role between six months to one year with the mean score for managers at 4.56 and the mean score at 1.83 for those who are not manager, a difference of 2.73 points. The gap between managers and those not in management was the smallest between those who have been in their role between three to six months (managers mean score at 2.07 and non-managers mean score at 2.40).

Figure 2: Control Mutuality as a Function of Position and Length of Time

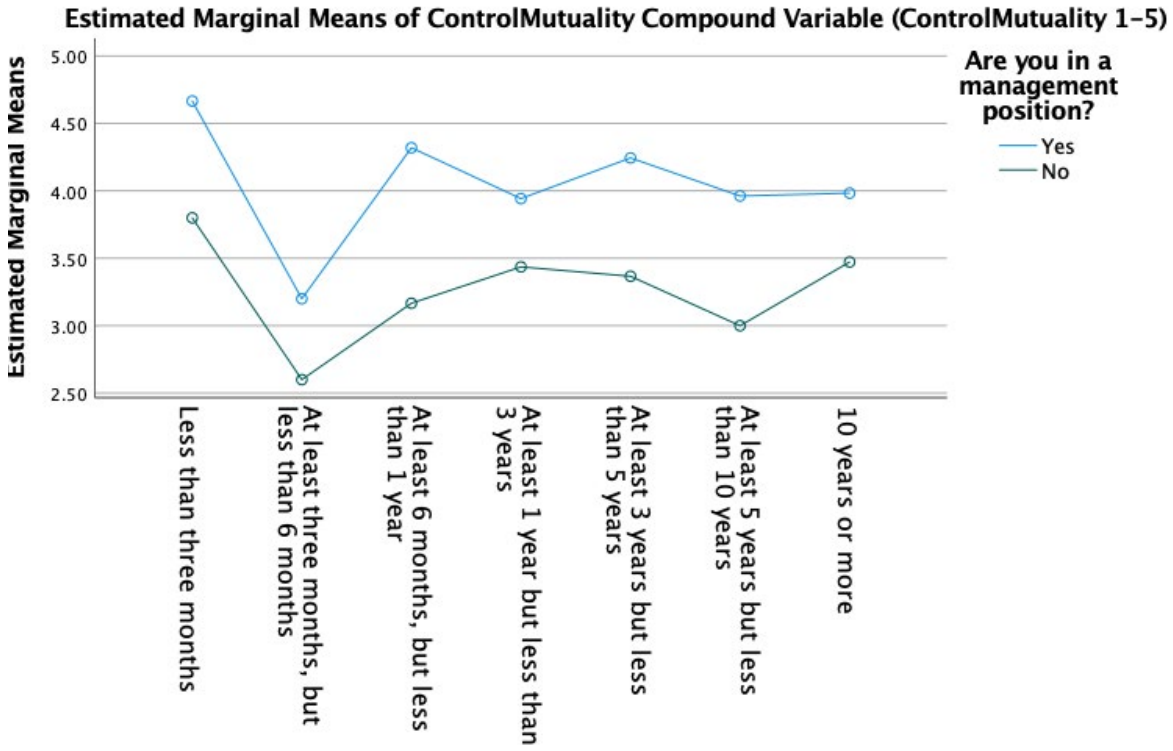
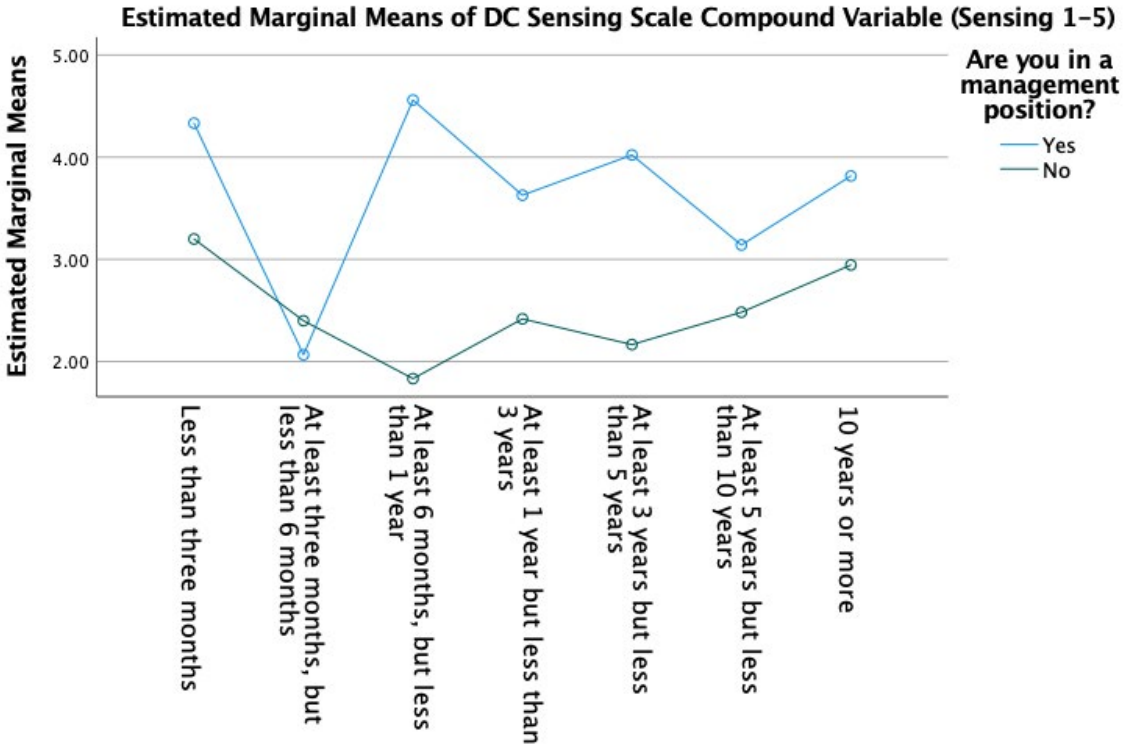


Figure 3: Sensing as a Function of Position and Length of Time



Management/Seizing: There was a statistically significant main effect of the management role within an organization for the sensing compound scale score, $F(1, 92) = 10.460$, $p = .002$, partial $\eta 2 = .102$. There was not, however, a significant main effect of the length of time on the control mutuality score, $F(6, 92) = 1.086$, $p = .377$, partial $\eta 2 = .066$. Furthermore, in almost every time length that the employee was at the organization, there was an average 1.10 points difference between those in management versus those who were not, with management having a higher view of internal communication seizing abilities. The only difference was with the employees who were at the organization between three to six months. The most significant difference was found among those in a role between six months to one year with the mean score for managers at 4.40 and the mean score at 1.58 for those who are not managers. The gap between managers and those not in management was the smallest among those who have been in their role between 5 to 10 years (managers' mean score at 3.13 and non-managers mean score at 2.54).

Management/Transforming: There was a statistically significant main effect of the management role within an organization for the transforming compound scale score, $F(1, 91) = 16.155$, $p = <.001$, partial $\eta 2 = .151$. There was not, however, a significant main effect of the length of time on the control mutuality score, $F(6, 91) = .785$, $p = .584$, partial $\eta 2 = .049$. Furthermore, in almost every time length that the employee was at the organization, there was an average 1.34 points difference between those in management versus those who were not, with management having a higher view of internal communication transformation abilities. The only difference was with the employees who were at the organization between three to six months. The most significant difference was found with those in a role between six months to one year with the mean score for managers at 4.64 and the mean score at 1.13 for those who are not managers, a difference of 3.51. The gap between managers and those not in management was the smallest among those who have been in their role between 5 to 10 years (managers' mean score at 3.25 and non-managers mean score at 2.74).

Qualitative Analysis

In order to explore the data from the qualitative questions, an inductive approach using the in vivo method was used to code the data and identify themes in the analysis of the results. The meaningful unit was usually a complete sentence but there were often phrases or concepts that made sense in context. Out of the 103, fully completed responses, a majority of respondents provided content that could be used for analysis for the questions, "in what ways did your manager build trust through communication during the transition to remote work?" (n=81), and "how did your organization collaborate with you and your colleagues to change to remote work?" (n=94). The authors then first independently clustered the codes into categories and then transcriptions were collectively reviewed a couple of times and underwent recoding and recategorizing until saturation was reached (Saldaña, 2009). The authors were in alignment with the results and themes that arose, thus indicating intercoder reliability. The participants' identities were kept anonymous as a part of the original instrument and so titles, experience, and industries are presented as a part of the analysis instead. As a result of this analysis, four main themes emerged: (1) the need for consistency and regularity, (2) the importance of openness in communication, (3) the power of empowerment and flexibility, and (4) the importance of adequate equipment and training.

The Need for Consistency and Regularity: Regular meetings and maintaining consistent work habits were things highlighted as key needs for success in a remote environment. An IT professional (non-management) who works online 100% of the time stated that his manager "built trust through consistency and empathetic communication through email and text" and that there were good listening skills and regular words of encouragement. Similarly, managers stated methods such as daily update email communication, frequent Zoom meetings, to regular phone calls and clear role definition were beneficial. A manager in behavioral health who works remotely full-time stated that there is "continuous checking in" and the "implementation of changes based off feedback."

The Importance of Openness in Communication: Many managers and employees highlighted the importance of openness in communication in addition to the need for regularity and consistency. This was seen in both positive and limiting actions. For example, a positive example is where there is an establishment of "collaborative goal setting." A fully remote non-manager working in international development stated that "open communication, clear role definition, flexible work time, and a focus on preserving mental health are all elements that built a lot of trust between my man-

Figure 4: Seizing as a Function of Position and Length of Time

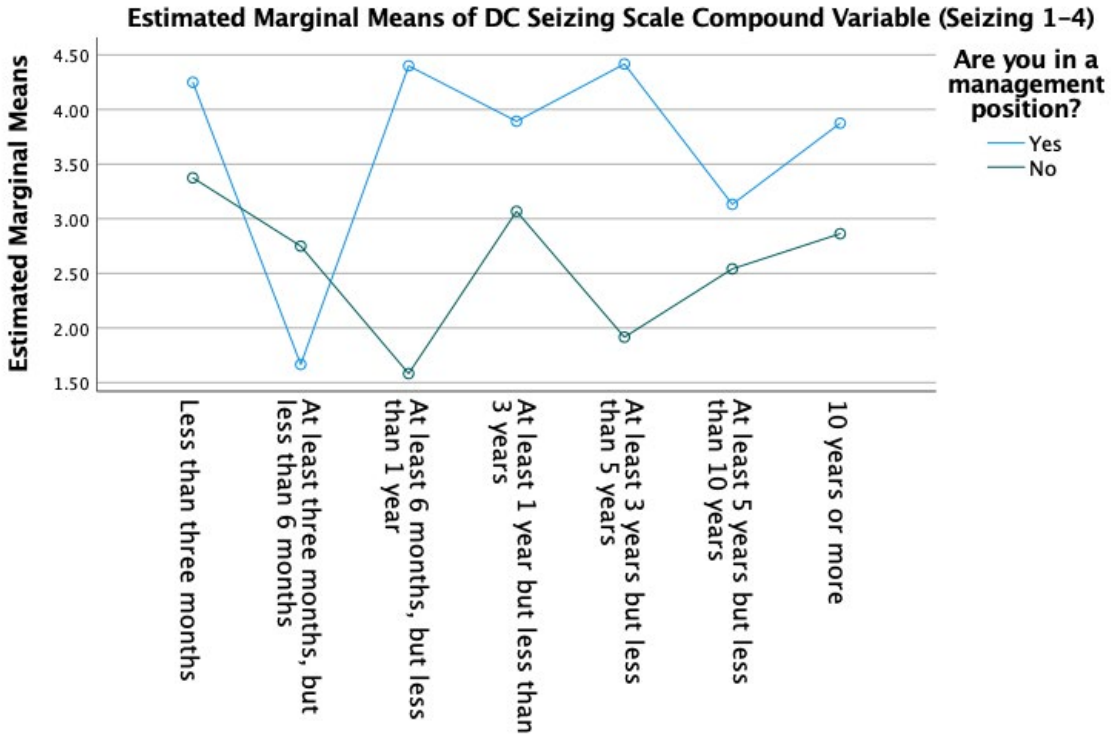
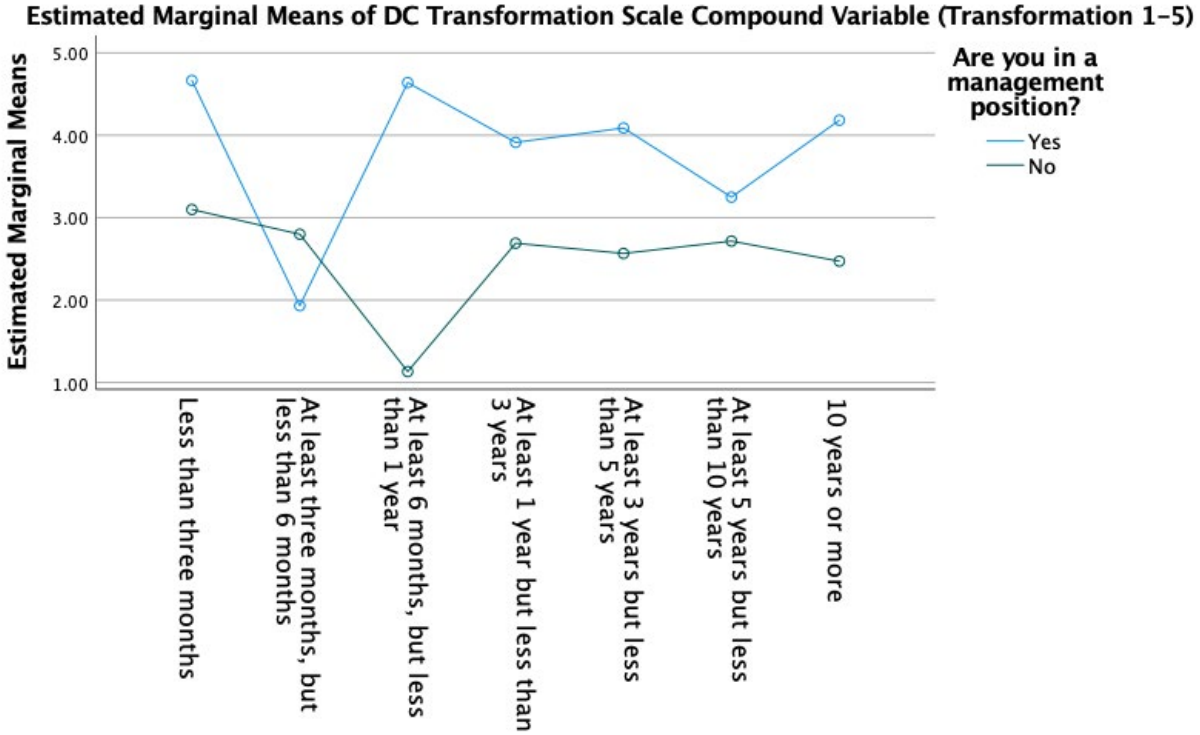


Figure 5: Transformation as a Function of Position and Length of Time



ager and me during remote work." This professional also shared that whereas she has not met her manager, she has a "great working relationship … probably the best I've had yet in my career with a manager." On the other hand, a limiting action example is found where a full-time manager in IT stated that there was a need to "limited useless meetings." Another way that was shared was that communication channels changed with managers giving personal cell phone numbers as a means of creating open communication channels. A non-manager in the delivery industry stated that that the openness in communication by managers was helpful in building trust with her manager "always being responsive to any questions or concerns."

The Power of Empowerment and Flexibility: The fact that people are working from a non-office environment also meant that they wanted to have choice over working times and benefit from the flexibility of a remote work environment. There were a wide range of responses that were shared about the importance of empowerment and sense of ownership in work. Whereas some individuals shared about micromanagement practices, such as a retail employee who stated that her manager could monitor her work by logging into her system, there were others who stated that there are "trusting relationships" and the empowerment of employees to find a good balance between their home-life and work-life.

The Importance of Adequate Equipment and Training: Many individuals highlighted that the transition to remote work was accomplished not only through clear communication and encouragement, but also through the equipping of team-members with the right equipment and training. A human resources manager who works half the time remotely, for example, stated that their organization bought her a new laptop and introduced new software. Similarly, a manager said that his supervisor provided authorization "for any needed equipment for basic functions as well as comfort."

Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly shifted the way in which organizations managed their employees with many knowledge-based workers moving to remote work settings (Choudhury, 2020; Nagel, 2022). Additionally, an organization's ability to successfully manage change management can be measured by the construct of dynamic capabilities that suggests that the actions of sensing, seizing, and transformation allow for organizations to respond in ways that allow them to thrive in the midst of VUCA environments (Teece et al., 1997). This study adapted the dynamic capabilities scales (Kump et al., 2019) that created a framework for measuring sensing, seizing, and transforming activities so that it would measure internal communication dynamic capabilities abilities. Viewing internal dynamic capabilities in light of the constructs of trust and control mutuality that Hon and Grunig (1999) highlighted, the study sought to understand whether internal communication dynamic capabilities would lead to a positive relationship with a sense of organizational trust and control mutuality. There is a direct application for the way in which a student-run agency can and should operate in order to gain relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities that would translate directly into the public relations industry.

The Trust and Control Mutuality Gap: Helfat and Martin (2015) argued that top and middle management were responsible for the modification of organizational resources through the strategic process of dynamic capabilities. This study, however, found that there is a significant gap in trust and control mutuality between management that needs to be considered. In fact, the communication of dynamic capabilities and correlated perceptions of trust and control mutuality tend to favor management positions at any time period. The importance of Bojadjiev and Vaneva's (2021) suggestion is that a collaborative approach to change is of utmost importance. Qin and Men (2022) also discussed the importance of the well-being of employees' mental wellness. This study suggests that managers should, therefore, make the extra effort to try and understand their employees' experiences and not rely on their own experience as a metric. In measuring compound scales of each of the factors of dynamic capabilities (sensing, seizing, and transformation) against trust and control mutuality, there was statistical significance.

The qualitative responses from the participants also indicated that there were four main areas in which trust and control mutuality areas were built. The findings indicated that consistency and regularity, as well as open communication, helped build a sense of trust, supporting the findings from Qin and Men (2022) who argued for the importance of corporate symmetrical communication. The importance of empowerment and flexibility as well as having the right equipment supported the findings from Bojadjiev and Vaneva (2021) and their argument that there is an

importance for shared decision-making and making followers feel important.

The Three-to-Six Month Effect: For both managers and non-managers alike, there was a significant drop in the sense of organizational trust and control mutuality for those who have been at the organization between three to six months. By contrast, in the first three months of employment, there is a relatively high level of organizational trust and control mutuality that is reported by participants. The drop at the three-to-six month time frame, however, is dramatic. It should be noted that due to the lower sample size, statistical significance cannot be verified. Nevertheless, there seems to be an initial "honeymoon" period after which there are challenges in trust and control mutuality that get negotiated afterward. In light of Lee's (2021) finding that there is a connection between an employee's emotional reaction that was elicited from the perceived organizational support, managers should be aware of the potential for miscommunication and should pay close attention to their team members after the initial onboarding process is completed. There is also an opportunity for managers to circle back to their new hires during this time frame to make sure there is mutual understanding to build trust and a greater sense of control mutuality in the workplace.

Implications of Dynamic Capabilities and Internal Communication for Student-run Agencies

The work world is clearly changing. Whereas many universities have returned back to the classrooms, the workplace has not yet made a full transition back to in-person work. Faculty who are advising student-run agencies can integrate the findings of this study into the training of the student leaders. This study supplements the findings from K. Kim (2021) who suggested that student-run firms provide an environment in which they can learn how to engage in VUCA environments with dynamic capabilities practices. Additionally, this study integrates and furthers the findings by Bayerlein et al. (2021) who found that there is a need to address the educational curricula within higher education. Instead of having to entirely change the learning outcomes for courses, the usage of SRA can help provide opportunities to train and equip students for a changing world. In particular, it would be recommended to encourage online collaboration and work practices as a part of the agency experience. Beyond this, all educators can utilize online collaboration tools and software within in-person classes to simulate the hybrid working environment. Whereas SRAs provide the ideal workplace environment, encouraging students to engage in teamwork and complete projects entirely online would also provide opportunities to learn how to work in an increasingly remote and online work environment.

Additionally, the study suggests that any modification to the running of an organization in order to engage in the sensing, seizing, and transforming activities of dynamic capabilities would benefit from trust and control mutuality between the leaders and staff. In other words, it is important for faculty to not assume that students are able to engage in organizational listening effectively given that there is a gap between managers and employees in the industry itself. The importance, therefore, of encouraging two-way communication as a way to navigate change and difficult situations cannot be understated. Student leaders should be trained to build trust and control mutuality through consistent and open communication. The way in which these conversations also happen is critical as the team needs to feel empowered to do the work, given the flexibility to work in the way that works best for them, and also given adequate support. Just as important, is that the faculty need to model and demonstrate what this kind of communication looks like.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations were observed during the course of this study. This study would have benefitted from more granularity in questions and subsequent responses based on observed drops in perceptions of trust and control mutuality in the three-to-six-month period. Likewise, more granularity in terms of analyzing trust and control mutuality based on business type and length of time working in an online environment would have likely provided more substantive results regarding the impact of internal communications emphasizing dynamic capabilities within those particular companies.

As mentioned in the discussion section, future research should analyze the significant drop in trust and control mutuality scores in the three-to-six-month range for both management and non-management. Future studies should determine if there is a gap in communicative practices in terms of quantity or quality, potentially using the attributes identified through this study's qualitative analysis. Additionally, impacts on the retention of talent, company growth, and prof-

itability are all additional factors that could be analyzed through this lens.

Another topic for future research would be an analysis of the communication of dynamic capabilities through the lens of diffusion of innovations theory. Through this lens, companies could be compared by type in order to understand which have higher scores and possible best practices to be incorporated by those with lower scores. This same type of analysis could be used to develop potential methods of bridging the trust and control mutuality perception gaps observed between management and non-management in online environments.

Finally, it would be beneficial to engage in a survey of student-run agencies and the way they understand and experience dynamic capabilities, trust, and control mutuality as a part of their educational experience. Subsequent studies could also engage in qualitative studies to go into a deeper dive into the experience of trust and control mutuality look like in light of the changes that have been experienced in the online work environment.

Conclusion

The future of work has been changing with a significant shift of the United States workforce moving to remote work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Utilizing the theory of dynamic capabilities and the internal communication constructs of trust and control mutuality, it is possible better understand how leaders can better engage their online workforce through stronger communication practices. The study suggests that there is a significant difference in the experience of trust and control mutuality between managers and their employees. Furthermore, this study shows that there is a greater positive effect observed by those workers identifying as management as opposed to those who do not identify as management. Educators can use the findings to train and provide insights to students who are seeking to find their own place in the increasingly changing workplace dynamics. This study also suggests that student-run agencies provide strong channels through which this kind of real-life training can be simulated to better prepare students for the realities of the work world. There are, nevertheless, opportunities to integrate the best practices of the online and hybrid work environments into the classroom to provide the training and experience that will help prepare students for the workforce.

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