

EJ

Elon Journal
of Undergraduate Research
in Communications

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Issue
School of Communications
Elon University

Joining the World of Journals

Welcome to the nation's first and, to our knowledge, only undergraduate research journal in communications.

We discovered this fact while perusing the Web site of the Council on Undergraduate Research, which lists and links to the 60 or so undergraduate research journals nationwide (<http://www.cur.org/ugjournal.html>).

Some of these journals focus on a discipline (e.g., Journal of Undergraduate Research in Physics), some are university-based and multidisciplinary (e.g., MIT Undergraduate Research Journal), and some are university-based and disciplinary (e.g., Furman University Electronic Journal in Undergraduate Mathematics).

The Elon Journal is the first to focus on undergraduate research in journalism, media and communications.

The School of Communications at Elon University is the creator and publisher of the online journal. The first issue was published in Spring 2010 under the editorship of Dr. Byung Lee, associate professor in the School of Communications.

The three purposes of the journal are:

- To publish the best undergraduate research in Elon's School of Communications each term,
- To serve as a repository for quality work to benefit future students seeking models for how to do undergraduate research well, and
- To advance the university's priority to emphasize undergraduate student research.

The Elon Journal is published twice a year, with spring and fall issues.

Articles and other materials in the journal may be freely downloaded, reproduced and redistributed without permission as long as the author and source are properly cited. Student authors retain copyright ownership of their works.

Celebrating Student Research

This journal reflects what we enjoy seeing in our students -- intellectual maturing.

As 18 year olds, some students enter college wanting to earn a degree, but unsure if they want an education. They may question whether communication theory has anything to do with real life. Ready to start their media careers, many would rather focus on workplace skills than analyze issues and concepts.

In Elon's School of Communications, we strive for a balance among concepts, writing and production. All are important.

Student media and organizations are terrific venues for the practice of journalism, broadcasting, public relations, advertising and cinema.

In turn, this journal celebrates the life of the intellect through undergraduate research. It represents the intellectual maturing that occurs by the senior year.

These published articles make us aware of the solitary hours that students spend in research and the untold hours in which student and teacher-mentor work together to revise a paper for public consumption. It's exciting to see students conducting research in such arenas as social media and press freedom.

By focusing attention on undergraduate research, this journal helps reinforce all that we think a university should be.

Dr. Paul Parsons, Dean
School of Communications

Editorial Board

Twenty-six faculty members in Elon's School of Communications served as the Editorial Board that selected the 9 undergraduate research papers appearing in the 2012 spring issue.

From more than 100 research papers written in advanced School of Communications classes, 23 papers were submitted to the journal by Elon communications students through the encouragement and mentoring of capstone teachers and other professors in the school.

Professors who served as the Editorial Board were Janna Anderson, Lucinda Austin, Brooke Barnett, Vanessa Bravo, Lee Bush, Naeemah Clark, David Copeland, Vic Costello, Michelle Ferrier, Michael Frontani, Kenn Gaither, Mandy Gallagher, Don Grady, Anthony Hatcher, Derek Lackaff, Julie Lellis, Harlen Makemson, Barbara Miller, Phillip Motley, Thomas Nelson, George Padgett, Paul Parsons, Glenn Scott, Michael Skube, Amanda Sturgil, Frances Ward-Johnson.

Thanks should also go to Jason McMerty, who videotaped student introductions to their projects, and Colin Donohue, who uploaded the PDF version of this issue and student videos.

Editor's Note

Student readers of this journal might wonder how the authors are able to complete their research paper within a semester and publish it here. As the editor of this journal, I wondered what kind of advice these authors could offer to prospective authors. So I asked authors in this issue for the advice they would give prospective authors about their research strategies.

Laura Levitt emphasized the importance of choosing a topic for which you have passion. Katherine MacKinnon echoed the feeling, "It is extremely important to choose a topic you are passionate about, as it will make writing the paper more interesting and thought provoking." Carissa Hilliar even said, "Don't be afraid to pick a topic that's completely untamed, that's wholly unheard of. . . . Do something that excites you, that ignites you, that you're perfectly fanatical about. Whatever it is, make it yours. Make it fun. And most of all, make it spectacular."

Once the topic is selected, the writing step kicks in. While emphasizing systematic organization, Daniel Koehler said, "Set out a schedule for yourself and break your paper down into sections. This way, rather than getting overwhelmed by one gigantic paper, you can tackle smaller sections in a strategic manner, which will eventually formulate one collective piece."

Writing a paper is mostly a solitary work, but getting help from others can expedite the research process. Laura Levitt said, "My professor worked by my side through the entire paper because I was in her office on a regular basis asking questions and making sure I was on the right track. It helped me through the entire process and made the paper much easier to write." Emily Cray cast her net wider for help. She said, "If your capstone teacher is not well-acquainted with the topic of research you intend to write about . . . find another professor who is equally, if not more, passionate about your topic as you are. Adopt him or her as your mentor. They will help you immensely."

Among others, I appreciate the effort of the Fall 2011 senior capstone professors—Dr. Naeemah Clark, Dr. David Copeland and Dr. Michael Frontani, along with me—who guided student research and selected submissions on time, even on a tight deadline. The online issue also reflects the work of Jason McMerty, who videotaped and edited the video introductions by students, and Colin Donohue, who posted this journal online.

I hope the articles in this issue will inspire students in the next semester to be serious about research and submit their papers to this journal.

Dr. Byung Lee
Journal Editor

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Influence of Social Media on the Management of Music Star Image

*Michael Margiotta**

*Strategic Communications
Elon University*

Abstract

As a result of changing business models, the music industry has narrowed its focus to music stars with mass appeal. Management of music star image has become more complicated in the digital realm due to a rise in consumer-generated social media, particularly in the areas of promotion and publicity. As a new element in the promotion mix, social media enables management to develop artist-fan relationships by engaging fans using a variety of media formats. Social media also provides management with the tools to shape internet-based discussions and publicity. Using Richard Dyer's model of star image as a framework and other scholarly research, this study discussed the management of promotion and publicity of music star images via social media.

I. Introduction

The music industry has experienced a revolution over the past decade. After successive years of growth in the 1990s, CD sales began to decline at the turn of the century, posing a great threat to the industry. Following years of fighting digital piracy in legal battles, the music industry began to embrace innovative digital business models and shifted its focus to signing artists with mass appeal and large sales potentials. During this same period, Internet-based social media became an increasingly important aspect of marketing communications throughout all industries, including the music industry. Using Richard Dyer's model of star image as a framework and other scholarly research, this study explores ways of promoting and publicizing music star images using social media.

II. Background of the Record Industry

Traditional Business Model

From the early 20th through the early 21st century, the music industry maintained roughly the same business model. This traditional model included the mass production, promotion, and distribution of recorded material. Record labels would identify and develop artists, record music in professional recording studios, manufacture physical albums (vinyl, cassette, or CD), promote the albums in traditional media, and distribute the albums via physical record stores. Record labels of this time typically promoted their products

* **Keywords:** Social Media, Music promotion and publicity, Music Industry, Image, Artist Management

Email: mmargiotta@elon.edu

using large budgets spent on heavy advertising, encouraging radio airplay, and television spots. This business model had a sales-oriented philosophy, focusing efforts on making transactions (i.e., selling CDs) with little concern for developing and maintaining long-term relationships with the customer. The consumer was subject to a slow, inefficient process of purchasing music where they had to travel to a physical record store (prominent retailers included Tower Records and Best Buy), search the shelves for desired music, and then wait in line to check out (Vaccaro & Cohn, 2004). For the greater part of the 20th century, the record industry had an oligopoly over how music was distributed to customers.

The Turning Point: 1999-2000

The period from 1999 to 2000 has been regarded as the turning point of the industry. After consecutive years of growth and record high U.S. sales in 1999, CD sales throughout the United States and the world began to decline. Many industry executives (at least in part) blame this decline on digital piracy, which began in 1999 with Napster. From 1999 until 2002, CD sales worldwide plummeted 19.8 percent, or about \$7.7 billion (Janssens, Vandaele, & Beken, 2009). CD sales have continued to decline.

Threat of Digital Piracy

Innovations in technology have a great influence on business models throughout all industries. The MP3 was the most influential technological advancement in the music industry since the creation of the CD in 1982. The MP3 enabled users to compress music files from CDs into a format with slightly poorer quality that could be easily transferred through the Internet. This technology allowed Shawn Fanning to create Napster, the first peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing network. Launched in 1999, Napster made it possible for users with the Napster software to search for and download music files from other users. It operated using a central computer server that would list users who had certain songs and make the connection between the downloader and the uploader. On December 6, 1999, the Record Industry Association of America (RIAA) sued Napster, accusing the company of enabling and encouraging copyright infringement. Within one month of the lawsuit being filed, the number of Napster users grew from 50,000 to 150,000 and the number of songs available grew to 20 million (Menn, 2003). At its peak, Napster had 70 million registered users (Janssens, Vandaele, & Beken, 2009). In 2001, the court ordered Napster to block all copyright-infringing files, and it was shut down in July of that year.

Although other factors were influential in the decline of CD sales, digital piracy from P2P services commonly receives the bulk of the blame. According to the RIAA, "In the decade since peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing site Napster emerged in 1999, music sales in the U.S. have dropped 47 percent" (Record Industry Association of America, 2011). Statistics such as this show a correlation between the decline in sales and emergence of digital piracy, but researchers have not proven digital piracy to be the direct cause of the decline. Janssens, Vandaele and Beken (2009) propose that file sharing has three possible effects on the record industry. The first is the substitution effect. This suggests that if customers are able to download music for free through unauthorized online services, they will no longer be willing to legally purchase the same music. Record labels view this as the most likely and threatening effect of digital piracy. However, a real limitation to this theory is to believe that people who would download a free copy would not necessarily legally buy the same product at market price. A second effect is the sampling or exposure effect. By downloading music from the Internet, people are able to experience or preview the product before making the decision to legally purchase the product. This effect positions file sharing as a means to promotion, allowing customers to discover new music with little effort. The third effect is the network effect, which can be compared to radio exposure (Janssens, Vandaele & Beken, 2009). A song's popularity on unauthorized sites and peer-to-peer networks increases reach of exposure and publicity.

Music labels have responded to the growing threat of digital piracy in two ways: awareness campaigns and legal action. The RIAA states that its response to piracy was "designed to educate fans about the law, the consequences of breaking the law, and raise awareness about all the great legal sites in the music marketplace" (Record Industry Association of America, 2011). As a means of dissuading people from participating in P2P file sharing, these promotional campaigns were intended to educate people about the issues of copyright infringement and how piracy hurts artists, job growth, and the U.S. economy. These campaigns also informed people of the benefits of using legitimate online music services (Janssens, Vandaele & Beken, 2009). The music industry's legal response was threefold. The first targets of legal actions were the unauthorized file sharing services. These lawsuits effectively shut down numerous file sharing sites

including Napster, Grokster, Morpheus, Kazaa, and, most recently, LimeWire. Lawsuits also targeted Internet service providers to force them to reveal infringer identities or pay damages for infringement, or block illegal sites (Janssens, Vandaele & Beken, 2009). Lastly, lawsuits targeted individual P2P users who had committed copyright infringement. Between 2003 and 2007, the RIAA filed suit against more than 20,000 individual P2P users, maintaining that the lawsuits were intended to spread awareness of the potential consequences of copyright-infringement (Hiatt & Serpick, 2007). As of 2008, the RIAA has stopped filing lawsuits against individual users, but continue to fight legal battles against illegal music sites.

Going Digital

In order to curb the decline in music sales, the music industry had to adjust its business model in order to survive in the digital age. As an initial attempt to enter the digital marketplace, all of the big five major labels created new digital music services in 2001 and 2002. Warner, EMI, and BMG set up MusicNet, followed soon by Sony and Universal's PressPlay. Both legal digital music distribution services proved to be unsuccessful. MusicNet and PressPlay were subscription based digital music distribution services that offered a small selection of the labels' catalogues for a monthly fee. Another reason the services did not attract many users was that the music available was subject to a number of technological restrictions that prevented copying and distribution (Janssens, Vandaele & Beken, 2009). In order to be successful, legal digital music services had to be more user-friendly than the unauthorized peer-to-peer services.

Apple Corporation's iTunes Music Store is the most successful and popular legal music service to date. Originally intended to boost sales of its iPod, Apple launched the iTunes Music Store on April 28, 2003, after signing licensing deals with all five major labels (Levy, 2006). iTunes, a pay-per-download music service, allowed users to purchase music at 99 cents per song or \$9.99 per album*. Initial success of the music service was believed to be due to its lack of security restrictions. Apple CEO Steve Jobs had to fight for this user freedom in negotiations with the record labels. "We told them that to compete with Kazaa, we had to offer users broad personal-use rights . . . like being able to burn as many CDs as you want. And being able to put your music on as many iPods as you want, being able to put it on more than one computer. They were not in that mind-set when we first talked," said Jobs (Levy, 2006). Another important factor in the iTunes store's success is its accessibility. Users are able to purchase music conveniently from their computer 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Within 6 months from its launch, 14 million songs were purchased on iTunes. By July 2004, over 100 million songs were purchased (Vaccaro & Cohn, 2004). As of February 24, 2010, over 10 billion songs have been purchased on iTunes ("iTunes Store Tops 10 Billion Songs Sold," 2010).

Success with the Apple's iTunes Music Store has encouraged more licensing deals between music companies and a variety of legitimate online digital music services. According to the IFPI Digital Music Report 2011, there are currently more than 400 licensed digital music services, many of which offer a catalogue of 13 million tracks. "The record industry is more open to new models now than it has ever been," said Mark Piibe, the global head of digital business development at EMI Music. "We are experimenting in ways that we wouldn't have considered three years ago, and we are also getting a lot more sophisticated about the differences between markets" (*IFPI Digital Music Report*, 2011). Although not a new concept, the music subscription service model has seen some growth in popularity in recent years, likely due to advances in broadband and portable technology.

Based out of Sweden, Spotify is a music streaming service that has seen recent success in the digital music market, having licensing deals with all of the major record labels as well as numerous independent labels. Instead of purchasing individual songs, users are able to access nearly 15 million songs through the Spotify software on their computer or smart phone application. CEO Daniel Ek said, "We're educating people into moving from ownership to access" (*IFPI Digital Music Report*, 2011). In addition to its unique business model, Spotify allows users to share their playlists with friends via Facebook, Twitter, and e-mail. In this "freemium" subscription model, users are able to choose from three plans: free, unlimited, and premium. Users with the free plan are subject to advertisements. The unlimited plan offers ad-free listening for about \$5 a month. Users with the premium plan pay \$10 a month for ad-free listening with smartphone access and the ability to make offline playlists that are available without an Internet connection. With over 10 million us-

* iTunes' pricing structure has changed since its creation in 2003. Single songs are currently offered at 79 cents, 99 cents, or \$1.29. Album pricing varies depending on a number of factors, including release date and popularity.

ers and 1.6 million paid subscribers, Spotify is the second most popular digital music service in Europe after iTunes (Baig, 2011). The service expanded into the United States in July 2011.

III. Increased Emphasis on the Star

Over the last decade, the recording industry has seen consistent growth in digital revenue. The industry's digital revenue in 2010 was \$4.6 billion, compared to \$420 million in 2004. In 2010, 29% of the record industry's revenue came from digital channels, up from 2% in 2004. Despite the 10 times increase in the digital music market's value, the overall value of the global record industry has decreased 31% since 2004 (*IFPI Digital Music Report*, 2011). Since 1999, the Big Five record labels have now become the Big Three. In 2006, Sony and BMG merged forming Sony Music Entertainment and in 2011, EMI was bought by Universal Music Group. The Big Three are Sony Music Entertainment, Universal Music Group, and Warner Music Group. Major record labels have had to substantially cut costs due to the continuing decline in overall music sales. These cuts have greatly affected record labels' artist and repertoire (A&R) and marketing departments, which are funded by about a third of the company's revenue (*IFPI Digital Music Report*, 2011). These labels have, therefore, had to narrow their strategy and try to eliminate risk when it comes to investing in artists. Experts believe that record labels will "pursue a risk-adverse strategy by focusing only on marketing clones of artists with mass appeal and large sales potential" (Vaccaro & Cohn, 2004). By directing their focus to artists with proven success and popularity, major label A&R and marketing departments will have an increased responsibility in managing each artist's star image. In their book, *On Record* (1990), Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin said, "[the] most important commodities produced by the music industry . . . may not be songs or records but stars." This is the philosophy major record labels are operating with to remain successful in today's music marketplace.

IV. Model of Star Image

Richard Dyer's model will be used in this research to define and outline the discussion of star image. According to this model, a star's image is made up from four types of media text: promotion, publicity, films, and criticism and commentaries (Dyer, 1998). Dyer originally used this model as a method to define a movie star's image, but it can be expanded to define a music star's image due to the similarities in the two entertainment industries and their products. In his book, *The Beatles: Image and the Media* (2007), Michael Frontani adapted the third media text in Dyer's model from films to work product in order to make the model suitable for defining a music star's image. The revised model of promotion, publicity, work product, and criticism and commentaries will be used for this research.

The first media text, promotion, refers to materials deliberately created to support the designed image of a star. Promotional material includes announcements, news releases, fan club publications, photographs, advertisements, product endorsements, and public appearances, as well as advertisements, news releases, or trailers that promote the star's work product. The content of these promotional materials is consistent with the image that management has designed for the individual and is intended to promote that image to the public (Dyer, 1998).

Publicity, the second media text, refers to the influence of the press on a star's image. Dyer explains that publicity is "theoretically distinct from promotion in that it is not, or does not appear to be, deliberate image-making" (Dyer, 1998). Publicity is what the press publishes about a star. This type of media text can be found in newspapers, magazines, television, interviews, gossip columns, and basically any other publishable medium that is not directed by promotional efforts. Publicity is important for a star's image because it appeals to the public as being a more authentic representation of the star, untouched by management. Publicity can have either a positive or negative effect on promotional efforts (Dyer, 1998).

The third media text in the revised Dyer model is work product. Work product is what gives the star their celebrity status. For a music star, work product is defined as recorded music, live performance, and video. Although it is primarily the result of the star's artistic creativity, work product may also be slightly influenced by management to remain consistent with previously established promotional efforts (Frontani, 2007).

The final media text category is criticism and commentary. This category comprises reviews of work product, commentaries, biographies, obituaries or other writing after a star's death. This category of media text typically provides a retrospective of a star's life or professional career (Dyer, 1998).

V. Influence of Social Media on Star Image

The development of social media on the Internet has considerably transformed the way people communicate with one another. According to a recent Nielsen report on the state of social media, nearly 80% of active Internet users visit social networks and blogs ("State of the Media," 2011). Social media can be described as "a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues" (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2004). "Social media" is an umbrella term that includes social networking sites, creativity work sharing sites, blogs, and forums.

This new media form is becoming increasingly influential on consumer behavior in the marketplace, specifically in awareness, obtaining information, developing opinions, and purchasing behavior. Consumers are substituting traditional media and means of advertising, such as television, radio, magazines and newspapers, for new media that give them instant access to information at their own convenience. Due to its consumer-generated nature, social media is perceived as a more trustworthy source of information than traditional advertising and communication. Therefore, consumers are turning to social media platforms to obtain information and make purchasing decisions (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

As both a new promotional tool and a venue for consumer-generated communications, social media is becoming increasingly influential on the creation and realization of a music star's image. A variety of social media platforms including Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, VEVO, and interactive artist websites, are used to manage promotion and monitor publicity of stars. The following discussion of social media's influence and importance on the creation and realization of the music star image will focus on the first two media texts: promotion and publicity.

Promotion.

While traditional advertising, public relations, and direct selling still exist and remain essential, social media is becoming an increasingly important tool used in the promotion of a music star image. According to Nielsen, active adult social networkers are 75% more likely to be heavy spenders on music compared to the average adult Internet user, therefore promotion via social media is crucial to an artist's and, in turn, their record label's success. Mangold and Faulds (2009) suggest "a new [communications] paradigm that includes all forms of social media as potential tools in designing and implementing [marketing] strategies." Promotion via social media is similar to that of traditional elements of the promotion mix in that it enables companies to communicate messages to their customers. In terms of the music industry, it allows artists and record labels to talk to their fans and customers. Messages published in social media are consistent with the artist management's promotional strategy and design of the star image. Management also controls the content, frequency, timing and medium of this communication (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Advances in social media have significantly reduced the communication gap in distance and time between an artist and a fan. Various types of social media "enable instantaneous, real-time communication, and utilizes multi-media formats (audio and visual presentations) and numerous delivery platforms (Facebook, YouTube, and blogs, to name a few), with global reach capabilities," (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). An artist is virtually able to communicate instantly with thousands of people over a number of media platforms.

In the digital marketplace of social media, artists must maintain an online persona that is consistent with their manufactured star image (Ferri, 2010). Social media platforms, such as Facebook and MySpace, offer users a one-stop shop for everything about an artist. "Essentially, it's an electronic press kit," said Derek Bachman, program manager at SaskMusic (Foley, 2010). From an artist's Facebook page, fans are able to find information including the artist's biography, band members, tour dates, and discography. Often artists also make available various types of media including studio or concert photos as well as links to artist and record label websites, merchandise websites, supported charities or organizations websites, and the artist's other social media pages. Once a fan chooses to "like" the artist on Facebook, they receive updates from the

artist about new music, appearances, tour information, photos, video, and anything else the artist chooses to tell their fans. Facebook and MySpace pages also give the fan various ways to access and purchase their music. Facebook is now working with iTunes allowing fans to click on a link posted on the artist's page, which then directs them to the iTunes store where they can preview and purchase that artist's music. Recently, Facebook has reached a similar partnership with Spotify, which allows Spotify users to share playlists and songs they are listening to on Facebook (Nakashima, 2011). As one of the first social networks to allow musicians to post songs on their profiles, MySpace has played a significant role in promotion of artist's music. For example, alternative rock group Arctic Monkeys set up a MySpace page so that fans could easily access their music. Their presence on MySpace is said to have supported the sales of their debut album, *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*, which became the fastest-selling album in British music history (Young & Collins, 2010).

While traditional promotional elements were typically passive, social media is an interactive form of communication. Social media have encouraged consumer interaction by converging different types of media, whether that is text, photographs, video, or otherwise (Cayari, 2011). As an easy means of quickly publishing messages, Twitter has now connected with Facebook, allowing Tweets to now also simultaneously post to Facebook as a status update. Social networking sites like Facebook and Google+ allow users to share a variety of multi-media through status updates or by posting to a friend's wall. Similarly, YouTube and VEVO fans are able to share video media on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and other social media simply by clicking a Share button. This convergence of multi-media on social media platforms has made the distribution of promotional messages and media of artist images to be quick and effortless.

Messages intended for the promotion of an artist's star image should be designed to interact with fans and stimulate conversations over a number of social media platforms. This interaction between artists and fans "contributes to a sense of community in which honest, open communications are encouraged and customer engagement is enhanced" (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). When fans re-Tweet or share something an artist publishes, they are essentially advertising that artist's message to a new network of people to read (Foley, 2010). Therefore, these messages should contain information that fans may find interesting and would like to pass on to their own network of followers. Likewise, by composing tweets or status updates in the form of a question, you are directing your message at fans on a more personal level while encouraging responses. These responses, in the form of comments on Facebook and tweets on Twitter, will be re-published to the fan's network of followers.

Publishing messages in a variety of media formats is often more appealing to the fans. The music video has been used as a promotional tool in the record industry for decades, with original broadcasts on MTV in the 1980s. In the age of social media, people are viewing more video content online at their own convenience. During May 2011 alone, over 31 million people in the United States watched video content on social media platforms ("State of the Media," 2011). Today, record labels are making music videos available to consumers online via licensing deals with YouTube and VEVO in hopes that views will result in greater music sales. "We offer consumers artist-branded channels on YouTube," said Michael Nash, executive vice president of digital strategy and business development at Warner Music Group. "In a world where over half of the active rosters are signed to extended rights agreements, it is extremely important for us to have a strong marketing partnership with our artists," (*IFPI Digital Music Report*, 2011). Justin Bieber is perhaps the poster child for the music video as a promotional tool on YouTube. With over 430 million views on YouTube, Justin Bieber's song, "Baby," was the 8th highest selling single in 2010 at 6.4 million units sold (2011). Other artists, such as the Black Keys, have published music videos of unreleased songs on Facebook through YouTube as a means of promoting an upcoming album release.

As yet another means of engaging fans, some artists allow fans to submit photos from concerts, which may then be published on the artist's social media pages. Foo Fighters told their nearly 6.4 million Facebook fans to submit photographs they have taken at their concerts by tagging the artist in the photo. The band selected 130 of these fan-photos and published a photo album on their page called "Pics from our pals." By engaging their fans on Facebook, the Foo Fighters shared their fans' real experiences while narrowing the communication gap between artist and fan.

Publicity

Social media has drastically changed the landscape and magnitude of the publicity media text of a music star image. Specifically, social media has expanded the publicity concept of word-of-mouth to a much,

much larger scale. With these new media technologies, it is possible for an individual to communicate with hundreds to thousands of other individuals instantaneously. “We are at a moment when the digital-music experience is moving from a linear to a dynamic model: the many telling the many what they like, hate, and want others to hear, and providing a communal experience that re-creates digitally some of the reasons we fell in love with music in the first place,” said reporter Michael Hirschorn (2007). With the capacity to self-publish, everyone now has the ability to influence consumer behavior. According to a Nielson report on social media, 60% of social media users publish reviews of products and services and 30% of active social networkers follow a celebrity (“State of the Media,” 2011). With an increasing number of people publishing reviews and turning to social media to make purchasing decisions, managing publicity on social media platforms is becoming crucial to maintaining a profitable music star image.

The sharing capabilities of social media can produce beneficial mass publicity that is consistent with the promoted star image. However, bad publicity can be detrimental to a star image. In the past, music stars and other celebrity personalities have argued that they have been misrepresented in the media and often employ publicists to monitor and control the type of media coverage artists are receiving. The increasing speed and extent of social media conversation between consumers will certainly make controlling publicity a much more difficult job (Ferri, 2010). In his book, *The New Influencers* (2007), author Paul Gillin explains, “Conventional marketing wisdom has long held that a dissatisfied customer tells ten people. But that is out of date. In the new age of social media, he or she has the tools to tell 10 million.” With the power now in the hands of the consumer, publicists and managers must attempt to control social media publicity to coincide with their promoted music star image. While successful promotion efforts should stimulate good publicity, maintaining an effective presence in social media is the best way to control publicity overall, both good and bad.

Artist management should provide social networking platforms that develop communities of social networkers that center on shared interest in the artist (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Aside from artist Facebook pages, managers could also create Facebook groups that give fans and critics a place to communicate with one another. Some artist websites have a forum section that encourages registered users to post discussion topics to which other users can post their responses. Foo Fighters is one band that employs this tactic. By registering to the Foo Fighters Postboard, fans can share their opinions on Foo Fighter-related discussion topics with others. Allowing users to submit feedback results in a closer artist-fan relationship and engaged a wider fan base. To encourage use of similar forum or discussion platforms, artist management may provide registered users with exclusive benefits, such as being able to hear songs before they are released to the public (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Another crucial element to controlling publicity is by providing information about artists. Mangold and Faulds (2009) suggest, “Consumers are more likely to talk about companies and products when they feel they know a lot about them.” The same is true with fans and artists. Information inspires action. For example, when fans learn that their favorite artist is coming to a nearby venue, they may share that information with their friends via social media. Once artist-fan relationships are developed from promotional efforts, these relationships must be maintained. The best way to maintain and strengthen these relationships is to keep fans and followers informed and updated with what the artist is doing. Twitter is probably the most ideal social networking platform for this type of communication although Facebook can also be used. By publishing a tweet every day or so, artists remain in the public eye of their followers. At the same time, if an artist has recently received bad press in other media outlets, social media gives them the ability to address their fans and provide a response to the press.

VI. Conclusion

Consumers are turning to social media to conduct their informational searches, develop opinions, and make purchasing decisions. Therefore, a strong social media presence is crucial to successful management of music star images. Management of music star image must include promotion via social media by providing information using a variety of media formats, stimulating social media-based conversation, and developing artist-fan relationships by engaging fans. Due to the expansive nature of Internet-based word-of-mouth communications, management must also use social media as a means to control publicity and shape discussions. The overall realization of management’s designed music star image relies heavily on its representation in the social media marketplace.

While an effective digital strategy will remain crucial to the management of music star image, the future will likely bring even more user-friendly, interactive models of social media. As technology improves, more distribution services will begin partnering with social media platforms to enable direct selling of music. We are already seeing these sorts of partnerships with Spotify and Facebook, which enable users to make recommendations to other users. In order to remain effective, it's necessary for the record industry to explore new models and increase market research to identify their role in this growing consumer-run market.

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User Generated Content vs. Advertising: Do Consumers Trust the Word of Others Over Advertisers?

Katherine A. MacKinnon*

*Strategic Communications
Elon University*

Abstract

This study examined consumer reliance on user generated content and consumers' trust of advertising as it relates to user generated content and word of mouth. An eight-question survey was answered by 90 participants. It was found that 66.3% of consumers surveyed do rely heavily on user generated content when attempting to make purchasing decisions. It was also found that 65% of consumers trust word of mouth on the Internet more than content produced by advertisers. This research can be used by marketers and advertisers to assist in effectively reaching their targets.

I. Introduction

Should you buy the Apple iPad, or the Amazon Kindle? What type of refrigerator is best for conserving energy? Should you fly on JetBlue or American Airlines? What makes one better than the other?

These are all questions that consumers are faced with when making major purchasing decisions. Before the advent of the Internet, consumers had limited resources to assist with their decision making. Some relied on word of mouth, others relied solely on information that came directly from the producers, otherwise known as advertising. Word of mouth limited the consumers to a small number of opinions, while advertising gave them only biased information. What they needed was a larger database of reviews to assist in their decision making.

With the invention of the Internet came a new era: Web 2.0. Suddenly, web users had the ability to share information with one another through the Internet. Product reviews are now on thousands of websites in hundreds of different languages. Consumers can type any product name into a search engine and immediately have access to reviews from other consumers. Detailed and thought-out reviews can be found with the click of a mouse, allowing consumers to learn more about a product or service before making a purchasing decision.

In spite of all of these new resources, do consumers trust these reviews as a credible source of information? If so, are they trusted more than traditional advertising? The research conducted in this study aims to answer these questions while determining the how heavily consumers actually rely on word of mouth reviews.

* **Keywords:** user generated content, advertising, consumer trust, word of mouth, Web 2.0

Email: kmackinnon@elon.edu

II. Literature Review

Traditional WOM

Dating back to the 1960s, various aspects of Word of Mouth communication have been studied and analyzed by researchers. In particular, word of mouth has been studied as a form of communication as it relates to customer satisfaction. Wayne Delozier and Arch Woodside (1976) defined word of mouth advertising as oral communication between two or more persons concerning a brand, product or service on a non-commercial basis. Delozier and Woodside argued that group influence gives reliable and trustworthy information, as it is coming from other consumers rather than the producer of the product or service. David Godes and Dina Mayzlin (2004) noted that word of mouth is the most important communication channel. They argued that it has more impact than any other form of communication.

Marsha Richins (1983) conducted a study on the relationship between negative word of mouth and how likely consumers were to share their dissatisfaction with others. The research, performed in 1983 before the advent of the user generated content on the Internet, found that 57% of those sampled did share their negative experiences with others via traditional word of mouth. The study found that consumers were quick to tell their friends about an experience with a product or service.

Web 2.0 and UGC

With the invention of the World Wide Web came an entirely new type of Word of Mouth: User Generated Content (UGC). Suddenly, users were given the ability to share their reviews with millions of other people (Ochoa & Duval, 2008). The term Web 2.0 is a popular term used to describe an entirely new generation of web that allows users to read and write content through the web (Balasubramaniam, 2009). Web 2.0 was the first sign of users beginning to interact with one another via the Internet. It was the invention of Web 2.0 that encouraged users to engage with one another on the Internet.

Sacha Wunsch-Vincent and Graham Vikery examined the quick growth of user generated content (UGC) and its over-powering importance in our society today. UGC is defined by Wunsch-Vincent and Vikery as having three parts: “i) Content made publicly available over the Internet, ii) content which reflects a ‘certain amount of creative effort,’ and iii) content which is ‘created outside of professional routines and practices’” (2006). The highlight of the definition is that the content is created *outside* of professional routines and practices. This study also found that UGC is being produced and shared at very high rates, especially with younger people. It was found that 35% of all U.S. Internet users, and 51% of users under the age of 30, have posted content on the Internet at some point.

In 2008, Cheong and Morrison performed a study on the reliance of consumers on user generated content. This study looked at previous research on word of mouth and UGC and built on it by looking at how technology’s progression has advanced these concepts. Cheong and Morrison found that most consumers view people who post UGC on the Internet as opinion leaders, even if they do not personally know the people posting (2008). The study also found that consumers trust negative UGC as much as they trust positive UGC, leaving them with the question of whether consumers even pay attention to advertisements anymore.

UGC and Advertising

Word of mouth dissemination on the Internet has proven to be one of the most effective ways to share information about a product (Frost, 2010). The Nielsen Company conducted a survey among thousands of people worldwide to discover the level of trust most consumers place in word of mouth from other consumers. The study found that 90% of participants noted that they trust recommendations from people they do know, while 70% said they trust recommendations from strangers on the Internet (Global Advertising, 2009).

In a blog post written by Nicole Introcaso (2011), she argued that social media is starting to take a strong hold on advertising, as it is a new medium in which consumers can express their experiences with certain products or services. It is, in turn, yet another platform consumers can turn toward before making a purchasing decision. Introcaso noted that consumers will often post their experiences with products on sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, sharing the post with all of their friends.

Word of mouth and advertising are very different forms of communication and therefore have different effects on consumers (Lorette, 2011). The timeline for traditional advertising is much shorter than that of word

of mouth. Advertising is limited to the amount of time the company can afford to run their advertisement, while word of mouth happens whenever someone buys the product. This can prove to be both beneficial and detrimental to the company, depending on the quality of their product as perceived by consumers. Word of mouth proves to be more beneficial for consumers, as the message is not biased and comes from other consumers who have used the product.

UGC on Mobile Phones

Niroshan Balasubramaniam's research on user generated content examined a new technology that has recently been released to cell phone users: Apriori. This application for smartphones allows users to connect their phones with reviews for specific products. Users simply scan a barcode on the product into their cell phone and are immediately linked to a database of reviews for that product (2009). The application requires the presence of a moderator, who would ensure that all reviews are accurate and legitimate. Balasubramaniam also raises the idea of possibly expanding their database by connecting applications like Apriori to consumer review websites such as Eopinions.com. With the expansion of information, consumers are connected to even more user generated content

Goodguide, another consumer review website, focuses on reviewing products that are sustainable, safe, ethical and healthy. Goodguide has developed a cell phone application similar to Apriori that scans product bar codes. The application reads any product barcode and comes up with a review for that product right on the spot if it has been reviewed on the website (Goodguide Delivered, 2011). This application gives consumers the ability to read a review on a product right from the store and decide whether or not they want to purchase the product.

Clever and colleagues looked at what the future holds for UGC. They raised the idea that the mobile aspect of UGC will begin to really take precedence in the upcoming years (2009). Not only will consumers be able to access product reviews from their phones, but they will also be able to actually send their personal reviews in from their phones. After a bad experience at a restaurant or with a product, the consumer has the ability to text their review to the website and see it published immediately. This invention leads to infinite possibilities for the future of user generated content.

III. Method

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the study.

1. How heavily do consumers rely on UGC to assist with purchasing decisions?
2. Do consumers trust UGC more than traditional advertisements?

Research Design

The research was executed through a survey sent out to a wide variety of participants. The survey website SurveyMonkey.com was utilized to produce an eight-question survey in which participants were asked about their Internet use for purchasing. The survey, mostly including multiple-choice or short-answer questions, took approximately 10 minutes to complete. Participants were asked to omit answers to any questions that were not applicable to them.

The survey was emailed out to participants covering various demographics, such as students, professors, and other adults. Participants were made well aware that their response was completely voluntary, and their anonymity was guaranteed. A short description of the research was sent alongside the survey to brief the participants on the subject of user generated content and word of mouth.

Participants

The participants cover a wide range of demographics, particularly focusing on Generation Y and Generation X. Generation X is comprised of people born between the mid 60s and the late 70s. They are generally known to be capable in technology use and very logical. Generation Y, otherwise known as the "Net

Generation,” is made up of people born any time from the 80s to the early 2000s. This generation is heavily reliant on technology and the Internet (Thielfoldt & Scheef, 2004).

A variety of participants were chosen in order to make the findings of the study truly represent the wider population. Previous researchers have focused mainly on adults in the demographic of Generation X. With the growth of technology over the lifetime of Generation Y, it is important to focus on how that demographic perceives word of mouth and user generated content in order to come up with solutions for the future.

Measures

An in-depth survey was used as a guide to the interviews conducted (See Appendix). The survey questions covered the topics of Internet use, UGC, and purchasing behaviors. The questions detailed whether participants frequented UGC websites and how much of an impact the websites have on their purchasing decisions. The questions also aimed to discover the amount of trust participants put into these websites.

Several of the smaller questions sought to find the answer to one of the main research questions: Do participants trust consumer reviews more than traditional advertising? Questions 2a, 2b and 3 in Appendix aimed to reveal whether participants do place trust in these websites.

IV. Findings

A total of 90 people ranging from 16 years old to 56+ years old answered the survey. The majority of participants (79.8%) were classified as Generation Y, the “net generation,” and 16.9% of participants in the study were between the ages of 30 and 55, placing them in the age category of Generation X. The rest of the participants were over the age of 55, falling into an earlier generation.

The amount of time spent on the Internet each day was not necessarily consistent among different age groups. Among the respondents, 39.5% reported that they spend between 2 and 4 hours on the Internet each day and 51.2% for more than 4 hours per day.

Participants were asked about their daily Internet usage (See Figure 1). Most participants reported news/weather (73.3%) and entertainment (75.6%) as their main uses of the Internet. An overwhelming number of participants (38.4%) checked the “other” box and specified that they use the Internet for social media.

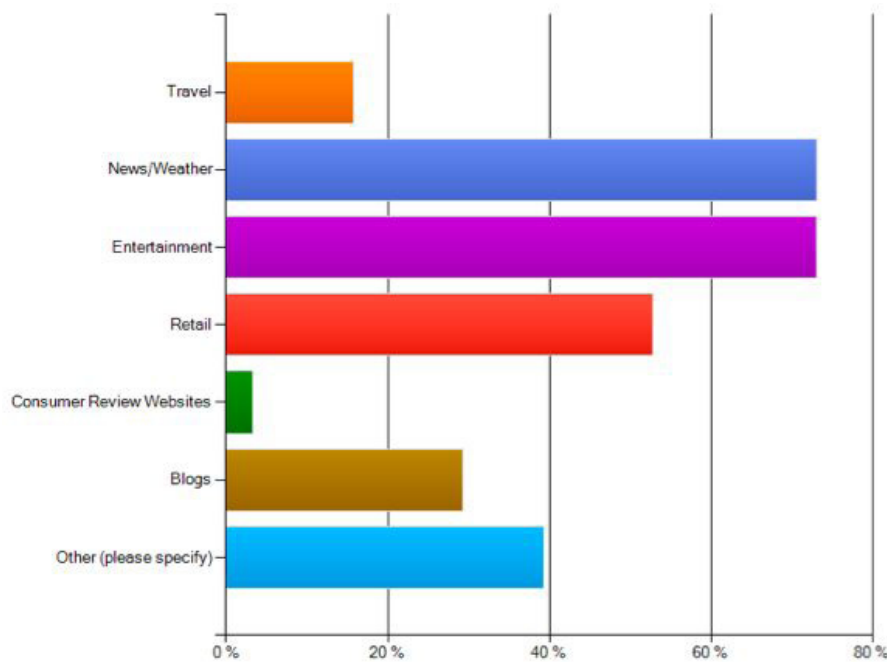


Figure 1. Websites visited daily

Although only 3.5% of participants answered that they visit consumer review websites as part of their daily Internet use, 66.3% of all participants did say that they visit these on the occasion of making major purchasing decisions. Amazon proved to be the most popular website for looking at reviews before purchasing products or services, with 66.7% of respondents attributing their review habits to the site. Travel websites were also very popular among participants, with 42.1% of participants acknowledging that they visit these sites before determining vacation choices.

Ages had an impact on respondents' visits to consumer review sites (See Figure 2). The review sites were the least popular among the age group of 16-22 with 42.6% of participants in that age group reporting that they do not actually use consumer review sites. An overwhelming majority (83.3%) of participants above the age of 25 do, in fact, use consumer review sites before making purchasing decisions.

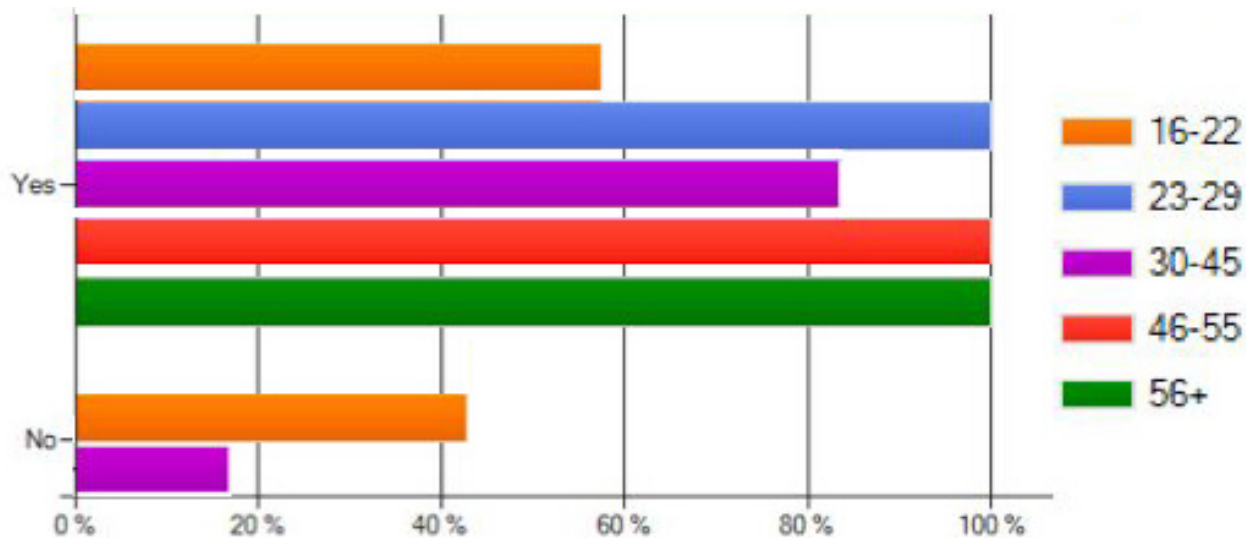


Figure 2. Use of consumer review sites before making purchasing decision by age

When asked whether participants trust information that consumers generate more than advertising by the actual producers, respondents had a wide variety of answers. Among respondents, 65% had a concrete answer of yes. Almost every participant gave an explanation of why they tend to trust other consumers more. Some of the answers included the following:

"I do value the opinions of others when it comes to consumer comments. I feel that something, either positive or negative, prompted them to make the effort to write. It is taken with the proverbial 'grain of salt.'"

"Yes, because it takes an effort to comment on websites and I don't think most people would take the effort to intentionally mislead people."

"Yes, because producers of most products tend to be really promotional in their product descriptions, and consumers have no vested interest in the sales of the product, so their reviews are inherently more trustworthy."

"Yes, it's more honest. Producers always enhance the description of what their product can actually do in order to get people to buy the product or service."

It is evident that consumers are very trusting of the reviews, mainly because of effort and lack of bias. Several of the responses noted that it takes effort for users to post reviews; therefore, the user must feel passionate about their review. Another popular response was that the consumers are not paid to write on these

websites, so they tend to be much more honest.

Approximately 23% of respondents said that they trust consumer reviews sometimes. There were a variety of factors that affect whether they trust a review that is posted. Several participants noted that they only trust information if it sounds credible and is not too extreme. The participants dismissed anything that appears to be too opinionated and not objective enough.

Those who did not trust consumer reviews (7%) discredited the reviews because they felt that anybody could write reviews on the Internet and there is no censoring on these sites. Those participants also noted that they would rather form their own opinions or listen to professional opinions than listen to those of random consumers.

When asked how much of an impact specific websites have on their buying decisions, participants certainly showed reliance on review websites. An emphasis was put on Amazon as a popular consumer review website, with 71.9% of participants noting that the website positively impacted their buying decision. Travel websites were also a popular response, with 68.4% saying they relied these websites before booking flights, hotels and other vacation activities.

In terms of turning around and posting on these consumer review websites themselves, participants tended to respond negatively. Only 17.1% confirmed that they actually posted on consumer review websites after purchasing products. Of that 17.1%, 86.4% said that they posted both negative and positive reviews when they did actually post on the sites.

V. Analysis

Through the findings in this study and previously conducted research it is evident that word of mouth via user generated content is starting to take a strong hold on Internet users in our society. It is becoming more and more prevalent in our lives especially when it comes to making purchasing decisions. With 66.3% of participants admitting that they do, in fact, look at consumer review websites before making purchasing decisions, it is apparent that these websites and their content generated by users are well respected by consumers.

The responses from participants in this study affirmed that they do, in fact, trust the word of consumers over advertisers. With 65% of participants revealing that they trust advertisers less, it is evident that trust has remained in other consumers even though they are now anonymous on the Internet. It is clear that consumers rely each other more than ever and they are even not afraid to take the advice of a stranger. Delozier and Woodside's study conducted in 1970 found that consumers trusted word of mouth from their friends over advertisers at the time. This continued trust, regardless of whether the consumer knows the identity of the reviewer, really emphasizes the idea that advertisers are not gaining the trust of consumers.

Several respondents explained that the reason they trust user generated content more than advertising was because there was no bias coming from user-posted reviews. Lorette (2011) also argued that a certain credibility comes from word of mouth that is not present with advertising. Participants noted that advertisers also have an agenda, whereas those posting consumer reviews do not. Not only do advertisers have an agenda, but they also have a set amount of time to accomplish this agenda, making their message stronger and more aggressive. Consumers posting on the Internet are not necessarily held to a certain timeline, and are therefore producing a less aggressive message.

When compared with other genres of websites, participants did not rank consumer review sites very high in *daily* usage. They did, however, report that they used these sites in the event of making major purchasing decisions. This can be attributed to the fact that consumers are not making important purchases every day, yet they are on the Internet every day for other reasons. Important purchasing decisions are usually a fairly rare occasion, supporting the idea that consumers do not frequent these websites as often as other websites.

Among all sites, Amazon was selected as the most popular consumer review website with a variety of travel websites coming in close behind. Because Amazon is an aggregation of reviews for thousands of different types of products, consumers are able to visit this one site and get a wide variety of reviews. Travel websites, such as Travelocity.com and Expedia.com, were also favored as top consumer review sites. Booking hotels, restaurant reservations and recreational activities are things that consumers tend to turn to others

for help because those factors end up defining the vacation.

The research conducted in this study found that consumers are as equally likely to post positive reviews as they are negative reviews. Because this study examined consumer reviews online, rather than general word of mouth, it is interesting that consumers go through the effort to get on the Internet to share their experiences. It does, however, show that participants are more reliant on these reviews and therefore go through more trouble to share their experiences with others. In Marsha Richins's study (1983) conducted before the advent of the Internet, she found that 67% of participants contributed negative word of mouth after being dissatisfied with the product. The participants in her study noted that they were more likely to engage in word of mouth communication after they were dissatisfied with a product than when they were satisfied. Because the Internet has such a fast pace of information dissemination, consumers posting these reviews post them knowing that the information will quickly reach a large volume of people. Word of mouth has a much slower and smaller scale of dissemination, meaning not as many people heard these reviews when they were popular during Richins's study.

VI. Conclusion

What started back in the early 1900s as friends giving advice to other friends has turned into a phenomenon—one that is changing the behaviors of consumers. Today, consumers rely on user generated content and word of mouth to assist them with making purchasing decisions and they trust this content more than what comes from advertisers.

The study found that consumers are heavily reliant on user generated content when it comes to making purchasing decisions. Consumers look to websites filled with user reviews to find out more information about the product or service they are considering purchasing. These reviews can now be accessed from mobile devices as well, widening the possibilities even further.

The research also found that consumers place more trust in user generated content than they do in advertisements. It is clear that consumers feel that advertisers are biased, while those who post reviews on the Internet do not hold any type of bias. They also see a certain reliability in opinion leaders who generate content on these review websites.

There were certainly limitations to this study. Time was perhaps the most important limitation, as the study was conducted over a period of only two months. Had there been more time, more responses could have been collected from a wider variety of participants. Another limitation was access to participants. The researcher was able to send out an email to a large group of students, but did not have access to a large-scale database of adults. Had the researcher been given access to a large database of adults, there would have been more participants in the Generation X and older.

In order to fully understand consumers' perceptions of user generated content and word of mouth, more research could be conducted. Advertisers could look further into this topic and develop solutions for consumers who do not trust them as much as word of mouth content. Researchers could also look into exactly which purchases consumers look to user generated content for help with, which was not covered in this study.

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Appendix: Survey Questionnaire

1. What is your age range?
 - a. 16-22
 - b. 23-29
 - c. 30-45
 - d. 46-55
 - e. 56+
 2. How many hours a day do you use the Internet?
 - a. Less than 1
 - b. 1-2
 - c. 2-4
 - d. 4-6
 - e. 6+
 3. What type of websites do you frequent? Check all that apply.
 - a. Travel
 - b. News/Weather
 - c. Entertainment
 - d. Retail
 - e. Consumer Review Websites
 - f. Blogs
 - g. Other (Please Specify)
 4. Do you visit consumer review websites before making certain purchasing decisions?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 5. If yes, which ones? Check all that apply.
 - a. Yelp.com
 - b. Travel Websites
 - c. Restaurants.com
 - d. Craigs List/Angies List
 - e. Blog Sites
 - f. Digg.com
 - g. Amazon.com
 - h. Other (Please specify)
 6. How much do these websites impact your buying decision? (1 being lowest, 5 being highest)

a. Yelp.com	1	2	3	4	5
b. Travel Websites	1	2	3	4	5
c. Restaurants.com	1	2	3	4	5
d. Craigs List/Angies List	1	2	3	4	5
e. Blog Sites	1	2	3	4	5
f. Digg.com	1	2	3	4	5
g. Amazon.com	1	2	3	4	5
h. Other	1	2	3	4	5
 7. Do you trust the information that consumers generate on these sites, including their comments, more than content from the actual producers of the product/services? Why or why not?
 8. Do you post on consumer review websites after purchasing a product or service?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
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Social Media for Healthcare: A Content Analysis of M.D. Anderson's Facebook Presence and its Contribution to Cancer Support Systems

Carissa Hilliard*

Communications Science & Pre-Medicine

Abstract

Though telemedicine has been primarily concentrated in clinical care, a new component of the field has evolved through the past decade with the popularization of social media. Telemedicine has been prevalent for years, but social media has made the term more recognizable. This study examined the common themes of the official Facebook group of the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center over a 15-day period and analyzed its contents to evaluate the following variables: poster type, type of content, gender, age range, location, and activity on the post. The data collected provided a comprehensive overview of how M.D. Anderson interacted with their patients through Facebook and how this method enhanced a patient's cancer experience, particularly those who live in rural locations.

I. Introduction

Throughout the past decade, social media has become a practical vehicle for the exchange of ideas and information, and the reach of sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, has extended into the modern medical field. Most notably, there has been a proliferation of social media catered to oncology, demonstrating a rise in home-based cancer care. Patients are more easily able to connect to others like themselves for camaraderie and support, as well as gain access to doctors at any time of day from any location. Additionally, healthcare providers are able to extend information about specific services and care in real time to an ever-increasing audience. Medicine's transition to a social media platform exhibits a novel shift into the expanding field of telemedicine and a positive transition into a viral-powered world.

Several top-ranked medical centers have begun to gravitate towards Facebook as a means of explicitly connecting to patients and other associated parties. Facebook has been a leader in social media for the past decade, and allows for the most interactive, extensive use of pictures, video, messaging, and network connectivity. The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, located in Houston, Texas, has utilized Facebook as a medium for the transmission of news, events, and information to any who choose to connect to their official Facebook website. This study aims to analyze the most prominent constituents of M.D. Anderson's Facebook group, according to a series of predetermined metrics in order to ascertain how a top cancer center employs social media tactics to better serve its patients. By using these methods, this study can examine the efficacy of social media in relation to oncological services, providing for a better understanding of telemedicine and how it can provide for improved cancer care.

* **Keywords:** cancer, telemedicine, social media, rural health care, oncology

Email: chilliard4@elon.edu

II. Literature Review

The Background of Telemedicine

Telemedicine, as defined by the American Telemedicine Association, is “the use of medical information exchanged from one site to another via electronic communications to improve patients’ health status” (Telemedicine Defined, 2011). It primarily concerns the use of satellite-based videoconferencing through which virtual appointments with patients and consultations between other physicians can be performed. Telemedicine has the potential to move the services of a doctor’s office into the convenience of one’s home, providing instant access to medical assistance at any time, at any location, via a high-definition video screen and specialized medical instruments. Readings from blood pressure monitors, cameras, stethoscopes, and other clinical devices can be transmitted in real time to an on-duty health professional who can then converse directly with a patient and provide treatment. Doctors can also converse with other doctors instantly, perform robotic surgeries from any remote location, and simultaneously monitor several patients at once through a comprehensive audiovisual network. Telemedicine has specific applications to rural areas, connecting regions without sufficient healthcare services to telemedical sites in top metropolitan hospitals.

Several advances in the realm of telemedicine have created a futuristic representation of healthcare technologies that have the potential to revolutionize the medical industry (Geracimos, 2009). Since the 1960s, when Dr. Kenneth Bird used television to transmit images from Boston’s Logan airport to Massachusetts General Hospital, telemedicine has evolved to surgical robots and localized healthcare from mobile phones. Remote-controlled robots have been tested in surgery in Europe, and Duke University is currently experimenting with robotic surgery in warfare and in outer space. EnVision eICU, a program being tested in northern Virginia, allows personnel to monitor ICU units from a station 15 miles away from connected hospitals. In April 2009, the FCC allotted \$35.6 million to the Rural Health Care Pilot Program, connecting hospitals in remote locations. The Veterans Administration has offered telehealth programs since 1977, and today 32,000 clients participate in the outside monitoring of their vital signs; those utilizing such services have reported a 95 percent satisfaction rate.

In order to investigate the opinions of health professionals in the area of telemedicine, a study in rural Missouri was conducted to seek the best methods for implementing telemedical services in remote locations (Campbell & Harris, 2001). Telemedicine is sought after as a more cost-effective version of medical care in locales that do not have an adequate number of available physicians. Three counties in Missouri were outfitted with computers, medical databases, and videoconferencing facilities. Volunteers from clinical staff were given open-ended questions concerning the disadvantages/advantages of telemedicine, barriers/facilitators of telemedicine, the use of telemedicine in physical practice, and suggestions for the use of telemedicine in the healthcare field. Fifty-seven interviews were collected from physicians of different backgrounds. Those who were already associated with a practice at the university’s tertiary center were more likely to use telemedicine than those who were part of a private practice. Turf, efficacy, practice context, apprehension, time to learn, and ownership were all discriminating factors for the responses of the subjects.

Social Media and Healthcare

Though telemedicine has been primarily concentrated in clinical care, a new component of the field has evolved through the past decade with the popularization of social media. Telemedicine has been prevalent for years, but social media has made the term more recognizable (HealthNation, 2011). Recent research at Sidorov Health Solutions has deconstructed the considerations for care management programs in the adoption of social networking (Sidorov, 2010). As of 2010, there were 750 health-related Facebook groups devoted to cardiovascular disease and cancer. The validity of the information presented in these groups was commendable, with only 0.22% of the postings cited as inaccurate information.

An additional study conducted by the National Cancer Institute focused on the sociodemographic and health-related factors associated with current adult social media users in the United States (Chou, 2009). This study identified adults who used the Internet and who used social networking, blogging, and online support groups. Using the Health Information National Trends Study, the author found that personal cancer experiences, age, and health status were the most determining factors in the level of participation in social media use.

The Internet's effect on medical practices has grown exponentially according to research done at the Center of Global eHealth Innovation at the University of Toronto, which specifically cites the likes of Google Health, Microsoft HealthVault, and Dossia (Eysenbach, 2008). A new term, "Medicine 2.0," encompasses an interpretation of the connection between social networking, collaboration, participation, apomediation (a new scholarly socio-technological term that characterizes the process of disintermediation), and openness. An analogous term, "Health 2.0," also appears as a recurring keyword related to healthcare and social media in other references (Hawn, 2009). A Brooklyn-based primary care practice titled "Hello Health" is utilizing Web-based social media to communicate with patients via weblogs, instant messaging, video chat, and social networks. Initially, 300 patients had signed up for \$35 per month with additional charges for other services. Such an immediate response exemplifies the power and span such networks have on a connected population.

Coincidentally, the medical world has begun taking advantage of one social media platform in particular: Twitter (Terry, 2009). Physicians can utilize the website to communicate with other physicians, to gather medical information, and to acquire general information about conference updates. As of May 2009, 255 hospitals in the U.S. were members of a social media website and 167 were on Twitter (this number has undoubtedly risen since). TrialX, an online clinical trial service that can connect patients and clinical trial investigators is currently being tested. Patients can tweet the TrialX program with their statistics in order to find a match with a clinical trial program tailored to their needs. The Centers for Disease Control has also taken advantage of Twitter in order to provide followers with quick, up-to-date information concerning outbreaks such as H1N1. This foray into viral media channels, especially by such a healthcare giant, undoubtedly emphasizes the value of social media as a platform for the flow of information.

Social Media and Cancer

An especially remarkable application of healthcare's role in social media is found in the cancer realm. Because the disease imparts such a grave diagnosis to such a large assembly of people, instant and constant access to online support is invaluable. Some of the most popular social media platforms today include Twitter, WordPress, Facebook, Tumblr, YouTube, StumbleUpon, Reddit, Mashable, LinkedIn, and Bebo (Riccobono, 2010). These websites have been used to raise money, build community, and increase awareness, with examples including Lance Armstrong's LIVESTRONG foundation, viral Twitter hashtags ("#BeatCancer," "#BlameDrewsCancer," and "#BlameEthansCancer") and StandUp2Cancer. The Mayo Clinic is also a prime participant in social media ventures, with 2 million views on its YouTube account and over 10,000 Facebook fans. Not only have those diagnosed with cancer been able to form their own online identities, but oncologists have also been able to connect with their patients as well.

One such analysis, performed by the National Cancer Institute, focuses specifically on personal cancer narratives shared through YouTube (Chou, 2011). The common themes of 35 YouTube videos listed by the keywords "cancer survivor" and "cancer stories" were assessed; it was found that 86% of such stories concerned cancer diagnosis. It was concluded that the Internet has promoted a sense of emotional engagement and a more efficient exchange of experience, resulting in a powerful shared sense of community.

Blogs can also be utilized as a form of communication between cancer patients, between patients and their doctors, or as an update for family members of those with cancer (Jeffries, 2011). Benefits of blogging include extending a support network, reducing stress, reducing feelings of isolation, and allowing for long-distance communication. Sites that focus on blogs related to cancer include Blog for a Cure, CaringBridge, and Blogger. Such blogs can also connect with Facebook, as well as mobile devices such as the iPhone and Android, expanding the reach of these services even farther.

An especially prevalent venture has been Lance Armstrong's LIVESTRONG bracelet campaign. Twitter, Facebook, and the LIVESTRONG blog were pivotal features of the campaign's success (Hibbard, 2010). The company raised over \$70 million for cancer research due to its viral popularity, with 60% of LIVESTRONG's website traffic coming through social networking sites, primarily Twitter. A strong voice, constructive comments, and the encouragement of community storytelling have all been components of the campaign's achievements.

An even newer application of social media to oncology is the website, *I Had Cancer*, which has been christened the "Facebook for cancer survivors, patients, and their family and friends" (John, 2011). The website is divided into three categories: survivors, fighters, and supporters, with users creating their own custom profiles complete with pictures and a chronological treatment diary. Visitors to the website can also search

for other community members by type of cancer, location, age, and gender; there are circles available for those with analogous traits. This type of social media is especially credible because it goes beyond physical support networks and online forums due to its increasingly customizable format. Since *I Had Cancer* is an entity outside of a traditional social media outlet, such as Facebook or Twitter, it is noteworthy that the same dynamic is still successful even in a smaller online arena.

By assessing those projects that have been successful in connecting cancer patients with support systems, reputable sources, and instant feedback, it can be ascertained that social media is a viable option for cancer care and support. Due to telemedicine's incorporation into mainstream social media outlets, it is now easier than ever for the layperson to access and interact with doctors, nurses, caregivers, and other patients. Such instant communication allows for a more rapid and productive transmission of information, contributing to a heightened sense of awareness, community, and quality of care, all of which are essential variables in the management of a terminal illness.

III. Methods

In order to form a comprehensive overview of how a major cancer center utilizes its official Facebook page, a content analysis was performed. The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center (facebook.com/MDAnderson) is the top cancer center in the United States, as defined by *U.S. News & World Report*. This page was chosen for analysis due to the center's prestige, high volume of page traffic, and high degree of page interactivity.

For this content analysis, several variables were defined. A Facebook page is essentially an online community for fans of a business, product, or celebrity, and provides a platform for comments, photos, videos, and other links. The number of "likes" a page receives is the number of users who have added that page to their list of favorites, analogous to the number of fans who favored the page. "Check-ins" are the number of fans who have physically been present at the location of the page (in this case, at M.D. Anderson) and logged this information using a mobile device. Comments are any content that has been posted by a user onto the Facebook page. "Shares" refer to any post that has been reblogged from the Facebook page onto an individual's own Facebook page.

From October 9, 2011, to October 23, 2011, a period of 15 days, the M.D. Anderson Facebook page was checked at 12 a.m. (midnight at the conclusion of the previous day). For M.D. Anderson's overall page, the following were tallied: 1. The total number of likes for the page; 2. The number of shares; 3. The number of check-ins; and 4. The number of posts made.

Posts made by any individual on the M.D. Anderson page (main posts) were assessed through the following variables: 1. The poster type; 2. The type of content; 3. Gender; 4. Age range; 5. Location; 6. Number of likes; 7. Number of comments; and 8. Number of shares (Refer to Appendix for detailed element categories).

For any additional comments made on an individual post (thread posts) the following were assessed: 1. The poster type; 2. The type of content; 3. Gender; 4. Age range; 5. Location; and 6. Number of likes.

To define a post, a set of numerical metrics was used. This data, along with the individual posts being described, was logged into a spreadsheet, with each number a code for a mutually exclusive category. Such data was gathered from the information publicly displayed on an individual's Facebook account. These numbers were assessed to find the most common types of posters, the most common locations, the most common gender, most common age range, most common type of content, and the content with the most activity. More detailed information about the metrics is available in the Appendix.

IV. Findings

Overall Page Statistics

The number of individuals who liked M.D. Anderson's Facebook page increased nearly linearly over time (Figure 1). Over a 15-day period, the total number of likes rose from 23,355 to 23,585, exemplifying a

gain in 230 page fans. However, the number of pages they talk about slowly increased, sharply fell, and then steadily remained the same (Figure 2). Check-ins grew over time, but no inherent pattern was observed. The number of posts made per day ranged from one post to five posts, with most activity detected early in the week, and the least seen on weekends (Figure 3).

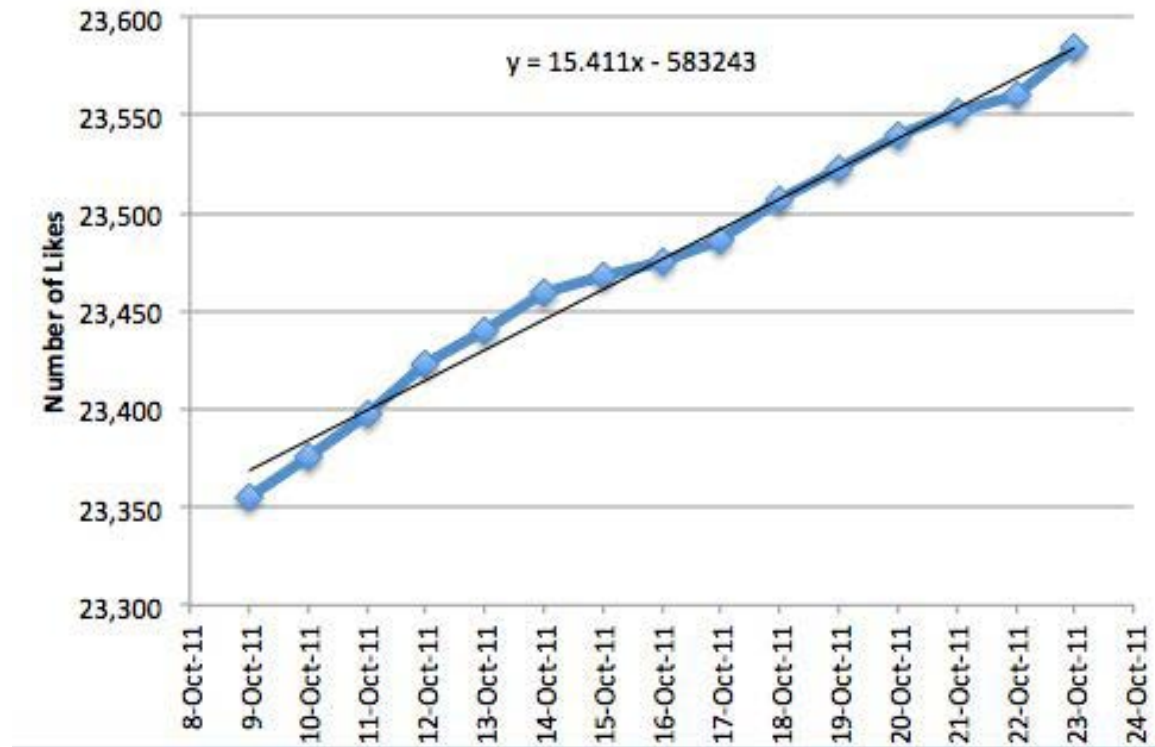


Figure 1. The total number of Likes viewers gave to pages

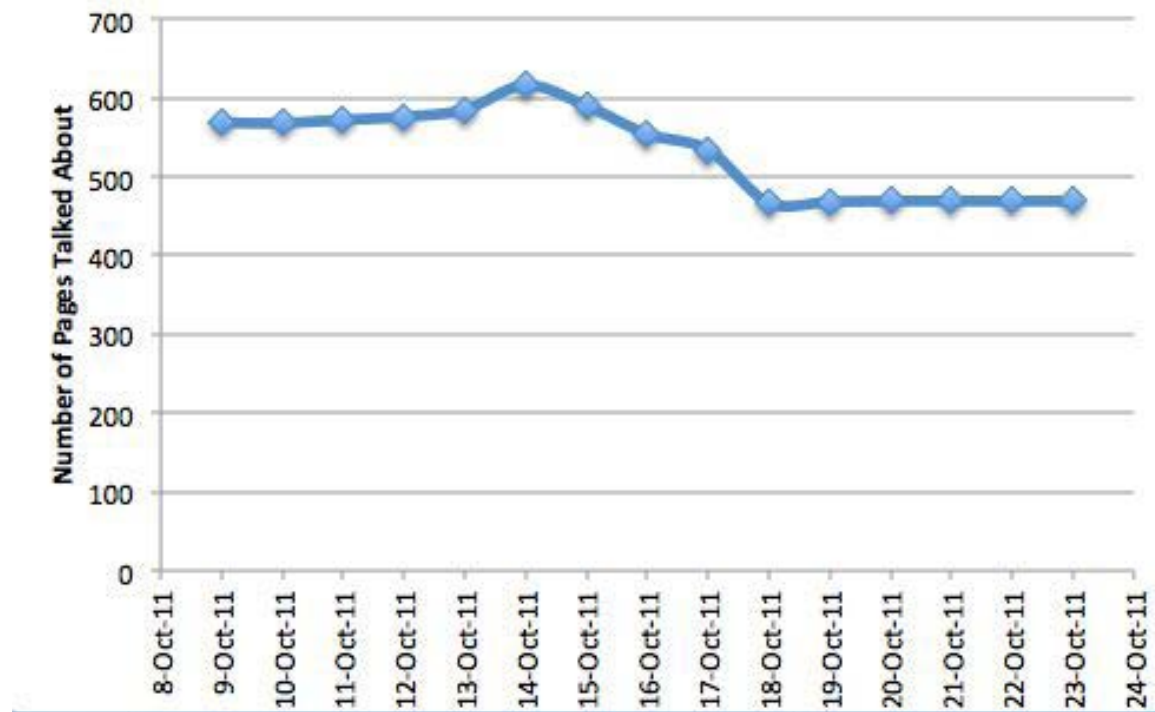


Figure 2. The number of pages viewers talked about

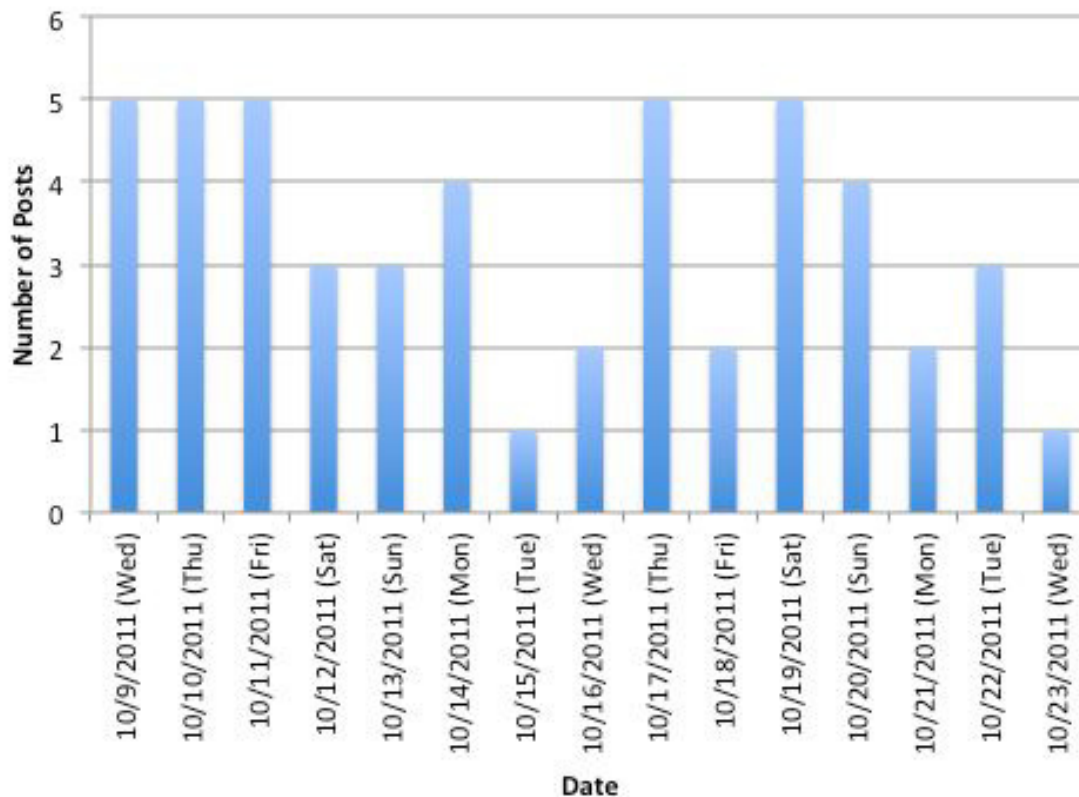


Figure 3. Total number of posts per day

Main Post Statistics

It is evident that M.D. Anderson is the primary contributor to the M.D. Anderson Facebook page, as their activity accounted for 60% (30 posts out of 50) of the poster type. The next highest majority is posters identified as others (16%), followed by friends/family of a patient (12%), patients (6%) and organization (6%) and staff (0%). Content type was heavily skewed towards direct links, which accounted for 38% (19 out of 50) and news (4%) with pictures and videos together (22%) making up nearly a quarter of the contents posted (Figure 4). Nearly five times as many females individually posted on the Facebook page (13 out of 50 posts) in comparison with males (3 posts); 34 posts were classified as “not specified” due to the gender ambiguity of M.D. Anderson and other organizations. The age of most posters was not made public, leading to a large percentage (36 out of 50) of posters with undisclosed ages, followed by 30-to 59-year-olds (18%), over 59-year-olds (6%), 20- to 29-year olds (4%), and no posters under the age of 20. Many posters also did not reveal their location. Those that did were located in areas surrounding Houston, Texas as well as nearby states, such as Kansas, Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama, with one poster from New York City and one from Aruba.

Additionally, there was an extreme disparity in responses M.D. Anderson’s posts and the others received (Figure 5). Likes M.D. Anderson accumulated averaged about 24 per day, with a maximum of 56, while likes general posters got averaged less than one, with most posts receiving no likes at all. The same held true for number of comments and shares; M.D. Anderson collected exponentially a higher number of comments and reblogs.

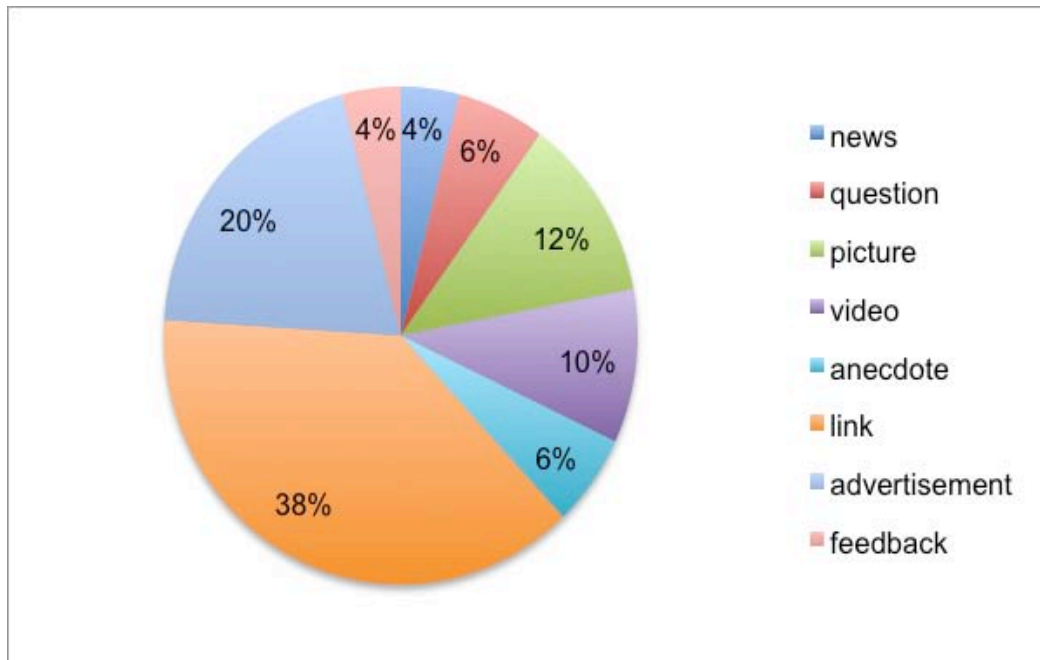


Figure 4. Content types of main posts

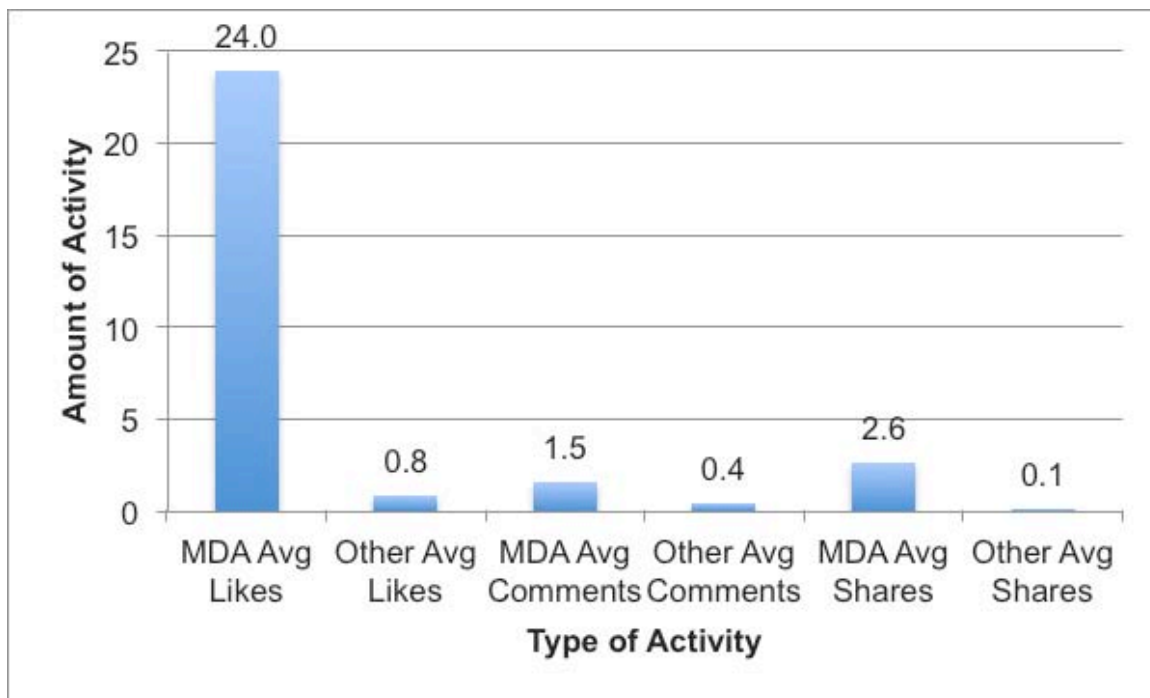


Figure 5. The number of Likes viewers gave to posts that M.D. Anderson and others made

“Child” Post Statistics

After M.D. Anderson and others put up initial posts, on which anybody can make comments, so-called *child* posts. Nearly half of commenters (48%) in this child post category could not be identified. The comments M.D. Anderson made accounts for 25%, followed by 17% by friends/family of an M.D. Anderson patient, 8% by the staff, and 2% by patients. The dominant majority (64%) was once again female, with only 8% by posters being male and the rest by unidentified commenters. The comments were made up of responses to prior posts (75%), additional links (8%), anecdotal stories (10%), further questions (5%) and others. In terms of

ages, commenters were dominated by 30- to 59-year olds (31%), with a nearly equal number of younger and older adults. Commenters were again located in Texas, with many of them also coming from Louisiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Individuals from Aruba, Iowa, and North Carolina were also observed. The number of likes on thread posts, even for M.D. Anderson, were much lower than those of main posts. There is no option on Facebook to share or comment upon a thread post.

V. Discussion and Conclusion

By assessing the content of M.D. Anderson's official Facebook page over 15 days, it is clear that the facility is effectively utilizing their social media platform to interact with online users. It is apparent that M.D. Anderson dominates conversation by posting articles of interest, including videos, pictures of hospital events, relevant case studies, and research inquiries. M.D. Anderson continues to further discussion by responding promptly and thoroughly to any questions or information posted by an online user. Posters are able to interact directly with each other by liking, sharing, and commenting on one another's posts; nonprofits and other organizations can also advertise events and services that may be relevant to patients, hospital staff, or their families and friends. This type of social media vehicle has proved itself a positive community, with ample encouragement and virtual handholding, as patients, families, and doctors alike posted words of support, hope, and understanding.

The study found that most of the posters are uploaded by middle-age people who typically suffer from cancer, rather than younger people whom social media often caters to. This shift in age exemplifies how the Facebook dynamic is changing as its appeal broadens, transitioning from a mere trend among teenagers to a more universal, recognized, and respected form of communication. This shows that older users are becoming increasingly more comfortable with social media and are beginning to take advantage of its accessibility. Additionally, a majority of the posters are women. This can be contributed to this specific gender's predisposition for emotional connectivity, as well as its greater affinity for social support. Most women posted encouragement in response to a specific post whereas men were more likely to initiate a question.

Telemedicine is a remarkable asset to patients living in rural or remote areas; provided an Internet connection is available, and access to medical information is not limited by distance. Telemedicine can be extremely effective through the social media in regions where local medical care is insufficient if patients in these locations are more inclined to interact through social media sites due to lack of high-quality health-care. In this study, many people made comments from several rural locations, as well as regions well outside the Houston, Texas area, which reveals the importance of an accessible soundboard for patients who may live without direct contact with a major medical center. Several of the locations listed by commenters include sparsely populated areas in Texas and Louisiana, signifying a definite utilization of the M.D. Anderson Facebook page for medical information. Even those living outside the United States, as exemplified by one specific poster from Aruba in the southern Caribbean Sea, can interact and converse with hospital officials and other patients who may be undergoing similar treatments. What is specifically unique about the M.D. Anderson's Facebook page is that it offers posters a place to convene regardless of age, gender, or location. Examination of the diversity of commenters helps to understand how M.D. Anderson is reaching its patients through the Web. M.D. Anderson's implementation of a resourceful, positive, and interactive online forum is a compelling representation of telemedicine, exemplifying a positive shift towards the use of social media to enhance the experience of cancer treatment.

Future Research

Because of the limitations of privacy settings, a larger sample size is recommended in order to gather as much solid information as possible. Additional studies comparing M.D. Anderson's use of Facebook to that of other top cancer centers would be useful in determining the state of social media use in major hospitals in general.

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Appendix.

Category items

Poster Type

- 1 – M.D. Anderson (the moderator of the M.D. Anderson Facebook group)
- 2 – patient (an individual having undergone, currently undergoing, or about to undergo treatment)
- 3 – friend/family of patient (an individual related to a patient at M.D. Anderson)
- 4 – staff (an individual employed by M.D. Anderson)
- 5 – other (not stated)
- 6 – organization (a nonprofit or business)

Type of Content

- 1 – news (current event or article of interest)
- 2 – question (a question relating to treatment options, symptoms of cancer, general inquiries about the hospital, etc.)
- 3 – picture (visual graphics)
- 4 – video (a video coming directly from an individual or YouTube)
- 5 – anecdote (a story)
- 6 – link (a direct connection to another website or page)
- 7 – advertisement of services/events (notification of services/events of interest to those associated with M.D. Anderson)
- 8 – feedback (a comment in response to already posted material)

Age Range

- 1 – child/teenager (0-19 years)
- 2 – young adult (20-29 years)
- 3 – middle adult (30-59 years)
- 4 – older adult (60+)
- 5 – not specified

Gender

- 1 – female
 - 2 – male
 - 3 – not specified
-

Bullying and Cyberbullying: History, Statistics, Law, Prevention and Analysis

*Richard Donegan**

*Strategic Communication
Elon University*

Abstract

Bullying has been engrained in American society since the country's founding. Bred from a capitalistic economy and competitive social hierarchy, bullying has remained a relevant issue through the years. Technological bullying, known today as cyberbullying, has allowed the problem to expand, become more elusive, and even harder to define. A thorough analysis of various case studies, statistical research, law cases, and news articles was conducted to understand the issue of cyberbullying and to find preventative measures that should be taken. This paper illuminates the background situation, current legal struggles, clinical implications, and potential preventative steps concerning bullying and cyberbullying alike.

I. Introduction

Each day school children learn valuable skills and lessons from their teachers as well as through interactions with their peers. Although school, undoubtedly, is beneficial to America's youth, there are some experiences, such as bullying, that may negatively affect and stick with these children for the rest of their lives.

Certain children find an outlet for their frustrations through bullying others. In the past, these actions could be better controlled because they were limited to face-to-face interactions. However, in recent years, this age-old conflict has matched the pace of technological evolutions, making it more dangerous and harder to contain. Cell phones, social media sites, chat rooms, and other forms of technology have allowed bullying to expand into cyberspace. This new form of abuse is known as cyberbullying.

The following research paper focuses on both traditional bullying and cyberbullying. The paper provides background information about bullying, defines the problem and where it is focused, looks at the clinical and legal issues that surround both forms of bullying, and discusses possible preventative programs.

II. History of Bullying

Bullying, a definition

The word "bully" can be traced back as far as the 1530s. (Harper, 2008). In its most basic sense bullying involves two people, a bully or intimidator and a victim. The bully abuses the victim through physical,

* **Keywords:** bullying, cyber bullying, law, statistics, prevention

Email: rdonegan@elon.edu

verbal, or other means in order to gain a sense of superiority and power. These actions may be direct (i.e. hitting, verbally assaulting face-to-face, etc.) or indirect (i.e. rumors, gossip, etc.).

Origins of bullying

The desire to survive is instinctual and common among all living things. Survival is associated directly with competition due to the multitude of species and limited natural resources on the planet. Since the beginning of time there has been a constant drive to out-perform others and overcome obstacles. This survival instinct, along with a competitive atmosphere, has remained the same as the human race has evolved. Both of these forces have flowed over into the educational, social, and economic realms. This competitive hierarchy, though prevalent in most societies, varies across cultures depending on their ethical systems, traditions, and the type of control exerted by the government. Unfortunately, the U.S. capitalistic society inadvertently pushes the belief that success and wealth go hand in hand. This ideology has shaped a nation where bullying is unintentionally instilled as a survival tactic from a very young age.

From the time an American child enters grade school, he or she is taught to be the best he or she can. This seemingly innocent lesson can morph as a child develops throughout his or her education. Students often learn corrupt ways to get ahead in the highly competitive educational and social environments that grade school presents. These bullying tactics may include pressuring others for answers on assignments to attain higher grades, which leads toward better college opportunities, or spreading social rumors about fellow students. These tactics are dangerous because once a student realizes their effectiveness, he or she may construct a life style from them. Developing a habitual use of bullying tactics can lead to negatively affecting a countless number of people as well as corruption in the workplace.

Traditional bullying vs. cyberbullying

Technology's progression is often equated with the advancement of human societies. Pivotal innovations, such as the Internet, have forever changed how people interact. Though these developments have allowed the human race to make great strides in many fields, they have also allowed forms of transgression to become more rampant and widespread. This is evident when considering how traditional bullying has evolved into an issue today known as cyberbullying. While bullying and cyberbullying are often similar in terms of form and technique they also have many differences. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying allows the offender to mask his or her identity behind a computer. This anonymity makes it easier for the offender to strike blows against a victim without having to see the victim's physical response. The distancing effect that technological devices have on today's youth often leads them to say and do crueler things compared to what is typical in a traditional face-to-face bullying situation.

A technological evolution

As technology has evolved, bullying has proliferated. With the advent of the Internet, chat rooms soon followed. Online forums provided a communal breeding ground for youth to assault one another (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Chat rooms were supplemented by AOL Instant Messenger (AIM), an online communication program that allowed teens to spend hours talking to one another in private, one-on-one conversations or in public chat rooms. The program further allowed youth to create group-specific chat rooms. This exclusive forum allowed for youth to get together with select groups of friends and talk about the latest gossip.

Online innovations have continued due to telecommunication advances. The advent of cell phones in the late 1960s and early 1970s changed the way people communicated (Shiels, 2003). However, these portable communication devices did not become widespread, or make it into a majority of youth's hands, until the appearance of the second generation of digital network phones in the 1990s. After that, they spread like wildfire. According to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center, 75% of 12-17 year-olds own cell phones, which increased from 45% in 2004 and one-in-three teens sends 3,000 text messages per month (Lenhart, 2010). Though many parents believe that they are purchasing a cell phone for their child for protective reasons, the opposite may be true as many youths admit to utilizing their phones as an instrument for cyberbullying.

Further progress on the Internet brought about more and more websites and with this came the advent of social media. The site MySpace is often considered the pioneer of social media. MySpace allows individual users to create their own unique profiles and interact in cyberspace with friends and foes alike.

Online publication of personal information is dangerous because it allows many people to see a side of a person more often kept private in a face-to-face interaction. This vulnerability puts many teens in a position as either the victim or active offender partaking in cyberbullying actions. Another aspect of social media that can be misleading and hazardous is the ability to create alias profiles. The ability for teens to mask their identities provides them with an opportunity to say anything to another individual without the worry of any repercussions. Social media sites, such as Facebook and Google+, are prone to abuses like cyberbullying.

Anonymous blogging is another technological advancement that has fostered cyberbullying activity and fueled ethical debate. On sites, such as College ACB and Juicy Campus, which have both recently faced tightened regulations due to their verbally abusive nature, youth (typically of college age) were able to login and comment anonymously in an open forum. The forum included harsh topics ranging from “Most Attractive” to “Worst Hookup.” The sites even included certain topic headings that were simply a person’s name under which people could post insulting comments. These blogging sites are illustrative of the most dramatic forms of cyberbullying thus far.

III. Status of cyberbullying

Studies have indicated that the number of youth reporting cyberbullying instances varies greatly depending on the definition of the term and the age of those surveyed. In the following study, Sameer Hinduja and Justin W. Patchin, of the Cyberbullying Research Center, sampled 4,441 teens, ranging in age from 11 to 18, from a large school district in the southern U.S. In this study, the researchers defined cyberbullying as “when someone repeatedly makes fun of another person online or repeatedly picks on another person through email or text message or when someone posts something online about another person that they don’t like” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010c, p. 1).

Victimization

According to their results, cyberbullying victimization rates have varied in the past few years, ranging between 18.8 percent in May 2007 and 28.7 percent in Nov. 2009 with a mean of 27.32 percent based on 7 different studies from May 2007-Feb. 2010. Cyberbullying offending rates have varied in a broader spectrum than victimization rates, ranging between 20.1 percent in June 2004 and 11.5 percent in Nov. 2009 with a mean of 16.76 percent based on 7 different studies from June 2004 to February 2010 (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010g, p. 1).

Several specific types of victimization and cyberbullying were discovered through a survey taken in 2010. The survey discovered that the highest concentration of victimizations and cyberbullying offenses occurred in the following areas respectively: mean or hurtful comments posted online (14.3%, 8.8%), rumors online (13.3%, 6.8%), threats through a cell phone text message (8.4%, 5.4%) (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010e, p. 1).

Another important factor that Hinduja and Patchin brought to light was what type of technology a teen primarily uses. According to a 2010 study, which asked teens what role technology played in their daily lives, cell phones were used the most (83%), followed by the Internet for school work (50.8%), and then Facebook (50.1%) (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010h, p. 1). This points to cell phones and the Internet as the two primary mediums used for cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying proved to vary by gender as well. Based on a 2010 study involving a random sample of 2,212 teen males and 2,162 teen females, the male to female ratio varied the most in the following three areas: victimization within a person’s lifetime (16.6% for males vs. 25.1% for females), admitted to a cyberbullying offense within a person’s lifetime (17.5% for males vs. 21.3% for females), and had a hurtful comment posted about oneself online (10.5% for males vs. 18.2% for females) (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010b, p. 1). This information may be biased due to the reticence among males about admitting a past bullying experience. Nevertheless, it is interesting that females reported a higher percentage in all categories.

Bullying hierarchy

As with most competitive atmospheres, the social struggle among today’s youth has an evident hierarchy. Bullying is a component of this hierarchy and has its own structure. According to Dr. Dan Olweus, there

are seven different levels within the bullying ladder: the students who want to bully and initiate the action, their followers or henchmen, supporters or passive bullies, passive supporters or possible bullies, disengaged onlookers, possible defenders, and defenders who dislike the action of bullying and help those that are victimized (Olweus, 2001). Dismantling the aggressive portion of this ladder and shifting students to a deterring mindset must be a fundamental part of any prevention program.

IV. Clinical Perspective/Repercussions

At first, one may believe that the effects of bullying is limited to initial responses that tend to fade within a few days or a week, at most. However, research indicates that the harm inflicted by bullying, whether physical or psychological, has many implications and can result in a snowball effect of lasting painful emotions and negative impacts.

Gender and bullying

Though many students tend to deny the emotional harm caused by bullying tactics such as name-calling, rumor spreading, and teasing, research suggests the opposite. In a study that utilized a sample of over 3,000 students, researchers found that “38 percent of bully victims felt vengeful, 37 percent were angry and 24 percent felt helpless.” Furthermore, in a study conducted by the Cyberbullying Research Center involving a sample size of 468 students revealed that females are typically more emotionally affected by cyberbullying than males. The females in the study reported being frustrated (39.6%), angry (36%), and sad (25.2%) more often than males who reported lower percentages in each category (27.5%, 24.3%, 17.9% respectively). This is not surprising due to the fact, as mentioned earlier, that males have a reluctance to admit weaknesses especially from an emotional standpoint. In reality, one would expect males to be at least equal if not higher in emotional response concerning anger and frustration. (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009c, p.1).

Age and bullying

In another study conducted by the Cyberbullying Research Center, the emotional repercussions of cyberbullying across age groups were observed. The study discovered that anger and frustration remain the dominant responses among senior and junior high students, but students at the elementary level are more likely to feel sad as a result of being bullied (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009c, p.1). This is likely because at a younger age children are not battling with the same kind of competitive social hierarchy typically found within upper level schools. So, rather than feeling the need to prove themselves among their peers, students at the elementary level tend to well-up within the initial emotional responses to bullying. This points to the idea that younger children may keep their initial emotional responses to themselves rather than acting out. Unfortunately, regardless of the initial emotional reaction to bullying, these emotions have the ability to continue to develop, with serious clinical implications. A 2003 intensive survey study, which focused on the clinical effects of cyberbullying, reported an increase in emotional distress specifically related to cyberbullying. The study involving 512 professionals coming from psychology, psychiatry and social work backgrounds reported that for “one-third (34%) of these youth, the Internet problem played a primary role in the client’s treatment” (Mitchell, Finelhot & Becker-Blease, 2007, p. 48). This evidence proves that cyberbullying is having noticeable clinical effects on today’s youth.

In his “General Strain Theory,” sociologist Robert Agnew hypothesized that the strain and stress exerted on an individual as a result of bullying “can manifest itself in problematic emotions that lead to deviant behavior,” possibly leading to delinquency (Agnew, 2006, pp. 659-660). This theory stresses the vicious cycle that many teens may go through while being victimized. The cyclical repercussions of this process are particularly alarming if it leads a victim to antisocial behaviors when they try to find an outlet for their emotions.

In 2001, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention reported that “60 percent of males who were bullies in grades 6 through 9 were convicted of at least one crime as adults, compared with 23 percent who did not bully; 35 to 40 percent of these former bullies had three or more convictions by the age of 24, compared with 10 percent of those who did not bully” (Ericson, 2001). Offenders are likely to utilize bullying tactics as an outlet for other insecurities or problems in their lives. This utilization of bullying as a coping mechanism contributes to the cyclical nature that the process evidently has on victims and offenders

alike. Not only do these flawed coping mechanisms fail to resolve the emotional distress caused by bullying, they also expand the overall problem of deviant behavior. This inability for bullied victims and offenders to find adequate relief for emotional wounds, coupled with the fact that youth are unlikely to seek relief through a mentor, explains why some youth begin to feel helpless. Feeling lost in emotional distress with seemingly no way for relief allows suicidal or even thoughts of violent response to creep in to a youth's consciousness (Ericson, 2001).

So, what does this all mean? Research confirms that both bully victims as well as offenders are emotionally harmed by the act of cyberbullying. In a fact sheet produced by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, loneliness, humiliation, and insecurity were each reported as further manifestations of the initial emotional responses to the bullying process. These feelings have the potential to cause students to fear going to school. This constant instability makes it difficult for bully victims to adjust socially and emotionally, focus on their studies, and develop in a healthy mental fashion. These responses can lead to more serious clinical implications, such as depression, which can continue to develop into even worse problems (Ericson, 2001, pp. 1-2).

The extreme consequences of bullying are suicidal thoughts or thoughts of violent revenge. According to a National Vital Statistics Report, suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death among youth ranging in age from 15 to 24 (Anderson & Smith, 2003). Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported "substantial increases in both homicide and suicide rates among males from 2000 to 2003" (Fraizer, 2005). This statistic becomes chillingly relevant as more information is uncovered concerning the link between cyberbullying and suicidal ideation or action. According to Rigby and Slee, "Youth who are bullied or who bully others, are at an elevated risk for suicidal thoughts, attempts, and completed suicides" (Rigby & Slee, 1999, p. 119). Statistically both victims of cyberbullying as well as offenders proved to be much more likely to have attempted "bullycide," the act of committing suicide due to the effects of bullying, than youth who had not been affected (High, 2007).

V. Case Law and Legislation

Although all of the evidence illustrates the effects of cyberbullying on today's youth, lawmakers at both the state and federal levels continue to wrestle with the issue. Unfortunately, it has taken a number of cases to force lawmakers to come to terms with the harsh reality of the situation and attempt to mold laws to deal with such issues. The infringement on student's 1st Amendment rights is what originally sparked heated controversies concerning schools limiting what students could do or say on or off school grounds. Throughout history, the United States has been shaped by the public's right to freely express their opinions. Inevitably, when a case arises attempting to limit these rights, the plaintiff's side is often hard to argue due to such a strong tradition. Without limiting constitutional rights, lawmakers must grapple with the difficult task of defining cyberbullying, as well as determining proper sanctions for committing the act. Because of this, many cases dealing with freedom of speech on and off school grounds have worked their way up to the United States Supreme Court in the past.

Federal law

One of the earliest cases that dealt with this issue on a public school campus was *Tinker vs. Des Moines* in 1969 (Tedford & Herbeck, 2009, pp. 1-4). In this case, three high school students arrived on campus wearing black armbands, symbolically protesting the Vietnam War. The school's administration told the students that they must remove the armbands, and if they refused to do so they would be suspended. The students refused and were sent home. They took the case to court, arguing that their 1st Amendment rights had been violated by the school. The case eventually made it to the United States Supreme Court. The court ruled that any school preventing the expression of opinion must prove that the prohibition was enforced "to avoid substantial interference with school discipline or the rights of others" (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011, p. 2). Because the school was unable to prove either of these factors, the suspensions were considered unconstitutional and the court ruled in favor of the students. This case set the first guidelines for what forms of expression public schools could and could not limit. As time has continued and technology has progressed, this issue has expanded to whether or not schools can interfere with student's actions off-campus.

J.S. v. Bethlehem Area School (2000) involved a student who was expelled from school for creating

a page on the Internet that included threatening and derogatory comments about members of the administration. The court ruled that the school was justified in taking action due to its ability to prove that the public information fostered an evident disruption of the school environment. In its closing statements, the U.S. Supreme Court stated the following: "Regrettably, in this day and age where school violence is becoming more commonplace, school officials are justified in taking very seriously threats against faculty and other students" (Herbeck, 2010). Such schoolyard violence had reached this level at Columbine High School in 1999.

Through this and more recent cases, the federal government has defined the requirements for off-campus behavior, such as cyberbullying, to be regulated by the school. For a school to take action, there must be a clear disruption to the educational process or a representation of true threat. To determine whether or not an expression is representative of a true threat, the court must determine "whether a reasonable person [in the speaker's position] would foresee that the statement would be interpreted by those to whom the maker communicates the statement as a serious expression of intent to harm or assault" (Herbeck, 2010). The idea of public schools limiting student's speech off campus is highly relevant as cyberbullying becomes a more recognized problem nationally. School administrations and communities must take past cases into account as well as current legal definitions of what constitutes a disruption of the educational process or a true threat when developing an effective preventative program.

State level

Similar to speech and harassment laws at the federal level, individual states continue to wrestle with defining the problem and what legal actions to take when a violation occurs. Unfortunately, it took a number of high-profile cases, and even some suicides, to bring the issue to the attention of many states' courts and legislatures. One such case revolved around an incident in Missouri during 2006. This case, formally known as *United States vs. Lori Drew*, involved Drew and her daughter creating a false MySpace account under the alias name "Josh." The defendants used the account to become friends with the victim, 13-year-old Megan Meier, whom Drew's daughter attended school with. After becoming friends with Meier, Drew and her daughter started sending hateful comments to her. Meier took these comments to heart and committed suicide.

The Missouri district court determined that they could not hold Drew directly accountable for the harassment leading to Meier's death due to extraneous circumstances and lack of legal encompassment. However, due to public outcry, federal prosecutors took charge by applying the Computer Fraud and Abuse act to the case. This act is typically used to prosecute electronic theft, but in this instance was used to apply the Myspace terms of service. The terms require users to abide by a host of regulations, which "required truthful and accurate registration, refraining from using information from MySpace to harass others [and] refraining from promoting false or misleading information" ("Unites states of America v. Lori Drew," 2009). Based on MySpace's terms of service, the jury found Drew guilty of one felony count for conspiracy and three misdemeanors counts for unauthorized computer use.

This case caused Missouri to modify its state harassment law to encompass acts of cyberbullying like the Lori Drew case. The law now prohibits any electronic communication that "knowingly frightens, intimidates, or causes emotional distress" (Henderson, 2009).

VI. Prevention

As cyberbullying draws more attention, a universal definition has begun to take shape within the law. Though not acknowledged across all states, a common definition in congruence with a wider recognition of the problem makes addressing the elusive issue a bit easier. The problem is that technology will inevitably continue to advance. So, as technology progresses, local and national anti-bullying policies and laws must continue to evolve at a parallel rate. Many of the issues faced by federal and state governments concerning cyberbullying are avoidable for schools and communities at the local level through the implementation of procedures to limit the effects of cyberbullying.

Recognition of the problem

One of the most notable issues that need to be addressed is recognition of the problem itself. Many people, whether parents, teachers, or even law enforcement officers, do not know what their specific state

laws are in regards to cyberbullying. In a formal survey of approximately 1,000 officers, “over 85 percent . . . said that cyberbullying was a serious concern that warrants the response of law enforcement. 90 percent of the school’s resource officers had dealt with a cyberbullying case ‘sometimes’ or ‘often.’”

Despite this obvious concern, “25 percent of the school resource officers and over 40 percent of the traditional law enforcement officers did not know if their state had a law specific to cyberbullying” (Patchin, 2011). These statistics are alarming considering that the number of states without some kind of bullying or harassment specific law can be counted on one hand (HI, MI, MT, SD) and the number of states with cyberbullying specific laws are increasing. Every person that deals with children (i.e. education, parenting, law enforcement, etc.) should know the bullying or harassment law specific to his or her state, the physical and emotional signs of bullying, and his or her community or school prevention plan, including how to deal with and report a problem.

Along with recognizing the problem and being able to identify solutions, it is vital that cyberbullying be addressed in a consistent way. To effectively put a harness on the problem will require “a concerted and coordinated effort – a partnership if you will – among our families, schools, youth organizations, and communities” (Morino, 1997). If American communities and schools address the issue with a clear preventative program that keeps each level of prohibition on the same page, children will in turn receive a consistent message from a young age, which will presumably resonate effectively. This message should cause children to feel comfortable with confronting and reporting the problem by portraying any form of bullying as unacceptable. Furthermore, this consistency across a given program will change the overall environment rather than just focusing on individual cases. According to Dorothy Espelage and Susan Swearer’s book *Bullying in American Schools*, “A comprehensive program . . . is generally more powerful in reducing bullying and increasing school safety than concentrating on individual students” (Espelage & Swearer, 2009).

Potential Solutions

Credited with initiating the first systematic bullying research in the early 1970s, Dr. Dan Olweus is primarily known for his bullying prevention programs. The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*, enacted by Norway’s Ministry of Education, develops methods of dealing with bullying on a variety of levels including school-level components, individual-level components, classroom-level components, and community-level components. This all-encompassing structure creates a cohesive plan in which each level reinforces the next. Since its creation, the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* has been adopted in schools across the world. According to a series of evaluations involving 40,000 students from 42 schools over a two and a half year period, the program proved to be successful. The studies verified the program’s success by reporting “reductions by 20 to 70 percent in student reports of being bullied and bullying others,” “reductions in student reports of antisocial behavior, such as vandalism, fighting, theft, and truancy” and “clear improvements in the classroom social climate” (Olweus, 2005, pp. 389-402).

A mixed-methods research design carried out in Nevada, in which 118 middle school principals were surveyed about cyberbullying, identified components of a successful preventative program. Of those surveyed, 66 responded and 10 agreed to participate in a one-on-one interview. From these ten, three were selected and questioned intensively about cyberbullying and preventative strategies within their school as well as about their thoughts on the issue in general. Based on the interview results, the following six components were identified as essential elements to a preventative cyberbullying program: “the importance of a reporting procedure; curriculum integration; student-centered productions through mediums such as Broadcast Journalism; a focus on prevention rather than solely on punishment; the importance of punishment as a part of an effective policy; and keeping up with changes in technology” (Wiseman, 2011).

VII. Conclusion

Bullying is deeply engrained in American culture. Our society illustrates the pinnacle of capitalistic competition. This win-or-die-trying atmosphere, the competitive college acceptance process, and much of the corporate world, contribute to many of the bullying problems that we battle today. The issues of bullying and cyberbullying can only be contained in the short term and not eliminated completely due to how deep-seeded they have become in our competitive society.

The clinical repercussions that bullying and cyberbullying have on today’s youth present the most

troubling issue at hand. The permanent mental effects are what both the law and prevention programs are striving to eliminate. The fact that these initial emotional responses to bullying in any form have been proven to escalate to the point of suicidal thoughts and violent response is the primary reason for why this issue has become a matter of pressing public concern. The thought of children getting so caught up in the psychological battery of bullying that they commit suicide is extremely troubling, an issue that must be dealt with. Though the legislative and judicial branches at both the state and federal levels are having a difficult time adapting laws to encompass cyberbullying as technology advances, there is assurance in the fact that the issue is a pressing concern. However, it is unsettling that it takes drastic cases such as *United States vs. Lori Drew* to bring about a direct change in law. Ideally, laws will develop in correspondence with technology to help define the problem itself and establish appropriate judicial repercussions.

As more is learned about the reasons behind bullying and the specific tactics utilized, prevention programs are becoming increasingly more effective. As discussed previously, a successful program needs to clearly identify the problem, establish recognition, and formulate consistent ways of dealing with the issue across all platforms. The biggest struggle for cyberbullying prevention in the future is matching the fast pace of technological innovation with effective preventative techniques.

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The Social ROI: Successful Social Media Measurement From an Agency Standpoint

Emily Cray*

*Strategic Communications
Elon University*

Abstract

This research analyzed the viewpoints of advertising agency professionals regarding the successful monitoring and measurement of social media for clients. Research was conducted through one-on-one interviews with advertising professionals. This study found that successful campaigns are fully integrated, with social media possessing transparent and responsive characteristics and serving as an amplification and engagement tool. It should be consistently monitored and measured both qualitatively and quantitatively. The Facebook “like” is the most commonly measured metric; however, the importance of a specific metric is dependent on the campaign’s objectives. Free built-in analytics tools are primarily used to measure social media, while paid-for third-party tools are not as common.

I. Introduction

Since its introduction about a decade ago, social media has been a game-changer in the field of communications. Even the most amateur user of social media is aware of the incredible influence social media has on daily life. Facebook tops Google for weekly traffic in the United States. The world has about 1.5 million real farmers and 80 million Farmville farmers. If Wikipedia were made into a book, it would be 2.25 million pages long and would take over 123 years to read. If Facebook were a country, it would be the world’s third largest. Thirty four percent of bloggers are posting opinions about products or brands. Ninety percent of consumers trust peer recommendations, while only 14 percent trust advertisements (Qualman, 2011). As social media expert Eric Qualman stated in 2008, “We don’t have a choice on whether we do social media, the question is how well we do it” (Qualman, 2011, p. xxii).

Compared to past history, social media has influenced immense changes in a relatively small amount of time. It has significantly affected society’s norms, both positively and negatively depending on the considered subject. It has drastically changed communication relationships between humans. It has also transformed consumer relationships among businesses, organizations, brands and products. Social media is not a fad. It is becoming a tool, a strategy and a learned skill set for communication and business professionals. When used properly, it has the potential to reap many benefits for both providers and consumers alike.

It is important to keep in mind that social media operates similarly for advertisers as it does for people. Social media is about relationships. When using social media, advertisers must earn and develop relationships between their brands and customers, much as friendships are earned and developed between people. However, for advertisers it takes time, strategic planning and research. The social web requires subtle commitment, which is why terms like relationships, conversations and trust are popular buzzwords in profes-

* **Keywords:** social media measurement, social ROI, successful campaign, advertising agencies, metrics

Email: ehcray@gmail.com

sional social media settings.

Advertising is no longer a vertical engagement; it is lateral engagement. It has become a conversation, mainly driven by consumers in the social media space. Forget acronyms like B2B and B2C. A new one has taken place: “P2P”—people to people. This study seeks to evaluate how social media is currently monitored and measured by advertising agency professionals who create and regularly maintain a brand’s presence in the social media space alongside consumers.

II. Literature Review

The statistical data showing the enormous amount of social media users strongly suggests that it is an effective tool for advertising. Based on its sheer audience size, social media offers a platform of opportunity for advertising that is difficult to rival. However, the web-based applications and technologies that make up the term “social media” are constantly evolving. This research adopts the definition of social media provided by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), to which social media is defined as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 59). In essence, social media may be best described as technology-based social connectivity with interactive, participatory and collaborative characteristics (Choi, 2011, p. 11). Or even more basic: the type of digital communication that allows people to interact with each other and to share information.

Social media includes networks (e.g., Facebook, and LinkedIn), wikis (e.g., Wikipedia), multimedia sharing sites (e.g., YouTube and Flickr), bookmarking sites (e.g., Delicious and Digg), virtual worlds (e.g., Second Life), and rating sites (e.g., Yelp). These sites allow people to interact with others and share information about products, services and brands. Social media-specific tools include tagging, posting, pinning, sharing, RSS, and tweeting — interlacing different areas of the web even tighter. These tools are used to encourage buzz and facilitate viral campaigns. Location-based services (e.g., Foursquare, Facebook Places) allow for tracking and potentially give advertisers the best opportunity for immediate sales or location-based information about target demographics and psychographics. Social Gaming (e.g., Words with Friends, Farmville) along with social couponing (e.g., Groupon and LivingSocial) is booming as advertisers watch consumers sway each other to share, buy and sell products and brands at the same time (Edwards, 2011, p. 1).

Traditional definitions of advertising no longer suffice. Instead, today’s definition must expand to include all forms of marketing communications (Edwards, 2011, p. 1). The integration of all marketing communications is required in order to provide a seamless product and/or service experience. Famous advertiser, Leo Burnett, understood this idea back at the birth of advertising agencies: He believed that each small advertisement is like a building block for the picture of the brand as a whole (O’Guinn, Allen, & Semenik, 2009, p. 357). His idea translates into advertising today. Now, consumers are in control; they have greater access to information and greater command over media consumption than ever before (Vollmer & Precourt, 2008, p. 5). All forms of marketing communications must be utilized in order to create a successful advertising campaign—including a strategically planned social media program (Evans, 2008, p. 154).

A social media program is a completely integrated communications mechanism that amplifies the impact of every function within an organization by leveraging the power of human networks via social networking platforms (Blanchard, 2011, p. 8). Users of social media embrace it because it helps them connect with the rest of the world in their own ways. Users have the power to turn on and off messages pushed towards them, which is both a positive and negative concept for advertising in social media. Advertisers realize the opportunity to engage with customers and how it can ultimately drive their business forward. It provides advertisers with a voluntary, segmented audience in a cost-effective way compared to other media (Chu & Kim, 2011, pp. 47-48).

Consumer involvement in social media

Many of the last decade’s fastest-growing and more socially active companies have made significant changes: at least 79 percent of Fortune 100 companies use Twitter, Facebook, YouTube or blogs; 20 percent use them all. Organizations are opening up to the idea of customer involvement as a main component for organizational structure and design. Consumer involvement is beginning to drive marketing practices and media

choices as a way to measure the performance of brands (Moffitt & Dover, 2011, pp. 32-34).

Consumer's online brand-related activities (COBRAs) must be understood for companies to effectively anticipate and direct consumers in a way that is in sync with business goals. According to an article by Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit (2011), consumer motivation for the general use of social media includes entertainment, integration and social interaction, personal identity, or information motivations involving remuneration and empowerment purposes (Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011, pp. 18-21). These motivations, however, do not explain the different motivations driven by COBRAs, which are different than consumers' general use of social media.

COBRAs pertain to consumer activity involving brand-related content on social media platforms. Examples of COBRAs include 'electronic word-of-mouth' (eWOM), associated with online consumer-to-consumer interaction with brands; and 'user-generated content' (UGC), used to describe content uploaded and produced by consumers instead of companies (Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011, p. 14). Research performed by Chu and Kim (2011) reports that eWOM transmitted through social media is now a necessary element in the promotional mix (Chu & Kim, 2011, p. 65). However, limitations, such as trust between social networkers, may inhibit or distort eWOM results. Opportunities for marketers' use of eWOM include identifying 'social influencers' in social networking sites and encouraging those users to spread positive eWOM regarding select brands (Chu & Kim, 2011, p. 67).

Research performed by Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit (2011) finds that different brand-related activities on social media platforms are driven by different motivations. Those consuming, contributing and creating COBRAs fall into segmented groups with different sets of motivations for participation including information, entertainment, remuneration, personal identity, integration and social interaction and empowerment (Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011, pp. 26-34). These motivations provide valuable insight into consumer behavior in social media environments. The knowledge of different sets of motivations gives brand managers the opportunity to anticipate and stimulate consumers' online brand experience and ultimately enable them to direct their outcomes.

Building “success” in social media

Beyond the study of consumers' motivation behind their use of social media, it is important to understand how to successfully build a social media campaign or program that effectively targets and communicates with consumers. It takes focus, strategic planning and patience. There are many different ways to build social media programs; each is different depending on business goals, but the basic framework involved in creating a program often includes similar attributes. According to in his book *Social Media ROI*, Blanchard states there is a basic, operational framework that places all the elements in the right way and at the right time (Blanchard, 2011, p. 3). In theory, there is a possibility that social media is engineered, but because the art of building brands in a collaborative social sphere is relatively new, blueprints are still in the process of navigating towards success.

One promising social brand architect is community expert and planner Sami Viitamaki's model, FLIRT, which involves many of the common successful characteristics in a social media program. FLIRT is an acronym for the processes involved in building an effective and engaged brand. Following the acronym, planners should first focus the strategic imperatives of engagement efforts: determine the specific areas, depth, scale and exclusivity of collaboration before execution has occurred. Second, determine the language and content to be used whenever presenting the brand. Third, incentives that members/fans/followers/customers earn for their participation should be considered. Fourth, rules and rituals decide the accepted brand engagement and community activity. Finally, tools such as the technical infrastructure, collaboration, engagement and community features that optimize user experience should be determined. Four other important components maintain the system of the social campaign: metrics and insights to monitor performance; internalization of benefits within the organization to optimize the value of customer engagement; life cycle of the community requires constant maintenance to keep it fresh and growing; and community management to keep dialogue and exchanges happening in the space (Moffitt & Dover, 2011, p. 86).

Mashable.com writer, Aaron Uhrmacher, prescribes another example of building a successful social media framework. He advises five steps when creating a social media plan: listen, prepare, engage, go offline and measure. The first step, listen, involves listening to what customers are already talking about in the social media space in order to determine how to best contribute. Step two, prepare, includes identifying the appropriate people inside the organization to participate in the conversation. These people will represent the com-

pany's brand and must act on the feedback they receive instantaneously in a way that is consistent with the overall brand image. Another component of prepare includes defining the social media strategy to allow an area of focus and a measure of success. Step three, engage, means interacting with social media users in a way that builds a community for the brand; developing online relationships with customers is key to a thriving social media program. Step four, go offline, is necessary to maintain face-to-face interaction with members of the online community. Social media may be used to help facilitate conversations but this is not a replacement for human interaction. Finally, step five, measure success, is imperative to understand your performance in the social media space. Refer back to your social media strategy and objectives and check to see if the goals and objectives have been met (Uhrmacher, 2008).

While each social media campaign varies with its creator and its purpose, measurement of the program itself is essential to monitoring effectiveness. However, social media is evolving at an incredible pace and the tools needed to precisely measure the effectiveness of a social media campaign are too —so how do we measure something that is not complete?

Measuring success in social media

For online media in general, previous research indicates that the majority of agencies rely on qualitative assessments followed by cost-based criteria or Internet-specific measures, like page views or click-throughs (Cheong, Gregorio, & Kim, 2010, p. 403). Traditional brand metrics — like qualitative assessments—only provide a measure of passive interest in a brand. Today, there is close to real-time data capture of consumer response to advertising, and it has several effects. First, the proliferation of media and the fragmentation of audiences rendered the traditional currency of advertising, like advertising exposure or “reach,” to a much less compelling metric of media value than before. Second, advertisers have the option to measure the efficacy of efforts and to concentrate advertising only on those target consumers interested in specific categories, brands or products. Third, the ability to track the relationship between advertising and sales has continually grown more precise and sophisticated (Vollmer & Precourt, 2008, pp. 108-112). These advancements provide a foundation for the measurement of interactive media; in terms of social media metrics, these metrics must move from impressions to impact.

The ability to track metrics in social media is needed for companies to understand what is being said in the social media environment. Currently, there are no ‘best practices’ for measuring a successful social media campaign (Suryakumar, 2011). However, companies need to invest in infrastructure to make such a learning cycle possible. To survive, organizations must apply more effective measurements that link explicitly back to revenue, profit and lifetime value of the customer to measure success with the help of developing technology to grow and support these goals.

The return on investment (ROI) in social media is a hot topic. ROI is defined by Blanchard (2009) as the measurement of the expectation of return from an initial investment made in a program. In other words, each resource allocated in the social media space, whether it is talent, time or actual currency, is accounted for and referred to as the investment in a program: the specific results measure the return. Typically, it happens in a sequence of 1) investment, 2) action, 3) reaction, 4) non-financial impact, and 5) financial impact. The financial impact is the metric that most businesses want and is most commonly referred to in the financial world as the ROI (Blanchard, 2009). The ROI of social media is what clients ultimately want to know; however, it is difficult to precisely track. According to Moffitt and Dover (2011), tracking actions, not impressions, will yield the true value of the brand in terms of brand engagement, differentiation, participation and influence. Building real-time measurement through Web analytics, search engine optimization and mobile technologies will aid in keeping track within community-building initiatives. Finally, measuring in markets of one, meaning tracking the performance at an individual customer level, will glean true consumer insights (Moffitt & Dover, 2011, pp. 285-286).

Companies should invest in listening capabilities that capture activities of existing or potential customers online to aid two-way communication (Suryakumar, 2011). Edwards (2011) advises the use of tools, such as technorati and blogpulse, to monitor brand mentions (Edwards, 2011, p. 2). Several other free and paid-for tools that monitor online chatter can be found online. Real-time monitoring offers companies the opportunity to keep a finger on the pulse of active conversations. Text mining and sentiment analysis are the new, up-and-coming social media analytics but current tools are not able to classify a high percentage of the comments (Suryakumar, 2011). No algorithm or machine logic has the ability to decipher conversational or colloquial language mutations about brands between fans. As a result, social media data is constantly changing and not

entirely accurate (Dumenco, 2011, p. 82).

The need for improvisation and identification of new metrics is high. Specifically, three categories of metrics need to be developed: metrics that help decipher conversations and engagement; metrics to spot key influencers in a community; metrics that help in measuring holistic impact of social media activities on the business (Suryakumar, 2011). It is important to integrate listening data with internal web behavior metrics to enable a business to get a 360-degree view of online customer activity.

Although there has been a significant amount of research regarding the nature of social media and the future of social media data measurement, there is a lack of research in building a theoretical foundation for understanding the current role and future potential of social media measurement in the advertising landscape. This research is intended to fill the gap in the existing research and to create a platform for the exchange of ideas and the generation of knowledge between advertising professionals by specifically garnering the viewpoints of social media measurement and analytics from different agency standpoints. This study seeks to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What makes a social media campaign successful?

RQ2: How is social media monitored by advertising agencies?

RQ3: How is social media measured by advertising agencies?

RQ4: What is the most significant social media metric measured?

This research is unique in that it seeks to understand how social media is measured and analyzed from the point-of-view of those who create and maintain social media programs on a day-to-day basis, the advertising agency professionals, rather than from the perspective of the client for which the campaign was created. This research uses qualitative data rather than quantitative data to gain insights into participants' thoughts and views (Morrison, et al., 2002, p. 22). This study is important because it could create a forum for discussion and education for both companies and agencies alike regarding a difficult-to-define topic that is applicable to almost every brand. This study may provide professionals and non-professionals with new ideas of how to measure and monitor social media success for their businesses and/or clients.

III. Method

The primary method for this research was one-on-one interviews with a variety of advertising professionals, employed by advertising agencies and specialized in client services involving social media. This research, using qualitative data rather than quantitative data, consists of direct, interactive dialogues to produce a shared understanding, giving it validity and authenticity (Branthwaite & Patterson, 2011, pp. 430-440). The researcher chose agencies based on convenience sampling.

In order to gain a large scope of current viewpoints, the author interviewed professionals who were employed by agencies of different sizes, locations and clientele. The sample included agencies ranging in size from 10 employees to 800 employees. All of the agencies are full-service, traditional advertising agencies, located in the United States of America. The researcher sought to collect the viewpoints of agencies that regularly worked on social media campaigns for a variety of clients, who ranged from non-profit clients, to government clients, to business-to-business clients, to business-to-customer clients. All perspectives and answers included in the qualitative data analysis offer a well-rounded view from each agency member (Morrison, et al., 2002, p. 23). Agencies with larger than 250 employees typically led to speaking with a designated department that handles social media projects for clients rather than professionals at smaller agencies who juggle social media programs in addition to traditional advertising campaigns for clients. Variety in size was a key component when choosing agencies to interview.

Professionals at advertising agencies were contacted via email and/or LinkedIn messaging to request their permission to participate in this research. Email correspondence was used to set up a time for the interview. Seven interviews were conducted via telephone. Two partial interviews were conducted via email. Those interviewed were professionals in position, such as Chief Executive Officer, Director of Social Media, Digital Insights Analyst, Social Media Analyst, Account Supervisor, Interactive Account Executive, or Interactive Production Coordinator. This variety gave the researcher diverse viewpoints regarding the measurement of successful social media campaigns. After seven full interviews were conducted, data redundancy was reached

(McCracken, 1988, p. 50). Intensive notes were taken during each interview and responses were analyzed.

In each interview, the same basic 14 questions were asked and other questions were asked based on responses from the interviewee (See Appendix) (Morrison, et al., 2002, p. 47). Each interviewee was first asked to state his or her official title at their place of employment and then to define social media in order for the researcher to understand what he or she was referring to in the answers. The other questions were about their views of practicing and measuring social media successfully for clients.

IV. Findings

The author asked interviewees to articulate their experience and opinion about social media in general. The results do not specify a particular client or campaign; instead the findings reflect their professional viewpoint concerning social media as a whole.

Findings for RQ1: What makes a social media campaign successful?

Social media allows brands to have a casual presence where they can engage with audiences on a personal level; however, this demands transparency, which presents both benefits and ramifications depending on how it is done. A successful social media campaign will listen to its audience and respond as needed—appropriate moderation is the key to success of any platform, but specifically within the social media space, authenticity, transparency and quality are the most important messages to convey (personal communication, November 19, 2011).

In addition to reaching consumers on a personal level, successful social media is used as an amplification tool. A successful campaign serves as a complement to traditional advertising and should be included as a part of any media mix for a client because the social media platform is too pervasive and powerful to ignore. A successful social media campaign cannot exist only within the social media space—it must have a traditional campaign to spark interest; social media serves as a follow up where customers can further interact with the brand (personal communication, November 21, 2011).

The most successful advertising campaigns are completely integrated: brands that intelligently use all of the channels at their disposal to successfully reach consumers are the most effective. The best campaigns are ones that allow followers to deepen their own connections with a brand on their own terms because that is how consumers want to interact: they want to control the interaction instead of being controlled by the brand and they do so through social media (personal communication, November 19, 2011).

Findings for RQ2: Why is social media monitored by advertising agencies?

Advertisers must monitor social media on a day-to-day basis. By communicating with customers, they are kept loyal. Social media requires closer monitoring than traditional advertising because of two reasons: two-way communication and the fluctuation of audience members. Brands look to encourage conversation and engagement through transparency but they must be a part of the conversation to guide it; if it isn't executed and monitored appropriately, negative press for your brand can easily be generated. Social media has the power to reach new audience members that may have previously been unavailable to a message without the social media platform. This possibility further enforces the idea that close and careful monitoring on a daily basis is essential for exceptional social media communication (personal communication, November 7, 2011).

Findings for RQ3: How is social media measured by advertising agencies?

This study found that all of the interviewees primarily use the free, built-in analytics tools that are provided by the social media platform used (specifically Facebook Insights was mentioned in every interview). The second most cited measurement tool was Google Analytics. Finally, nearly every interviewee mentioned the possibility of using third-party analytic tools; however, one specific third-party tool was not stated repeatedly by differing agencies. Free tools are used more frequently than paid-for tools.

Most commonly, the favored metrics are “vanity metrics,” such as #tweets, “likes”, shares or mentions. These metrics show interaction with the brand, but are more insightful when converted into rates like share per post or retweets per tweet (i.e. amplification rate). These rates can potentially help advertisers

understand the reach of the channel (personal communication, November 17, 2011).

Tracking parameters to URLs that are shared on a social site can follow social interactions. The parameters will then get passed into a web analytics tool like Google Analytics and data will be reported to the tracker. Certain tools have the capability to text mine and determine a sentiment analysis; which may help brands discover what they are doing right, or what they are doing wrong. To do a more in-depth and precise analysis, statistical tools are required. Through the process of multiple regression analysis paired with tracking tools, a brand is able to track the original source responsible for promoting a transaction on a brand's e-commerce site (personal communication, November 17, 2011). In other words, this method allows social media analysts to credit a social media promotion for an e-commerce transaction by process of tracking a user's online actions from the social media space to the e-commerce site.

Findings for RQ4: What is the most significant social media metric measured?

The most mentioned metric was the Facebook "like". All of the interviewees stated they regularly track the number of fans (i.e. the number of "likes" per page) for clients. Other metrics commonly tracked are engagement, sharing and time spent on site.

The most important social media metric depends on the campaign's objectives and which social media platforms are used. It would be futile to identify one, single metric and designate it as the most important without knowing what the campaign's objectives were or the type of social platform used (personal communication, November 16, 2011).

If people are engaging in the brand and talking about the campaign, this is the most important indicator of success. People are deepening their connection to the company, which is inherently good advertisement. If advertisers create content, push it out and it receives no response, that is failure in the social media space (personal communication, November 7, 2011).

V. Discussion

Traditional advertising is shrinking. Social media is beginning to take a bigger space because it has the capacity to apply to anyone. Social media is where the people are: One out of every six minutes spent online is spent social networking (Parr, 2011). Advertisers have the opportunity to go straight to their target through social media. Traditional media involves a mass marketing approach, but with social media, brands have the ability to find a niche following and can keep those followers loyal in addition to gleaning new fans through appealing content-creation.

The intimacy of the social media makes it organic and real time. It can serve as a gauge representing how loyal followers feel about a brand at any given minute. This is a different, non-traditional perspective of analyzing advertising effectiveness, the measurement of customer sentiment. Without social media, analytics are still available to measure how successful a traditional ad campaign was; however, customer sentiment allows advertisers to better understand why it did or did not succeed.

Social media must translate value to both the customers and to the business in order to fulfill the need for a space within the social platform. Value to the customer can potentially be captured through surveys or sentiment analysis; value to the business can be measured through attribution analysis or figuring the ROI of social. "Likes" on Facebook and followers on Twitter have become like currency in the advertising world. But how does "fanning" a page or following a handle translate into dollars and cents in a company's cash register?

As of now, the ROI of social media is still being determined. Impressions are recorded; actions are appreciated but are not completely quantified. Followers alone do not tell a story, but sharing and communicating mean customers are digging deeper into the brand, spreading the message and empowering followers. If overall sales go up after launching a social media campaign while keeping the rest of the marketing mix static, it is most likely possible to link the sales to social media if it is the only variable that changed. In other words, the effect of a campaign or the impact of connecting with consumers through the social channel can be determined through multiple regression analysis: elements in the newly-implemented campaign itself are independent variables while their impact is the dependent variable. This is an unofficial way of figuring the ROI of a social media campaign.

In the future, metrics will become more specific: the ROI of social media will eventually be figured. So-

cial media will become more and more integrated into daily life; therefore, brands will too. Brands will become more honest with customers because they are being forced to reach a new level of transparency never before seen. It is impossible to predict the future of social media because it is a medium controlled by users, not by marketers or advertisers.

VI. Conclusion

This study found that social media offers both qualitative and quantitative data for analysis. Advertisers typically want both types of data, while clients primarily want quantitative data. Qualitative metrics, such as engagement and “talking about this,” are equivocally as important as the quantitative number of followers or fans a brand has. Right now, advertisers are focused on driving engagement and communicating with customers through social media to keep them loyal, building the brand personality and ultimately building sales for the client over time and they do so through constant and deliberate monitoring and management in the social media space.

Today, the social channel is still developing and businesses are not measuring social efforts consistently. Advertisers and brands alike are continuously deciding what they want to get out of social media and how it should be measured. Similar to how hits on website was the metric to pay attention to for so many years, the measurement of social media is currently stuck in time; however, measurement capabilities are slowly becoming more precise and varied.

The future of social media is up for discussion. From an advertising standpoint, hyper-targeting will become more specific as people begin to more openly share their lives with the Internet. Everything on the Internet is slowly starting to become more integrated with social media. In fact, daily life is becoming more integrated with social media. Social icons, such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, appear on company websites, on business cards, in retail stores, on product packaging and more. As more and more social platforms develop and grow, measurement tools will have to become applicable to multiple sites in order to offer convenience to users.

The limitations of this research include the use of a convenience sample and its sample size, which prevent the research results from being generalized to the population. The sample was limited to regional agencies, which may have different viewpoints of social media than those of other agencies. The research also tackled a very broad subject that is constantly evolving: Depending on the time of readership, the findings may be outdated and therefore irrelevant to the social media measurement in the future.

The future research of social media measurement should direct toward determining how to quantify emotion on the Internet, pinpointing strong influencers to amplify messages and more importantly, calculating the return on investment for social media. It is safe to say that in the near future, analytics will hone in on proving return on investment to companies and advertisers alike.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

1. What is your official title at your place of work?
 2. How would you define social media?
 3. What is the typical role of social media for clients?
 4. What are the benefits of using social media?
 5. What are the risks of using social media for clients?
 6. Is social media an effective alternative or complement to traditional advertising? Please explain.
 7. What is the most effective social media campaign you have seen or participated in?
 8. For what type of client is social media most effective?
 9. What sort of results do clients typically want from social media?
 10. How do you measure the results of social media for clients? Are there certain tools involved? (ex.: Google Analytics, technorati, etc.)
 11. What is THE most important metric that is paid attention to when measuring results? (ex.: brand perception, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, etc.)
 12. From your point of view, how has the measurement of social media evolved and where is it going?
 13. What are the most important lessons you have learned about social media?
 14. What is the future for social media?
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Documentary and Ethnography: Exploring Ethical Fieldwork Models

Daniel Koehler*

Media Arts and Entertainment
Elon University

Abstract

Conducting fieldwork frequently sparks ethical challenges as researcher and environment clash. This paper seeks to address these challenges, using documentary and ethnography methodologies as a lens to illuminate different ways of thinking about fieldwork ethics. In line with its more qualitative nature, this paper will accomplish its task via meta-analysis and historiography, analyzing past texts as well as introducing new thoughts through interviews with professionals. The key to confronting ethical challenges lies within one's understanding of obligations. Despite a heightened sense of importance placed on ethics in recent years, not enough dialogue has been contributed to this topic. Further conversation may help fieldworkers realize the importance of considering ethics before confronting the grit and dynamism the world has to offer.

I. Introduction

Personal engagement with the subject is the key to understanding a particular culture or social setting. Participant observation . . . interviews, conversational and discourse analysis, documentary analysis, film and photography, life histories all have their place.

—Dick Hobbs¹

Conducting fieldwork that necessitates prolonged human interaction will spark ethical concerns, if not dilemmas. Documentary and ethnography are serious disciplines that place the portrayal of people's lives in the hands of the researcher. These fields of study are not about testing in the lab; they are not about reading in the library; but they are about real life, including the grit — the complex and uncomfortable realities that may bring unforeseen consequences to the subject. These fields of study are about piecing together human stories in a volatile world inhabited by an often-volatile people. How does one successfully navigate the challenges that arise from operating in so dynamic an environment? How does one remain true not only to story and truth but also to one's convictions? The answers are not always clear. This paper seeks to address these challenges, transcending methodological lines to illuminate different ways of thinking about fieldwork ethics. In so doing, it hopes to strike a relative balance, providing a moral compass for future researchers operating in the gritty world that is the field.

This paper, by its very nature, assumes qualitative characteristics. There is nothing hard and fast

Keywords: Fieldwork, Ethics, Filmmaking, Documentary, Ethnography.

Email: dkoehler@elon.edu

¹ Victor Jupp, ed., *The Sage Dictionary of Social Research Methods* (London: Sage Publications, 2006).

about the study of ethics under ideal conditions, let alone under unpredictable ones. Fieldwork takes researchers across cultural, religious, and socio-economic lines as they immerse themselves in the natural environment they choose to study. This hands-on approach to research frequently creates unpredictable conditions as researcher and environment clash. Fieldwork ethics, therefore, becomes complicated and elusive relatively quickly, sometimes tripping up even the most experienced fieldworkers. Generally speaking, fieldwork ethics encompasses how researchers interact with a new environment on moral grounds: deciding an appropriate course of action founded not only on personal belief but also on a greater sense of responsibility to individuals and society.² It also incorporates post-fieldwork interactions, including the dissemination of material. As distinct disciplines, documentary and ethnography tend to handle — or, at the very least, to perceive — these interactions differently, and this paper will explore those differences.

In line with its more qualitative nature, this paper will accomplish its task via meta-analysis and historiography, analyzing past texts as well as introducing new thoughts through interviews with professionals. This approach will help document common ethical challenges in the field and how different fieldworkers have addressed those challenges. Thus, a significant part of this paper will be based on anecdotal evidence. These sections will describe specific situations, recounting the background information needed to understand the ethical concerns at stake. Other parts will synthesize these anecdotes, processing lessons learned as well as advocating certain methods to handle ethical concerns. However, the desire is not to suggest a rigid list of rights or wrongs. To do so would defy the elusive nature of fieldwork ethics. Rather, the desire is to help guide future fieldworkers as they struggle through ethical concerns of their own. The sooner that future fieldworkers are forced to process ethical issues, the more likely they are to handle appropriately the grit and dynamism the world has to offer.

II. Definitions and Perspectives

I'm open for anything . . . I will do anything that I think needs to be done to get them to open up . . . I don't have any what-I-will-do and what-I-won't-do.

—Barbara Kopple³

Anthropologists . . . have obligations to the scholarly discipline, to the wider society and culture, and to the human species, other species, and the environment.

—American Anthropological Association⁴

Documentary and ethnography share similarities, but at the core of each of these disciplines lies a profoundly different spirit. Documentary embodies an art form, a modern incarnation of the age-old tradition of storytelling. Like oral and written stories of the past, documentaries seek to take their viewers on an unforgettable journey, observing and consequently preserving what makes humanity human: hope and fear, comedy and tragedy, compassion and cruelty. When grounded in factual evidence and the sometimes-seeming impossibilities of everyday life, these narratives can be both compelling and meaningful, challenging viewers “to think about what they know, how they know it, and what more they might want to learn.”⁵ Documentary takes many forms: a celebration of humanity, a tool for social activism, a method for preserving the past or even projecting the future. But above all else, documentary is about truthful and compelling storytelling. Romanticism aside, documentary films often carry a journalistic predisposition, operating as a check on power run amuck in line with what Alan Rosenthal calls documentary’s “strong reform or social purpose.”⁶

2 Brooke Barnett et al., *An Introduction to Visual Theory and Practice in the Digital Age* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 49.

3 Liz Stubbs, *Documentary Filmmakers Speak* (New York: Allworth Press, 2002), 212.

4 “Code of Ethics,” <http://www.aaanet.org>.

5 Sheila Curran Bernard, *Documentary Storytelling* (New York: Focal Press, 2010), 2.

6 Alan Rosenthal, *Writing, Directing, and Producing Documentary Films and Videos* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 4.

Ethnography, on the other hand, is first and foremost a science, a method of research that aims “to explore and examine the cultures and societies that are a fundamental part of the human experience.”⁷ Ethnography emerged as a discipline within the realm of academia and, more specifically, anthropology, which christened it in a strong sense of scholarly responsibility. It is therefore a research strategy bound not only by a list of tested methods and techniques, including household surveys, mapping, and kinship charts, but also by a centralized document on ethics, provided by the American Anthropological Association. Moreover, ethnography advocates a standardized, scholarly language, which informs its methodology, whether that be in describing the concept of *building rapport* or the process of becoming a *participant-observer*. Ethnographers “tend to spend long periods of time with their subjects, develop a rapport seldom possible with traditional documentary methods, and seek feedback as a means of verification.”⁸ This perspective is not to make ethnography sound cold or calculated. It, too, deals with the grit and emotional complexities of fieldwork. However, the point is to reveal how ethnography’s background has given the discipline a more codified perspective than that of documentary when it comes to unpacking ethics.

As evidenced by the Barbara Kopple quote that introduces this section, there is little consensus among documentarians when it comes to ethics. Some say documentary is about crafting a strong story, no matter the ethical repercussions. Others say a filmmaker must balance story and ethics, which tends to be the less extreme and healthier perspective. That said, there is truth to documentarian Marcel Ophuls’ confession that filmmakers, by their very nature, are professionals in exploitation: “As a filmmaker you’re always exploiting. It’s part of modern life. It’s a con game to a certain extent.”⁹ Filmmakers specialize in exposing peoples’ lives using an easily manipulated medium. The filmmaking process sometimes unravels into a parasitic, selfish endeavor where the filmmaker momentarily enters into the lives of the subjects, documents them, and soon thereafter abandons them, taking the footage and manipulating it with an exhaustive array of tools. There is no surprise, then, that “the relationship of ethical considerations to film practice is one of the most important topics in the documentary field.”¹⁰ Nevertheless, many would contend that ethical considerations are the least discussed topic in the documentary field as evidenced by the continued influx of documentarians oblivious to their moral obligations.¹¹ Such disregard of ethics tarnishes efforts to make documentary film a serious and respectable pursuit.

Perhaps this pinpoints the problem. Despite a heightened sense of importance placed on ethics, there is no consensus on the topic within the documentary community. Instead, an endless babble of opinion, which can be particularly daunting for emergent filmmakers, clouds hopes for clarity. Lacking guidance and discouraged by the elusive nature of fieldwork ethics, these filmmakers may adopt subpar scruples, mistaking legal protection for adequate ethical standards. No single entity or organization like the ethnographer’s American Anthropological Association has moved above the chaos to champion what it means to be ethical in filmmaking. This is where documentary and ethnography most often collide: uncertainty versus clarity concerning matters of ethics and codes of conduct. Ethnography is steeped in the language of ethics. Before immersing themselves in fieldwork, ethnographers study and confront ethics head-on, grappling with the difficult realities of interacting with people, including deception, misinformation, privacy, and confidentiality.¹²

Not surprisingly, there is a growing demand for the convergence of documentary and ethnography methodologies, which makes this paper both timely and appropriate.¹³ Video ethnography has emerged as a

7 Julian Murchison, *Ethnography Essentials* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 4.

8 Jay Ruby, “Speaking For, Speaking About, Speaking With, or Speaking Alongside: An Anthropological and Documentary Dilemma,” *Visual Anthropology Review* 7 (2008): 57.

9 Calvin Pryluck, “Ultimately We Are All Outsiders: The Ethics of Documentary Filmmaking,” *Journal of the University Film Association* 28 (1976): 22.

10 Rosenthal, *Writing, Directing, and Producing*, 363.

11 Alan Rosenthal and John Corner, *New Challenges for Documentary: Second Edition* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 209.

12 Tom Mould, interview by author, Elon, NC, November 17, 2011. Despite a standardized code of ethics for anthropology, there is admittedly some debate within the ethnography community. Tom Mould, associate professor and folklorist at Elon University, described an instance of conflict during a national conference when fellow ethnographers questioned the pillars of their discipline, including the practicality and functionality of building rapport.

13 Amanda Ravetz, “News from Home: Reflections on Fine Art and Anthropology,” in *Visualizing Anthropology*, ed. Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2005), 69.

serious discipline and gained popularity across the country, attracting people concerned not only about the human experience but also about ethics in filmmaking. Crafting a compelling story is not a license for irresponsibility and negligence. Many researchers desire a healthy balance of documentary's visual storytelling principles with ethnography's centralized code of conduct since "the moral and ethical concerns of one can be applied to the other."¹⁴ In the past, scholars have focused on these fields of study as separate entities and often in the theoretical realm. This paper will attempt to move past the theory of ethics to address real life situations. In so doing, it supports a healthy convergence of documentary and ethnography methodologies in the attempt to guide future fieldworkers as they navigate ethical concerns of their own.

III. Experiences in the Field

You can read a book about ethics, or you can go out with an executive producer who'll tell you what you can and can't do. If you invent everything, people are going to figure it out quickly.

—Nicolas Fraser¹⁵

In order to understand better some of the ethical concerns a fieldworker can expect to confront, this paper showcases the experiences of two professionals: Brooke Barnett and Tom Mould. If nothing else, their stories reveal the stakes involved in fieldwork, even in seemingly uncomplicated, everyday life scenarios. Brooke Barnett is a documentarian with particular emphasis on social issues, which informs her ethical perspective. This emphasis is important to note given the lack of consensus in the realm of documentary. A documentarian whose primary focus is entertainment rather than social issues, for example, is going to approach the same scenario using a profoundly different ethical lens. Tom Mould is an ethnographer with particular emphasis on folklore. His background instills within him a heavy sense of responsibility toward culture and character. This section compiles first-person interviews into easily accessible scenarios and patterns of thought applicable to any fieldworker operating in these disciplines.

The Ethics Continuum

This is my personal code of ethics. It's just pre-thinking — deciding where you stand beforehand rather than making decisions on the fly.

—Brooke Barnett¹⁶

Barnett stresses the importance of intentionality when considering ethics. As this paper has emphasized, ethical questions, by their very nature, elude an easy list of categorized solutions. These questions require serious research and pre-planning in addition to a healthy dose of self-reflection. In the end, despite the professional standards and experiences of others, ethics are founded on a personal code, unique to each fieldworker. Failure to pre-plan invites poor decision-making during the process of fieldwork, miring potentially simple ethical situations in complication, perhaps even risk. Barnett takes great pride in knowing her decisions made while conducting fieldwork have consistently coincided with her moral compass. This consistency is due in part to her dedication to pre-planning: simply put, researching ethics before launching the process of fieldwork is as important as having a strong understanding of story, character, and place. Intensive research may help a documentarian or ethnographer predict or, at the very least, respond more appropriately to ethical problems likely to emerge during fieldwork.

Several years ago, Barnett produced a film about people living with HIV in isolated rural areas in the United States. In these areas, poor access to healthcare in addition to a strong, small-town stigma — people frequently dismissed HIV as a big city or gay disease — made living there very difficult for anyone diagnosed with HIV. The person to emerge as the film's main character was not only HIV positive but also the father of

¹⁴ Rosenthal and Corner, *New Challenges*, 211.

¹⁵ Bernard, *Documentary Storytelling*, 292.

¹⁶ Brooke Barnett, interview by author, Elon, NC, November 16, 2011.

four children. During an interview conducted by Barnett, one of the main character's children started sobbing; Barnett decided to keep the camera rolling in order to capture this emotionally charged moment. This sequence of events presented a moral dilemma to Barnett as she entered the postproduction stages of filmmaking. Would it be ethical for her to use this footage in the final cut or would doing so expose and subsequently exploit the child's emotional vulnerability? The decision was made more difficult by the interview's unquestionable potential as an emotional peak in the film's narrative.

Many filmmakers would not hesitate to use this footage. Capturing someone crying on camera often makes for a powerful moment, the ultimate appeal to pathos. A signed talent release already gave Barnett the legal right to use the interview. Despite being legally covered, however, Barnett made a conscious decision — founded purely on ethical concerns — to use the content of the interview but cut away before the child started crying. The program director responsible for the documentary had caught glimpses of the emotionally charged interview and insisted that cutting away was the wrong choice; the viewer, he argued, needed to see this moment in order to understand the stakes associated with having HIV in a small, rural town. Barnett was nevertheless resolute, referencing her ethical obligation according to a relative continuum of personal dignity afforded to her subjects. The program director stood on one end of the continuum, conflating legal protection with ethical appropriateness. Barnett describes herself as standing somewhere in the middle. She is less concerned for wrongdoers' or political figures' dignity but more affording to ordinary people with whom she works: "This is real people's lives," she says. "The key is that the people in the film see it as honest."¹⁷

This scenario embodies only one of the many ethical challenges faced by Barnett as she navigated interviews and daily life encounters. The frequency with which moral dilemmas were experienced indicates the importance of encouraging an open dialogue on ethics for serious fieldworkers. Grit is everywhere, whether researching in developed or underdeveloped countries with privileged or underprivileged peoples. Barnett confronted another ethical challenge during production that is worth noting given her course of action, one employed across methodological lines as this paper will show. Barnett knew how the main character contracted HIV. According to Barnett, including this component of the story was not only unnecessary but also ethically questionable. Viewers want to know such information as a means by which to judge the main character, which hopelessly misses the point of the film. She therefore approached the question in a novel direction, asking why people are curious about the method of contraction. As the main character described the uselessness of passing judgment, Barnett effectively shamed anyone who wanted to know this information into no longer seeking to know.

Celebrating Culture over Crafting Story

The real dilemma emerges when your ethical obligation to one group runs counter to your obligation to another group.

— Tom Mould¹⁸

Mould raises an interesting question, one that may very well define the heart of fieldwork ethics: where do a fieldworker's loyalties lie? Is there a greater responsibility to the audience — viewers inherently trust documentary films and ethnographic studies to champion unbiased truth — or to the characters being studied? Does withholding information to protect the characters violate the tacit trust between fieldworker and viewer, thereby diluting the power of these studies? Should personal gain factor into questions of loyalty? Mould teaches the Video Ethnography course at Elon University, a small liberal arts institution in North Carolina. While there is nothing particularly exotic about a story framed within the university context, one of Mould's student groups encountered a moral dilemma while conducting fieldwork on campus. Once again, this indicates the ubiquitous nature of the ethical challenges associated with conducting fieldwork. Problems emerge in small, rural towns and universities alike; one cannot avoid moral dilemmas when interacting with people. Although he was not directly involved in this study, Mould provided the necessary faculty mentorship to encourage the student group to adopt accepted ethical standards throughout the course of fieldwork.

This particular student group studied Elon University's women's rugby team, which had been sanctioned the year before for alcohol abuse. The stakes were high; the team would lose official status if it received another infraction. Drinking is a part of rugby culture and, from an ethnographer's perspective, conse-

¹⁷ Barnett, interview by author.

¹⁸ Mould, interview by author.

quently forms a crucial component of the study. The student group sought to compile a broad ethnography, so the importance of drinking could not be ignored despite the topic's sensitivity. According to techniques employed by the ethnography community, a practical solution to handling potentially damaging information is to reframe the question, much as Barnett did in the previous example. Using this strategy, the student group asked about the role of alcohol generally before moving on to address the specifics of the team sanction. They avoided questions linking alcohol to recent developments within the rugby community; although answers to these questions may have made the story more compelling, they were not necessary to understanding the culture in question. This scenario represents a balancing of the fieldworker's ethical obligation to the audience as well as to the characters. Perhaps more importantly, it represents ethnography's commitment to celebrating culture and character over crafting strong story.

Mould indicates a profound difference between documentary and ethnography stemming not only from the practical realities of the respective mediums but also from the overarching objectives of each discipline. Video does not provide subjects with the same opportunity for immunity as do written studies. In ethnography, troubles revolving around sensitive issues are often resolved through simple fixes such as assigning pseudo names. "In video," Mould said somewhat jokingly, drawing a comparison, "you can't put grey, dancing dots over everyone's face."¹⁹ According to Mould, though, the difference between the disciplines is even deeper. Documentary tends to be more issue oriented, assuming a journalistic stance often associated with controlling power run amuck. There is little to no expectation that a documentarian is working to establish a deep rapport with the subjects involved. An ethnographer, on the other hand, spends years with a community in order to understand the culture and characters in question. Ethnographers tend to approach fieldwork differently in terms of relationship expectations, which influences the character-centric way these researchers approach ethical situations.

IV. Conclusion

I take that trust seriously and understand that I must show people fairly and respectfully. That doesn't mean hiding conflicts or negative issues, but it means showing things with context and humanity and sense of humor — because we all have negatives.

—Marshall Curry²⁰

Understanding ethical challenges in relation to different disciplines boils down to acknowledging the ethics continuum described by Barnett in the previous section. Journalism tends to fall on one side of the continuum, embodying hard-hitting news where subjects are respected but not necessarily protected. On the other side of the continuum lies the realm of academia, represented by anthropology and ethnography where culture and character trump everything. Here, subjects tend not only to be respected but also protected. There is veracity to Mould's assertion that documentary harbors a journalistic predisposition, but this disposition stems more from the discipline's flexible spirit. As this paper has described, documentary can be a celebration of humanity, a tool for social activism, or a method for preserving the past or even projecting the future. Documentary, therefore, tends to float; it is a hybrid, landing anywhere on the continuum according to an imprecise combination of the fieldworker's personal ethical obligations and an overarching duty to compelling storytelling. Fieldworkers need to be intentional about asking themselves where they stand on this continuum.

The key to confronting ethical challenges lies within one's understanding of obligations, not only to the subjects of the study but also to a wider audience. Ethnographers tend to be keenly aware of this fact. Many documentarians, however, fail to grasp the value of acting ethically and do not confront issues of obligations before plunging into the gritty world that is the field. For this reason, this paper advocates a healthy balance of documentary's visual storytelling principles with ethnography's centralized code of conduct. This convergence may help promote documentary as an increasingly serious and respectable undertaking, a discipline parallel to ethnography. If nothing else, one should constantly submit one's understanding of ethical obligations to reevaluation. Doing so involves decisions about what kind of people deserve protection and whether compelling storytelling is more important than celebrating character and culture. A fieldworker should also remember

¹⁹ Mould, interview by author.

²⁰ Barnett et al., *Visual Theory and Practice*, 54.

useful methods for confronting ethical challenges such as reframing problematic questions in a way that is sensitive to the study's subjects.

Documentary and ethnography place the portrayal of people's lives in the hands of the researcher. This is a tremendous responsibility. Despite a heightened sense of importance placed on ethics in recent years, not enough dialogue has been contributed to this topic. Emergent researchers, overwhelmed and perhaps disillusioned by the elusive nature of fieldwork ethics, too often overlook questions of obligations and plunge into the field ill-prepared. This is an avoidable reality, and further conversation may help fieldworkers realize the importance of considering ethics before confronting the grit and dynamism the world has to offer. At the very least, one should remember Barnett's encouragement for intentionality: pre-plan, struggle with difficult questions, and study professional codes of ethics, regardless of whether they fall under a particular discipline. One should not be caught in ethically challenging situations without the direction of a strong moral compass because poor decisions affect not only the fieldworker but also the subjects of study.

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Racial Discrimination Rhetoric in *USA Today*

Sam Calvert*

Journalism (Print/Online)
Elon University

Abstract

This is a case study looking at racial rhetoric within the sports section of USA Today over a 12-day period, examining how black and white athletes are portrayed and whether stereotypes found in other news media, such as broadcast and magazines, translate to newspapers. It found that while it did not go outside the stereotypes found in previous research, most often athletes were not framed at all. Instead, they were described simply by their objective statistics and performance on the field. When the newspaper did go into background and character descriptors, though, it stuck within the previously defined racial stereotypes.

I. Introduction

Jackie Robinson played his first game in Major League Baseball April 15, 1947. He became the face of integration in sports, demonstrating that black athletes do indeed have the physical ability to play alongside white ones in professional sports. But today, 64 years later, has it gone to the opposite extreme in the media, overemphasizing the athletic ability of black athletes while ignoring everything else?

For the most part, the stereotype exists that black athletes are gifted athletically but not intellectually.¹ Blacks and whites are compared, with the former excelling in athletics while the latter excels in intellect, both in societal thought and sports journalism. Research suggests that sports broadcasters make comments focusing on one or the other, depending on race, on a regular basis.² Even during the 2000 Men's and Women's NCAA Final Four basketball tournaments, sportscasters characterized blacks and whites differently.³ Racial discrimination still exists and is even perpetuated by broadcast media.

Keywords: *USA Today*, newspaper coverage, black athletes, case study, racial rhetoric

Email: scalvert2@elon.edu

1 Gary A. Sailes, ed., *African Americans in Sport* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 183-198.

2 Jeff Stone, W. Perry, and John M. Darley, "'White Men Can't Jump': Evidence for the Perceptual Confirmation of Racial Stereotypes," *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 19(3, 1997): 291-306; Andrew C. Billings and Susan Tyler Eastman, "Biased Voice of Sports: Racial and Gender Stereotyping in College Basketball Announcing," *Howard Journal of Communications* 12 (2001):183-204.

3 Kelby Halone, and Andrew Billings, "The Structuration of Racialized Sports Talk," (paper presented at 2008 International Communication Association annual meeting).

II. Literature Review

There has been a small amount of recent study done on the racial rhetoric used within sports media to discuss white and black athletes, but most of this has been done on televised productions. For the most part, though, it shows that the stereotypes are mostly the same: White athletes are more dedicated and skilled mentally, while black athletes are more gifted athletically.

Broadcast Media

In general, television announcers used more positive remarks to talk about white athletes, focusing on success because of commitment, hard work and mental ability.⁴ During the 2000 NCAA Final Four basketball tournament, the commentators' favorable descriptions were generally given to the white athletes playing,⁵ while in 1999, Andrew C. Billings and Susan Tyler Eastman watched 66 college basketball games and found that the white athletes were characterized by their effort and work ethic, as well as their intelligence when it came to the game.⁶ This framing extends farther than just in-game commentary, though. In the 2002 Winter Olympics, Billings and Eastman found that the hosts and reporters covering the Games ascribed the success of the white athletes to their commitment and drive in their respective sports.⁷ In the 2004 Summer Olympics, after surveying almost 70 hours of primetime television, Billings and James R. Angelini discovered that more than two-thirds of the athletes mentioned in the broadcasts were white, and 14 out of the 20 most frequently mentioned athletes were white. While white athletes who competed, in fact, outnumbered black athletes, the difference was not so great.⁸

One of the main descriptors used in television to characterize black athletes has been their innate athletic ability.⁹ When Billings and Eastman studied the college basketball broadcasts, they found that most of the success of black athletes was attributed to this inherent skill in sports,¹⁰ and when Billings and Angelini looked at the 2004 Summer Olympics, they found essentially the same thing, with black athletes being described as naturally athletic, quick and powerful, without much mention to their passion or dedication.¹¹ In the research on the 2000 Winter Olympics, Billings and Eastman also found another difference: The backgrounds of the black athletes were more often talked about than those of white athletes.¹² In 1996, 340 hours of international athletic events were studied, and Don Sabo, Sue Curry Jansen, Danny Tate, Margaret Carlisle Duncan, and Susan Leggett discovered that while treatment of race varied from production to production, very few actually negative representations of black athletes appeared in the broadcasts.¹³ This televised representation is important because in the late 1980s and 1990s, the presence of blacks grew exponentially, and Herman Gray asserts that this has shaped how society views blacks and race in general. As the amount of network-television space was devoted to blacks increased, people began to gain more and more exposure to racial characteristics. Gray argues that sometimes it brought to light the similarities between whites and

4 Andrew C. Billings and Susan Tyler Eastman, "Selective Representation of Gender, Ethnicity, and Nationality in American Television Coverage of the 2000 Summer Olympics," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 37 (2002): 351-370; Bryan E. Denham, Andrew C. Billings, and Kelby K. Halone. "Differential Accounts of Race in Broadcast Commentary of the 2000 NCAA Men's and Women's Final Four Basketball Tournaments," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 19 (2002): 315-332; Billings and Halone, "The Structuration of Racialized Sports Talk"; Billings and Eastman, "Biased Voice of Sports," 183-204.

5 Denham, Billings, and Halone, "Differential Accounts of Race in Broadcast Commentary"; Billings, and Halone, "The Structuration of Racialized Sports Talk."

6 Billings and Eastman, "Biased Voices of Sports," 183-204.

7 Billings and Eastman, "Selective Representation of Gender, Ethnicity, and Nationality," 351-370.

8 Andrew C. Billings and James R. Angelini, "Packing the Games for Viewer Consumption: Gender, Ethnicity, and Nationality in NBC's Coverage of the 2004 Summer Olympics," *Communication Quarterly* 55 (2007): 95-111.

9 Billings and Eastman, "Selective Representation of Gender, Ethnicity, and Nationality," 351-370; Billings and Eastman, "Biased Voices of Sports," 183-204.

10 Billings and Eastman, "Selective Representation of Gender, Ethnicity, and Nationality," 351-370.

11 Billings and Eastman, "Biased Voices in Sports," 183-204.

12 Billings and Eastman, "Selective Representation of Gender, Ethnicity, and Nationality," 351-370.

13 Don Sabo, Sue Curry Jansen, Danny Tate, Margaret Carlisle Duncan, and Susan Leggett, "Television International Sport: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalistic Bias," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 20 (1996): 7-21.

blacks, bridging the racial gap, but other times it upheld white stereotypes and widened the gap.¹⁴

Print Media

Print media have been studied but not in as great depth as television. Andrea M. Eagleman looked at articles on Major League Baseball in *Sports Illustrated* from 2000-2007, finding that 80 percent of the time, white athletes are again characterized as working hard in order to succeed, whereas hard work wasn't prominent in talking about black players. Articles also discussed off-the-field hobbies and physical descriptors and focused on the role of the father in teaching the white athlete to play. In contrast, articles centered on black baseball players' backgrounds and families, referencing mothers more often, especially single mothers. There was also the theme of overcoming obstacles, mostly in proving themselves to the public in terms of race, personality and character, physical appearance, and on-field performance. While white players sometimes have to overcome the same obstacles, those themes weren't mentioned.¹⁵

In another study of *Sports Illustrated*, Eugenio Mercurio and Vincent F. Filak looked at articles on prospective National Football League quarterbacks leading up to the NFL Draft from 1998 to 2007. In these articles, white quarterbacks were characterized as less physically talented, but more mentally prepared and less likely to make mental errors. On the flip side, the writers emphasized the black quarterbacks' physical gifts but lack of mental prowess.¹⁶

In the literature on the subject of racial rhetoric within sports media, there is a hole where newspapers are concerned—and more print media in general. This research looked to fill that gap and see if racial stereotypes between black and white athletes exist within the newspaper medium and determine whether the conclusions drawn by previous research is valid in this area.

Research question

When writing about athletes in the newspaper, do racial stereotypes exist for black and white athletes?

Hypothesis

Tendencies of racial rhetoric in newspaper writing exist in the facts chosen and the characteristics ascribed to players, and the conclusions drawn in previous research can be applied to newspapers.

III. Methodology

To begin, the national newspaper *USA Today* was selected to study. It was chosen because of its large national readership—nearly six million readers daily.¹⁷ It has a wide public prominence, and therefore how it frames race and athletics is important, and it has a section just for sports. The sports section of the newspaper was then read for 12 days: September 21, 2011, to October 6, 2011, excluding Saturdays and Sundays since *USA Today* does not publish on weekends. Because there can be more than 10 pages in each sports section, every third article was chosen to read and code.

First, each article was scanned for mentions of current athletes. Coaches and former athletes were excluded because oftentimes these people's athletic ability is not discussed. From the current athletes mentioned, only the white and black athletes were coded. This study looked specifically at the difference in rhetoric between white athletes' descriptions and black athletes', so other ethnicities were not necessary. Articles not containing current black or white athletes were ignored.

14 Herman Gray, *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for Blackness*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

15 Andrea M. Eagleman, "Stereotypes of Race and Nationality: A Qualitative Analysis of Sport Magazine Coverage of MLB Players," *Journal of Sport Management* 25 (2011): 156-169.

16 Eugenio Mercurio, and Vincent F. Filak, "Roughing the Passer: The Framing of Black and White Quarterbacks Prior to the NFL Draft," *The Howard Journal of Communications* 21 (2010): 56-71.

17 "Gannett Brands: USA Today" Gannett Co. Inc., <http://www.gannett.com/section/BRANDS&template=cover>.

Then, how each athlete was mentioned on first-reference was coded. Athletes could fall into one of three categories:

- Basic: Basic information was given, such as a position, team or hometown.
- Statistics/awards: The athlete was introduced with a mention of recent statistics or awards received.
- Positive, subjective description: Commentary on the skill-level or the innate characteristics of the athlete accompanies the mention.

Based on the norms of journalism, the most important information is given right away. For this reason, what information is introduced right after the athlete is mentioned will be the most important, so this study will record which of those three categories each athlete fits into on first reference.

Finally, framing themes in the articles will be noted. If the athletes are only mentioned within the context of the sporting event and only objective facts or statistics from the event are given, then the article falls under a normal framing context. If any other type of theme exists, that frame is recorded.

IV. Findings

From September 21 to October 6, there were 322 articles, which, once every third article was chosen, amounted to 107. Twenty-seven of those pieces did not contain a mention of currently competing athletes, leaving 80 to be coded. Table 1 shows the breakdown of articles by what sport each one primarily centered around. The time period chosen for research fell on Major League Baseball's post-season playoffs and the beginning of football season, which explains why about 60 percent of the articles are about those two sports.

Table 1. Articles by Sport

Sport	Number of articles	Sport	Number of articles
Football	27	Basketball	4
Baseball	26	Hockey	3
Racing	6	Tennis	2
Golf	5	Soccer	2
Fighting	4	Running	1

Within these 89 articles, there are 495 first references to athletes (only eight of those were women). More white athletes were present, representing just over half with 278 first references. Meanwhile, there were 217 black athletes. Because it was a short period of time, most of the star athletes in the in-season sports came up repeatedly. This was true especially in the baseball stories, where there were only a few teams left in the playoffs and only a handful of important players on each team. For this reason, each first-reference mention of an athlete was tallied and every article describing that athlete was examined, instead of what other researchers did by simply selecting one single prominent article during the entire research period.

The majority of athletes were mentioned with just their basic information: 77 percent of white athletes were characterized only by their basic identifiers, while 67 percent of black athletes were done so. Athletic achievements, such as statistics and awards, were more often attributed to black athletes than white athletes, amounting to 29 percent of the first-reference mentions for black athletes, as opposed to 21 percent for white athletes. Furthermore, black athletes were also introduced more often with positive, subjective descriptors: 4 percent, compared to 2 percent for white athletes. Table 2 shows the number of categories by which they were first depicted.

Table 2. First-reference Categories of Athletes

	White athletes	Black athletes
Basic	213	145
Statistics/awards	60	64
Positive descriptors	5	8

While most of the athletes fell within the context of recap from the event or analysis of an upcoming event, a few themes appeared in a few of the articles. For example, the idea of the underdog appeared in four of the articles. Three of those were in reference to white athletes, each using hard work and perseverance to overcome obstacles. One of those was Drew Brees, who the article said “does not possess prototypical size” for a quarterback, but he is continuously able to rise to the occasion because of his spirit and drive for the game.¹⁸ The only “underdog” article centered around a black athlete, “Sproles does it all in Saints’ victory,” told the story of Darren Sproles, who, like Brees, is small for his position, but instead of hard work, Sproles beats the odds because of his physical abilities, such as his speed.¹⁹

The literature on sports journalism pointed to findings that black athletes were characterized by their athletic abilities, while white athletes were characterized more for their intelligence and hard work. As the numbers above indicated, this wasn’t found much within this study. Most of the athletes were simply described by their actual accomplishments within their specific sports—although there were a few exceptions. Four articles distinguished a black athlete for his physical talent, while four portrayed white athletes as having what sports refers to as “intangibles,” the intrinsic characteristics that will make a player or team win. Dallas Cowboys’ Tony Romo is able to get a “gut-check win,”²⁰ and Iowa State University can count on “production when the game is on the line” from quarterback Steele Jantz.²¹ On the other hand, Baylor University’s Robert Griffin III “can do so many things,”²² and Oakland Raiders’ wide receiver Denarius Moore is noted as having an “array of skills.”²³ While this is a small number that is not conclusive, it is interesting to note because this trend never went the other way. White athletes were neither distinguished for their exceeding athletic talent, nor were black athletes set apart for their hard work and drive to win.

One trend is that black athletes are more likely than white athletes to be depicted as getting in trouble. In the 12 days of study, there were five articles in which an athlete either got arrested or accused of competing unfairly. These five articles include eight athletes—only one of them was white. The one white athlete who got in trouble, Paul Hamm, was mentioned in a brief at the very bottom of a list of briefs, so it was hidden among the other headlines.²⁴ Meanwhile, the other seven athletes in trouble all either appeared in full articles or in the very top brief. However, of the four articles centering on black athletes, only one of them was about an actual arrest. Two of them were about NCAA violations stemming from breaking collegiate rules, but no violations of the law. The final one was about playing unfairly on the field. Paul Hamm’s article was about his arrest stemming from an assault charge.

V. Conclusion and discussion

Within this study, it can be concluded that, while tendencies are present to stay within the stereotypes previously established and continually seen in other forms of news media, the newspaper displayed the athletes more objectively according to their personal performances and statistics than others. Other frames come into play every now and again, but for the most part, the newspaper lets the statistics and actions speak

18 Jon Saraceno, “Brees leads Saints’ emotional rally,” *USA Today*, September 26, 2011.

19 Jon Saraceno, “Sproles does it all in Saints’ victory,” *USA Today*, October 3, 2011.

20 Jarrett Bell, “In an instant, reputations can be rebuilt,” *USA Today*, September 28, 2011.

21 Eddie Timanus, “Big 12 to feature big battles among unbeaten,” *USA Today*, September 28, 2011.

22 Ibid.

23 Robert Klemko, “Rookies make strong opening statements,” *USA Today*, September 29, 2011.

24 Compiled by John Tkach, “Gymnast pleads not guilty in assault,” *USA Today*, October 6, 2011.

for themselves, with little emphasis of its own to sway the perception of the athlete.

This makes sense based on the nature and purpose of the newspaper as compared to other forms of news media. Broadcasting is typically live and more off-the-cuff, and therefore it would make sense that some preconceived notions and bias can sneak in and thus perpetuate the cycle of racial stereotyping. At the same time, magazines are typically meant to be more feature-like and go more in-depth into the personality and character of the athletes. It makes sense that more subjective judgments show up in these sorts of publications. However, newspapers don't fall into either of these categories. They are expected to be objective and informative, with several layers of editors to look over the content and make sure that stories fit those criteria without letting any bias in. Sometimes the newspaper runs more of a feature piece, and a majority of the time, this is where the framing of athletes outside of basic modifiers came into play within the study.

This study cannot make any generalized conclusions, however. It was only a small case study of one national newspaper, and therefore these results cannot be extrapolated to all newspapers. It cannot even really be expanded to encompass the entirety of *USA Today*—it can only be generalized to a specific point in the year. Only a select group of sports were seen, and the results could be different if more articles on other sports outside of the primary baseball and football had been selected. This study should, instead, stand both as a pilot study for a more extensive study of this national newspaper on these issues and as a stepping stone to looking into the differences among syndicated national newspapers and more localized ones with a smaller staff and fewer resources.

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Media Framing: a comparative content analysis on mainstream and alternative news coverage of Occupy Wall Street

Margaret Cissel*

Strategic Communications
Elon University

Abstract

This study examined the relationship between media framing and the way both mainstream and alternative media sources portray similar news events. Communication theories were researched and used in a comparative content analysis that examined articles written by mass and alternative media sources within the first three weeks of the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations. The study found that the portrayal of the movement differed greatly depending on the source. While mass media articles framed the movement as lackluster, dismissive and confusing, alternative news emphasized the strength and diversity of its protesters and demonstrations. The results may have far-reaching implications and raise further questions about the mode of communication people depend on to receive their news.

I. Introduction

The news media, and more specifically print media, serve as valuable sources of information and powerful modes of communication. This power controls much of what people understand of events that occur around the world on a daily basis. The way information is transferred to its recipients comes through various forms of communication, all of which is framed to meet the goals of the providing source. In social theory, a 'frame' consists of a schema of interpretation, collection of anecdotes, and stereotypes that individuals rely on to understand and respond to events. In communication, framing defines how news media coverage can shape mass opinion by using these specific frameworks to help guide their reader to understanding.

The following research provides a better understanding of what media framing is, what it is composed of and how it affects the way news is presented to its readers. By examining media framing theory and applying this in an analysis of mainstream and alternative media sources, several trends appear. These trends highlight how news sources are able to influence public perception. While framing news is almost impossible to avoid, it's the motive behind the frames that warrant further research.

The agenda setting theory states that the news media have a large influence on audiences. News companies and journalists have the ability to dictate what stories are considered newsworthy and how much prominence and space they are allocated. Coupling this theory with that of framing, researchers have been able to study the influence of mass media in the formation of public opinion. With an understanding of these theories, it becomes apparent that media sources with economic support and influence could have an effect

* **Keywords:** media framing and bias, agenda setting, media coverage, media conglomerates, mainstream vs. alternative media

Email: mcissel@elon.edu

on the opinions of their readers. The formation of words used in a news article creates a vehicle for persuasion that has the opportunity to form stereotypes and generalizations among the minds of its readers.

The passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 allowed for large corporations to buy media outlets and merge with other growing businesses and companies that would create even larger and more powerful media empires. Today, media giants, such as Time Warner and Telecom, dictate what the public reads, watches and ultimately perceives as the truth.

By comparing the manner that mainstream mass media and alternative sources portray the events of Occupy Wall Street, it is easy to see the difference in the way each structures its news. While both have agendas, the difference lies in the motive of profit. Due to the various funders, advertisers and special interest groups that keep media conglomerates in business, it would seem difficult for mainstream media sources to present news in an unbiased fashion. Conversely, alternative media outlets are independent from corporate control. And while bias is a natural result of time and space limitations, independent media sources have little to no profit motive, which allows for its news to be more transparent than mainstream media.

Researchers have studied framing theory since the late 20th century. However, rarely have the source and motive behind the frame and its possible implications been questioned and researched. This study aims at analyzing the different ways news sources frame similar news stories, their use of media framing and the effect these have on the portrayal of events to its readers.

II. Literature Review

Framing: History and Theory

Media framing is the way in which information is presented to its audiences. Goffman was the first to concentrate on framing as a form of communication and defined “framing” as a “schemata of interpretation” that enables individuals to “locate, perceive, identify and label” occurrences or life experiences (Goffman, 1974). Robert Entman modernized this definition by specifying that “to frame a communicating text or message is to promote certain facets of a ‘perceived reality’ and make them more salient in such a way that endorses a specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or a treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993, p. 51).

Today, media effects can be characterized as “social constructionism” (Scheufele, 1999, p. 103). Mass media constructs social reality by “framing images of reality . . . in a predicable and patterned way” (McQuail, 1994, p. 331). According to Gamson and Modigliani (1989), “Media discourse is part of a process by which individuals construct meaning, and public opinion is part of the process by which journalists . . . develop and crystallize meaning in public discourse” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

By incorporating media framing with agenda setting, priming and bias, Entman believes that readers can better comprehend how and why framing occurs in the media. “Agenda setting serves as the first function of framing as it defines the problems worthy of government attention.” Priming is “the goal, the intended effect, of strategic actors’ framing activities” (Entman, 1993, p. 165). Agenda setting will always occur, even if it is not pervasively biased. However, when paired, agenda setting and priming have the ability to create widespread bias. Bias, as defined by Entman, is “consistent patterns in the framing of mediated communication that promote the influence of one side of conflicts over the use of government power” (Entman, 1993, p. 166).

Consumer culture has penetrated the business of media through the use of framing, agenda setting, priming and bias, which facilitates its commerce. According to Budd, Craig and Steinmen (1999), “Media meet recommended or endorsed bias at the most fundamental levels: consistent framing in favor of capitalism, patriarchy, heterosexism, individualism, consumerism and White privilege, among other deeply entrenched values that help allocate power in American society” (Budd, Craig & Steinmen, 1999).

Framing the Media: 1996 Telecommunications Act

According to Robert McChesney, with the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the United States government deregulated control of media and created a laissez-faire commercialized media. All media systems now are the result of government-sanctioned monopoly rights to scarce frequencies and franchises where the notion now is that media systems are “naturally the province of private interests in pursuit of profit

(McChesney, 2000, p. 128). The Telecommunications Act of 1996 acted as the catalyst to rapid changes in global media systems as it “opened up a ‘Pandora’s box’ of consolidation in the media industry” (Herman & McChesney, 1998 p. 50).

This act gave way to the merging of major film studios with networks that allowed vertical integration. Vertical integration in economic terms is the common ownership or control of successive stages of the production and distribution process of a good or service. In result, the viewing public suffers from reduced diversity and quality of programming (Waterman, 1999 p. 536). This is a trend that follows the predominant tendency within capitalism toward centralization of economic power in the hands of oligopolies (Bettig and Hall, 2003, p. 16). Major corporations saw the rise of media conglomerates as an opportunity for savvy investments through the forms of stock ownership, joint ventures and interlocking boards of directors (Bettig and Hall, 2003 p. 32).

With these investments and joint interest groups came indirect and structural influences in content since media owners were most concerned with sound financial results (Thomas Guback, 1982 p. 32).

Framing as a Tool in Modern Communication

Framing is a tool used by media and politicians to make salient points that would direct their readers to a desired frame of mind. Frank Luntz was the first “professional pollster to systematically use the concept of framing as a campaign tool” (Diatram A. Scheufele & David Tewksbury, 2007, p. 9) as advertised in his 222-page memo called “Language of the 21st century,” which was sent to select members of the U.S. Congress with the distinct message: “It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it” (Frank Luntz, in press). Luntz has researched Republican campaign messages and “distilled terms and phrases that resonated with specific interpretive schemas among audiences and therefore helped shift people’s attitudes” (Diatram A. Scheufele & David Tewksbury, 2007, p. 9).

Frank contends, “The lessons of effective language transcend politics; business, media and even Hollywood . . . language, politics and commerce have always been intertwined, for better or for worse” (Luntz, 2006). Luntz notes, “Given the sheer amount of communication the average person has to contend with, the rules of communication are especially important.” With the right language, word or phrase, he argues, businesses, CEO’s and politicians can get “safely at your destination with money in [their] pocket.” Luntz asserts that, by using “words that pop, the kind of words and phrases you only have to hear once before they burn themselves into your mind and drive you to action,” those with influence over the news can facilitate a change the minds of the readers on any subject matter (Luntz, 2006).

Big Media Effects

After understanding the science behind the use of framing as a media tool and the fact that through governmental deregulation media could be bought and merged between major corporations, it is imperative to now grasp how to incorporate these truths in the examination of who it is that owns the media and the effects these owners might have on the way the news is portrayed to its audiences.

According to McChesney, the media system is not simply an economic category; it is responsible for transmitting culture, journalism and politically relevant information. Fulfilling those needs is mandatory for self-governance (McChesney, 2000, p. 130). On the contrary, as a result of deregulation and the opportunity to make large profits, mainstream media target as their primary audience market not the general public, but rather their advertisers. This introduces a layer of commercial vetting of content – and it gives media tremendous incentive to appeal to those audience members that advertisers wish to reach. Commercial journalism routinely emphasizes business stories and issues of importance to investors (McChesney, 2000, p. 131).

III. Methodology

In order to explore the relationship between media framing and its effects on the portrayal of events in the news a content analysis was performed on articles pertaining to the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations. Seven articles from both mass and alternative media were chosen to be cross-examined. Given the time and space limitations of this study’s research, the article selection was limited to the short time period of September 17th to October 8th. This time period was chosen because it represents the first three weeks the Occupy demonstrations took place on Wall Street.

With the set timeline, the researcher then investigated which news sources were considered 'mainstream media' and 'alternative media.' Mainstream media are defined by its wide-reaching circulation that generally results in what media consumers are likely to find. They are the large influential news conglomerates that underwent mergers in the U.S. after the Telecommunications act of 1996. They are often referenced as 'mainstream' or 'mass media' sources.

Independent media sources are referred to as being providers of news that present alternative information to that of the mainstream media. According to scholar John Downing, alternative media often aim to challenge existing powers, to represent marginalized groups and to foster horizontal linkages among communities of interest. An extensive list of alternative media sources is found online via The Alternative Press Center**.

After identifying the verified types of media sources, the researcher searched "Occupy Wall Street" and the name of each specific media source, e.g., "Occupy Wall Street" FOX NEWS. Together with these search terms and selected dates, a series of articles from each news source were found. From this list, the researcher chose one article that was written closest to September 17th.

The following six mainstream media sources were chosen: FOX NEWS, The New York Post, CNN, The New York Times, ABC News, CNBC and The Wall Street Journal. These sources were chosen because of their prominence and extensive readership, and their ties with large media conglomerates. The following six alternative media sources were chosen: Truthdig, Mother Jones, Loop21, Democracy Now, Digital Journal and Adbusters. These sources were picked because of their reputation among independent news media as being credible and authentic.

Content analysis is a method of research defined, in brief, as "the systematic assignment of communication content to categorize according to rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those categories using statistical methods (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 2005, p. 3). Under the consideration of framing theory, researchers are able to conduct content analysis by measuring clusters of messages also known as frames to see how these are then incorporated into their audiences' schemata (Entman, 1993). Content analysis is essential to finding patterns, based on which scholars and researchers can methodically evaluate news media and its use of framing. In turn, this allows for the comparison of possible agenda setters' bias of the event.

Articles were categorized by length — small (0-400 words); medium (401-800 words); long (801-1,200 words) — tone (positive, negative or neutral), and dominant frames, which varied depending on source of media.

IV. Research Design

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the differences between the way mainstream and alternative media report on the same news event.

RQ. 1: In what ways is news framed by print media?

RQ. 2: Does the way print media frame cultural and social events in their publications affect the perception of the event to its readers?

RQ. 3: When comparing media coverage of Occupy Wall Street, are there differences and/or similarities between the two different groups of media and the way each has framed the events.

By exploring the impact of a media source's frame, agenda, bias and priming, the author hopes to identify what effect these elements may play on news articles.

Mainstream Mass Media

Article 1) FOX NEWS, Demonstrators 'Occupy Wall Street' to Protest Influence of Money on U.S. Politics

Article 2) New York Post, "Over 50 'occupiers' cuffed in Union Sq. chaos"

Article 3) CNN, Dozens arrested in 8th day of 'Occupy Wall Street' protests

Article 4) New York Times, "Hippies and Hipsters Exhale"

**<http://www.altpress.org/>

Article 5) ABC News, Occupy Wall Street Protesters: We Are Americans

Article 6) CNBC, What Does Occupy Wall Street Want?

Article 7) Wall Street Journal, "Wall Street Protest Digs in, Spreads"

Alternative Media

Article 1) Truthdig, "99 Percenters Occupy Wall Street"

Article 2) Mother Jones, "Is #OccupyWallStreet Working?"

Article 3) Loop21, "Occupy Wall Street becomes Nationwide Movement"

Article 4) Democracy Now, [audio] "Cornel West on Occupy Wall Street: It's the Makings of a U.S. Autumn Responding to the Arab Spring"

Article 5) Digital Journal, "Op-ed: Millionaires, unions and activists join (Unions and Activist Join-capitalization) Occupy Wall Street"

Article 6) Mother Jones, "Occupy Wall Street, Powered by Big Labor"

Article 7) Truthout, "Occupy Boston: Day One"

V. Findings

Mainstream Media

Length: Research has shown that there is significant relationship between length of the news article and its perceived importance. By analyzing article length, the researcher was able to understand and draw conclusions about how important the media source felt the covered topic was or should be regarded by its reader. The reason is that the magnitude of a news article can be signified by the location of the story and its length. For example, a news story on the front page and 900 words long can be perceived as more important to its reader than one buried in the middle of the publication and written with only 200 words.

Out of the seven articles examined in this study, five of them were written with less than 400 words and two with more than 800 words, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The length of news stories

LENGTH:	SHORT*	MEDIUM*	LONG*
	1,2,3,5,6**		4,7*

Note. *short indicates 0-400 words; medium, 401-800 words; and long, over 800 words;

***The number represents an article listed above.*

Tone, Dominant Frames & Viewpoint: These three analyses were grouped together because they all overlap and show a relationship. Generally, the article's use of tone and various viewpoints all contribute to the dominant frames seen in all of the articles (see Table 2): downplay/dismissal and conflicts of the Occupy demonstrations. The categorization of frames came directly from the news stories.

Tone of Downplay/Dismissal: The dismissive tone of these articles is highlighted by the viewpoints from which the journalists write.

In a piece written for FOX NEWS, the journalists writes, "Hundreds of demonstrators gathered on Wall Street . . . to protest the influence of money in U.S. politics and decry what they perceive to be the injustices of the financial system." First, the article provides a false count of demonstrators, which was reported by U.S News as 1,000 on September 17th (Green, 2011). Second, the subtle use of the words, "they perceive," immediately places the readers of the article apart from those who are demonstrating. The language used here is one example of the dismissive tone that carries through the rest of the article.

In article 2, Josh Saul and Joe Walker of The New York Post quoted a "complaining" 24 year-old college student named Moses Appleton, who was described as having made the "pilgrimage from Virginia

Beach” to come demonstrate on Wall Street. By quoting a demonstrator with the name, Moses Appleton, and describing how he came to New York as a “pilgrimage,” they create a perception of the demonstrations as being of another world, different and peculiar (Saul & Walker, 2011). Additionally, their use of the verb “complain” to describe how the demonstrator felt reinforces the bothersome frame that the article is using to describe the protesters. This excerpt reinforces the frame that downplays the events of Occupy.

In article 4, New York Times writer, Blow, began his article by describing the Occupy movement as a “festival of frustrations, a collective venting session with little edge or urgency. He continues by adding that Occupy is “a ‘leaderless resistance movement’ of a couple hundred people (depending on whom you ask)” who “have camped out and sat-in at a tiny park in Lower Manhattan to protest greed and corruption, among other things.” He concludes the article by adding that “the protesters would first be meeting at Bowling Green Park for a program that included yoga, a pillow fight and face painting” (Blow, 2011).

By picking out several key words in the above quotations, the trivializing and condescending frame-work becomes evident. The words and phrases, “festival”, “venting”, “little edge or urgency”, “depending on whom you ask” and “pillow fight and face painting” evoke a sense of insignificance. By presenting the Occupy demonstrations in this light, the writer gives the reader the perception that the movement is trivial and inconsequential.

Articles 3, 4, 5 and 7 each use words like “claim,” “so-called,” “few,” “small-scale,” “off-shoot,” “disorganized,” and “confusing.” These all create an unobtrusive nature to the events of Occupy, which when used frequently enough, result in the downplaying of the demonstrations.

Conflict: The conflict frame is one used in most articles to date, and media coverage of Occupy was no different. All but two out of the seven articles written by the mainstream media elaborated on the conflict between police and Occupy protesters.

In a piece for FOX NEWS, the journalist commented on this conflict, “The NYPD had taken action to prevent protestors from wreaking havoc” (2011). By using the phrase “wreaking havoc,” the reader automatically pictures a violent and destructive cataclysm between the officers and protesters. By focusing on this conflict, the journalist steers the reader’s attention away from the actual reasons for the protests in the first place and places more emphasis on the violence.

Journalist Nina Golgowski wrote an entire CNN article on this conflict and titled it, “Dozens arrested in 8th day of ‘Occupy Wall Street’ protests.” The first paragraph reads that “the latest arrests include disorderly conduct, resisting arrest, obstructing governmental administration and assaulting a police officer” (Golgowski, 2011). All of these offences create a framework, which works against the protesters and the movement as a whole

Table 2. The tone and frame of news stories

TONE:	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	NEUTRAL
	6	1,2,3,4,5,7	
DOMINANT FRAMES:	CONFLICT (X v. Y)	DOWNPLAY	
	1,2,3,4,5,6	1,3,4,5,7	

Alternative Media

Length: In contrast to the articles written by the mainstream media, stories from the alternative sources were much longer. Out of the seven alternative news articles, two were of medium length and five were written with more than 800 words (see Table 3 on next page). The reason for this may be due to type of publication or printing costs. Alternative media sources are all online so longer articles don’t cost much to the organization. Still, the length of each article denotes how important these news sources feel the Occupy movement is to its readers.

Table 3. The length of news stories

LENGTH:	SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG
		1,2	3,4,5,6,7

Tone: Each of the seven articles referenced at least one element of the Occupy movement in a positive manner. In an article for Mother Jones, journalist Any Kroll commented on the labor union's joining Occupy by adding, "It's not only Occupy Wall Street winning union support. On Tuesday evening, the Greater Boston Labor Council, which speaks for 154 unions representing 90,000 workers, publicly praised Occupy Boston for shining 'a spotlight on the imbalance of power in our nation and the role that Wall Street has playing in devastating our economy'" (Kroll, 2011). One union worker commented, "My sense is that the outrage they're speaking of is the same outrage we're feeling here in the union." These conversations frame the Occupy movement in a strong light and one that is felt among thousands. Additionally, Cryn Johansen's Loop21 article quoted activist Dr. Noam Chomsky who said, "The courageous and honorable protests underway in Wall Street serve to bring this calamity to public attention and to lead to dedicated efforts to overcome it and set the society on a healthier course" (Johanson, 2011). The overall positive tones of these articles create a frame from which the readers can better understand who the movement speaks for and why they are speaking for it.

Two dominant frames were salient among all seven articles: conflict and diversity in viewpoints. When looking at conflict among the alternative media articles, most of what they discussed pertains to the cause of the movements and the reaction of police and government to the protests. In article 1, written by Amy Goodman for Truthdig, she explained that the rift between both political parties comes as a result of their different ideologies. Their differences can be seen in the Republican's reaction to President Barack Obama's proposed "millionaire's tax" in efforts to reduce the deficit: The Republicans refer to projected tax as "class warfare." Goodman cited one of protesters, who said that "for the last 30 years we've seen a political battle being waged by the super-rich against everyone else," and this sentiment, she concludes, "is the reason why young people have abandoned any thought of appealing to politicians"(Goodman, 2011). These conflicting frames illustrate to the reader the cause of the demonstrations and the reasons why they are continuing their fight.

Additionally, in article 5, Nancy Houser wrote an op-ed for the Digital Journal, where she quoted Glenn Greenwald from Politics.salon, who described the cause of the Occupy Movement as "an adversary of long prevailing institution power which is viewed with hostility by established institutions and their loyalists." The majority of corporate media, says Goodman, "is treating the movement with dismissal or in a rather condescending manner" and that "the more effectively adversarial it is, the more establishment hostility it's going to provoke" (Houser, 2011)

The other frame apparent is the conflict between police and protesters. Lauren Ellis (2011) from Mother Jones wrote that while "the crackdown [of police] has made the mainstream media belatedly pay attention to Occupy Wall Street" the downside is that "the cop vs. protester storyline overshadows the campaign's populist message" (Mother Jones, 2011).

Viewpoint: A person's perception of a news event is a product of the viewpoint(s) from which they heard about it. Contrary to the majority of mainstream articles, those written by alternative sources included a wide-breadth views and perspectives.

In an article for Truthout, journalist Mark Provost started by establishing the fact that his interpretation of the events in the article is a reflection of his own views and "not of the other '99 percent' movement or Occupy Boston as a whole." Furthermore, he included the perspective of one Bostonian banker he ran into on his way to the Occupy site in Boston. "I work for an investment bank. I am a capitalist . . . but I don't agree with American-style capitalism." Without pause, Provost wrote, "he refined his thoughts, 'I am a socialist'" (2011). By including this perspective, the reader now has the understanding that the Occupy movement may not just be for those camping on the streets but also for those working in finance.

Provost continued by adding, "We share painful stories and common concerns" and with this, the demographics of the movement vary greatly. The "ages range from seven to 77," and include "men and women, middle class and homeless, gay and straight, bisexual and transgender, anti-war activists and Marine Corps veterans, African-Americans and immigrants, Arab and Jewish, Asians and Latinos, unemployed and overworked, working class and Ivy-League educated." Here the article illustrates just how diverse the Occupy movement is (Provost, 2011).

Another viewpoint pointed out among the articles is that of both Republican and Democratic parties. In article 4, Democracy Now's Amy Goodman (2011) interviewed Cornell West, an American philosopher and author the Democratic Socialists of America on the Occupy movement. West comments, "It's sublime to see all different colors, all different genders, all different sexual orientation and different cultures, all together" at the demonstrations. The implications of these descriptions add a positive tone to the diversity of Occupiers. Additionally, West describes the political parties' current eco-political climate as "the mean-spiritedness of the Republicans moving towards reactionary and quasi-fascist politics, and the relative spinelessness of a Democratic Party" that helped catalyzed the movement in the first place. These harsh descriptions provide quite a different viewpoint from that of the mainstream media articles discussed previously.

Table 4. The tone and frame of news stories

TONE:	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	NEUTRAL
	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	2	
DOMINANT FRAMES:	CONFLICT (X v. Y)	VIEWPOINT	
	1,2,4,7	2,3,4,6,7	

VI. Discussion

Upon analyzing the content of articles pertaining to the Occupy movement written by both mainstream and alternative media sources, several trends became salient.

First, it is important to note that the difference in lengths between news sources may lie in the printing costs that accompany many of the news articles written for the mainstream media. And so, the alternative media's longer articles may be attributed to the fact that they are all online-based instead of print.

After analyzing the content of these articles, several major trends appear. First, while the mainstream media used confusion over the event as their dominant frames, alternative media focused on what the demonstrators were actually trying to accomplish.

Secondly, while both news sources highlighted various conflicts surrounding the events of Occupy, they did so differently. The mainstream media placed the protesters at fault of the violence, and conversely, the alternative media sources focused on the brutality of the police and their violent acts on the peaceful protesters.

While it is naïve to assume that the reasons for these differences lie in media ownership alone, this study calls to question the agenda, intentions and motive behind the various frames. For example out of the 12 people sitting on the board of The New York Times, all 12 of them had an interest tied to at least two other major corporations, businesses, banks, advertising companies, pharmaceuticals or industries under government influence***.

Some of these industries include Merck Schering-Plough Corporation, the second largest pharmaceutical company in the world; Flamel Tech, a drug delivery business; and the Carlyle group, an infamously corrupt defense equity firm, which makes large sums of money when American goes to war and one that has also been directly tied to both Bush administrations. Also on the board are executives from Tropicana, Nabisco, Verizon, Telecom, Bell Atlantic, Hallmark, Lehman Brothers, Pepsi, Sara Lee and Staples.

The most disconcerting of them all would be William Kennard, an elected member of the board of directors in 2001. Kennard sits as managing director of the Carlyle group, a global equity firm with reported assets in excess of \$150 billion under management****. Before this, he served as Chairman of the U.S. Federal Communications Commission and is the U.S. ambassador to the European Union*****.

*** http://www.nytc.com/company/board_of_directors/index.html

**** Carlyle Group: Culture of Performance, 2010: <http://www.carlyle.com/Media%20Room/Annual%20Report%20Files/2010%20Annual%20Report%20-%20English.pdf>

***** http://www.nytc.com/company/board_of_directors/William_E_Kennard.html

Through its large amounts of wealth and influence, The New York Times has grown in size and range of influence; resulting in becoming a trusted news source that people read and rely on today. While, the specific effects of these influential executives go unpublished, their relationship with The Times and that of their other investments and interests should be questioned.

Since alternative media sources lack large corporate sponsorships and advertisers, the news they provide would seem to be more objective and transparent. On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge the long-standing prejudice independent media has had against large corporations and their relationship with government. And with this, there is a certain degree of bias that resonates throughout the alternative media.

Interestingly, Occupy Wall Street highlights the differences between these two media sources. On the one hand, the mainstream media portrayed Occupy as a directionless and confused gathering of “hippies”; on the other, alternative media focused on how the police, corporations, government and mass media are preventing them from having a voice by prohibiting their free speech through legalities and logistics.

This study only took into account the articles written about the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations between September 17th and October 8th. Due to time constraints, this study was limited to only looking at 14 articles all except one of which pertained to the events in New York City. If given more time, the researcher would have analyzed more stories with a broader time frame and more news sources.

VII. Conclusion

News media serve as an effective source of information and powerful mode of communication. In order to communicate efficiently, writers and journalists use media frames to streamline information flow to their readers. Framing is, on the most fundamental level, the combination of words that form a sentence, phrase or story that consequently provides a message to its recipient. This message, whether it be provided by mass or alternative media, is being framed in some way.

Through content analysis and research, it has been determined that there is a difference between the way mainstream and alternative media present news information. It is speculated that the cause in difference could be due to the financial backing behind different media sources and the motives that drive them. While mainstream media want to protect their fiscal security, independent media aren't pressured by big business and thus are able to project themselves as transparent and objective. Further research needs to be done to determine the strength of the relationship behind funding and media frames used. However, the inherent differences between mainstream and alternative media sources beg to question where they get their funding and what effect this may have on the content of their news.

Framing works in conjunction with agenda setting, priming and bias. But who is it that decides the framework of each story or agenda of each news source? Furthermore, what are the specific implications of such decisions, and how do these affect how news is portrayed to its readers? These are questions yet to be answered.

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Posting Grief on the Wall

Using Facebook to Grieve and Offer Support After a Tragedy

Laura Levitt*

*Broadcast Journalism Major
Elon University*

Abstract

This research explores how people use Facebook as an emotional outlet after a tragedy. Facebook has become a form of communication in the digital age; it is used to send messages, share photos and as a public forum. Facebook can be used as a gathering place for grievers following a death and can be used to send messages of support after an accident. Through the use of auto-ethnography, content analysis and interviews, this research examines the trends behind and the benefits of logging in to grieve and find support.

I. Introduction

"Stay strong Laura" "Thinking about you Laura!!" "Good luck girl!!! Praying for you from London!" These are just three of the almost 300 posts on a Facebook page titled "Pray for Laura Levitt."

In a time of tragedy, people search for ways to reach out for catharsis, information, and solace. Social media site Facebook has added a new platform that is changing how people seek support and grieve after an accident or death. In the case of an accident, people use Facebook to receive updates about the victim's condition, stay in touch with the family, and send supportive messages to the victim. This new platform allows the family to give updates about the condition to thousands of people at once. The victim can also receive supportive messages from friends and strangers.

This forum also gives users a place to mourn and memorialize a deceased friend. People set up groups where friends and strangers can share memories and photos about a deceased friend. People also use the deceased friend's Facebook as a platform for mourning. There is a connection with the lost friend. Facebook also provides a community for mourning. People can share stories about their mutual friend and offer support.

In April of 2010, the Facebook site "Pray for Laura Levitt" was created after an accident left me hospitalized for two week. This study will rely on auto-ethnography, textual analysis and interviews to determine why people turn to social media in the aftermath of an accident or tragedy and will look into the ramifications of doing so.

This research is important because social media has drastically changed how people relate to each other. Studying how social media aids in times of tragedy or grief adds to what is known about these computer-mediated relationships. This specific study is important because it will provide a first-hand account of a support page. Previous researchers have studied Facebook pages objectively because they were not apart of the group. This study will look at the new trend from inside the grieving experience.

* **Keywords:** personal reflection, support, tragedy, family, Facebook, community

Email: llevitt@elon.edu

II. Literature Review

Grief

Grief has been described as a “natural reaction or ‘passion’ [that] produces mental suffering and afflicts physical health” (Archer, 1). Another way of describing grief is as “both an emotional reaction to loss and an active process for dealing with loss” (Merten & Williams, 2009). However it’s defined, grief is an unavoidable aspect of human nature that has both physical and mental side effects. While everyone handles grief in different ways, there are similarities between how everyone grieves. People share the four steps of grief: 1. numbness and disbelief, 2. yearning and searching, 3. disorganization and 4. despair and reorganization (Archer, 24). While the number of steps and the steps themselves vary between studies, there is an understanding that there are steps that bridge from disbelief to acceptance.

The first step, numbness and disbelief, “are common initial reactions to bereavement” (68). The focus of this step is denial. However, this is only a temporary removal from the truth. Once people move beyond the denial stage, they become angry, which “can be regarded as a basic emotional response to loss” (70). Another response is distress, which is “anxiety verging on panic, a desperate feeling of not knowing what to do next, or of wanting to run away” (74). This emotion can be experienced after a death or a near-death experience. These feelings are caused by an inability to control the situation. Running away is seen as an option because people feel like they are in control.

The next step is yearning and disbelief, which includes “feelings of sorrow, mental pain, anxiety and anger” (76). These four characteristics are also included in the first step of numbness and disbelief. Yearning occurs as a result of separation distress, in which there are “feelings of pining surges up inside the person, producing pangs of grief, often resulting in an outburst of sobbing” (76). This goes a step further into preoccupation, when a person relives moments they spend with their lost friend and the moment they lost that friend. The recovery process is often hindered on the anniversary of the death or a significant day, such as a birthday. Because of the pain associated with these dates, “some bereaved people avoid them” (81).

After yearning and disbelief, people who are grieving go through a disorganization period followed by a period of reorganization where they are able to accept their loss and move forward with their lives.

Although people grieve differently, grief is a natural human reaction that is “in the province of biology and psychology” (249). Some recognize grief in stages, but “recent research suggests that grief is best understood within a flexible content, recognizing the tendency to move between phases during the mourning period” (Fearon, 11).

Social Networking

Because this study looks at the grieving process as told through social media, it is necessary to understand how social media creates connections between users. The current model of social networking, which in this case is a website that facilitates online relationships, was started in 1997 with the creation of sixdegrees.com. This social networking site opened a door for many other social networking sites, including Friendster in 2002 and LinkedIn and MySpace in 2003 (Social Networking Timeline, 2007). Facebook, which quickly dominated the social networking field, was founded in 2004. Facebook allows people to create personal profile pages, “friend” people, send messages to their friends, upload pictures and videos and “like” fan pages. Facebook has more than 400 million active users and “the average user spends more than 55 minutes per day on Facebook” (Fearon, 2011).

The way people communicate and interact is changing because of social media. Ninety-three percent of teenagers use the internet with “more than half of those users participating in online social networking via websites such as www.Myspace.com and www.Facebook.com” (Merten & Williams, 2009). Social networking allows people to “share common interests, connect with friends, participate in discussion forums and express themselves through a personalized blog” (Kim & Ahn, 2011). People often form connections with others who are like them; they work together, live near each other and/or have a hobby in common. However, Facebook is changing that. Social networking is “utilized within a variety of social arenas connecting work and home, without geographic or generational barriers” (Fearon, 2011).

As technology evolves social networking changes with it. Initially someone had to be at a computer to use her social networks but now she can check her Facebook from almost anywhere using a smartphone.

Because of this changing technology and the increasing popularity of social networking, it “continues to gain momentum as numerous users experience a new level of interaction with other users” (Kim & Ahn, 2011).

This increased social networking use comes with a price. Although people are creating “relationships” with others on sites like Facebook, “research on excessive forms of Internet usage has shown that uncontrolled or compulsive Internet use has been known to have negative effects on psychological well-being, such as depression and loneliness” (Junghyun, LaRose, & Peng, 2009). Depression can push people online in search of companionship, but as they spend more and more time online they have a hard time regulating their Internet use.

Overuse of social networking can lead to “negative life outcomes such as lower academic grades, missing class or work, and missing a social engagement” (Junghyun, LaRose, & Peng, 2009). People turn to the Internet when they seek companionship, but they often find the opposite. A study of 176 secondary students that analyzed the ramifications of social networking found a correlation between excessive Internet use and loneliness (Deniz, 2010).

Sharing Grief

It is not possible to change grief because there is no specific formula for grief and everyone handles their own grief differently. However, it is possible that “how people share grief” has changed (Dickinson, 2011). The presence of the media surrounding traumatic events has encouraged people to become more open about grieving. There are “solidarity-producing effects of crime, natural disasters and mass tragedies” (Hawdon & Ryan, 2011).

This change in how people share grief was seen “on Facebook, whose ‘Never Forget 9/11’ site the social networking company calls the ‘largest and most interactive 9/11 memorial page on the internet’” (Dickinson, 2011). Facebook facilitates relationships between griever which allows them to support each other. These relationships are between family, friends and strangers, and “a sharing of grief, even by strangers, seems to console; it helps to know that others care” (Dickinson, 2011).

The openness of grief has made people more comfortable with expressing their grief in public. There are “changing practices of public visibilities of death and grief—practices that render visible in a semiotic way what would otherwise be invisible or relatively unknown occurrences of death” (Gibson, 2011). Public grief can be seen, for example, in roadside memorials. These public memorials suggest that “the ordinary citizen feels entitled to public recognition beyond officially sanctioned categories of death events such as war, natural disaster, or mass murder” (Gibson, 2011).

The media coverage of tragic events has encouraged people to be more open with their grief. This has led to people sharing their grief with one another and expressing their grief in very public ways. Furthermore, social structure also affects how people grieve because of the “important function, both for the individual and the group, of funeral rites, mourning customs, and general social structural features in moderating and managing the course of grief” (Fowlkes, 1990).

Grieving Online

People shared grief before social networking sites were popular, but the sites offered a new and very different platform on which to share grief. Facebook is a popular site to connect with people, but “it has also become a site to express grief and bereavement through the creation of Memorial Groups” (Fearon, 2011). The creation of the groups represents “a new mourning ritual with the bereavement process.”

The stages of grief suggest that at the end of the grieving process there is acceptance and moving on. However, social networking allows a long-lasting connection with a deceased friend. If someone has a Facebook page, it stays online after his or her death. The page allows friends to look through their photos and send them messages, meaning they can “maintain the bonds established in a new and reorganized manner” (Fearon, 2011). Reorganization means that rather than moving on from a death a person changes their bond with that person.

The Memorial Page allows someone to communicate with a deceased friend, tell the friend stories and experience the connection they had when the friend was still alive. The friend will not respond, but it gives the griever an outlet. Someone in mourning no longer has to sever all ties immediately at death; they can maintain a relationship with that person.

Social networking also allows people to support other grievers after an accident or death. Facebook

provides an “emotional outlet for individuals unable to express emotion in public” (Fearon, 2011). Furthermore, “talking about the death with others has been suggested as a positive coping skill, allowing individuals to process grief.” News is easily and quickly spread through Facebook, meaning the news of an accident or death is made public, it is potentially in front of hundreds of eyes in a matter of minutes. Facebook allows random strangers to connect, which is helpful if those strangers are grieving over a mutual friend. They can offer each other support and share stories about their friend.

Facebook gives people an outlet for grief, which is especially helpful when people have trouble expressing their grief in public. Facebook also allows people to choose how they grieve. They can write what they want and choose where to write it. They can post a photo, change their profile picture or post a song that expresses how they feel.

Facebook facilitates a new kind of grieving that is very public and yet more personal. People can connect with a friend who passed away and maintain a relationship with that friend. People, whether they know each other or not, can also connect with each other when mourning the loss of a friend or showing support for a friend.

III. Method

For my research I conducted auto-ethnography, which means I studied an experience in my own life. In April of 2010 I was in a severe car crash. The night of my accident my friend Kristi Ferguson created a Facebook page titled “Pray for Laura Levitt.” My brother, sister and Kristi posted updates about my recovery. Family, friends and strangers used this page to receive those updates and to show their support and encouragement for my family and me.

I looked at the page’s posts between April 5, 2010 and April 5, 2011 to determine the frequency and content of the posts. Research suggests that people address posts to the victim and use the page as an outlet, and I studied my Facebook support page to see how it compares to previous research. Additionally, I interviewed my friend who created the group and my mom and sister to ascertain how the people closest to me were impacted by this use of social media. I sent out a survey to the members of the Facebook group that asked closed- and open-ended questions about how and why they used the page. Finally, I used my own recollections and experiences of reading the posts to determine how the page affected my recovery.

Background on the Event

On Monday, April 5, 2010 I was in a severe car accident when a man fleeing police rammed into my Toyota truck on highway 85 in Durham during afternoon rush hour. The truck I was driving flipped approximately 10 times. I was Medevac’d to Duke Medical Center immediately after the crash where I spent four days sedated and on a ventilator due to a badly bruised lung. I came off the ventilator on Friday but it wasn’t until Monday that I was really aware of what was going on. I have very few personal memories from that first week I was in the hospitalized. I was released after twelve days and spent the next month in a wheel chair doing physical therapy for my leg, which was broken and had many deep cuts, and spent a year in physical therapy for my shoulder, which was broken and dislocated.

IV. Findings

Facebook Page Details

Although I was sedated, the rest of the world was actively making efforts to connect with me. My family and I received phone calls, emails, texts and letters from friends and strangers who were interested in my recovery. However, the primary and most expansive source of support was from a Facebook page created by a friend from high school, Kristi Ferguson. The page “Pray for Laura Levitt” was activated early in the morning on April 6. In the description of the group, Ferguson wrote:

“Laura Levitt was involved in a serious car accident on Monday, April 5th. She has several broken

bones and will spend many days in the hospital but I thought it would be nice if we had a group to tell her and her family how much we love them and that we are here for them.”

In an interview with K. Ferguson, she explained that she made the group because she “figured [she’d] get as many people to rally in support of [Laura]” (personal communication, Nov. 11, 2011).. Her initial intention behind the group was a place for people to post photos and stories about me and for my family to post updates. However, “it became a support network” and “ended up being such a big thing where people who barely even knew [me] or people who saw the accident joined the group.” Ferguson said she was surprised by what the group turned into and was “shocked... that it spread so far.” After one of my roommates posted something on the page Ferguson messaged her so that they could support each other, even though they had never met in person. The page gave members “some kind of way to find support in each other.” Summing everything up, Ferguson said that “it was cool to see that something as small as a Facebook page can bring everyone together.”

By the end of April 6, there were 104 posts to the page not including comments to these posts. By the second week there were 254 posts. A couple weeks after the accident there were more than 1000 members. People posted daily until the end of April and then the posts became more sporadic. The last post was on July 24, 2010. In total, there were 272 posts to the page, not including comments on posts. During the second week of my hospital stay I started being able to do more on my own. I was aware of what was going on and understood what happened to me. My parents started bringing my laptop to the hospital. During that week I was able to read the entire Facebook page.

My family didn’t use Facebook a whole lot and was skeptical about Facebook. My parents had a joint Facebook that they never used and my brother and sister had Facebook profiles that they used scarcely. My sister said she mainly used Facebook to send messages about dance performances and to wish people happy birthday. My sister, S. Levitt, even said that she “generally spends a lot of time thinking Facebook is the worst thing ever and has no value and drives community and people apart” (personal communication, Nov. 5, 2011). However, my sister and mom were both surprised and impressed by the Facebook page. My mom, V. Levitt, thought the page was “a stroke of genius [and that] it was inspired.” Both found the page extremely beneficial and used it almost exclusively to contact people. It was helpful in many different ways. My mom said the page “put a lot of information in a simple manner that everyone could access.” There were a lot of my friends from high school and college in the group that my parents wouldn’t have known to contact. The Facebook page allowed my family to contact a large number of people, many of whom they wouldn’t have contacted, at once. This allowed a lot of people to receive first hand information that was coming from the source. This helped minimize false information.

The ability to contact a lot of people at once also made my parents life easier because they “didn’t have the time or the energy to field those phone calls or emails” from people wanting to show support or receive updates.

The page also had a huge impact on my family. My mom said “the humanity of mankind was remarkable” and that “the kind of emotional sustainment that that much encouragement came from was huge.” Through the support of more than 1000 members, my family realized that they weren’t fighting the battle by themselves. My sister, who previously saw Facebook as superfluous, realized that “having something like [Facebook] is really valuable” in that kind of situation.

My family found the Facebook page very beneficial because it gave them a huge support network. People who were members also found the page beneficial. A survey was sent to members of the group and their responses paralleled my family’s responses about why they liked the page, specifically that it was a place to receive updates and gathering place for support. Many of the respondents said they used the page to receive updates, and one added that it was “nice to get information without having to bother a lot of people by phone.”

The page was also used for support and encouragement. People used the page to support the family and to find support themselves. One survey respondent said he/she used the page to show “support for someone I knew who was hurt. I know Laura (distantly) but wanted to acknowledge that I was thinking of her.” Another said that the page was an “excellent meeting house and sense of community supporting Laura in recovery.” One respondent had a slightly different view about the page but was still benefited by it. That respondent said, “it was disheartening to look at, at first because it is how I found out about the accident. But as I started reading the updates and the positive messages I really like looking at it and it reheartened me. [sic]”

Ferguson’s initial intention of creating the page was not how the page was ultimately used. However,

family, total strangers and I found support and encouragement in the page.

Analysis of Posts

There was a mix between posts from family, high school friends, college friends, friends of friends and complete strangers. After examining these posts, two patterns emerged in the messages. First, my family posted updates about my condition. Second, people posted messages of support for my family and me.

There were fifteen posts about my condition that were posted by my brother, my sister and myself. Initially, my parents and siblings had family conferences about what to post on the page. My mom had a small group of family and friends who she updated through email, but this page allowed them to, according to my mom, “put [out] a lot of information in a simple manner that everyone could access” (Levitt & Levitt, 2011).

My family would let people know about my condition, what surgeries I had, what the doctors were saying and what I was doing or how I was responding to them. My sister also posted information about how to send me cards. They would both also use the page to thank everyone for their support. There was about a post every day for the first week.

The first one was on April 6, 2010 just before noon. My brother updated people about what was wrong and what the doctors were doing and saying about my condition. He also wrote:

“...she started waving her hand around a bit in front of my mom. We assumed she was just delirious, but the nurse figured out that she really wanted to communicate. They gave her a pen, and while most of what she wrote was illegible, it’s really a great sign.”

He ended the post by thanking everyone for his or her support. The first couple of updates about my condition were straightforward and serious. The second update was on April 7 and was similar to the first one. However, as it became clear that I would make a full recovery the posts became more celebratory. On April 8, my sister posted:

“UPDATE: Just left Laura at the hospital--she is OFF the ventilator and breathing on her own! She had a lot of questions about the accident and now she is resting. We are so thankful. Please keep the prayers coming!”

The last post by a family member was the most jubilant and thankful of any one before it. On April 13 my sister gave one last update about my condition and thanked everyone for his or her support. At this point I was healthy enough to be giving updates. I gave three updates about my recovery, including an update that I would be leaving the hospital and an update when I first walked during physical therapy. Furthermore, I updated my personal Facebook status and thanked everyone for his or her support.

In response to these posts about my condition, people posted words of support and encouragement to my family and me. On April 7 a friend from high school posted:

“Laura you and your family are in my prayers!!! You are so strong, you will be amazing in your recovery.”

A majority of the posts were very similar to this one. I knew many of the people in the page and while the posts were personalized they all contained similar messages. There were deviations from that pattern, and those posts were from people who I knew really well and from people who I didn’t know at all.

The people who I knew really well included family and friends who I have known for a long time. Posts from these people were more personalized in the sense that they included personal jokes and references to things we had in common. A family friend who I took karate with years ago said:

“...not many know how tough you are, but those of us who sparred against you can tell stories!!!”

Another friend wrote:

“... if Jack Bauer really existed I know he’d lock up the jerk that hit you.”

She was referencing one of our favorite television shows 24. Although many of my close personal friends were also contacting me through other forms of communication, they chose to be a part of the online support group.

Although I knew a majority of the people who posted, there were a handful of posts from complete strangers. Complete strangers are people whose names I don’t recognize and who don’t work with my parents. There were 20 posts from complete strangers. Many of the complete strangers addressed the fact that they didn’t know me and explained how they became aware of my situation. Many of them learned about it

through the media, including news broadcasts and newspapers. However, their posts still included the same messages of support that were discussed earlier.

One complete stranger posted: "I have no [idea] who Laura is all I know is what I read in the paper my thoughts are with her and her family..."

Another said: "Live and work here in the Durham area. I left work a few minutes early that day and just missed this incident. Glad to hear that Laura is improving."

A third complete stranger posted: "Laura, I had similar injuries from an automobile accident in 1995 and was treated at Duke just like you. You are in my prayers."

These are just three of the posts from complete strangers but they all included a personal message and explained why they felt connected with me.

There were two people who connected with me via Facebook that were unexpected and would not have happened without Facebook. The first person that surprised me was Mark Carder. On April 11 he posted:

"i dont know you,whoever my wife and myself were the first on scene at accident.we were at a friends house and saw the wreck.we are so glad to see that you pulled through.seeing it happen i said "whoever is in that truck wont be alive when we were running to it to assist.again, good luck in your recovery laura. [sic]"

Although I don't remember this, Carder told me in a Facebook message that he called 911 while his wife stood with me and talked with me until the emergency crews showed up. Without Facebook I would have never been able to connect with him and never would have known that he and his wife were the first ones on the scene.

The second one was an anchor from WTVD in Durham, North Carolina. WTVD covered my accident and had footage from the scene. My family was contacted by reporters from the station asking for an interview. I Facebook messaged the anchor about doing an interview. When she responded, she said "I remember seeing you from our helicopter's liveshot... and i was praying you would be OK. [sic]" The anchor was one of the few people who saw the immediate aftermath live. She was watching the moments after the accident as they happened. She was able to follow my recovery and we were able to get in touch, two things that would have been very difficult without Facebook.

V. Discussion

Facebook allows strangers to support each other in tough times. Many people sent me messages on Facebook even though they didn't know who I was. Facebook provided an outlet for people to find out updates about me and show me their support. It was an outlet for me, too. I was able to connect with more than a thousand people on one forum. They could write individual messages to me and I could address everyone with one wall post.

Facebook served as a catharsis, an outlet for my emotions. I was able to log on to Facebook and find support that stretched far beyond the walls of my hospital room. Once I was well enough to sit up and was aware of what was going on around me my parents would bring my laptop to my hospital room. About a week after my accident I was alone in my hospital room with my computer. I opened up the Facebook page for the first time and read through every post. It was overwhelming to see how many people, from close family to strangers, posted a message of support on the wall. I could not believe that so many people had reached out to support me. It was comforting to know that there were more than a thousand people connected through Facebook to support me. For about a month I went on the Facebook page on a daily basis to read what people were posting and to post my own updates. I updated people about my recovery and thanked everyone for their support. Almost two years after the accident I still occasionally read the page and am still amazed at the power that a Facebook page had during a challenging time.

The Facebook page provided an outlet for anyone's emotions, not just my own. An aspect of grief is the "active process for dealing with loss" (Merten and Williams, 2009). Even though the authors are addressing grieving over a death, there was an active process for dealing with the grief of the accident. During the first week of my hospital stay the posts by my family were relatively serious and there were messages of

support. As it became clear that I would make a full recovery the posts became more celebratory. There was a process of transitioning from worry to support to celebration.

Social networking sites such as Facebook allow strangers to share common interests, participate in discussion forums and express themselves (Kim & Ahn, 2011). The *Pray for Laura Levitt* Facebook page demonstrates how that happens. More than 1,000 people united over a common interest and participated in discussions and expressions about that common interest. Many of the people in the group didn't know each other, but there was a connection between the members. This bond was strengthened by the "solidarity-producing effects of crime" (Hawdon & Ryan, 2011). The members of the group united on a virtual platform to support me.

Research suggests that when people are writing on the Facebook wall of someone who died or who went through a tragedy they address the victim. For the most part this is true in my situation too. Most people addressed me directly, sharing words of support or a personal joke. However, there are a couple exceptions. When my family would post updates they would address the whole group. Besides the updates, there were only a couple of posts that were not addressed to me. One of the posts was from an Elon professor and was addressed to the group explaining how she knew me and saying she hoped I could return to campus soon. Facebook was the easiest way for people to reach out to me, which explains why most people addressed me directly. Furthermore, Facebook is becoming a form of communication for many, which explains why people turned to Facebook to send me a message more than any other method.

While Facebook is often used for superfluous status updates about watching television or complaining about homework, it offered an unbelievable platform for people to reach out and support me in an easy and quick fashion.

VI. Conclusion

Social media has changed how people communicate with one another and how people mourn and grieve. Grieving was once looked at as a very rigid process that was kept private, but grieving has become a public matter fairly recently. As the Internet became common and pervasive, grieving moved online. Online grieving provides a personal connection to the victim. In my situation, Facebook offered a platform where people could support me, my family and each other through the healing process.

This study adds to the current field of research because it gives a look at using Facebook for grieving and support from the perspective of the victim. Furthermore, previous studies look at how people use Facebook for grieving and this study looks at how Facebook can be used as a means for communal support. This research is important because the Internet is changing how people are grieving.

There are negative ramifications of turning to Facebook to find companionship in times of loneliness. This study is primarily about using Facebook for support rather than grief, which means it doesn't address the ramifications of going online for grieving. Future research should examine if turning to social media helps or hurts the grieving individual, both in terms of the immediate grieving process and the long-term mental health.

Secondly, there are many more social networking sites such as Twitter and Tumblr that are extremely popular and yet offer different ways of interacting with other users. There needs to be research about how people use those social networking sites and how the sites are being used as a platform for grieving to fully understand how people grieve online.

Facebook has become a form of communication for many and a major part of the societal structure. As a part of the social structure, Facebook has also become a natural place to reach out for grief and support during times of tragedy and celebration.

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