THE ORGANIZATION-PUBLIC RELATIONSHIP GOES SOCIAL

by

AMY WILSON

(Under the Direction of Jeff Springston)

ABSTRACT

As social media become increasingly popular, it is important for practitioners to understand how they are best used in public relations. This study surveyed the publics of a local, governmental organization to test the effectiveness of social media for relationship building. The results indicated that pages that are used primarily for one-way communication will not improve publics' perceptions of the quality of their relationship with the organization. If practitioners wish to use their organization's Facebook page as a tool for relationship building, they must balance content that gratifies their publics' need for information with content that intentionally promotes interactivity.

INDEX WORDS: relationship management, organization-public relationships, social media, Facebook, uses and gratifications, governmental organizations

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by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my Creator and Savior, who gave me both the desire for knowledge and the mind with which to seek and acquire it. May I always use these gifts for His glory.

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CHAPTER 1

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Social media have become a popular topic in the world of mass communication, from the university setting to industry. The field of public relations is no exception to this trend. A 2010 study found that in *Public Relations Tactics*, a trade newspaper that is read by students, faculty, and practitioners, more than 95% of the articles published between April 2008 and May 2009 focused on the subject of social media (Taylor & Kent, 2010).

And *Public Relations Tactics* is not the only industry voice calling for increased adoption of social media. PR industry blogs and activities such as the International Association of Business Communicators' podcasts promote social media as relationship-building tools that should be fully integrated into the practice of public relations (Kitchen & Panopoulos, 2010; Taylor & Kent, 2010). A growing body of scholarly work also promotes social media as useful for building organization-public relationships (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Kelleher, 2009; Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Levenshus, 2010; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007; Sweetser, 2010; Sweetser & Lariscy, 2008; Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007; Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009; Wright & Hinson, 2010). To quote Taylor and Kent, "the question today is not so much a question of 'if' but 'how' to use social media in public relations" (2010, p. 207).

The rise of social media as the "future" of public relations began in 1994, when the Internet first became operational for commercial use (Taylor & Kent, 2010). In less than 20 years, the Internet has become an increasingly prevalent and valuable medium that has changed

the way that people, and by extension organizations, communicate with one another (Christ, 2005).

The idea that the industry must accept and adopt online media into their practice is now widely held (Christ, 2005; Curtis, Edwards, Fraser, Gudelsky, Holmquiest, Thornton, & Sweetser, 2010; Kitchen & Panopoulos, 2010; Taylor & Kent, 2010). From e-mail to websites to blogs and now social media, sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are merely the latest in a line of new Web technologies that the industry must learn to effectively employ (Taylor & Kent, 2010).

Increased Adoption of Social Media

Among practitioners. As Internet use became more popular and more widespread in the beginning of the 21st century, research found that public relations practitioners were "laggards" in the adoption of new technologies into their practice (Porter, Sallot, Cameron, & Shamp, 2001). Porter et. al (2001) warned that if practitioners continued to remain behind the curve in adopting new technologies, they would find their practice being encroached upon by other, more technologically savvy departments.

This "laggard" label may no longer be accurate, because today the majority of public relations practitioners are eager and willing to adopt social networking technologies into their practice (Lariscy, Avery, Sweetser, & Howes, 2009; Wright & Hinson, 2010). The 2007 PRSA Wired for Change survey found that 95% of professionals believe new technologies have had a positive impact on public relations. Similarly, 88% say that new technologies allow them to more easily reach mass audiences with their messages (Sullivan, 2007).

Practitioners believe that social media are changing the way public relations is practiced because they are a new way to interact with publics and track emerging issues (Lariscy et al.,

2009). More than 80% of practitioners think that social media have changed the way that organizations communicate with internal and external publics. They also agree that social media can be used to complement traditional media (Wright & Hinson, 2010). Moreover, practitioners are almost unanimous in their agreement that social media are a low-cost way to develop relationships with strategic publics and that they should be monitored to measure the impact of campaigns on publics' attitudes (Wright & Hinson, 2010). Lariscy et al. (2009) found that even practitioners who do not currently use social media are beginning to recognize their importance.

As acceptance of social media has grown in the industry, so has their use (Curtis et al., 2010; Lariscy et al., 2009; Wright & Hinson, 2010). A recent cross-industry survey of practitioners found that almost all (99%) spend some part of their average workdays using social media (Wright & Hinson, 2010). Among Fortune 500+ companies, 76% of practitioners have adopted at least one social media tool, the most popular being blogs, podcasting, video sharing, text messaging, and social networking sites (Lariscy et al., 2009). Similarly, almost all practitioners in the nonprofit sector report using at least one social media tool. For nonprofit practitioners, the most popular tools are social networking sites, video sharing, and blogs (Curtis et al., 2010). These recent findings show that, regardless of their industry, practitioners' perception of the value of social media is growing, as is their use of social media tools (Wright & Hinson, 2010).

Among publics. The rising popularity of social media in the public relations industry has paralleled their increased use by Internet users of all age groups (Lenhart et al., 2010; Madden, 2010). Young adults aged 18 - 29 remain the demographic group with the heaviest use, 86%, but usage among older demographics has grown in the last few years (Madden, 2010). Although e-mail is still the primary form of online communication used by these older adults,

47% of those aged 50 - 64 and 26% of those aged 65 and older now report that they use social media (Madden, 2010).

Many of these older adults are repeat users and not just dabblers in the world of social media, as 44% reported that they had used social media the day before participating in the survey (Madden, 2010). Madden (2010) noted that, once older adults purchase high-speed Internet access, they often come to rely on the Internet for daily use. This includes using social media. The frequency of social media use for older adults with high-speed Internet access is relatively close to the frequency of use for younger demographics (Madden, 2010).

Of even greater importance to the public relations industry are recent findings that two of the demographic groups with the heaviest use of social media, young adults aged 18 - 29 and adults aged 30 - 49, now view the Internet as a primary information resource (Lenhart et al., 2010; Jones & Fox, 2009). This includes social media as well as traditional online search engines like Google and Yahoo. The video-sharing site YouTube is now the second most popular search engine; Americans conducted 2.8 billion searches on YouTube in November 2008 (Helft, 2009). This means that the audience for online public relations efforts constitutes more than just 18 to 29-year-olds, despite Generation Y's nickname of the "Net Generation" (Jones & Fox, 2009). As the Internet becomes an increasingly important part of people's daily media consumption, practitioners who ignore emerging technologies like online and social media will find themselves left behind (Christ, 2005).

Where Is the Proof?

With all the enthusiasm for social media among practitioners, publics, and even scholars, one problem remains. Taylor and Kent (2010) noted an inconsistency between the promotion of social media as a more effective method for public relations and the actual evidence that exists to

support this claim. PR practitioners are in the middle of a learning curve about how best to use social media in their practice (Kitchen & Panopoulos, 2010). Based on the continued growth of the sites' already overwhelming popularity with the public and on the precedent of past "new media" like television or, more recently, the Internet, it is reasonable to assume that social media are here to stay.

If social media are to become a permanent fixture in the communications landscape, then public relations scholars must answer questions concerning if and how they are effective tools for relationship building. While considerable research has examined the relationship-building possibilities of traditional websites and blogs, little has been published about the means for improving organization-public relationships via social networking sites (Waters et al., 2009). The purpose of this study is to begin the work of filling this gap in the public relations literature.

This study will apply relationship management theory to the use of Facebook by a local-level governmental organization by conducting a survey of the organization's stakeholders. Relationship management theory states that the primary concern of public relations should be building relationships with publics, not merely informing or persuading them (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Ferguson, 1984; Ledingham, 2003). The theory also suggests that the quality and content of an organization's communication with its publics may be the most significant factor in the relationship (Broom et al., 1997). Furthermore, scholars have claimed that social media may be an ideal tool for organizations to build relationships and promote two-way communication with their publics (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Curtis et al., 2010; Seo et al., 2009; Waters et al., 2009).

This study will test the validity of that claim by exploring how interacting with an organization on Facebook affects its publics' perception of their relationship with the

organization. This study will also examine the communication aspect of the organization-public relationship through the lens of uses and gratifications theory. The researcher will explore the gratifications publics are seeking when they communicate with an organization on Facebook and the effect these gratifications have on their perceptions of the organization-public relationship's quality.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Theory of Relationship Management

Ferguson (1984) was the first to suggest that relationships should be the central concern of public relations. Her seminal article gave rise to a host of new studies until, in 2002, Kent and Taylor declared that the study of relationships between organizations and their publics had become a focus in public relations scholarship. One year later, an analysis of 748 abstracts from public relations journals found that theory building about relationships accounted for the second-largest share of articles about public relations theory (Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, & Jones, 2003). Today, relationship management remains the second most-investigated theory in public relations, and one that has been applied to range of topic areas, from crisis management to media relations, and a range of industries, from the financial industry to the nonprofit sector (Ledingham, 2008).

Relationship management theory returns public relations to the concept suggested in the name of the field itself: relation(ship)s with the public (Sweetser, 2010). As research has shown, these relationships, when built on trust, commitment, and open, honest communication, result in positive behaviors toward the organization (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). A focus on relationships is especially important now that new online communication technologies have enabled publics to become active participants in the communication process (Bruning, 2002; Bruning & Ledingham, 2000).

Ledingham cites five developments that have led to the emergence of what he calls the "relational perspective":

> (a) recognition that the field of public relations should focus on relationships, “not . . . the organization, nor the public, nor the communication process”; (b) a reconceptualization of public relations as a management function with the need for strategic planning and evaluation; (c) construction of models of organization-stakeholder relationships, including antecedents, maintenance processes, and consequences; (d) the distillation of relationship attributes from the literature of interpersonal relationships and related disciplines; and, (e) development of organization-stakeholder relationship scales to measure relationship quality. (2008, p. 243-244)

To provide a more complete understanding of the way relationship management theory has evolved in literature on public relations theory, the next five sections will examine these developments in detail.

A new focus for public relations. As the society in which it operates has changed, the field of public relations has been forced to adapt as well, such that the current practice of public relations is no longer what it was thirty years ago (Ledingham, 2003). One of the earliest conceptions of a public relations practitioner was that of an "in-house journalist" who wrote articles and stories about the organization that portrayed it in a positive light (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Ledingham, 2001).

Historically, public relations was grounded in this press-agentry approach, where its chief activity was publicity (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999). Furthermore, the field developed during a time when 90% of the U.S. population watched the three major television networks and expressed trust in the media (Bruning, 2002). In this setting, it was only natural that the central

focus of public relations was on communication management and that its primary function was disseminating information (Bruning, 2002; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).

Grunig describes this type of public relations as forming merely symbolic relationships between an organization and its publics (1993). In symbolic relationships, the organization's primary focus is on image management, and the purpose of its communication efforts is to influence its publics' perceptions of itself (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Grunig, 1993). The desired outcome of these positive perceptions is that the organization's publics will behave towards the organization in a manner that it views as positive. Thus, by managing the communication between itself and its publics, the organization can avoid conflict and create a positive relationship (Grunig, 1993).

Toward the end of the twentieth century, scholars and practitioners began to discover that this concept of public relations' purpose and function was shortsighted and ineffective (Grunig, 1993; Lindenmann, 1998). No matter how properly targeted or perfectly crafted the message, communication is not an end in itself. Furthermore, messages are communicated to publics by the way an organization behaves towards them as well as by the way it "speaks" to them through the mass media (Lindenmann, 1998). While communication is important in improving publics' perceptions of an organization, it must be used in conjunction with the organization behaving towards its publics in a way that validates what it says to them (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000).

According to Grunig, actions and words must work together (1993). If an organization focuses only on a symbolic relationship with its publics and ignores the behavioral aspect, it is doomed for failure. No matter how positively its publics have been persuaded to perceive the organization, if it acts negatively towards them, the symbolic relationship will be adversely affected (Grunig, 1993).

As many scholars now argue, if public relations is to be successful and effective, it must focus not on communication between an organization and its publics, but on the relationship that is a product of that communication (Ledingham, 2003). Ferguson began this paradigm shift by stating that relationships are central to public relations (1984). She suggested that public relations must understand the relationship between an organization and its publics, and the social environment in which they exist, instead of merely managing communication between them (Ferguson, 1984).

One year later, Cutlip, Center, and Broom advanced Ferguson's concept by defining public relations as "the management function that identifies, establishes, and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the various publics on whom its success or failure depends" (1985, p. 4). This focus on relationship is what distinguishes public relations from advertising and marketing, as all three fields involve communication between organizations and publics (Bruning & Ralston, 2000).

Public relations as a management function. The new focus also moved public relations from a communication function to a management function that uses communication strategically (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). No longer would public relations' success be gauged by output measurements such as press clippings (Ledingham, 2001). Instead, its contribution would be measured by outcomes, like the changes it produced in the public's perception of and behavior towards the organization (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999).

Whereas practitioners had previously struggled to quantify their contributions to those in management with their eyes on the organization's bottom line, they now had a way to prove that management's investment in a public relations department was worthwhile (Ledingham, 2003). As Grunig and Grunig stated in their paper on public relations and strategic management, the

value of public relations to an organization lies in its ability to build positive, long-term relationships with strategic publics that can either support or divert its mission (2000).

Because the environment in which an organization exists affects what actions it is able to take, the organization must take care to build relationships with the publics in its environment (Grunig & Grunig, 2000). These relationships should be behavioral, rather than merely symbolic. The positive perceptions communicated by the organization should be reinforced by actions of goodwill towards its publics (Grunig, 1993). When the organization communicates with its publics, it does so with relational goals in mind, and the success of its public relations efforts is measured by the quality of the relationship they produce (Ledingham, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).

With their communications efforts focused on relationships rather than clip counting, practitioners help their organization by identifying strategic publics in its environment that may become important resources. They also bring these publics' problems and perspectives to the decision-making process (Grunig & Grunig, 2000). Hon and Grunig stated that it is more effective to include strategic publics' voices into the decision making process than it is to persuade them to agree with a decision that did not involve them (1999). In this way, relationship-focused practitioners serve a strategic management function by acting as a mediator between the organization and its publics (Grunig & Grunig, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999).

The marketing adage that it is cheaper to retain existing customers than it is to create new ones has implications for public relations as well (Lindenmann, 1998). Practitioners contribute to the success of their organization when they develop positive, long-term relationships with its publics (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Lindenmann, 1998). By cultivating positive relationships with the publics in its environment, public relations can help the organization avoid negative

consequences such as lawsuits, regulation, and boycotts and help it to achieve positive results in the form of improved relations with donors, investors, legislators, employees, etc. (Grunig & Grunig, 2000). In a crisis situation, a positive relationship history can also serve as a buffer against damage to the organization's reputation (Coombs & Holladay, 2000).

According to Grunig, symbolic relationships with publics are not an effective, long-term method for achieving organizational goals (1993). Instead, organizations should form behavioral relationships with their publics by acting in a way that is mutually beneficial and then communicating those actions to their publics. These mutually-beneficial, behavioral relationships will result in positive attitudes, and therefore positive behaviors, toward the organization (Bruning, DeMiglio, & Embry, 2006; Grunig, 1993; Ki & Hon, 2007). With its focus on strategically managing relationships to produce desirable outcomes for the organization, relationship management theory can help public relations be seen as a management function and earn practitioners a seat at the management table (Ledingham, 2003).

Models for organization-public relationships. Once public relations had been reconceptualized as a management function that develops and maintains relationships, the next step for scholars was to construct models of these organization-public relationships (Ledingham, 2003). Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) offered the first and most commonly used model. Drawing upon literature from interpersonal communication, psychotherapy, interorganizational relationships, and systems theory, they proposed a model of relationship antecedents, concepts, and consequences (Broom et al., 1997).

Antecedents are the factors within the organization and the external factors in its environment that either cause a relationship with its publics to form or affect an already existing relationship. These factors include social norms, the publics' and organization's perceptions of

one another, their motives for forming the relationship, and their needs and expectations within the relationship. Antecedents can positively affect an organization-public relationship, or they can cause tension and changes within it (Broom et al., 1997).

These antecedents lead to relationships with certain characteristics: “the properties of exchanges, transactions, communication and other interconnected activities” (Broom et al., 1997, p. 94). These relationships are the dynamic result of exchanges, and each relationship has unique and measureable characteristics (Broom et al., 1997). Broom et al. (1997) suggested that communication may be the most significant of these characteristics, and that practitioners should study the symmetry, intensity, content, frequency, valence, and duration of the communication between an organization and its publics.

As a result of these relational exchanges, organizations and their publics experience consequences such as goal attainment, loss of autonomy, and routine or institutionalized behavior. The consequences of organization-public relationships change the environment in which the relationship exists or the goal states of one or both parties in the relationship. The reality of relationship consequences means that organization-public relationships are both the consequences and causes of environmental factors (Broom et al., 1997).

Three years later, Grunig and Huang modified this model to include elements of Grunig's situational theory and two-way symmetric model (2000). Antecedents became "situational antecedents," and practitioners were urged to conduct environmental scanning to identify external factors that might influence the organization-public relationship (Grunig & Huang, 2000). Consequences became the "relationship outcomes" of control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, trust, and goal attainment (Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999).

In order to achieve these relationship outcomes, Grunig and Huang proposed using maintenance strategies, which replaced Broom et al.'s (1997) "relationship concepts" (Grunig & Huang, 2000). These maintenance strategies include providing access to organizational leaders, positivity (the degree to which one party attempts to make the relationship enjoyable for all involved), the openness of thoughts and feelings shared between both parties, assurances (one party conveying to the other that its concerns are legitimate), networking with other coalitions that are important to both parties, and the sharing of tasks in which both parties work together to solve mutual problems (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Other models of organization-public relationships are Toth's (2000) dichotomy of personal and interpersonal communication and Dimmick, Bell, Burgiss, & Ragsdale's (2000) professional model. In Toth's personal model, organizations use one-sided communication to persuade their publics; in her interpersonal model, communication becomes a two-way process that reaches mutual understanding and consensus. In Dimmick et al.'s professional model, practitioners are relationship facilitators tasked with balancing the interests of service providers and recipients. They achieve this goal by maintaining relationships with both parties (Ledingham, 2008).

Aside from models that conceptualize the organization-public relationship, scholars have also developed process models that can be used to explain the process of developing and maintaining relationships (Ledingham, 2008). For example, scholars have pointed to the theory of dialogic communication as a way to understand how an organization-public relationship develops, particularly how it develops online (Bruning et al., 2004a; Jo & Kim, 2003; Kent, 2008; Kent & Taylor, 1998; Kent & Taylor, 2002; McAllister-Spooner, 2009).

Kent and Taylor explained that dialogic communication and the organization-public relationship are related as process and product; dialogic communication produces a positive relationship (1998). They proposed five principles for fostering dialogic communication online, on the organization's website. First, the organization must establish a dialogic loop, which requires not only a feedback mechanism but also the organization's commitment to responding to generated feedback. Second, the organization must provide useful information about topics that its publics either want or need to understand (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Today's publics are active participants in their communication with organizations (Bruning, 2002; Bruning & Ledingham, 2000). If the organization is not willing to communicate with its publics in a way that gratifies their needs and expectations, then they will look elsewhere for information, and true dialogue will not occur (Kent & Taylor, 1998).

Third, the website must encourage return visits. No relationship is based on only one conversation. If publics do not make return visits, then no dialogic communication can occur on the website. Generating return visits is aided by the fourth principle, that the website design and navigation must be intuitive and easy to use. The information found on a website is useless if the organization's publics cannot find it. Finally, the website should keep its visitors on the site by not providing more links to outside websites than is necessary. As the third principle explains, if the organization's publics do not spend much time on its website, then the website's use as a relationship-building tool is limited (Kent & Taylor, 1998).

As well as offering principles for facilitating dialogic communication between an organization and its publics, Kent and Taylor declared that five features should characterize this dialogue (2002). It should include mutuality (an acknowledgement of interdependence), propinquity (an orientation towards relationship and dialogue), empathy, risk (here defined as the

organization's willingness to interact with publics on their own terms), and commitment to the dialogue (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

Since Kent and Taylor proposed the idea, later scholars have applied dialogic communication to other areas of online public relations. Seltzer and Mitrook (2007) studied blogs' potential for relationship building via dialogic communication. Sweetser and Lariscy (2008) examined political candidates' use of Facebook for dialogic communication with their constituents. Bortree and Seltzer (2009) examined environmental advocacy groups' use of dialogic strategies on their Facebook profiles. Finally, Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) studied Fortune 500 companies' use of Twitter as a tool for dialogic communication.

In addition to dialogue as a model for communicating with publics, public relations scholars have developed the SMARTS PR model to provide practitioners with a general plan around which to organize their public relations activities (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000). Each letter in the acronym represents one step in the plan, beginning with "scan," which is short for environmental scanning to determine the current state of the organization-public relationship (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000). Next, practitioners should "map" out their plan by detailing the strategies, tactics, objectives, and goals that they will use to influence their relationships with their publics. The third step, "act," requires that practitioners conduct a field test of their plan and make any necessary revisions before the "roll out" in step four, when the plan will be implemented full-scale. Once the plan has been implemented, practitioners must "track" its influence on their publics' perceptions and behaviors (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000). Ledingham later added the sixth step, "stewardship," to emphasize the need to evaluate the campaign's effects and adjust future campaign plans accordingly (2008).

Organization-public relationship attributes.

A definition for the organization-public relationship. In relationship management theory, the organization-public relationship is the goal and the measured outcome of public relations activities (Ledingham, 2003). As the body of literature on this theory has developed, scholars have attempted to articulate an agreed-upon definition for "organization-public relationship," but research has generally fallen into one of two frameworks: those who describe the organization-public relationship by its impact on behavior and those whose concept is based on the relationship's characteristics (Huang, 2001).

Bruning and Ledingham subscribe to the former conceptualization, defining an organization-public relationship as "the state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political, and/or cultural well-being of the other entity" (1999, p. 160). Huang (1997) and Grunig and Huang (2000), on the other hand, place more emphasis on the perceptions of both parties in the relationship. Huang defined an organization-public relationship as "the degree that the organization and its publics trust one another, agree on which one has rightful power to influence, experience satisfaction with each other, and commit oneself to one another" (1998, p. 12).

Despite their differing emphases, both definitions agree that organization-public relationships are subjective, situational experiences that involve an exchange of resources (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Huang, 2001). They are formed because both parties depend on exchanging information, energy, or resources with one another in order to succeed, in order to combat a perceived mutual threat, because it is legally necessary to associate, or simply because both parties have expectations and perceptions about each other (Broom et al., 1997). As a result, the organization and its publics are interdependent; a change in one affects a change in the

other (Bruning, 2001), and the actions of one party have consequences for the other (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Many related fields view relationships as a central concept, and public relations scholars have drawn upon this knowledge in the process of defining the organization-public relationship (Broom et al., 1997; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Kim, 2001; Ledingham, 2001). Theories from social psychology, interpersonal relationships, and interorganizational relationships have helped illuminate the three most important dynamics at the heart of the organization-public relationship: expectations, satisfaction, and loyalty (Broom et al., 1997; Kim, 2001; Ledingham, 2001; Schoen, 2005).

Kim (2001) points to two paradigms used to explain interpersonal relationships, economic and humanistic, which also characterize the organization-public relationship. The economic paradigm explains the relationship through costs and benefits, where both parties help the other (Kim, 2001). For example, Bruning et al. (2004a) found that publics often want the organization to sponsor events that benefit the community. These events are mutually beneficial to the organization and its publics in that the community is provided with some sort of aid and the organization secures the goodwill of its publics (Bruning et al., 2004a).

Another aspect of the economic paradigm is the concept of expectation and satisfaction, which are critical to the success of the organization-public relationship (Jo & Kim, 2003; Ledingham, 2001). Ledingham uses the social psychology theory of social exchange to explain how expectation and satisfaction drive the exchange of resources in the relationship (2001). The theory posits that both parties in a relationship expect to receive a benefit from their contributions to it and that relational satisfaction occurs when each side perceives that what he gets out of the relationship equals or exceeds what he put in (Ledingham, 2001). Publics,

therefore, have certain expectations of the organization, which it must meet and ideally supersede in order to satisfy them (Bruning & Ledingham, 1998; Jo & Kim, 2003).

The humanistic paradigm, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of publics' cognitive and emotional attachment to the organization (Kim, 2001). The way that each party perceives the other will affect the way that they behave towards one another (Broom et al., 1997). Publics' perceptions about an organization lead to the development of certain attitudes towards it, and these attitudes will affect their behavior towards the organization (Grunig, 1993). Publics will be loyal to an organization if they are emotionally attached or if their attitudes and preferences are biased towards that organization (Jo & Kim, 2003). If they develop a negative attitude towards the organization, no such loyalty is likely to exist (Grunig, 1993). This is why it is important for the organization to find and articulate common interests and goals with its publics that can help these emotional ties begin to form (Bruning et al., 2004a).

As the economic and humanistic paradigms reveal, organization-public relationships can build the public's loyalty to and satisfaction with the organization, and they are governed by the public's expectations of the organization (Ledingham, 2003). Bruning et al. (2004a) found that customers who rated their relationship with an electric company positively were more likely to express loyalty towards the company than those who rated their relationship negatively. Ledingham (2001) found that citizens stated they were satisfied with their local government when they perceived that the benefits they received from the government were equal to or greater than what they had expected to receive. Those who were not satisfied with the benefits they received rated their relationship quality as lower than citizens who were satisfied (Ledingham, 2001). A 2002 study found that students who were satisfied with the benefits received from their

university were more likely than unsatisfied students to be loyal to (and therefore remain at) the university (Bruning, 2002).

It seems, however, that this influence is circular, as Bruning and Ledingham (1998) found that a positive relationship with a telecommunications company could predispose its customers to be satisfied with a company and its products. A later study of the relationship between a bank and its customers found similar results (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000). The quality of the relationship can influence the public's perceptions of its satisfaction and loyalty to the organization, just as the public's levels of satisfaction and loyalty affect how positively they view their relationship with the organization (Bruning & Ledingham, 1998; 2000).

In light of the importance of these three relational dynamics, Kim urges public relations practitioners to consider both the expectations/satisfaction and loyalty aspects of relationships when building favorable relationships with publics by "offering quality products or services beyond the publics' expectation levels and fostering committed relationships through empathic interchange" (2001, p. 800).

Types of organization-public relationships. Similar to the economic/humanistic divide, organization-public relationships have typically been divided into two types: exchange and communal (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Hung, 2005). Exchange relationships, like the economic paradigm, are focused on the benefits each party expects to receive by being in the relationship. One party gives benefits to the other only because it expects to receive benefits in return (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Communal relationships are more similar to the humanistic paradigm; in a communal relationship, both parties provide benefits to the other because they are concerned about each other's welfare (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Bruning applies a similar distinction in his concept of complementary and symmetric relationships (2001). He notes that a complementary relationship, in which one party possesses the knowledge and skill necessary to fulfill the other's goals, is more true to the usual balance of power in organization-public relationships. In these relationships, both parties must intentionally work together for mutual benefit to occur. In a symmetric relationship, both parties identify with each other and see their success as intertwined; for the relationship to be mutually beneficial, they must merely communicate with one another (Bruning, 2001).

Both types of relationships proposed by Hon and Grunig and by Bruning can be mutually beneficial; the difference is in the motivation for each party's actions (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Bruning, 2001). Hung further explored motivations for organizations forming relationships with their publics that might explain the exchange-communal divide (2005). Her qualitative study of multinational companies in China uncovered eight different types of relationships, which she organized into a continuum (Hung, 2005).

Whereas exchange relationships had traditionally been at the far left (and therefore less desirable) end of the continuum due to their self-focus, Hung found four other types of organization-public relationships that she stated were even less desirable: exploitive, manipulative, contractual, and symbiotic (2005). In an exploitive relationship, the party with the most power takes advantage of the other either by not following communal norms or by not fulfilling its end of the resource exchange (Hung, 2005). Manipulative relationships are similar to exploitive ones, because the powerful party in both instances thinks only of its own benefit and does not consider the other's welfare. However, in a manipulative relationship, one party pretends to be concerned about mutual benefit, while in reality it is only looking to serve its own interests (Hung, 2005).

A contractual relationship is one in which both parties begin the relationship by agreeing on a set of behaviors and actions they must each follow (Hung, 2005). Hung considered contractual relationships to be more desirable than manipulative or exploitive ones, but still self-focused (2005). The next relationship type on the continuum, symbiotic, is the most neutral. Symbiotic relationships involve a special type of exchange in which both parties realize their interdependence. They work together, not out of particular concern for their own or for the other's interest, but to fulfill some other mutual goal or simply to survive in their environment (Hung, 2005). For example, Hung related a participant's description of the relationship between the public relations and catering departments of a local hotel, who worked together simply because it was necessary to do their jobs (2005).

According to Hung, the exchange, covenantal, and mutual communal relationships are the three types of organization-public relationships in which both parties hold some degree of concern for the other's welfare (2005). While it is true that the motives behind an exchange relationship may not be as altruistic as those behind a communal one, they are both "win-win" in the sense that each party seeks to benefit the other as well as receive its own benefits (Hung, 2005).

Covenantal relationships, the next on the continuum, are similar to Hon and Grunig's communal relationships in that both involve concern for the other's well-being, but covenantal relationships emphasize open exchange between two parties in order to achieve a common goal, while communal relationships emphasize an intention to protect each other's welfare (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Hung, 2005). Hung (2005) distinguishes mutual communal relationships, in which both parties are equal in their concern for and behavior to promote the other's welfare, from one-sided communal relationships, which she places at the right-most extreme of her

continuum. Neither the self-interested extreme of an exploitive relationship nor the other-interested extreme of a one-sided communal relationship is recommended for an organization. As noble as it may sound to be concerned only for the interests of its publics, an organization cannot survive in its environment if it pays no attention to its own welfare (Hung, 2005).

Measuring the quality of organization-public relationships. In order for a theory to be useful or valid, its concepts must be measurable. Therefore, the fifth essential development in relationship management theory is the construction of scales to measure the relationships that have become the focus of practitioner's communications efforts (Ledingham, 2008). Bruning, Dials, and Shirka (2008) identify two streams of research about the measurement of organization-public relationships. The first research stream results from scholars who seek to measure the relationship's quality by its outcomes; the second measures relational quality based on its characteristics (Bruning et al., 2008).

Measurement by influence on relationship outcomes. The first stream of research began with a 1997 study by Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison, and Lesko that pulled concepts from literature on interpersonal communication, marketing and social psychology, and public relations. Their literature analysis uncovered 18 relational dimensions: investment, commitment, trust, comfort with relational dialectics, cooperation, mutual goals, interdependence, power imbalance, performance satisfaction, comparison level of alternatives, adaptation, nonretrievable investment, shared technology, summate constructs, structural bonds, social bonds, intimacy, and passion (Ledingham, 2008).

Next, Ledingham and Bruning (1998) replicated this study by conducting focus groups and interviews with subscribers to and public relations personnel of a telecommunications company to examine these relational dimensions. They found that the five dimensions of trust,

openness, involvement, commitment, and investment were critical to the development and maintenance of organization-public relationships. These qualitative findings were confirmed by the results of a telephone survey of 384 subscribers to the same telecommunications company (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).

In order to increase the reliability and validity of their scale, Bruning and Ledingham expanded the 1998 version by adding the additional items of reciprocity, mutual legitimacy, mutual understanding, and satisfaction (1999). Their survey of 183 bank customers resulted in a 16-item scale and revealed that organization-public relationships have personal, professional, and community dimensions (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999). Later studies suggested that the personal dimension may be the most influential in determining relational satisfaction and loyalty (Bruning, 2000; Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Bruning & Ralston, 2000).

The personal dimension describes the way that an organization builds a sense of trust with its publics by investing time and energy into interacting with them and demonstrating commitment to their needs. The professional dimension is defined as the organization adopting a professional role in dealing with its publics by meeting their business needs and financially investing in the relationship. Lastly, the community dimension involves the organization being open with its publics, engaging in activities to socially and economically improve their community, and sponsoring events of interest to them (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999).

In 2003, Bruning and Galloway expanded the 1998 scale again to include items for two different dimensions of relational commitment: personal and structural. Personal commitment consists of both parties choosing to remain involved in the relationship because of positive feelings towards one another and the benefits and rewards gained from their interaction. Structural commitment occurs when both parties remain in the relationship because they feel that

other potential partners aren't able to meet their needs or because there are barriers to terminating the relationship (Bruning & Galloway, 2003).

Their survey of an electric company's customers redefined the previous personal, professional and community dimensions into five factors: anthropomorphism (the way the organization demonstrates positive, human qualities), the organization's commitment to community improvement, the public's personal commitment to the organization, comparison of alternatives (the way the public perceives the organization's competitors), and the public's expectations that the organization will behave responsibly, professionally, and beneficially towards them (Bruning & Galloway, 2003).

Measurement by relationship characteristics. The second group of scholars searching for a reliable organization-public relationship scale have focused their efforts on developing a scale that measures the presence or strength of certain relationship characteristics (Bruning et al., 2008). Huang suggested in 1997 that the relational attributes of control mutuality, trust, commitment, and satisfaction be used to measure relationship quality. Later, Hon and Grunig expanded this scale to include items measuring the dimensions of exchange and communal relationships (1999).

Control mutuality is "the degree to which parties agree on who has rightful power to influence one another" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 13). The concept of trust includes each party's confidence in the other's reliability and integrity and their willingness to be open with one another. Relational satisfaction is how favorably both parties feel toward one another and how favorably they perceive each other as a result of the degree to which their expectations of each other have been met. Relational commitment describes how strongly each party feels that the relationship is worth maintaining (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Subsequent studies have found Hon

and Grunig's scale to be a reliable tool for measuring the effectiveness of the organization-public relationship (Jo, Hon, & Brunner, 2004) and for predicting a public's attitudes and behavioral intentions towards an organization (Ki & Hon, 2007).

Huang adapted Hon and Grunig's scale to measure cross-cultural organization-public relationships (2001). Her scale used the first four dimensions of control mutuality, trust, relational satisfaction, and relational commitment and replaced the exchange and communal relationship dimensions with a fifth dimension developed from Eastern literature: face and favor or "mianzi" and "renging." Mianzi is akin to impression management or "keeping face" in society. Renging refers to the social norms that govern relational interactions in Chinese culture; often, renging becomes a social resource to be used and exchanged (Huang, 2001).

A third scale to measure the characteristics of organization-public relationships was developed by Kim (2001). She culled a list of 113 items from literature about public relations, interpersonal communication, and relationships marketing. Her survey of university students resulted in a 16-item scale that measured the four relationship dimensions of trust, commitment, involvement, and reputation (Kim, 2001).

The results of organization-public relationships. During the development of relationship management theory, the measurement of relationship results has gone hand in hand with the measurement of relationship quality. As Bruning and Ledingham (1999) said, one of the main benefits of the relational perspective is that it provides practitioners with measurable results of their communication efforts that can be used to demonstrate public relations' value to the management team.

The public's positive attitude toward the organization-public relationship benefits the organization by increasing the public's satisfaction with the organization (Bruning & Ledingham,

2000; Bruning & Hatfield, 2002; Bruning et al., 2004b; Ki & Hon, 2007), loyalty to the organization (Bruning, 2000; Bruning & Ralston, 2000, 2001; Ki & Hon, 2007; Ledingham, 2001), and positive behavior toward the organization (Bruning, 2002; Bruning & Lambe, 2002).

Bruning and Ledingham (2000) first tested the impact of publics' perceptions of relational quality on their reported satisfaction with the organization by examining the relationship between a bank and its customers. They found that relationship quality indicators explained 75% of the variance in customers' satisfaction with the bank (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000). These results were confirmed when Bruning and Hatfield (2002) replicated the study.

Practitioners can ensure that their publics are satisfied with the organization-public relationship by taking care that the organization meets or exceeds its public's expectations (Bruning et al., 2004a; Ledingham, 2001). As noted earlier, the concept of exchange is central to the organization-public relationship, and both parties expect to receive some sort of benefit from being in the relationship (Kim, 2001). Bruning et al.'s (2004a) study of the relationship between a city and its residents found that citizens' attitudes about relationship quality differentiated those who felt the city had fallen short of, met, or exceeded their expectations. Ki and Hon (2007) tested the university-student relationship and concluded that relational satisfaction was necessary for a positive attitude towards the university.

Relational satisfaction, along with positive attitudes about relational quality, can lead to positive behavioral intentions, or increased loyalty, toward the organization (Ki & Hon, 2007). Publics who feel the organization provides some benefit to them, and therefore rate their relationship more highly, are more likely to express loyalty to the organization (Bruning & Ralston, 2000, 2001; Ki & Hon, 2007; Ledingham, 2001). For example, Ledingham's (2001) study of a government-community relationship found that citizens who felt the city government

was acting in their best interest were more likely to state they intended to remain in the city even if they could live elsewhere at a comparable cost.

Furthermore, publics' attitudes toward the organization-public relationship can also predict actual behavior (Bruning, 2002; Bruning & Lambe, 2002). Bruning (2002) found that freshmen who returned to the same university as sophomores had more positive attitudes and reported greater satisfaction with their relationship with the university than did their classmates who transferred to a different university. By increasing satisfaction and loyalty, which translate into positive behavior toward the organization, quality organization-public relationships give the organization a competitive advantage (Bruning et al., 2006).

Building organization-public relationships. Quality organization-public relationships produce positive results for the organization, but they do not arise by accident. One of the essential tasks of public relations practitioners is to build and maintain them (Ledingham, 2003). The most important factor in ensuring relationship quality is that the relationship be mutually beneficial (Bruning et al., 2006). With the idea of corporate social responsibility receiving ever-greater interest, publics have come to expect mutuality in their interactions with an organization (Ledingham, 2001).

In their study of a government-community relationship, Bruning et. al (2006) found that those who perceived their relationship with the city government to be mutually beneficial were more likely to be satisfied with the relationship. Also, 87% of citizens who said their relationship with the city government was mutually beneficial also said they planned to continue living there, whereas 40% of those who perceived no mutual benefit said they did not plan to continue living in the city (Bruning et al., 2006).

A second important factor in ensuring relationship quality is that the publics recognize they are in a relationship with the organization (Bruning, 2000, 2002; Bruning & Hatfield, 2002; Bruning & Lambe, 2002). When compared to those who do not, publics who identify themselves as being in a relationship with the organization tend to be more satisfied with the relationship (Bruning & Hatfield, 2002), express greater loyalty to the organization, and evaluate the relationship more positively (Bruning, 2000). In their study of a university-student relationship, Bruning and Lambe (2002) found that identifying as being in a relationship was significantly related to returning to the university as a sophomore. Bruning (2000) concluded that publics must first recognize they are in a relationship with the organization before any positive relational outcomes can occur.

In order for publics to self-identify as being in a relationship with the organization, practitioners must communicate with them about the organization-public relationship (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Bruning et al., 2006). Generally, the task of establishing and building a relationship falls to the organization (Hallahan, 2008). In their communications to the public, practitioners should emphasize the organization's relationship-building activities (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000) and that these activities are part of an ongoing relationship (Bruning et al., 2006).

Communication is also necessary to ensure that the organization-public relationship is mutually beneficial (Bruning et al., 2008). The organization cannot meet its publics' needs and expectations unless it first knows what they are (Bruning, 2002; Bruning & Lambe, 2002). This is why effective communication is a necessary relationship maintenance strategy (Bruning et al., 2004). Through communication, practitioners can identify the common goals of the organization

and its publics and target their programming in a way that will help achieve these goals (Bruning et al., 2008; Ledingham, 2001).

Many scholars point to dialogic communication as the most effective way to align the goals and interests of both parties in the relationship (Bruning et al., 2008, Jo & Kim, 2003, Kent & Taylor, 1998). Dialogue, by its definition, requires two-way communication, and therefore forces the organization to listen to what its publics have to say (Bruning et al., 2008). By listening as well as talking to their publics, organizations can monitor the status of the relationship and stay abreast of their publics' needs and expectations (Bruning et al., 2004).

Damaging organization-public relationships. While the majority of research in relationship management theory has focused on strategies for building and maintaining organization-public relationships, a few studies have examined factors that damage these relationships (Baker, Baker, & Tedesco, 2007; Sweetser, 2010). Baker et al. (2007) studied the impact of phishing attempts on the organization-public relationship, while Sweetser (2010) studied the impact of nondisclosure on the relationship.

The results of both studies indicate that unethical behavior on the part of the organization negatively affects publics' perceptions of relationship quality by damaging their trust in the organization (Baker et al., 2007; Sweetser, 2010). Because a lack of transparency can damage the organization-public relationship, practitioners should be careful to communicate honestly and openly with their publics (Sweetser, 2010).

Since the idea was first proposed in 1984, public relations scholarship has examined relationship management theory from myriad angles in order to develop workable models and definitions and valid, reliable measurements for organization-public relationships. What has emerged from this decades-long stream of research is a valid, usable theory for public relations

scholarship that provides an organizing concept for teaching, scholarship, and practice and a framework within which the field can respond to the demands of organizations, publics, and society at large (Ledingham, 2003).

Conceptualizing Social Networking Sites

Before examining the impact of social networking sites on public relations literature, and on relationship management theory in particular, it is important to understand and define what exactly is being studied. Social networking sites fall under the umbrella of a set of online technologies that are alternatively called “new media,” “social media,” or "Web 2.0," but the most commonly used term in public relations literature is "social media" (Beer & Burrows, 2007; Wright & Hinson, 2009).

What are social media? While exact definitions for "social media" may vary, the common thread is that social media are inherently interactive, social communication tools (Avery, Lariscy, Amador, Ickowitz, Primm, & Taylor, 2010b). They are "a set of technology tools that are just as they sound — mediated opportunities for bringing people together and encouraging social networking and dialogic communication" (Sweetser & Lariscy, 2008, p. 180).

At the heart of social media is the concept of an active audience that contributes its own content and consumes the content that others have contributed (Beer & Burrows, 2007; Sweetser & Lariscy, 2008). By blogging and posting their own content and tagging and sharing the content of others, social media users are involved in generating online content, instead of merely browsing media content that has already been posted (Beer & Burrows, 2007).

According to Beer and Burrows, this is what distinguishes the era of Web 2.0 from what they call "Web 1.0" (2007). With the advent of the Internet (Web 1.0), media users suddenly had a much wider array of media outlets and content from which to choose (Beer & Burrows, 2007;

Ruggiero, 2000). However, social media give media users even greater control over the content they consume (Beer & Burrows, 2007). They can produce and publish their own content with relative ease, which means that each user has an even greater variety of choices when selecting media content to meet his own needs (Shao, 2008).

In this way, social media are also distinct from traditional media, which usually require significant barriers to entry in order to publish content (Wright & Hinson, 2009). Social media, on the other hand, are a means for anyone to publish digital content, receive real-time feedback about it, view and provide feedback about others' content, and change the content they originally posted; more succinctly, they are user-generated content (Beer & Burrows, 2007; Wright & Hinson, 2009).

The term "social media" encompasses an array of technology tools that allow users to share their creative content, opinions, experiences, insights, and media (in the form of photos, videos, or music) with one another (Lariscy, Avery, Sweetser, & Howes, 2009). Beer and Burrows have classified these tools into four types of applications: wikis, folksonomies, social networking sites, and mashups (2007).

Wikis are information resources constructed and edited by anyone who wishes to contribute, with a collaborative, online database as the end result (Beer & Burrows, 2007; Wright & Hinson, 2009). The most well-known example of a wiki is Wikipedia, but wikis are also created on a smaller scale to serve communities or organizations (Wright & Hinson, 2009).

Folksonomies are defined as online platforms which allow users to tag and classify pages, browse through their own tags, and browse through others' tags (Beer & Burrows, 2007). This more general category of "folksonomies" includes three types of social media that public

relations literature generally lists as photo sharing, video sharing and social bookmarking (Wright & Hinson, 2009).

Photo sharing means publishing digital photographs on a website, such as Flickr, where others can access them; similarly, video sharing involves uploading video clips or even short films to a website, such as YouTube, where others can see and comment on them (Wright & Hinson, 2009). Finally, social bookmarking sites like delicious.com allow users to store, organize, search, and share their favorite links (Wright & Hinson, 2009). In all three forms of social media, the content is tagged or categorized by the user who uploaded it, which makes the content searchable and allows users to locate and share their favorite photos, videos, and web pages (Beer & Burrows, 2007).

Social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace are similar to folksonomies in that they allow users to publish their own information and multimedia content and to browse the content published by certain others (Beer & Burrows, 2007; Wright & Hinson, 2007). However, in the case of a social networking site, the focus of the site activity is on publishing not content but social connections (Beer & Burrows, 2007; Boyd & Ellision, 2007).

While the site layout, member groups, and site terminology may differ, every social networking site allows its users to construct a public or semi-private profile, to decide on and publish a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and to navigate through the list of their own connections and those of other users on the site (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Mashups, Beer and Burrows' fourth type of Web 2.0 application, are hybrid applications that combine two or more technologies into a new, unrelated tool. For example, software developers have combined police reports with Google Maps to produce crime maps of most major U.S. cities (Beer & Burrows, 2007).

In their annual studies of social media use in public relations, Wright and Hinson have studied several social media tools not included in Beer and Burrows' list: online forums, RSS feeds, podcasts, search engine marketing, blogs, and micro-blogging sites (2009). RSS, which stands for "really simple syndication," is an online feed that publishes frequently updated work in written, audio and/or video format and delivers the content to subscribers. Podcasts are syndicated audio and/or video content available for download. Finally, search engine marketing involves increasing the visibility of a website on popular search engines like Google and Bing (Wright & Hinson, 2009).

Blogs are one of the oldest forms of social media, and they remain one of the most popular for use by public relations professionals (Burns, 2008; Curtis et al., 2010; Eyrich et al., 2008; Lariscy et al., 2009). Sometimes described as online diaries, blogs are regularly updated websites consisting of entries of text, audio, and/or video in reverse chronological order (Burns, 2008; Wright & Hinson, 2009). According to Burns, blogs are most public relations practitioners' first foray into the social media world (2008).

Micro-blogging sites, a more recently developed tool, are similar to blogs in that they allows users to publish updates of text, links, or small media files, but these updates are of limited length. For example, Twitter, the most popular micro-blogging site, allows its users to send "tweets" of 140 characters of text or hyperlink. Some of the more popular social networking sites have begun to include their own micro-blogging feature in the form of a "status update" (Wright & Hinson, 2009).

Other, less popular social media tools that have also been researched include virtual worlds, such as Second Life, online gaming, events, and news aggregation sites like Digg.com (Eyrich et al., 2008; Lariscy et al., 2009). With the number and variety of tools available, it is no

surprise that the content provided by the tens of millions of social media users around the world makes up as much as one-third of today's web content (Finin, Joshi, Kolari, Java, Kale, & Karandikar, 2008). In fact, social media are now the number one use of the Internet (Wright & Hinson, 2010).

What, then, is a social networking site? Social networking sites have become a particularly popular type of social media, and more than half of Internet users have an account on a social networking site (Young, 2009). Along with blogs, they are one of the tools most frequently used by public relations practitioners (Curtis et al., 2010; Lariscy et al., 2009; Wright & Hinson, 2010). Scholars have examined their use in various sectors of public relations, from political campaigns to corporate public relations to nonprofit organizations and health communication (Avery, Lariscy, & Sweetser, 2010a; Avery et al., 2010b; Diga & Kelleher, 2009; Lariscy et al., 2009; Sweetser & Lariscy, 2008; Waters et al., 2009).

Beer (2008) cautions that before social networking sites can be properly studied, they must be defined, as they are only one type of - and not the model for - social media. Social networking sites are unique in that "they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks" (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 210). This ability to expand and articulate one's network of friends is the motivation for creating and maintaining a profile on a social networking site and what distinguishes these sites from other forms of social media (Beer, 2008).

Other scholars offer varying definitions of what constitutes a social networking site, but every definition centers on the concept of social connections between users. Richter and Koch define social networking sites as digital reproductions of human social networks that allow users to maintain contact, despite geographical or social barriers, with those they have designated as

friends (2008). Schmidt describes them as "online-based applications… that facilitate the creation, articulation, and maintenance of social networks" (2007, p. 1).

Relationships, then, are the foundation of social networking sites, and maintaining these social connections is their goal (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Joinson, 2008; Waters et al., 2009). These sites are both the environment in which online social networks are fostered and the visual expression of those networks (Donath & Boyd, 2004). According to Boyd and Ellison, every social networking site allows its users "to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (2007). The terminology used to describe these features may vary from site to site, but their purpose - fostering social connections - remains the same (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

These relationships are facilitated by site functions that allow users to practice information, identity, and relationship management (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Ploderer, Howard, & Thomas, 2008; Richter & Koch, 2007; Schmidt, 2007). Information management functions allow a user to find, share, and rate information within his network (Schmidt, 2007). Users can directly share information with other users in the form of text, photos, links, or other content like game and quiz results (Joinson, 2008).

This direct sharing can take place either privately, through a personal message, or publicly, through site features like a Facebook wall post (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Public sharing features like wall posts and comments also allow users to indirectly share information with other site users who may or may not be on their friends list (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Joinson, 2008; Richter & Koch, 2007). Furthermore, by creating profile pages that list information about themselves, users indirectly share information with any other users who visit their pages through

"social network surfing": browsing through friends' friends lists (Joinson, 2008; Ploderer et al., 2008; Richter & Koch, 2007).

While it is a method of sharing information, the profile page is also a place for identity management, where the user can "type [himself] into being" (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211). In the physical world, people construct social identities for themselves; in the online world, they construct social networking site profiles (Richter & Koch, 2007). Each user manages his identity in the way that he chooses what information to share with which users via his profile page (Richter & Koch, 2007; Schmidt, 2007).

Choosing the other users with whom he will establish a connection is also a form of identity management, as are site features like groups and events (Joinson, 2008). In the same way that people manage their identities in the physical world by being seen at certain places with certain people, users on social networking sites manage their identities by friending certain users, joining certain groups, etc. (Boyd, 2006).

Finally, social networking sites afford their users multiple methods of relationship management (Joinson, 2008). In fact, "keeping in contact" with others is often the primary use of a social networking site (Joinson, 2008; Richter & Koch, 2008). The same site functions that allow users to share information and manage their identity also enable them to establish and sustain ties with other users on the site. Previously listed functions such as social network surfing and private messaging are methods of relationship management, whether by seeking out and forging new connections or maintaining those that already exist (Joinson, 2008; Ploderer et al., 2008; Richter & Koch, 2008).

As Schmidt explains, the three functions of information, identity, and relationship management are all interdependent (2007). For example, commenting on a link that a friend has

shared is a form of relationship management, because it further strengthens the tie between the two friends, and also a form of identity management, because it displays the user's opinions about the content of the link (Schmidt, 2007).

Ploderer et al. (2008) noted this interdependence in their study of the social networking site BodySpace, which serves the niche community of bodybuilders. Through one action, posting their nutrition and training routines, site users participated in information, identity, and relationship management. This posting was information management because it involved sharing information between users; it was also identity management in that, by choosing what information to reveal about their diet and exercise regimes, the users were managing the way others on the site perceived them. Finally, this exchange of helpful information facilitated relationship management because it allowed users to strengthen their social connections and further support one another in their offline endeavor of body-building (Ploderer et al., 2008).

New meanings for friendship. Aside from, or perhaps because of, these functions, social networking sites are changing the cultural meaning of friendship and the social network (Beer, 2008; Boyd, 2006; Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Since the rise of the Internet introduced the concepts of "real world" and "online" friendships, society's definition of what it means to be friends has been changing, and by consequence, so has its definition of what constitutes a social network (Beer, 2008; Boyd, 2006). Social networking sites, which center on expanding the user's social network by creating and maintaining friendships, have had an especial influence on these two concepts (Beer, 2008; Donath & Boyd, 2004).

Technology, Beer says, has always altered the way we do life, so a technology that introduces a new type of friendship will necessarily alter the way we view friendship (2008). Friendship online and friendship in the "real world" are different but related concepts. The fact

that two people are friends in the "real world" does not necessarily mean they are also friends on a social networking site; the reverse is also true (Beer, 2008; Boyd, 2006).

While the primary use of a social networking site is often to strengthen and maintain friendships between people who are also friends in the "real world" (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Joinson, 2008), social networking site users can form friendships with other users whom they have never met in the "real world" (Ploderer et al., 2008). The friendships formed by users of BodySpace did not rely solely on "real world" experiences. In fact, the overwhelming majority of BodySpace users had never and would never meet their friends in a non-computer-mediated setting, yet they still formed a community of online friends who offered each other the same emotional and informational support found within "real world" friendships (Ploderer et al., 2008).

Because organizations have been creating profiles on social networking sites since the days of Friendster, one of the earliest social networking sites, these changes to the meaning of friendship have impacted the practice of public relations (Boyd, 2006). Boyd discusses the phenomenon of "Fakesters," Friendster accounts created for celebrities, universities, historical figures, products etc. that gained huge numbers of friends (2006). Similarly, indie rock bands using the site to connect with their teenage fans were an important part of the evolution of MySpace into a major social networking site (Boyd, 2006). When Facebook opened registration to organizations in April 2006, it further encouraged this trend of using social networking sites to build relationships not just between two people, but also between organizations and people (Waters et al., 2009).

Bruning stated that, as technology provides new ways for organizations to communicate with their publics, practitioners must learn how to incorporate these new tools into their

relationship-building efforts (2001). Publics have begun to expect organizations to have a social media presence (Lariscy et al., 2009), and organizations are working to learn how to adapt social media into their existing communications efforts (Finin et al., 2008). Social networking sites, which provide users with new ways to connect interpersonally, also provide organizations with new opportunities to build and strengthen relationships with their publics (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Waters et al., 2009).

Relationship Management on the Internet

Research about organization-public relationships became popular at about the same time the Internet was growing in popularity (Jo & Kim, 2003; Kelleher, 2009), and many scholars have recognized the unique potential of online communication for relationship-building (Hallahan, 2008; Kant & Norton, 2004; Kent & Taylor, 1998; Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003; Sweetser, 2010). As each new wave of online communication technology has arrived and become popular, from websites to blogs to newer forms of social media like Twitter and Facebook, public relations scholars have studied how these new technologies can be used to build and maintain organization-public relationships.

In fact, the Internet can be considered the first public relations mass medium because practitioners can use it to communicate directly with publics without going through the gatekeeper of traditional media (Kent et al., 2003; McAllister-Greve, 2009). This ability to reach thousands of people at once means that the Internet is a place where previously separate publics can unite for a common cause (Kent et al., 2003; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001). While some have feared that online communication only distances people from each other, Kent and Taylor argued that it is not technology itself but the way it is used that either creates or destroys

relationships (1998). They further argued that the Internet can be used to give a personal touch to communication between an organization and its publics (Kent & Taylor, 1998).

The Internet is different from traditional mass media because it is inherently interactive; publics as well as organizations can contribute to message content. Since relationship management theory embraces the concept of two-way communication between an organization and active publics, the Internet is well suited to the relationship-building process (Jo & Kim, 2003). Furthermore, resource exchange is one of the fundamental aspects of an organization-public relationship, and the Internet is an ideal place for exchanging the valuable resource of information (Kent et al., 2003).

The interactivity of online communication can also improve the quality of that communication by enhancing control mutuality (Hallahan, 2008; Park & Reber, 2008). Because Internet users are active consumers and can choose the content to which they expose themselves, publics have some degree of control over their online communication (Hallahan, 2008). This can help balance the power between the organization and its publics (Park & Reber, 2008).

Relationship-building on websites. The organization's website was the first part of online communication that relationship management scholars studied. Kent and Taylor (1998) applied dialogic communication to the web and suggested five principles for relationship building on a website. Later, Jo and Kim examined the effects of interactivity and multimedia content on the organization-public relationship and found that increasing the interactivity of a website positively affects relationship building (2003). Hon & Grunig's relationship maintenance strategies have also been adapted specifically for online organization-public relationships (Waters & Lord, 2009).

Some scholars have advocated an "experience-centered approach" in which an organization's website is seen as an experience not just as a communications tool (Hallahan, 2008; Vorvoreanu, 2008). Hallahan explained how the organizaton-public relationship characteristics of trust, commitment, control mutuality, communality, and satisfaction relate to the public's experience on an organizaton's website (2008). Vorvoreanu created a qualitative scale for measuring the public's experience on a website through the organization-public relationship dimensions of trust, commitment, openness, and involvement and through dialogue (2008).

Public relations scholars have shown that communication on an organization's website can enhance commitment, interdependence, and understanding between an organization and its publics (Jo & Kim, 2003). Park and Reber found that *Fortune 500* companies use their websites to enhance trust, satisfaction, and openness in the organization-public relationship (2008). A positive website experience plays an important role in relationship building by increasing the public's positive perceptions of and loyalty towards the organization (Vorvoreanu, 2008).

Despite the emphasis on websites as a place for relationship management, McAllister-Spooner found that organizations are only effectively using websites for creating, not maintaining, relationships (2009). There remains an inconsistency between what practitioners know is possible via the Internet and what they actually use their organizations' websites to accomplish (Levenshus, 2010; McAllister-Spooner, 2009). It seems that most organizations are not using the full potential of websites for relationship-building (Hallahan, 2008; Kang & Norton, 2004; Jo & Kim, 2003; McAllister-Spooner, 2009; Park & Reber, 2008; Waters & Lord, 2009).

Using blogs for relationship building. When blog use became increasingly popular and more legitimate around the year 2000, public relations practitioners found yet another technology tool that they could use for relationship building (Burns, 2008). Seltzer and Mitrook suggested that practitioners could use organizational blogs to fill the gap between their goals for relationship building on websites and how well they actually achieve those goals through online communication (2007). After comparing advocacy groups' blog use to their use of websites, they concluded that blogs are even better suited to dialogic communication than are websites (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007).

Blogs have an advantage over traditional websites because they allow organizations to communicate with a conversational human voice. Relationship management theory mandates that publics be seen not as targets of strategic messages but as participants in a conversation, but this can be difficult to accomplish when one online message reaches millions of people at once (Kelleher, 2009; Kelleher & Miller, 2006). Organizations must find a way to personalize their communication with publics, and Kelleher suggests that a participatory, interactive medium like blogs is ideally suited to this task (2009).

The concept of conversational human voice is similar to the anthropomorphism dimension in Bruning and Galloway's relationship management scale (2003). Kelleher and Miller (2006) define it as an engaging, natural communication style based on interactions between the organization and its publics in which the organization is open to dialogue, has a sense of humor, is willing to admit fault, and treats its publics as human beings instead of just customers.

As well as providing a more human voice to an otherwise impersonal organization, Kelleher (2009) stated that blogs can help organizations communicate relational commitment to

their publics. Indeed a conversational human voice and communicated relational commitment have both been found to predict variance in publics' perceptions of relational outcomes (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007). Sweetser and Metzgar noted that blogs can be particularly useful tools when an organization experiences a crisis (2007). Their replication of Kelleher and Miller's 2006 experiment found that using a company blog during a crisis increased the public's perception that the organization was being responsive to its publics and was attempting to maintaining a relationship with them. They also found that reading a company blog led publics to view the crisis as less serious (Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007).

The rise of social media. Beginning with blogs, social media have revolutionized the way that organizations communicate with their publics (Avery et al., 2010a; Lariscy et al., 2009; Wright & Hinson, 2010). When the number and variety of social media sites grew between 2006 and 2008, practitioners were presented with an even wider array of technology tools for relationship building (Wright & Hinson, 2010).

Social media have even greater power for relationship building than do organization websites (Avery et al., 2010b), because they present "limitless opportunities to really connect with one's publics" (Sweetser, 2010, p. 290). Many practitioners believe that social media are a way to put the "public" back in public relations and that they have helped move the field toward two-way communication (Wright & Hinson, 2010). Scholars have found that social media tools facilitate the development of organization-public relationships by providing a human voice to the organization and offering a more interactive, multimedia method for publics to communicate with the organization (Sweetser, 2010).

Relationship building is now the most commonly cited reason that practitioners use social media (Sweetser, Avery, Lariscy, & Howes, 2009), and 92% of practitioners agree that social

media are a low-cost method of developing relationships with strategic publics (Wright & Hinson, 2010). Avery, Lariscy, and Sweetser found that social media use can also enhance relationships with journalists, since both practitioners and journalists value using social media (2010).

Relationship building on social networking sites. Christ (2005) predicted that the rising popularity of social networking sites would force public relations practitioners to rethink how they develop relationships with their stakeholders. Indeed, the ability to "friend" a company on a social network humanizes the organization-public relationship and makes it much more similar to an interpersonal relationship than ever before (Sweetser, 2010). They also lend greater freedom and realism to online communication (Kitchen & Panopoulos, 2010). With their emphasis on maintaining relational ties, social networking sites provide organizations with an ideal place in which to interact with their publics (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009).

As social networking sites have enjoyed increasing popularity, a body of literature concerning their effectiveness for relationship management has begun to develop (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Sweetser & Lariscy, 2008; Waters et al., 2009). Sweetser and Lariscy (2008) studied political candidates' use of Facebook in the 2006 election cycle and found that supporters who friended a candidate on Facebook established what they perceived to be a personal friendship with that candidate. However, many candidates seemed to think that merely establishing a Facebook profile was sufficient and did not take advantage of the medium's full potential for dialogue or relationship building (Sweetser & Lariscy, 2008).

Bortree and Seltzer (2009) found similar results in their analysis of environmental advocacy organizations' Facebook pages. The majority of the organizations in their sample created a space for interaction and dialogue with their publics and experienced some success in

achieving dialogic outcomes, but they did not take advantage of the "full gambit" of opportunities for building relationships with stakeholders (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009). This trend continued in nonprofit organizations' Facebook pages, as examined by Waters et al. (2009). These organizations successfully used their Facebook profiles to disclose information, but they rarely used them to disseminate useful information or provide opportunities for their publics to get involved. By failing to take advantage of Facebook's interactivity, these organizations missed significant opportunities for relationship building (Waters et al., 2009).

The need for evidence. So far, scholarly work on social networking sites has focused on examining which relationship maintenance strategies organizations use when communicating via a social networking site profile (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Sweetser & Lariscy, 2008; Waters et al., 2009). At this point in time, public relations scholarship has not assessed the effectiveness of social networking sites as a relationship-building tool (Waters et al., 2009). Since social media are a cost-effective method of engaging stakeholders (Eyrich et al., 2008; Seo et al., 2009; Waters et al., 2009) and nonprofits and other charitable organizations depend on positive relationships with publics for their survival (Waters et al., 2009), this may be an area of particular concern for these organizations.

Uses and Gratifications in the 21st Century

As previously stated, one of the maintenance strategies most crucial to the success of an organization-public relationship is the way the organization communicates with its publics (Broom et al., 1997). The theory of dialogic communication addresses this aspect of organization-public relationships, and one of its premises is that the organization must provide useful information on topics its publics either wish to or need to know about (Kent & Taylor, 1998).

Previous research suggests that organizations are not following this premise on their social networking site profiles (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Waters et al., 2009), perhaps because they are not yet certain how best to use social media in their communications efforts (Kitchen & Panopoulos, 2010; Seo et al., 2009). This study proposes that uses and gratifications theory may be helpful in shedding light on this area of social media use for public relations.

A brief history. Uses and gratifications theory arose in the 1940s as a reaction to the hypodermic needle theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Instead of trying to determine the effects of media on their audience, scholars like Lazarsfeld and Stanton worked to describe certain audience groups' orientations to selecting certain types of media by creating lists of functions, or gratifications, that media consumption served and grouping these gratifications into categories (Katz et al., 1974). These early studies were merely descriptive, with no effort made to link gratifications to the original needs they satisfied (Katz et al., 1974; Ruggiero, 2000).

By the 1960s, scholars began operationalizing social and psychological needs as variables that led to different patterns of media consumption (Katz et al., 1974; Ruggiero, 2000). Uses and gratifications research took a more functional approach, in which the audience was conceived of as active, not passive (Ruggiero, 2000). The theory received sharp criticism, however, because of its failure to produce a cumulative, detailed picture of media gratifications that could lead to the formation of theoretical statements (Katz et al., 1974).

Uses and gratifications theory experienced something of a revival in the 1970s, as leading scholars like Katz, Blumler, and McQuail began to examine other factors, such as motives and expectations, that might influence patterns of media consumption (Katz et al., 1974). Researchers also began to distinguish between gratifications sought and gratifications actually

obtained and to recognize that cognitive and affective states might facilitate audience members' seeking of certain gratifications (Ruggiero, 2000).

What emerged from this resurgence of studies was a theory that sought to understand and explain "the social and psychological origins of needs, which generate expectations of the mass media or other sources, which lead to differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in need gratifications and other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones" (Katz et al., 1974, p. 20). This was a new way to study media effects and one that accounted for the audience members' ability to choose the content and media to which they expose themselves (Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973).

Theoretical underpinnings. Uses and gratifications examines the motives or needs that cause certain uses of media in order to obtain gratifications to fulfill those needs. These gratifications stem from social and psychological needs arising from an individual's social situation, such as a tension that must be eased, a problem whose solution requires information, or values that need to be reinforced (Katz et al., 1974). "Uses" in this context may mean the act of using the media content, the way it is used, or the purpose for which it is used (Sejrup, 2009). Users can obtain the gratifications they seek either from the media content itself (content gratification), the act of being exposed to it (process gratification), or the social context in which that exposure occurs (Katz et al., 1974; Stafford, Stafford, & Schkade, 2004).

In their seminal article on uses and gratifications, Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch identify the major assumptions behind the theory (1974). First, the audience is active, and media use is goal-oriented, which means that media users have certain expectations of the media they consume. Second, the audience member links his media choice to his need gratification. In other words, audiences use media for certain effects, as opposed to the hypodermic needle

concept of the media having effects on passive, unaware audiences. Third, each medium must compete with other mediums and with other non-media sources for the gratification of the audience's needs (Katz et al., 1974).

When communicating on behalf of their organization, public relations practitioners must take into account the implications of this theory. Different publics will consume different media content to fulfill different needs. Therefore, persuading publics to change their opinions, attitudes, or behavior is not simply a matter of broadcasting a general persuasive message to all publics, as the hypodermic needle theory would suggest. Instead, practitioners must target specific publics, communicating to them through certain media channels with messages tailored to address the particular needs of each public (Dozier & Ehling, 1992).

Scholars have created different typologies of media gratifications, one of the earliest being Lasswell's four functions of surveillance, correlation, entertainment, and socialization (Katz et al., 1974). This typology, however, was found to be inadequate and was replaced with what Sejrup (2009) calls the "classical typology" of McQuail, Blumler, and Brown. Here, the four media gratifications are diversion, personal relationships, personal identity, and surveillance. Diversion is conceptualized as an escape from routine or problems, and personal relationships are the social aspects of media, such as social utility and substitute companionship. The personal identity gratification includes reality exploration and value reinforcement, and surveillance is defined as exploring or learning about the world through mass media (Katz et al., 1974).

Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973) created a similar typology, centered around the concept that individuals use mass media to connect or disconnect themselves, through cognitive, affective, or integrative relations, with referent groups: self, family, friends, society, etc. They

identified five needs that individuals gratify through media consumption: cognitive needs related to information, knowledge and understanding, affective needs related to aesthetic, pleasurable, or emotional experiences, personal integrative needs related to credibility, confidence, stability, and status, social integrative needs to strengthen contact with family, friends, and the world at large, and escapist needs for diversion or tension-release (Katz et al., 1973). Later, McQuail's studies of television users revealed a slightly different typology of gratifications: information, social integration, personal identity, and entertainment (Sejrup, 2009). Social integration is defined as learning to carry out social roles, getting to know others, and achieving a sense of belonging (Sejrup, 2009).

Keeping up with a new medium. As the Internet rose in prominence and became a focus of scholarship, uses and gratifications researchers began the task of understanding this new medium, the ways it is used, and the gratifications it provides to users (Sejrup, 2009). Some argued that the uses and gratifications perspective is particularly well suited to the Internet because one of the theory's core assumptions is an active audience and online audiences exercise extremely high control over the communication process by choosing which sites to access and when (Ruggiero, 2000; Stafford et al., 2004).

This high level of audience activity is due to three media attributes particular to the Internet, the first of which is interactivity (Ruggiero, 2000). Interactivity blurs the line between sender and receiver and enables many-to-many communication (Ko, 2000; Ruggiero, 2000). The second attribute, demassification, arises from the enormous volume of content available online. This wide variety of choices contributes to the activeness of the audience because Internet users can be more selective in tailoring their consumption to the content they think will fulfill their needs (Ruggiero, 2000). Asychroneity, the ability of users to stagger their receipt of

media content over a period of time, is the final attribute identified by Ruggiero (2000). By giving users further, temporal control over their exposure to media content, asynchroneity also enhances the uses and gratifications concept of an active audience (Ruggiero, 2000).

Flanagin and Metzger argued that the Internet has caused an "evolution of computers from machines used predominantly for the execution of work tasks to machines often used to play games, communicate with loved ones, read a newspaper, or plan a vacation" (2001, p. 159). This evolution has created new forms of uses and gratifications that scholars have sought to identify and define (Cho, de Zúñiga, Rojas, & Shah, 2003; Flanagin & Metzger, 2001; Ko, 2000; Ruggiero, 2000; Stafford et al., 2004).

Although studies have resulted in various scales for Internet uses and gratifications, two common threads are information and social interaction (Cho et al., 2003; Flanagin & Metzger, 2001; Ko, 2000; Stafford et al., 2004). Flanagin and Metzger found information to be most common gratification of Internet use, and they distinguished between giving and retrieving information (2001). Stafford, Stafford, and Schkade also divided the information gratification into two factors: process gratifications related to the way the information is actually retrieved and content gratifications related to the knowledge and education gained from having found the information (2004).

The second most common gratification is alternatively labeled as social bonding and relationship maintenance (Flanagin & Metzger, 2001), connection (Cho et al., 2003), interpersonal utility (Sejrup, 2009), and social gratifications (Stafford et al., 2004). This social interaction gratification involves conversations and connections with others, the feeling of belonging to a group, and contributing to that group (Sejrup, 2009). Other gratifications include

entertainment and diversion (Flanagin & Metzger, 2001), convenience (Sejrup, 2009), and leisure or passing time (Flanagin & Metzger, 2001; Ko, 2000).

Uses and gratifications on social networking sites. Sejrup (2009) stated that uses and gratifications research must constantly adapt to changes in technology because these changes affect the way that people use certain media. For example, social media technologies like Facebook and MySpace have changed the way that people use the Internet (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Sejrup, 2009; Shao, 2008). Even more so than the Internet, social media are efficient and easy to use, and they allow users to control who they interact with, what content they receive, and how they receive it (Shao, 2008).

Social media are used for consuming, participating with, and producing content. Consuming content occurs when the user only watches, reads, or listens to already existing content; producing involves the user adding his own text, video, image, or audio to the site's content. Users can participate with content either through user-to-user interactions via discussion forums, messages, etc. or through user-to-content interactions such as rating or commenting on posted content. All three of these uses are interrelated. For example, producing creates more content for the consumers to consume, and participating with that content encourages producers to create more content for consumption (Shao, 2008).

As with other online media, the two most common gratifications sought by social networking site users satisfy their needs for information and social integration (Joinson, 2008; Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2008; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Richter & Koch, 2008; Sheldon, 2008). The information needs being gratified, however, are primarily for social information, so that "the utility of Facebook seems to be centered on its ability to provide social information about peers or others in one’s extended social circle" (Lampe et al., 2008, p. 727).

Users fulfill their information need by providing information through wall posts, comments, status updates, and messages (Richter & Koch, 2008; Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009) and by searching for information on friends' profiles, pages, and status updates (Joinson, 2008; Richter & Koch, 2008; Sejrup, 2009). Interacting with other users through comments and messages helps fulfill social integration needs and maintain existing social connections (Joinson, 2008; Lampe, Wash, Valesquez, & Ozkaya, 2010; Shao, 2008; Sheldon, 2008; Valenzuela et al., 2009). The need for social integration is also gratified by joining groups of those with similar interests, which gives users a sense of shared identity and belonging to a community (Joinson, 2008; Lampe et al., 2010; Sejrup, 2009; Shao, 2008; Valenzuela et al., 2009).

Social networking site users also seek to gratify needs for entertainment and personal identity management in their consumption, participation, and production of content (Valenzuela et al., 2009). Sharing photos, watching videos, using games and applications, and playing and interacting with others are all sources of entertainment for users (Joinson, 2008; Sejrup, 2009; Shao, 2008; Sheldon, 2008; Valenzuela et al., 2009). Finally, users can manage their personal identities by the way they present themselves on their profile pages, the content they produce and share on the site, and the social connections that they establish with other users and groups (Joinson, 2008; Shao, 2008; Sejrup, 2009; Valenzuela et al., 2009).

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

To examine how interacting with an organization on Facebook affects its publics' perception of the organization-public relationship, this study conducted an online survey of the stakeholders of a local-level governmental organization.

Survey methodology is well suited to this study of relationship management and uses and gratifications theory on a social networking site. Because a survey relies on respondents' self-reports of their opinions, attitudes, actions, etc., this method of data collection will be the most useful in examining publics' perceptions of relationship quality and their motivation for using Facebook. Surveys also allow the researcher to draw a proportionately larger sample than do other methodologies. The larger sample enhances the researcher's ability to generalize study results to the rest of the population.

Furthermore, scholars studying relationship management and uses and gratifications theory have frequently used surveys. Leading relationship management theory scholars have employed surveys to develop and refine scales to measure organization-public relationships (Bruning & Ledingham, 1998; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Bruning, 2000; Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Bruning & Ralston, 2000; Bruning & Galloway, 2003; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Huang, 2001; Kim, 2001). Scholars have also used surveys to test the application of relationship management theory in various sectors of public relations: a university setting (Bruning, 2000), the nonprofit sector (Schoen, 2005), government-community relations (Ledingham, 2001), and corporate public relations (Hall, 2006), to name a few.

While there is a strong precedent for using surveys in relationship management research in general, there is less precedent for applying this method to relationship management on social media. These types of studies have commonly used content analysis to gauge organizations' use of relationship-building strategies in blogs, Twitter, and Facebook (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007; Sweetser & Lariscy, 2008; Waters et al., 2009). Other scholars have conducted experiments to test the application of relationship management principles to blogs (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007) and to viral video (Sweetser, 2010).

One notable exception is Kelleher's 2009 study of the correlation between relational maintenance strategies and relational outcomes in which he conducted an online survey of publics who had interacted with an organization via an organizational blog. Similarly, this study will use an online survey to examine publics' perceptions of relational outcomes, but it will extend the use of survey methodology to a different area of social media: social networking sites.

Uses and gratifications theory also has a history of using surveys to collect data. However, unlike the majority of studies of relationship management, there are numerous studies using online surveys to measure how traditional uses and gratifications concepts apply to Facebook users. Recently, several scholars have surveyed Facebook users in order to develop a uses and gratifications scale specifically for Facebook (Joinson, 2008; Richter & Koch, 2008; Sheldon, 2008).

As with any research method, online surveys have disadvantages. The primary disadvantage associated with an online survey is the low response rate, which is usually about 20% (Kaplowitz, Hadlock, & Levine, 2004; Yun & Trumbo, 2000). A low response rate can be problematic because it can increase the chance of a nonresponse bias, which occurs when the

demographics or attitudes of those who do respond to a survey are different from those who choose not to respond (Umbach, 2004). Nonresponse bias is a particular problem for online surveys, because all individuals do not have equal access to the Internet. As a result, certain social groups such as those with low education levels or of low socioeconomic status are often underrepresented in online surveys (Umbach, 2004).

Fortunately, scholars have found several techniques for improving the response rate in online surveys. Porter and Whitcomb (2003) found that informing respondents they are part of a small group selected to participate and including a deadline can increase response rates by almost 8%. Sending at least one reminder e-mail can also increase response rates (Umbach, 2004; Yun & Trumbo, 2000). Umbach (2004) also advises researchers to ensure that their surveys are brief and do not take more than 20 minutes to complete.

Aside from the potential for nonresponse bias, online surveys are also subject to sampling and coverage error, both of which threaten the generalizability of the results. Sampling error occurs when all members of the target population are not given an equal chance to be included in the study sample. Coverage error occurs when the chosen delivery method limits or prevents some members of the target population from being included in the sample. In the case of online surveys, sampling or coverage error might occur because not all individuals have equal access to the Internet to take the survey.

Finally, all surveys, regardless of delivery method, are subject to self-reporting errors. Respondents may incorrectly report their actions, attitudes, and thoughts, which jeopardizes the validity of the survey results. This inaccurate reporting may be unintentional and merely a result of the respondent misunderstanding the question, or it may occur because the respondent is

unable to accurately report the information requested. In some cases, the respondent may lie in order to give a more socially acceptable response.

Despite these limitations, online surveys have several advantages over other methodologies. First, they are a comparatively inexpensive method for collecting data from a large population. The cost of an online survey is less than one administered via telephone or mail (Yun & Trumbo, 2000). Often, the only direct cost to the researcher is associated with the purchase of a membership account on a web application like SurveyMonkey that will be used to administer the survey.

As well as saving money, an online survey can also save the researcher time in delivering the survey and collecting data. Mail surveys require a minimum time frame of five to seven days (Umbach, 2004). Each survey packet can take several days to reach the respondent and, once the survey has been completed, several days to be mailed back to the researcher. With an online survey, the invitation is usually delivered in e-mail and is therefore received almost instantly. Once the respondent has completed the survey, the results are instantly available to the researcher. Reminder e-mail can also be sent instantaneously, which further reduces the time frame needed to collect data.

Because of the small amount of time and money required, online surveys are an efficient method of collecting data about the thoughts, attitudes, and actions of a large population. As the sample size increases, the cost per response actually decreases (Yun & Trumbo, 2000). This allows the researcher to draw a larger sample, which makes the survey results more generalizable.

Finally, thanks to web applications created specifically for survey administration, researchers who use online surveys enjoy greater flexibility in survey design. Researchers can

easily include audio, video, or graphic content in an online survey. They can also change the layout or color scheme of their survey to make it more visually appealing, since the appearance of the survey has a significant impact on survey response rate (Dillman, Robert, Conradt, & Bowker, 1998). Using features like SurveyMonkey's skip-logic, the survey can be engineered to skip questions that are irrelevant to a particular respondent, a technique that has been shown to decrease the amount of missing data in responses (Stanton, 1998).

While an online survey is not without limitations, the nature of the subject matter (social networking sites) and the historic precedence for survey methodology in relationship management and uses and gratifications theory make it an appropriate method for this study.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Given that the use of social media is strongly encouraged by professional publications (Taylor & Kent 2010) and has been widely adopted by practitioners across the industry, including the nonprofit sector, (Curtis et al., 2010; Eyrich et al., 2008; Lariscy et al., 2009; Wright & Hinson, 2010) it is essential for scholars to begin proving their effectiveness. Furthermore, because communicating useful information that its publics need or want to know is an important relationship maintenance strategy for organizations (Kent & Taylor, 1998), scholars and practitioners must begin to understand what motivates publics' use of Facebook pages. Therefore, the following research questions and hypotheses were proposed:

RQ 1: To what extent do publics who communicate with an organization on Facebook perceive their relationship with that organization to be different compared to those who do not communicate with the organization on Facebook?

RQ2: Are motivations for using a Facebook page correlated with publics' perceptions of relationship characteristics?

H1: Among publics with high levels of social media use, fans will perceive their relationship with the organization to be of better quality than will non-fans.

H2: Motivations for using a Facebook page differ according to demographic factors such as age, gender, and levels of Internet and social media use.

H3: Socialization and information are the predominant motivations for using a Facebook page.

Sample

In order to study how interaction with the organization on Facebook affects the public's perception of the organization-public relationship, it was first necessary to secure an organization to be studied. Patrons of the local library were selected as the population for this study, because the researcher specifically wished to examine the relationship between a charitable organization and its publics. The library also provided a sufficiently large population from which to sample: its Facebook page had 1,159 fans and its online newsletter subscription list included 5,748 e-mail addresses. Furthermore, as a library employee, the researcher had access to the list of fans and online newsletter subscribers.

In November 2010, the researcher sought and received permission from the library to use its patrons as the population for this study, pending IRB approval. The researcher applied for IRB approval in December 2010 and received that approval in January 2011. (See Appendix C for application.) This study used a stratified random sample, because the researcher wished to compare the responses of patrons who had liked the library's Facebook page with the responses of patrons who had not.

To generate the first stratum of patrons who had liked the Facebook page, the researcher cross-referenced the list of Facebook fans with the list of online newsletter subscribers. There

were 311 patrons who either appeared on both lists or had made their e-mail addresses publicly available on Facebook. They became the sample for the first stratum. Their names and e-mail addresses were removed from the list of subscribers prior to the generation of the second stratum of patrons who were not Facebook fans. To ensure confidentiality, respondents' names and e-mail addresses were not associated with survey responses, and no identifying information was collected in the survey.

The researcher created the second stratum by randomly selecting from the list of remaining subscribers. The original intent had been to draw a sample of equal size to the second. Since the first stratum was so small, the researcher drew a sample of 622 e-mail addresses for the second stratum. The final sample size for this study was 933.

The chosen sample did introduce a sampling error to this study in that the list of online newsletter subscribers did not include all library patrons. However, given the typically low response rate for online surveys, the researcher wished to maximize the likelihood that the patrons in the sample would complete the survey. It was believed that library patrons who had already shown some level of commitment to the organization (either by liking its Facebook page or subscribing to its monthly online newsletter) would be most likely to complete an online survey about their relationship with the library.

Delivery

The survey was administered through SurveyMonkey. So as not to confuse the data from the two sample strata, the researcher created a separate but identical survey for each one. The survey was delivered via an e-mail containing a link to the survey. Those in the Facebook fan stratum received a link to the survey for fans, and those in the non-fan stratum received a link to the survey for non-fans. The e-mail were sent from the researcher's library e-mail address.

The time period for this survey was January 26, 2011 through February 26, 2011. As previously mentioned, informing respondents that they are part of a selected group and that they have a deadline by which to complete the survey has been shown to increase response rates (Porter & Whitcomb, 2003). Therefore, a notice was included in the February edition of the library's online newsletter that read as follows:

> **What do you think about the Athens-Clarke County Library?**
>
> This month, the Library will be conducting a survey to evaluate how well we are meeting our patrons' needs and expectations. In a few weeks, you may receive an e-mail invitation to participate in the survey. The survey will be confidential, and your responses will not be associated with your name, email, or any other identifying information. We would greatly appreciate you completing the survey, which should only take six minutes of your time. Your responses will help us understand how well we are serving our patrons.

On January 26, the first wave of invitations was e-mailed to the sample. The e-mail invitation read as follows:

> You have been selected as part of a small group of library patrons to participate in a survey that will evaluate how well they are meeting patrons' needs and expectations. Please click the link below to complete the confidential, online survey. It should only take six minutes of your time. The deadline to complete this survey is Wednesday, February 16.

Because reminder e-mail have been shown to increase response rate (Umbach, 2004; Yun & Trumbo, 2000), on February 2, a follow-up e-mail was sent to those members of both strata who had not yet completed the survey. The reminder e-mail read as follows:

> You have been selected as part of a small group of library patrons to participate in a survey. There are only two weeks left to help us evaluate how well we are meeting our patrons' needs and expectations! Please click the link below to complete the confidential, online survey. It should only take six minutes of your time, and your response is important to us.

To reach the desired response rate of 20%, the researcher sent a total of seven reminder e-mail. Each one was worded similarly to the first.

Instrument

This study measured relationship characteristics (Hon & Grunig, 1999) and uses and gratifications for Facebook pages (Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009) in reference to a local-level charitable organization. The complete survey instrument is available in Appendix B.

Perceived relationship characteristics. Relationship characteristics were measured using the short version of Hon and Grunig's (1999) scale. Previous studies of organization-public relationships found these six indices to be reliable and valid measures of relationship characteristics (Brunner, 2000; Hall, 2006; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Jo & Kim, 2003; Kelleher, 2009; Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Ki & Hon, 2007). These indices measured the four relationship attributes of trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction, as well as two indicators of relationship type: communal or exchange relationship. With the exception of trust, each index included four items; the trust index included six items in order to adequately measure the three dimensions of trust: integrity, competence, and dependability (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Examples of trust items included "The Athens-Clarke County Library treats people like me fairly and justly" and "The Athens-Clarke County Library can be relied on to keep its promises."

Examples of control mutuality items included "The Athens-Clarke County Library believes the opinions of people like me are legitimate" and "The Athens-Clarke County Library really listens to what people like me have to say."

Sample commitment items were "There is a long-lasting bond between the Athens-Clarke County Library and people like me" and "Compared to other organizations, I value my relationship with the Athens-Clarke County Library more." Sample satisfaction items were "I am happy with the Athens-Clarke County Library" and "Both the Athens-Clarke County Library and people like me benefit from the relationship."

The communal relationship index included items such as "The Athens-Clarke County Library is very concerned about the welfare of people life me" and "I think the Athens-Clarke County Library succeeds by stepping on other people." The exchange relationship index included items such as "The Athens-Clarke County Library will compromise with people like me when it knows it will gain something" and "The Athens-Clarke County Library takes care of people who are likely to reward the Library."

All items were altered to include the name of the organization. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with each item using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Previous studies using this 7-point Likert-type scale found Cronbach's alphas higher than the acceptable threshold of .70 for all six of the indices (Jo & Kim, 2003; Ki & Hon, 2007; Kelleher, 2009).

Uses and gratifications of Facebook pages. To measure motivations for using Facebook pages, the researcher used a 14-item scale previously used to measure motivations for participation in Facebook groups. The items in this scale were compiled from prior studies describing participation in online groups and redefined to apply more specifically to Facebook

(Park et al., 2009). Respondents were asked to indicate, using a 7-point Likert-type scale, how well each item matched their motivation for using the library's Facebook page.

Park et al. (2009) found through factor analysis that the 14 items loaded onto four factors that explained 69.5% of the variance in motivation: socializing, entertainment, self-status seeking, and information. Chronbach's alphas for these four factors ranged from .81 to .81 (Park et al., 2009).

The socializing factor included items like "to get peer support from others" and "to feel like I belong to a community." The entertainment factor included "because it is entertaining," "because it is funny," and "because it is exciting." The self-status seeking factor included the motivations "to develop my career through group participation" and "because it makes me look cool." The information factor included items like "to get information about Library-sponsored events" and "to get useful information about Library products/services."

In addition to questions measuring their motivations for using the library's Facebook page, respondents were asked to "describe the content you would like to or expect to see on the Athens-Clarke County Library's Facebook page." During the survey data collection period, the researcher also did a content analysis of the posts on the library's Facebook page, so that the desired content could be compared with the actual content. The researcher noted the time and date of each post, the number of likes and comments, the type of post (status update, event, etc.), and the category (information about a library service, fun fact, etc.)

Demographics. To measure social media use, the researcher adapted a set of 15 items that had previously been used to measure industry adoption of social media (Curtis et al., 2009; Eyrich et al., 2008; Lariscy et al., 2009) and student use of social media (Dorton, Myers, Rudd,

Spinuzzi, & Wilson, 2009; Sweetser, 2010). One additional item was added to include new geolocation social media tools.

On a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from never (1) to all the time (5), respondents reported how often they use the following social media tools: blogs, social event/calendar systems (Upcoming, Eventful, etc.), instant messaging/chat, online video games (World of Warcraft, etc.), news aggregation/RSS, photo sharing (Flickr, etc.), podcasts, micro-blogging (Twitter, etc.), virtual worlds (Second Life, etc.), social bookmarking (delicious, etc.), social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace, etc.), text messaging, video conferencing, video sharing (YouTube, Vimeo, etc.), wikis (Wikipedia, etc.), and geolocation (Foursquare, Gowalla, etc.).

To compare the responses of fans and non-fans, this study included a demographic item for Facebook fan status (0, 1), which was previously determined by the respondent's sample stratum. Once the data collection period ended, the results from both surveys were combined, and an additional item was added to indicate the respondent's Facebook fan status: 0 for those in the fan stratum and 1 for those in the non-fan stratum.

Respondents were asked to report the standard demographics of age, gender, and race. Additionally, they were asked to indicate: "how many times, in the past week, did you visit the library?" Due to the subject matter of this study, respondents were also asked demographic questions to measure their general use of the Internet and Facebook.

Finally, the survey instrument included a Facebook demographics section for those respondents who reported that they used Facebook. This additional section measured their use of the Library's fan page and of fan pages in general. Sample questions included "approximately how many organizations/businesses/nonprofits have you fanned/liked on Facebook?" and "have you ever commented on a Library wall post?"

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This study examined the research questions posed here through an online survey of both Facebook fans (n = 130) and non-fans (n = 118) of a local charitable organization. The survey had 248 total respondents, with 118 respondents in the non-fan stratum and 130 respondents in the fan stratum. Of the 622 e-mail addresses in the non-fan stratum, 101 were undeliverable, making the response rate for non-fans 22.69%. The response rate for the fan stratum was 43.33%; out of 311 e-mail addresses, only 11 were undeliverable. The combined response rate for this study was 30.24%, which is above the accepted threshold of 20% (Kaplowitz, Hadlock, & Levine, 2004; Yun & Trumbo, 2000).

Demographics

As shown in Table 1, the average birth year of respondents was 1965 (M = 1965.37; SD = 14.77), making the average respondent approximately 46 years old. The majority of respondents were female (69.4%, n = 173), and more than three-fourths reported their ethnicity as White/Caucasian (81.4%, n = 172). On average, the respondents visited the library once a week (M = .91; SD = 1.35) and spent five hours on the Internet daily (M = 5.4; SD = 4.33). Respondents' level of Internet use was weakly correlated with their birth year ($r(161) = .3$, $p < .001$) and moderately correlated with their level of daily Facebook use ($r(163) = .45$, $p < .001$).

Facebook use. More than three-fourths of respondents said they use Facebook (80%, n = 180). This number includes both fans and non-fans. These Facebook users spent an average of nearly an hour and a half on Facebook daily (M = 1.44; SD = 1.57). These respondents have an

average of 300 Facebook friends (M = 300.97; SD = 238.68) and have liked an average of 33 organizations, businesses, or non-profits on Facebook (M = 33; SD = 65.77). As shown in Table 2, nearly three-fourths of Facebook users reported that they read the library's posts when they see them in their Facebook feeds (71.2%).

Of these Facebook users, more than half said they had "liked" a library wall post or status update in the past (56.5%, n = 138). The majority reported that they had not "liked" a library post in the past week (76.3%, n = 118). Approximately one in 10 had liked either one post (11.9%, n = 118) or two to five posts (10.9%, n = 118) in the past week. One respondent reported liking ten posts in the past week (.8%, n = 118).

Nearly a quarter of Facebook users said they had commented on a library wall post or status update in the past (24.3%, n = 120). More than nine in 10 reported that they had not liked a post in the past week (95%, n = 120). Five respondents reported that they had liked one post in the past week (4.2%, n = 120), and one respondent reported liking three posts in the past week (.8%, n = 120).

Social media use. A factor analysis indicated that social media use was a uni-dimensional concept; therefore the 16-item social media use scale was used to create an index to measure the level of social media use. The range of possible scores for this index was 16 to 80; the Cronbach's inter item reliability coefficient for this index was .87. The lowest reported score was 16, and the highest reported score was 78. The results for the social media use index are shown in Table 4.

The average social media use score was 39 (M = 39.7; SD = 12.02), which is considered a low score. The most frequently used social media were social networking sites (M = 3.68; SD = 1.52), wikis (M = 3.29; SD = 1.25), and text messaging (M = 3.23; SD = 1.58). The least

frequently used social media were virtual worlds (M = 1.17; SD = .51), online games (M = 1.66; SD = 1.14), geolocation (M = 1.61; SD = 1.01), and social bookmarking (M = 1.67; SD = 1.16)

Differences between strata. As shown in Table 1, there were more female respondents in the fan stratum (77.8%, n = 90) than in the non-fan stratum (60.2%, n = 83). The average birth year for fans (n = 86) was 1969 (M = 1968.72; SD = 12.2), and the average birth year for non-fans (n = 79) was 1962 (M = 1961.72; SD = 16.45). A t-test revealed that this was a statistically significant difference ($t(163) = 3.12$, $p = .002$). There was also a significant effect for hours of Internet use, $t(166) = 3.56$, $p < .001$, with fans (n = 87) reporting more hours of Internet use (M = 6.51, SD = 4.14) than non-fans (n = 81, M = 4.2, SD = 4.23). Fans (n = 85) also scored higher on the social media use index (M = 45, SD = 11.02) than did non-fans (n = 73, M = 33.53, SD = 10.07). This difference was statistically significant ($t(156) = 6.78$, $p < .001$). However, there was no significant difference between fans and non-fans for the number of recent visits to the library.

Content Analysis of Facebook Page Postings

At the time of the survey, the library's Facebook page had 1,158 fans. During the 29 days of the survey, there were 66 posts to the wall of the library's Facebook page. The average number of posts per day was 2.26. The results of the content analysis are shown in Table 3. Of the 66 posts, 48.5% (n = 32) were status updates, 37.9% (n = 25) were the library's posting of an upcoming event, 12.1% (n = 8) were the library posting a link to its wall, and 1.5% (n = 1) were the result of a Facebook fan tagging the library in a status update.

The majority of these posts received no likes (60%, n = 39), although more than a quarter received one or two likes (27.3%, n = 18). Similarly, the majority of the posts received no

comments (86.2%, *n* = 56), although nearly one in 10 received one comment (9.2%, *n* = 6). The average number of likes per post was .98, and the average number of comments per post was .25.

The researcher also recorded the data provided by Facebook for each post: impressions and percent feedback. Impressions are the number of times that a post has been seen either on the page's wall or in the newsfeeds of the page's fans. Percent feedback is the number of likes and comments per impression. On average, the library's posts made 977 impressions (*M* = 976.55, *SD* = 217.58), and their percent feedback was less than one percent (*M* = .12, *SD* = .19).

Finally, the researcher categorized each post by the type of information it contained. The first category was "fun facts," which accounted for 31.8% (*n* = 21) of the posts. Fun facts were posted every weekday morning. They included a tidbit of information about an event that happened on that day in history and a link to a library catalog search for books on the subject of the event. The second category was "information about a library event," which accounted for more than half of the posts (56.1%, *n* = 37). Posts in this category gave information, such as a date, time, and description, about upcoming or ongoing events at the library.

The third category was "information about a library product or service," and this category comprised 6.1% (*n* = 4) of the posts. Posts in this category gave information about new or currents services the library was offering, such as the availability of free federal and state tax forms. The final category was "request for information or action," which accounted for 6.1% (*n* = 4) of the posts. Examples of posts in this category include a request for volunteers to try a new database and a request for fans to name new films they would like the library to screen at a weekly event.

Perceived Relationship Characteristics

This study mirrored previous use of the Hon & Grunig (1999) scale (Hall, 2006; Jo & Kim, 2003; Kelleher, 2009; Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Ki & Hon, 2007) and created six indices, as shown in Table 5. The first index, trust, had six items, and its range of possible scores was six to 42. The remaining five indices (control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, communal relationship, and exchange relationship) each had four items, and their range of possible scores was four to 28.

Cronbach's inter item reliability coefficients for the initial six indices were as follows: trust = .94, control mutuality = .75, commitment = .92, satisfaction = .95, communal relationship = .79, and exchange relationship = .79. A previous study found that the item "in dealing with people like me, the organization has a tendency to throw its weight around" created a low Cronbach's α for the control mutuality index (Jo & Kim, 2003). Therefore, the researcher dropped this item, and the Cronbach's α was improved (α = .91).

RQ1 asked if publics who communicate with an organization on Facebook perceive their relationship to be different than do publics who do not communicate with the organization on Facebook. To answer RQ1, the researcher conducted t-tests to determine whether results for each of the six relationship characteristic indices differed significantly between fans and non-fans. As shown in Table 5, there were no significant differences between fans and non-fans for any of the six indices.

H1 proposed that, among those with high levels of social media use, fans would perceive their relationship with the organization to be of better quality than non-fans. To test H1, the researcher ran a t-test to determine whether results for the relationship characteristic indices among high users of social media differ significantly between fans and non-fans. To conduct

this t-test, the social media use index was split along the mean score of 39. Respondents were considered low users if their index score was below 39; they were considered high users if their score was 39 or higher. Results indicated that there were no significant differences for any of the six relationship characteristic indices. Therefore, H1 was not supported.

The researcher also performed a correlation analysis to test the relationships among the relationship characteristics, which is shown in Table 7. The results indicate a very strong, positive correlation between trust and commitment ($r(170) = .86$, $p < .001$) and between trust and satisfaction ($r(174) = .83$, $p < .001$). Similarly, there was a very strong, positive correlation between control mutuality and commitment ($r(173) = .84$, $p < .001$), between control mutuality and satisfaction ($r(176) = .81$, $p < .001$), and between commitment and satisfaction ($r(170) = .87$, $p < .001$). Finally, results indicated a weak, negative correlation between the exchange relationship and the four relationship characteristics of trust ($r(165) = -.38$, $p < .001$), control mutuality ($r(169) = -.29$, $p < .001$), commitment ($r(164) = -.32$, $p < .001$), and satisfaction ($r(168) = .32$, $p < .001$).

Uses and Gratifications of Facebook Pages

In contrast to prior use of this uses and gratifications scale (Park et al., 2009), a principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation resulted in a two-factor solution: socialization and community information. As shown in Table 6, both factors had an eigenvalue of at least 1 (socialization, 5.65; community information, 4), and they accounted for 68.88% of the variance.

The socialization factor ($\alpha = .92$) included 10 items, such as "to meet interesting people," "because I feel peer pressure to participate," "because it is funny," and "to talk about something with others." The community information factor ($\alpha = .88$) included 5 items, such as "to get

information about Library events," "to get information about Library products/services," and "to feel like I belong to a community."

RQ2 asked if motivations for using Facebook pages were correlated with publics' perceptions of relationship characteristics. To answer RQ2, the researcher ran a correlation between the two motivation factors and the six relationship characteristic indices. As shown in Table 7, the researcher found no significant correlations between the motivation factors and the relationship characteristic indices.

H2 stated that motivations for Facebook page use would differ according to demographic factors such as gender, age, Internet use, and social media use. The researcher conducted t-tests to test H2 for gender, fan status, and high or low social media use and found significant differences on all three variables for the community information factor, as shown in Table 8. The first t-test found a significant difference, $t(147) = -2.94$, $p = .004$, between males and females, with females ($n = 101$, $M = .17$, $SD = .92$) scoring higher than males ($n = 48$, $M = -.33$, $SD = 1.07$). A second t-test found a significant difference, $t(148) = 5.23$, $p < .001$, between fans ($n = 78$, $M = .38$, $SD = .7$) and non-fans ($n = 72$, $M = -.41$, $SD = 1.11$), with fans scoring higher than non-fans. A third t-test found that high social media users ($n = 80$) scored higher ($M = .35$, $SD = .7$) than did low social media users ($n = 61$, $M = -.37$, $SD = 1.13$). This difference was significant according to the t-test, $t(139) = -4.64$, $p < .001$.

To test H2 for age, hours on the Internet, hours on Facebook, level of social media use, and frequency of visits to the library, the researcher conducted a correlation analysis, as shown in Table 9. The socialization factor was weakly, positively correlated with frequency of visits to the library ($r(145) = .29$, $p < .001$). For the community information factor, the researcher found a weak, positive correlation for birth year ($r(143) = .34$, $p < .001$), hours on the Internet ($r(143) =$

.24, $p = .004$), hours on Facebook ($r(143) = .28$, $p = .001$), and level of social media use ($r(142) = .40$, $p < .001$).

A stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to test if demographic factors significantly predicted scores for the socialization factor. As shown in Table 10, the results of the regression indicated that one predictor explained 8.8% of the variance, $R^2 = .09$, $F(3, 132) = 13.76$, $p < .001$. The number of visits to the library significantly predicted the socialization motivation, $b = .31$, $t(132) = 3.71$, $p < .001$. The more frequently the respondent visited the library, the greater his motivation to use the library Facebook page for socialization.

Next, a stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to test which demographic factors predicted scores for the community information factor. As shown in Table 11, the results of the regression indicated that two predictors explained 16.5% of the variance, $R^2 = .17$, $F(3, 131) = 14.15$, $p = .018$. Level of social media use significantly predicted the community information motivation ($b = .28$, $t(131) = 3.13$, $p = .002$), as did fan status ($b = -0.21$, $t(131) = -2.41$, $p = .018$). If the respondent was a fan and had a higher level of social media use, s/he was likely to report a greater motivation to use the library's Facebook page for community information than would a non-fan with a lower level of social media use. As a result of the correlation and multiple regression analyses, H2 was supported.

H3 stated that socialization and information would be the predominant motivations for using a Facebook page. Because the factor analysis extracted only two factors, socialization and community information, H3 was supported.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As one of the first to examine how a social networking site supports relationship building, this study provides valuable insight about Facebook fans, their motivations for liking a page, and their expectations about pages' content. Furthermore, the results of this study lay the groundwork for future research in relationship management and social media.

This study set out to test the effectiveness of social media for relationship building between an organization and its publics and to examine publics' motivations for using an organization's Facebook page. Given the increasing adoption of social media by practitioners and publics, these are important questions to consider. As public relations professionals continue to incorporate social media into their daily practice, scholarship must illuminate how social media can be effectively used to build strong, positive organization-public relationships.

The Effectiveness of Facebook as a Relationship-Building Tool

Prior research suggested that social media like Facebook are ideal tools for relationship building and interacting with publics (Avery et al., 2010a; Kitchen & Panapoulos, 2010; Lariscy et al., 2009; Sweetser, 2010). This belief is also common among practitioners today (Wright & Hinson, 2010). However, this study found no significant differences between Facebook fans and non-fans in their perceptions of the quality of their relationship with the library. Even among respondents with high levels of social media use, fans' perceptions of relationship characteristics were not significantly different from those of non-fans.

It seems that merely establishing a presence on a social networking site neither detracts from nor adds to relationship building efforts. This finding is particularly important for practitioners in smaller organizations facing significant time and budget constraints. The fact that an organization's public relations department may not have the manpower to build and maintain a social media presence is not necessarily a death sentence for its efforts to manage relationships with its publics.

While this study did not find Facebook to be more effective than traditional methods of relationship building, these results must be considered alongside the content of the library's Facebook posts during the data collection period. An overwhelming majority of these posts were informational: "Our iFilm tonight is 'Stand Firm.' Watch the trailer here: http://ow.ly/3RENE and come out at 7 to see the film" (see Figure 1). Only 6.1% included a clear call for feedback or interaction: "We're running low on titles to use for our weekly Athens-Clarke County Library iFilms series. Time to order more international and/or independent movies! Any requests?" (see Figure 2).

These results are consistent with previous studies' findings that many organizations do not take full advantage of social media's potential for dialogue and relationship building (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Sweetser & Lariscy, 2008; Waters et al., 2009). While establishing a feedback mechanism is an important part of dialogic communication (Kent & Taylor, 1998), an orientation toward and a commitment to dialogue are also necessary (Kent & Taylor, 2001).

As was the case in the studies cited above, the library provided space for interaction on its Facebook page but did little to spark conversations with its patrons or encourage them to dialogue with one another. The library's failure to employ the full dialogic potential of its

Facebook page may have contributed to the finding that being a Facebook fan did not improve library patrons' perceptions of the quality of their relationship with the library.

Many of the responses to the open-ended survey question lend credence to this suggestion. For example, one respondent wrote, "I believe you can set up discussion boards on FB pages and this would be a great way to promote community involvement - you could even use it to facilitate an on-line book club." Others suggested the Facebook page be used "as a place to make suggestions or facilitate mutual groups," to post "polls to consider new materials," or for book discussions.

There were also several respondents who stated they would like to see a system of book recommendations and reviews on the library's Facebook page. Finally, one respondent wrote, "I love getting information about upcoming book sales and library events and ways that I can support the library. I'd love to see more posts about volunteer opportunities as they become available!" These findings suggest that the library's Facebook fans need more opportunities for interaction, primarily on the Facebook page but also at the library itself.

This need is a unique relationship-building opportunity for the library because it is an invitation to increased mutuality and sharing of tasks in the organization-public relationship. Previous research suggests that working towards a common goal can strengthen an organization-public relationship (Bruning et al., 2008; Ledingham, 2001). The task of promoting discussion about literature or choosing what new literature to acquire need not – indeed, should not – rest solely on the library's shoulders. By inviting its Facebook fans to share these responsibilities, the library can improve its relationship with these patrons.

In fact, Facebook fans are a valuable resource to the organization, because they are ready to become more involved when presented with an opportunity. As noted earlier, the fans'

response rate for this survey was nearly twice that of non-fans. Fans also expressed a desire to volunteer at the library and to help promote learning and literature among their peers. Practitioners who cultivate relationships with their Facebook fans benefit the organization as well as its publics. This may be particularly true for practitioners whose organizations have limited budgets and personnel with which to carry out their mission in their communities.

When the survey results and the content analysis of the library's Facebook page are considered together, it becomes clear that the mere fact of having a Facebook presence is not enough to improve an organization-public relationship. If practitioners only use Facebook as another forum for one-way communication, they will not find it useful for relationship building. Practitioners who wish to make strategic use of this popular social media tool must do more than use it to distribute press releases and calendar items. They must actively promote dialogue on their pages by initiating conversations with their publics, such as the post shown in Figure 2, and by providing forums for their publics to dialog with one another. Practitioners should also take advantage of Facebook's interactive nature and find ways to allow their publics to help the organization reach a common goal.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the four relationship characteristics and the communal relationship type indicator all have strong, positive correlations with one another and negative correlations with the exchange relationship indicator. These findings confirm those of earlier studies (Jo & Kim, 2003; Ki & Hon, 2007). The more patrons perceive that their relationship with the library exists only so that both sides can benefit from one another, the less likely they are to trust the library, perceive control mutuality, or feel committed to or satisfied with the library. On the other hand, patrons' perceptions of the quality of their relationship with the

library increase along with their perception that they and the library are concerned for each other's well being.

These correlations between the relationship characteristics and types serve as an important guideline for practitioners using social media. Practitioners should remember that social media have, in a sense, leveled the playing field for communication between an organization and its publics because they facilitate two-way communication. If the primary objective for their use of social media is to inform or persuade their publics, practitioners may find that their social media efforts are less effective for relationship building. Social media are an excellent listening tool. Practitioners who use social media to listen to their publics' suggestions will learn more about their publics' needs and expectations. The more an organization understands its publics, the better it is able to serve them. In doing so, the organization demonstrates concern for its publics' well being, which may lead to publics' perceptions of increased relationship quality.

Motivations for Using Facebook Pages

Park et al.'s original use of this uses and gratifications scale found four factors - socializing, information, entertainment, and status-seeking - that explained motivations for using Facebook (2009). Similarly, previous uses and gratifications research that examined social networking sites found that users seek to gratify needs for information, social integration, entertainment, and personal identity management (Joinson, 2008; Lampe et al., 2008; Park et al., 2009; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Richter & Koch, 2008; Sejrup, 2009; Shao, 2008; Sheldon, 2008; Valenzuela et al., 2009).

This study's results differed from previous uses and gratifications research in that socialization and community information emerged from the factor analysis as the only two

motivations for using a Facebook page. However, this finding is still consistent with previous research in that the aforementioned studies consistently found socializing and information to be the two most common gratifications sought by users of social networking sites (Joinson, 2008; Lampe et al., 2008; Park et al., 2009; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Richter & Koch, 2008; Sheldon, 2008).

Furthermore, this study examined a slightly different aspect of Facebook use than did previous studies. With the exception of Park et al. (2009), who specifically studied the use of Facebook groups, these studies examined motivations for using Facebook as a whole. This study only looked at motivations for using an organization's Facebook page. Whereas general Facebook use includes profile information, status updates, and friending – all of which apply directly to identity management – these elements are not part of using a Facebook page. Similarly, the elements of Facebook that most obviously provide entertainment, such as games, quizzes, and other applications, are not present on an organization's Facebook page.

It is also interesting to note that the lines between social networking sites and online games seem to be blurring. The respondents reported that social networking sites were their most frequently used social media, while online games were among the least frequently used. Yet, the most popular social networking site, Facebook, includes dozens of games, such as Farmville and the Oregon Trail, that are played by millions of Facebook users (Dybwad, 2009).

While it is true that Park et al.'s (2009) study also applied to a specific aspect of the site, Facebook groups differ from Facebook pages, which are much more akin to a regular Facebook profile. Also, since there was little interaction between users on the library's page, there may simply have been too few opportunities for entertainment or identity management for these motivations to emerge as factors.

Finally, the difference in results may be due to the newness of the Facebook pages application, which first launched in November 2007 (*Facebook*, 2007). Perhaps motivations for early adoption differ from motivations for the majority of users. Facebook itself is still a new medium. While little research has been published that tracks changes in its use over time, one such study found that use and attitudes toward use of Facebook did change slightly over a three-year period (Lampe et al., 2008).

Lampe et al. (2008) proposed that changes in the use of Facebook may be the result of changes in the site's structure or features. Facebook pages underwent a minor change in April 2010, when "fanning" a page became "liking" a page (O'Neill, 2010). Mere weeks after this study ended, the company introduced a major redesign to the layout of Facebook pages, making them nearly identical to regular users' profile pages (Parr, 2011). It may be that, as organizations' pages become more similar to users' profile pages, the motivations for using an organization's Facebook page will more closely resemble motivations for general Facebook use.

This study did not find significant relationships between motivations for using Facebook pages and any of the relationship characteristics. This suggests that publics tend to have similar reasons for using a Facebook page regardless of how they feel about their relationship with the organization. However, this finding may also be due to the overall positive perceptions that library patrons had regarding their relationship with the library. The mean scores for all four of the relationship characteristic indices and the communal relationship index were well above the median, and the mean score for the exchange relationship index was well below the median. One could just as easily conclude that library patrons express similar levels of motivations for using the library's Facebook page because they all have high opinions of their relationship with the library.

On the other hand, an examination of the interactions of demographic characteristics and the motivation factors did reveal some significant relationships. The only demographic factor that seemed to affect the socialization motivation was frequency of visits to the library. Respondents who visited the library more frequently were more likely to report a stronger motivation to use the library's Facebook page for socialization. This relationship is particularly meaningful when considered alongside the finding that there was no significant difference between fans and non-fans for frequency of visits to the library. It seems that the library's Facebook page is an extension of, and not a replacement for, the library community. Patrons who frequently participate in the "real life" community inside the library building are also likely to use the online community that exists on the library's Facebook page.

This finding raises an interesting question: if fans and non-fans are equally active library users, then why have a large group of library patrons chosen not to use the library's Facebook page? This may be partially due to the finding that 20% of library patrons do not use Facebook. Several respondents indicated in the open-ended question that they do not use Facebook and do not plan to use it in the future.

The difference may also be a result of some patrons' attitudes toward Facebook as a whole. One respondent said, "I would not link to the Library's Facebook page - I use my Facebook account exclusively to keep up with friends." If this is the case, then the library may benefit from emphasizing its page as a place to connect with friends. It should also provide more opportunities for connecting and engaging with other fans. As noted earlier, the library's page content currently does little to promote interactivity. This may be an obstacle to patrons who use Facebook primarily for socialization.

Public relations practitioners would do well to keep this in mind when planning their social media strategies. The ability to connect and interact with other users is an important aspect of Facebook and, by extension, of Facebook pages. If practitioners want their publics to use their organization's Facebook pages, they should provide content that gratifies this need for socialization. Perhaps if the library did more to encourage discussion on its Facebook page, then more patrons would begin using it.

For the community information factor, females and Facebook fans scored higher than did males and non-fans. Also, publics who are younger, have a higher level of social media use, and spend more hours online and on Facebook show a stronger motivation to use a Facebook page to find information about the community. In fact, fan status and level of social media use predicted, to some extent, a higher score for the community information factor. These results are consistent with recent data from the Pew Internet and American Life Project (2009): adults aged 18 – 49 are still the highest users of social media, and they increasingly use the Internet as a primary source of information. The finding that fan status predicts the community information motivation also makes intuitive sense. Library patrons who already benefit from timely information updates on the library's Facebook page are more likely than other patrons to be motivated to use the page as an information resource.

The open-ended responses confirm these findings. Library events, new books, and library services were the three most frequently mentioned items that respondents said they expected or wanted to find on the library's Facebook page. To quote one 27-year-old respondent: "For the purposes for which I use the ACC Library's page, it is very well maintained and updated. Upcoming events, classes, and new services are advertised, and I often find out about them via Facebook before any other source." It seems that younger patrons who are

inclined to spend longer each day on the Internet are also likely to be motivated to use the library's Facebook page to find information about upcoming events and services in the library community.

These findings have important implications for public relations practitioners. Even though an organization should not use its Facebook page solely as an online calendar or bulletin board, this is still an essential function of the page. Non-profits, small businesses, or other organizations with limited budgets may find these results useful when planning a public relations campaign. Organizations whose primary publics are under the age of 50 may also benefit from these results. A Facebook page is a free, simple forum for sharing important, timely information with an organization's publics. For younger publics, it may even be the primary or preferred information source.

Since teens under 18 are also likely to turn to the Internet for information (Lenhart et al., 2010), it is reasonable to infer that, as time passes and these demographics age, social media tools like Facebook will become an increasingly important information resource. Practitioners should respond by ensuring that their organizations' Facebook pages are updated in a timely manner with relevant information that their publics either need or want to know.

Understanding the "Facebook Demographic"

In comparing the demographics of library patrons who are Facebook fans to those who are not, this study provides useful insight into this particular public. Understanding the differences between publics who communicate with their organization via Facebook and those who communicate via other, more traditional, media can help practitioners to better target their social media messaging and campaigns.

The library's Facebook fans were significantly younger than non-fans, they spent significantly greater hours on the Internet and Facebook than non-fans, and they had a significantly higher level of social media use. These results are not surprising, given that adults under the age of 50 still have the highest percentage of social networking site use (Madden, 2010) and Internet use (Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2010).

The results also suggest that Facebook fans are equally as engaged with the organization as are their non-fan counterparts. There was also no significant difference between fans and non-fans for the number of weekly visits to the library. It appears that Facebook fans' commitment to the organization exists in the "real world" as well as online. In some cases, they may be even more committed. For example, the response rate for fans was nearly double the response rate of non-fans. However, this finding is not necessarily indicative of an actual difference in commitment between fans and non-fans. It may be that, since fans tended to spend more hours online each day, they felt they had more time to dedicate to taking an online survey.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The primary limitation of this study was its scope. This study examined one local governmental organization's relationship with its publics. Therefore, the results may not be generalizable to other sectors of the public relations industry. For example, a similar survey of the publics of a large corporation might yield different results. Future researchers may want to replicate this study in other types of organizations.

A second limitation was the gender and ethnic imbalances of the respondents. The majority of respondents were female (69.4%) and White/Caucasian (81.4%). These imbalances are likely the result of the sampling method. The sample was drawn from the database of e-newsletter subscribers, which may have biased the sample towards a certain demographic with

regular Internet access. The sample also did not include those who are regular patrons but have opted not to receive information about the library via e-mail. As a result, these findings may not be representative of the attitudes of all library patrons.

While this study found that communicating with an organization on Facebook had no significant effect on perceived relationship characteristics, these results may be partially due to the lack of interactive content on the Facebook page being studied. Future research should examine other libraries' Facebook pages with a greater proportion of interactive to purely informative posts to test for the effect of page content on perceived relationship characteristics.

The results of this study found that fans are equally as active library patrons as are non-fans but did little to explain why this is the case. Future research should examine what motivates publics not to use an organization's Facebook page, as this information could also provide practical guidelines for practitioners' use of Facebook pages.

Finally, this study has limited timeliness due to the constantly changing nature of the medium being examined. Less than two weeks after the data collection period ended, Facebook introduced a major change to Facebook pages' layout and capabilities, making them more similar to the profiles of regular users. This is only the most recent in a series of major changes and new features that Facebook has introduced since the company's beginning. As Facebook's capabilities and features continue to evolve, so will its uses and gratifications. Future studies should observe and track these changes so that public relations professionals and scholars have the benefit of the most current information about perceptions of and motivations for using a Facebook page.

Conclusion

This study is important to public relations scholarship because it applied one of the field's most-researched theories to a new, growing area of study. Specifically, this study applied relationship management theory to an organization's use of Facebook. The majority of previous studies in this area are descriptive, measuring the ways that organizations use social media. This study is one of the first to test the claim that social media are an ideal tool for relationship building by testing their effect on the organization-public relationship.

As social media grow in popularity with publics and practitioners, it is essential that public relations scholarship begins to understand these new tools: how they are used by publics and how they can be used most effectively by practitioners. Given the claims about social media's potential power and the degree to which they are currently emphasized in trade publications, this study is particularly timely. Rather than using social media because "everyone's doing it," practitioners should understand best practices for using social media so that their efforts are not wasted. This study begins constructing a clearer picture of how social media use affects an organization-public relationship, and its results lay the groundwork for future research into the effective use of social media for relationship building.

Additionally, this study contributes to the body of knowledge about the uses and gratifications of Facebook. Just as any good public relations campaign must begin with research about the target audience, a successful social media policy begins with an understanding of the motivations that drive publics' use of social media. The body of knowledge about uses and gratifications is constantly growing as scholars analyze new media. This study adds to that knowledge by applying the lens of uses and gratifications theory to a very specific aspect of social media use: Facebook pages. This aspect of uses and gratifications research is especially

relevant to public relations because Facebook pages are one of the most common social media tools that practitioners use.

The results of this study provide several useful guidelines for public relations practitioners. First, it should be noted that social media are no different from any other public relations tool. In order to be effective, they must be used wisely. In this study, Facebook fans did not differ significantly from non-fans in their perceptions about the quality of their relationship with the organization. Even among publics who spent more time using and/or used a wider range of social media, there were no significant differences between fans and non-fans. However, this was likely due to the library's failure to promote interaction between itself and its fans on its Facebook page.

Based on these findings, it is clear that simply having a Facebook page will neither increase nor decrease the strength of an organization's relationship with its publics. Practitioners with limited time to devote to social media need not worry that they are missing out on a magical tool that will automatically improve their public relations efforts.

Second, practitioners who do decide to use Facebook pages should consider the motivations for using Facebook when deciding what content to post. The needs for socialization and community information are the primary motivations that drive publics' use of an organization's Facebook page. If practitioners want to use their page to engage their publics, they must provide content that meets both needs.

Third, in their use of Facebook pages, practitioners must beware of the temptation to use Facebook as just another outlet for information about their organization. It is the job of the organization to initiate interaction between itself and its publics. Unless the organization makes a conscious effort to post content that promotes feedback, true dialogue is not likely to occur on

its Facebook page. Results indicated that publics want more opportunities to connect with the organization and with each other. Practitioners who fail to meet these desires miss an opportunity to listen to and serve their publics. Furthermore, their efforts will be wasted, as this study's results clearly indicated that Facebook pages used primarily for one-way communication have no effect on the organization-public relationship.

Finally, the results of this study help to clarify the unique features of the "Facebook demographic." Consistent with current data about Internet usage, this particular public tends to be younger, spend more time daily online and on Facebook, and have a higher level of social media use. This younger, Internet-savvy demographic is also more motivated to use an organization's Facebook page as a source of community information. Practitioners can better target the messaging of their Facebook pages by keeping in mind the basic demographics of their Facebook audience.

In conclusion, this study found that simply having a Facebook page does not significantly affect an organization-public relationship. Pages that are used primarily for one-way communication will not improve publics' perceptions of the quality of their relationship with the organization. If practitioners wish to use their organization's Facebook page as a tool for relationship building, they must balance content that gratifies their publics' need for information with content that intentionally promotes interactivity.

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APPENDIX A

INSTRUMENT

Relationship Characteristics
(* indicates items that were reverse coded)
Please indicate your agreement with the following statements:

The Athens-Clarke County Library treats people like me fairly and justly.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Whenever the Library makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The Library can be relied on to keep its promises.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I believe the Library takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I feel very confident about the Library's skills.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The Library has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The Library and people like me are attentive to what each other say

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

The Library believes the opinions of people like me are legitimate.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

In dealing with people like me, the Library has the tendency to throw its weight around.*

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The Library really listens to what people like me have to say.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I feel that the Library is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to people like me.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I can see that the Library wants to maintain a relationship with people like me.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

There is a long-lasting bond between the Library and people like me.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Compared to other organizations, I value my relationship with the Library more.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am happy with the Library.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Both the Library and people like me benefit from the relationship.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Most people like me are happy in their interactions with the Library.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship the Library has established with people like me.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The Library does not especially enjoy giving others aid.*

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The Library is very concerned about the welfare of people like me.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I feel that the Library takes advantage of people who are vulnerable.*

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I think the Library succeeds by stepping on other people.*

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Whenever the Library gives or offers something to people like me, it generally expects something in return.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Even though people like me have had a relationship with the Library for a long time, it still expects something in return whenever it offers us a favor.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The Library will compromise with people like me when it knows it will gain something.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The Library takes care of people who are likely to reward the Library.

Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Uses and gratifications

1) Do you use Facebook?

○ Yes

○ No

2) Have you ever liked a Library wall post?*

○ Yes

○ No

3) Have you ever commented on a Library wall post?*

○ Yes

○ No

4) When you see the Library's posts in your Facebook feed, do you read them?*

○ Yes

○ No

5) In the past week, how many Library posts have you liked?* _____

6) In the past week, how many comments have you left on the Library's page?* _____

7) Approximately how many Facebook friends do you currently have?* _____

8) Approximately how many organizations/businesses/nonprofits have you fanned/liked on Facebook?* _____

(* indicates item was only shown to respondents who answered “yes” to using Facebook.)

9) Please indicate how well the following statements might match your motivation for using the Athens-Clarke County Library's Facebook page:

	Not at all						Exactly
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To get peer support from others	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
To meet interesting people	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
To feel like I belong to a community	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

To talk about something with others	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
To stay in touch with people I know	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Because it is entertaining	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Because it is funny	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Because it is exciting	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Because I feel peer pressure to participate	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Because it makes me look cool	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
To develop my career through group participation	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
To get information about Library-sponsored events	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
To get information about other local events	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
To get useful information about Library products/services	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

10) Please describe the content you would like to or expect to see on the Athens-Clarke County Library's Facebook page.

Social media use

1) How often do you use the following social media (for any reason)?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often/Regularly	All the time
Blogs	○	○	○	○	○
social event/calendar systems	○	○	○	○	○
instant messaging/chat	○	○	○	○	○
online video games	○	○	○	○	○
news aggregation/RSS	○	○	○	○	○
photo sharing (Flickr, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○
Podcasts	○	○	○	○	○
Micro-blogging (Twitter, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○
Virtual worlds (Second Life, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○
Social	○	○	○	○	○

bookmarking (delicious, etc.)					
Social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○
Text messaging	○	○	○	○	○
Video conferencing	○	○	○	○	○
Video sharing (YouTube, Vimeo, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○
Wikis (Wikipedia, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○
Geolocation (Foursquare, Gowalla, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○

Demographics

1) Gender:

○ Male

○ Female

2) Ethnicity:

○ American Indian/Alaska Native

○ Asian

○ African American

○ Latino

○ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

○ White/Caucasian

○ Multi-racial

○ Other

3) Please indicate the year you were born: _____

4) How many times did you visit the Athens-Clarke County Library in the past week? _____

5) How many hours did you spend on the Internet (in general) last week? _____

6) How many hours do you use the Internet daily? _____

7) How many hours do you use Facebook daily? _____

APPENDIX B

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1
Respondents' Demographics M(SD)

	All Respondents (N = 248)	Fans (n = 130)	Non-fans (n = 118)
Year born	1965.37 (14.77)	1968.72 (12.20)	1961.72* (16.45)
Visits to library in the past week	0.91 (1.35)	0.85 (1.29)	0.96 (1.41)
Daily hours on the Internet	5.40 (4.33)	6.51 (4.14)	4.20* (4.23)
Daily hours on Facebook	1.15 (1.51)	1.44 (1.60)	0.84* (1.35)
Level of social media use	39.70 (12.01)	45.00 (11.02)	33.53* (10.07)

* indicates difference between fans and non-fans is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 2

Facebook Use Demographics as a Percentage of Facebook Users

Characteristic	Facebook users (n = 144)
Have you ever liked a Library wall post/status update?	
Yes	56.5
No	43.5
Have you ever commented on a Library post/status?	
Yes	24.3
No	75.7
Do you read the Library's posts when you see them?	
Yes	71.2
No	28.8
How many Library posts have you liked in the past week?	
0	76.3
1	11.9
2	5.9
3	2.5
4	0.8
5	1.7
10	0.8
How many posts have you commented on in the past week?	
0	95.0
1	4.2
3	0.8

Table 3

Characteristics of Facebook Page Posts as a Percentage of Total Posts

Characteristic	% of Total Posts (n = 66)
Type of post	
Status update	48.5
Event posting	37.9
Library posting a link	12.1
Fan tagging the library	1.5
Number of likes	
0	60
1	15.2
2	12.1
3	7.6
4	1.5
7	1.5
12	1.5
Number of comments	
0	86.2
1	9.2
2	1.5
3	1.5
5	1.5
Category of post	
Fun facts	31.8
Information about a library event	56.1
Information about a library product/service	6.1
Request for information or action	6.1

Table 4

Respondents' Social Media Use M(*SD*)

	All Participants (N = 248)
Social Media Index	39.7(12.01)
Blog Use	2.81(1.41)
Social Event/Calendar Systems	2.74(1.25)
Instant Messaging	2.71(1.37)
Online Video Games	1.66(1.135)
News Aggregation/RSS	2.75(1.50)
Photo Sharing	2.73(1.24)
Podcasts	2.37(1.40)
Micro-blogging/Twitter	2.02(1.41)
Virtual Worlds/Second Life	1.17(0.51)
Social Bookmarking	1.67(1.16)
Social Networking Sites	3.68(1.52)
Text Messaging	3.23(1.58)
Video Conferencing	2.12(1.16)
Video Sharing	2.75(1.24)
Wikis	3.29(1.25)
Geolocation (Gowalla, etc.)	1.61(1.01)

Table 5

Perceptions of Relationship Characteristics M(SD)

		All Respondents (N = 248)	Fans (n = 130)	Non-fans (n = 118)
Trust		34.00 (7.31)	34.06 (6.87)	33.93 (7.82)
	treats people like me fairly and justly	6.20 (1.31)	6.28 (1.15)	6.11 (1.46)
	will be concerned about people like me	5.43 (1.47)	5.58 (1.30)	5.26 (1.63)
	can be relied on to keep its promises	5.62 (1.38)	5.59 (1.37)	5.66 (1.40)
	takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions	5.41 (1.38)	5.41 (1.31)	5.42 (1.47)
	has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do	5.42 (1.43)	5.30 (1.46)	5.55 (1.40)
	I feel very confident about the library's skills	5.88 (1.37)	5.89 (1.32)	5.87 (1.43)
Control Mutuality		16.57 (3.81)	16.81 (3.37)	16.3 (4.25)
	The library and people like me are attentive to what each other say	5.49 (1.35)	5.52 (1.24)	5.47 (1.50)
	believes the opinions of people like me are legitimate	5.64 (1.38)	5.79 (1.13)	5.47 (1.61)
	really listens to what people like me have to say	5.43 (1.41)	5.47 (1.27)	5.37 (1.55)
Commitment		22.27 (5.24)	22.67 (4.87)	21.83 (5.61)
	is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to people like me	5.70 (1.49)	5.69 (1.45)	5.71 (1.54)
	wants to maintain a lasting relationship with people like me	5.79 (1.44)	5.87 (1.36)	5.70 (1.52)

	has a long-lasting bond with people like me	5.52 (1.49)	5.60 (1.39)	5.44 (1.60)
	compared to other organizations, I value my relationship with the Library more	5.32 (1.39)	5.52 (1.27)	5.10 (1.50)
Satisfaction		23.94 (4.94)	24.22 (4.19)	23.62 (5.67)
	I am happy with the library.	6.07 (1.33)	6.11 (1.20)	6.03 (1.47)
	Both the library and people like me benefit from the relationship	6.05 (1.29)	6.16 (1.04)	5.94 (1.51)
	Most people like me are happy in their interactions with the library	5.87 (1.30)	5.97 (1.15)	5.76 (1.44)
	Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship the library has established with people like me	5.98 (1.35)	6.02 (1.17)	5.93 (1.53)
Communal Relationship		24.03 (4.05)	24.17 (3.91)	23.88 (4.21)
	*does not especially enjoy giving others aid	5.99 (1.29)	5.98 (1.29)	6.00 (1.30)
	is very concerned about the welfare of people like me	5.26 (1.51)	5.23 (1.48)	5.30 (1.54)
	*takes advantage of people who are vulnerable	6.33 (1.25)	6.46 (1.03)	6.18 (1.45)
	*succeeds by stepping on other people	6.45 (1.10)	6.51 (1.03)	6.38 (1.71)
Exchange Relationship		9.99 (4.53)	10.24 (4.05)	9.73 (5.01)
	generally expects something in return whenever it gives or offers something to people like me	1.81 (1.25)	1.85 (1.21)	1.76 (1.30)

still expects something in return whenever it offers people like me a favor, even though we have had a relationship for a long time	1.78 (1.24)	1.76 (1.15)	1.81 (1.34)
will compromise with people like me when it knows it will gain something	2.62 (1.59)	2.75 (1.44)	2.48 (1.74)
takes care of people who are likely to reward the library	3.74 (1.66)	3.82 (1.61)	3.66 (1.71)

*indicates item was reverse coded

Table 6

Factor Analysis of Facebook Page Uses and Gratifications

Reasons for Using the Library's Facebook page	Factors 1	2
Factor 1: Socializing		
Because it makes me look cool	0.81	-0.10
To meet interesting people	0.81	0.29
Because I feel peer pressure to participate	0.79	-0.21
To get peer support from others	0.78	0.19
To stay in touch with people I know	0.76	0.23
To talk about something with others	0.76	0.37
Because it is exciting	0.72	0.51
To develop my career through group participation	0.71	0.05
Because it is funny	0.68	0.50
Factor 2: Community Information		
To get information about Library-sponsored events	0.01	0.92
To get information about Library products/services	0.03	0.90
To get information about local events	0.05	0.88
Because it is entertaining	0.41	0.62
To feel like I belong to a community	0.53	0.56
Eigenvalue	5.65	4.00
Variance explained	40.33	28.54
Cronbach's α	0.92	0.88

Table 7

Correlations between Relationship Characteristics and Facebook Page Uses and Gratifications

	Trust	Control Mutuality	Commitment	Satisfaction	Communal Relationship	Exchange Relationship	Socializing	Community Information
Trust	1	0.79**	0.86**	0.83**	0.60**	-0.38**	-0.01	0.11
Control Mutuality		1	0.84**	0.81**	0.59**	-0.30**	-0.05	0.13
Commitment			1	0.87**	0.65**	-0.32**	-0.24	0.17*
Satisfaction				1	0.61**	-0.32**	-0.10	0.15
Communal Relationship					1	-0.66**	-0.08	0.14
Exchange Relationship						1	0.01	-0.07
Socializing							1	0.00
Community Information								1

* indicates the correlation is significant at the 0.05 level
** indicates the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 8

Differences between Demographic Factors for Facebook Page Use

	Socializing M(SD)	Community Information M(SD)
Gender		
Male (1, *n* = 48)	-0.004(1.03)	-0.33(1.07)
Female (2, *n* = 101)	0.007(1.00)	0.17(0.92)*
Fan status		
Fan (0, *n* = 78)	-0.10(0.95)	0.38(0.70)
Non-fan (1, *n* = 72)	0.10(1.05)	-0.41(1.11)*
Level of social media use		
Low (0, *n* = 61)	0.09(1.08)	-0.37(1.13)
High (1, *n* = 80)	0.02(0.94)	0.35(0.70)*
Do you read the library's posts?		
Yes (1, *n* = 90)	-0.02(0.98)	0.38(0.69)
No (2, *n* = 33)	0.06(0.98)	-0.16(0.93)*

* indicates $p < .01$

Table 9

Correlations between Facebook Page Uses and Gratifications and Demographics

Correlate (*r*)	Socializing	Community Information
Year born	0.13	0.34*
Daily hours on the Internet	-0.02	0.24*
Daily hours on Facebook	0.01	0.28*
Level of social media use	-0.06	0.40*

* indicates $p < .01$

Table 10

*Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Socialization (*n = *134)*

Predictor Variable	B	SE(B)	β	*t*	*p*
Frequency of visits to the library	0.23	0.06	0.31	3.71	< .001

Note: $R^2 = 0.09$

Table 11

*Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Community Information (*n = *134)*

Predictor Variable	B	SE(B)	β	*t*	*p*
Step 1					
Level of social media use	0.03	0.01	0.38	4.66	< .001
Step 2					
Level of social media use	0.02	0.01	0.28	3.13	.002
Fan status (fan, 0; non-fan, 1)	-0.41	0.17	-0.21	-2.41	.018

Note: $R^2 = 0.17$



Figure 1. An example of an informational post to the library's Facebook page



Figure 2. An example of a post on the library's page with a clear call for interaction

APPENDIX C

IRB APPLICATION



Human Subjects Office (HSO)
612 Boyd GSRC ■ Athens, GA 30602-7411
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DHHS Assurance No.: FWA00003901

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

HUMAN RESEARCH APPLICATION

To submit: http://www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso/how/application

IMPORTANT: *Please respond to all the questions. Do not leave items blank; if not applicable, mark N/A. Please note that incomplete applications may result in delayed review. Click on the hyperlinks (text underlined in blue) to obtain additional information.*	***For Human Subjects Office Use Only*** **Project #:** **Date Received:** **Type of Review:** ☐ **Exempt** ☐ **Expedited** ☐ **Full**

Section A: PROJECT INFORMATION

1. **Study Title:** Library Survey
2. **Application Type:** ☒ New Project ☐ Response to Initial Review (*All revisions must be in italics or different font color.*)
   ☐ 5-Year Renewal; Previous IRB number:
3. **Principal Investigator:** (*Must be UGA faculty or senior staff. See Eligibility to Serve as PI.*)
   Name: Kaye D. Sweetser **Title:** Dr.
   Department Name: ADPR, Grady College
   Mailing Address: Department of ADPR, Grady College, 3018
   Phone: 5422049 **UGA E-mail** (Required): sweetser@uga.edu
4. **Co-Principal Investigator:** *(Required only if for thesis/dissertation or other student project.)*
   Name: Amy Wilson **Title:** Ms.
   Department: ADPR, Grady College
   Mailing address: 200 Brooklyn Rd. 30606
   Phone: 2142269147 **UGA E-mail** (Required): awils29@uga.edu
5. **Anticipated Start Date:** (*Must be at least 4 weeks after application is received.*) 1/17/11

Section B: PROJECT FUNDING

1. **Funding Status:** ☐ Funded ☐ Pending ☒ No Funding
2. **Funding Source:** ☐ Internal Account #:
   ☐ External Funding Source: OSP Proposal or Award #:
3. **Name of Proposal or Award PI** (if different from PI of IRB protocol):
4. **Proposal or Award Title** (if different from title of IRB protocol):

Section C: STUDY PERSONNEL / RESEARCH TEAM

Including the PI, identify all personnel who will be engaged in the conduct of human research. ***Important Note:*** *All researchers listed below are required to complete the CITI IRB Training prior to submission of this application. This application will be returned to PI for resubmission if training requirement has not been satisfied. To add more names, bring cursor to outside of last row, and press "enter" key.*

Name	E-mail	*Institution
Kaye D. Sweetser	sweetser@uga.edu	UGA
Amy Wilson	Awils29@uga.edu	UGA

*Submit an ***Individual Investigator Agreement*** for all study personnel affiliated with an institution that does not have an assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections or OHRP (typically, local schools, private doctors' clinics).*

Section D: PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR'S ASSURANCE

As the Principal Investigator, I have the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the study and the protection of the rights and welfare of human participants. *By affixing my signature below,*

- I assure that all the information contained in this Human Research Application is true and all the activities described for this study accurately summarize the nature and extent of the proposed participation of human participants.
- If funded, I assure that this proposal accurately reflects all procedures involving human participants described in the grant application to the funding agency.
- I agree to comply with all UGA policies and procedures, as well as with all applicable federal, state, and local laws on the protection of human participants in research.
- I assure that all personnel listed on this project are qualified, appropriately trained, and will adhere to the provisions of the approved protocol.
- I will notify the IRB regarding any adverse events, unexpected problems or incidents that involve risks to participants or others, and any complaints.
- I am aware that no change(s) to the final approved protocol will be initiated without prior review and written approval from the IRB (except in an emergency, if necessary to safeguard the well-being of human participants and then notify the IRB as soon as possible afterwards).
- I understand that I am responsible for monitoring the expiration of this study, and complying with the requirements for an annual continuing review for expedited and full board studies.
- If human research activities will continue five years after the original IRB approval, I will submit a new IRB Application Form. (*Exceptions:* If the research is permanently closed to the enrollment of new participants, all participants have completed all research-related interventions, and the research will remain active only for long-term follow-up of participants; or if the remaining research activities are limited to analysis of individually-identifiable private information.)
- I understand that the IRB reserves the right to audit an ongoing study at any time.
- I understand that I am responsible for maintaining copies of all records related to this study in accordance with the IRB and sponsor guidelines.
- I assure that research will only begin after I have received notification of final IRB approval.

Signature of Principal Investigator _____ **Date** (mm/dd/yyyy):

Section E: CONFLICT OF INTEREST (COI)

1. **Is there any real, potential, or perceived conflict of interest on the part of any study personnel** *(e.g., financial or business interest, stock or stock options, proprietary interest, inventorship, consultant to sponsor)***?** ☐ **Yes** ☒ **No**
2. **If yes, please identify personnel and explain.** ***Important Note:*** *Please review the* ***UGA Conflict of Interest Policy****. Final IRB approval cannot be granted until all potential conflict matters are addressed.*

Section F: LAY PROJECT SUMMARY

Briefly describe in simple, non-technical language a summary of the study, its specific aim(s)/objective(s), and its significance or importance. ***Response should be limited to 250 words and easily understood by a layperson.*** This study will test the validity of the claim that social media are an ideal tool for organizations to build relationships with their publics. This study will explore how interacting with an organization on Facebook affects its publics' perception of their relationship with the organization. This study will also examine the

communication aspect of the organization-public relationship through the lens of uses and gratifications theory. The researcher will explore the gratifications publics are seeking when they communicate with an organization on Facebook and the effect these gratifications have on their perceptions of the organization-public relationship's quality.

Section G: HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

1. Provide a general description of the targeted participants *(e.g., healthy adults from the general population, children enrolled in an after-school program, adolescent females with scoliosis)*, **and indicate the estimated total number, targeted gender, and age.** *To add a row, bring cursor to outside of last row, and press "enter" key.*

Targeted Population	Total Number	Targeted Gender	Specify age or age range
Non Facebook fan Library patrons	2000	M, F	18+
Facebook fan Library patrons	2000	M, F	18+

2. Identify the inclusion and exclusion criteria. If two or more targeted populations, identify criteria for each.

a. List inclusion criteria. library patrons, library patrons who are fans of the library on Facebook (this information is publicly accessible via Facebook)

b. List exclusion criteria. library patrons who are also fans on Facebook, library patrons who are not Facebook fans

3. If the research will exclude a particular gender or minority group, please provide justification.

4. Will participants receive any incentives for their participation (e.g., payments, gifts, compensation, reimbursement, services without charge, extra class credit)**?** ☐ **Yes** ☒ **No**

a. If yes, please describe. For multiple sessions, include scheme to pro-rate incentives.

b. If offering extra class credit, describe a comparable non-research alternative for receiving incentive.

Section H: RECRUITMENT AND ELIGIBILITY OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Describe how potential participants will be initially identified (e.g., public records, private records, etc.)**.** library listserv

2. Describe when, where, and how participants will be initially contacted. Participants will be sent an emailed the following invitation with a link to the survey:

> You have been selected as part of a small group of library patrons to participate in a survey that will evaluate how well we are meeting our patrons' needs and expectations. Please click the link below to complete the confidential, online survey. It should only take six minutes of your time.

3. Advertisements, flyers, and any other materials that will be used to recruit participants must be reviewed and approved before their use. Check all that apply below and submit the applicable recruitment material/s**.**

☐ **No Advertising** ☐ **Bulletin boards** ☒ **Electronic media (e.g., listserv, emails)** ☐ **Letters**
☐ **Print ads/flyers (e.g., newspaper)** ☐ **Radio/TV** ☐ **Phone call** ☐ **Other** *(please describe)*

4. Describe any follow-up recruitment procedures. If necessary, a second wave of emails will be sent to participants who have not yet completed the survey:

> You have been selected as part of a small group of library patrons to participate in a survey. There are only two weeks left to help us evaluate how well we are meeting our patrons' needs and expectations! Please click the link below to complete the confidential, online survey. It should only take six minutes of your time, and your response is important to us.

5. Describe how eligibility based on the above inclusion/exclusion criteria will be determined (e.g., self-report via a screening questionnaire, hospital records, school records, additional tests/exams, etc.)**.** Adult participants will be selected from the library's listserv subscribers. All subscribers are library patrons, therefore all adult participants are eligible. Participants will be told in the consent form that they must be 18 years or older to participate in the survey. They will only be allowed to continue to the survey if they self-report that they are eligible by agreeing to participate.

Section I: RESEARCH, DESIGN, METHODS AND PROCEDURES

1. Describe the research design and methods of data collection. To examine how interacting with an organization on Facebook affects its publics' perception of the organization-public relationship, this study will conduct an online survey of the stakeholders of a local-level nonprofit organization. The survey will be administered through SurveyMonkey's SSL server. The survey will be delivered via an e-mail containing a link to the survey. The e-mail will be sent from the researcher's library e-mail address.

2. **If applicable, identify specific factors or variables and treatment conditions or groups (include control groups).**
3. **Indicate the number of research participants that will be assigned to each condition or group, if applicable.**
4. **Describe in detail, and in sequence, all study procedures, tests, and any treatments/research interventions. Include any follow-up(s).** ***Important Note:*** *If procedures are long and complicated, use a table, flowchart or diagram to outline the study procedures from beginning to end.* This study will measure relationship outcomes and uses and gratifications for Facebook in reference to a local-level nonprofit organization. Relationship outcomes will be measured using the short version of Hon and Grunig's (1999) scale. To measure motivations for using Facebook, the researcher will use a 14-item scale previously used to measure motivations for participation in Facebook groups (Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009). To measure social media use, the researcher adapted a set of 15 items that have previously been used to measure industry adoption of social media (Curtis et al., 2009; Eyrich et al., 2008; Lariscy et al., 2009) and student use of social media (Dorton, Myers, Rudd, Spinuzzi, & Wilson, 2009; Sweetser, 2010). One additional item was added to include new geolocation social media tools.

Participants will take the survey via a secure online Web site. The IRB-approved consent form is the first page of the survey. Anyone choosing to participate after reading the consent form will check the box that says "I agree." The participant will then click the "next" button to continue to the survey. If the participant does not consent and click "next," their data will not be included in the results.

5. **Describe the proposed data analysis plan and, if applicable, any statistical methods for the study.** Differences in relationship outcomes and motivations for using Facebook will be compared based on whether or not the respondent is a Facebook fan and on various other demographics (age, gender, level of Internet usage, etc.)
6. **Anticipated duration of participation.** a. Number of visits or contacts: 1-3
   b. Length of each visit:
   c. Total duration of participation: the survey should take no more than 6 minutes

Section J: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

List and describe all the instruments (interview guides, questionnaires, surveys, etc.) to be used for this study. Attach a copy of all instruments that are properly identified and with corresponding numbers written on them. *To add a row, bring cursor to outside of last row, and press "enter" key.*

Number	Instrument	Brief Description	Identify group(s) that will complete
1	Survey	Relationship outcomes scale, Facebook uses and gratifications scale, social media use scale, demographic items	Facebook fans and non-fans

Section K: RISKS AND BENEFITS

1. Risks and/or discomforts

Describe any reasonably foreseeable psychological, social, legal, economic or physical risks and/or discomforts from all research procedures, and the corresponding measures to minimize these. ***Important Note:*** *If there is more than one study procedure, please identify the procedure followed by the responses for both (a) and (b).*

a. Risks and/or discomforts. Participating in this survey poses no risk or harm of any kind to participants.

b. Measures to minimize the risks and discomforts to participants. Information will be collected from participants via an SSL secure server. All information collected from participants will be kept confidential. Once the completed questionnaires are received, they will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office and any contact information will be destroyed three years after the questionnaire is complete. Results from this study will be published only in aggregate statistics in academic journals.

2. Benefits

a. Describe any potential direct benefits to study participants. If none, indicate so. ***Important Note:*** *Please do not include compensation/payment/extra credit in this section, as these are "incentives" and not "benefits" of participation in research; any incentives must be described in Section G.4.* There is no direct benefit to the participant.

b. Describe the potential benefits to society or humankind. This study will contribute to the general body of knowledge about using social media for relationship building.

3. Risk/Benefit Analysis

a. Indicate how the risks to the participants are reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits, if any, to participants and the importance of the knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result from the study *(i.e., How do the benefits of the study outweigh the risks, if not directly to the participants then to society or humankind?).* Participation in this study poses no risk to the participant, but participation will contribute to the body of knowledge about using social media for relationship building.

4. Sensitive or Illegal Activities

a. Will study collect any information that if disclosed could potentially have adverse consequences for participants or damage their financial standing, employability, insurability, or reputation *(includes but not limited to sexual attitudes, preferences, or practices; HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases; use of alcohol, drugs, or other addictive products; illegal conduct; an individual's psychological well-being or mental health; and genetic information)***?**

No

b. If yes, explain how the researchers will protect this information from any inadvertent disclosure.

5. Reportable Information

a. Is it reasonably foreseeable that the study will collect or be privy to information that State or Federal law requires to be reported to other officials (e.g., child or elder abuse) **or ethically might require action** (e.g., suicidal ideation, intent to hurt self or others)**?** No

b. If yes, please explain and include a discussion of the reporting requirements in the consent document(s).

Section L: DATA SECURITY AND FUTURE USE OF INFORMATION

1. Data Security

Check the box that applies.

☐ **Anonymous –** The data and/or specimens will not be labeled with any individually-identifiable information (e.g., name, SSN, medical record number, home address, telephone number, email address, etc.), or labeled with a code that the research team can link to individually-identifiable information.

☐ **Confidential –** The responses/information may potentially be linked/traced back to an individual participant, for example, by the researcher/s (like in face-to-face interviews, focus groups). **If necessary, provide additional pertinent information.**

☒ **Confidential – Indirect identifiers.** The data and/or specimens will be labeled with a code that the research team can link to individually-identifiable information. If the data and/or specimens will be coded, describe below how the key to the code will be securely maintained.

- ☐ **Paper records will be used.** The key to the code will be secured in a locked container (such as a file cabinet or drawer) in a locked room. The coded data and/or specimens will be maintained in a different location.
- ☒ **Computer/electronic files will be used.** The key to the code will be in an encrypted and/or password protected file. The coded data file will be maintained on a separate computer/server.
- ☐ **Other (please specify), or provide additional pertinent information.**

☐ **Confidential – Direct Identifiers.** The data and/or specimens will be directly labeled with the individually-identifiable information.

- ☐ **Paper records will be used.** The information will be secured in a locked container (such as a file cabinet or drawer) in a locked room.
- ☐ **Computer/electronic files will be used.** The information will be stored in an encrypted and/or password protected file.
- ☐ **Other (please specify), or provide additional pertinent information.**

If "Confidential" is marked, please answer all the following:

Explain why it is necessary to keep direct or indirect identifiers. Participant e-mail addresses will intially be kept on file to control who has access to the survey and to ensure that a particular respondent does not complete the survey more than once. Once data collection is completed, these identity links will be deleted.

Identify who will have access to the individually-identifiable information and/or the key to the code. PI and CI only

☐ **Public. Information will be individually-identifiable when published, presented, or made available to the public.**

2. Future Use of Information

If individually-identifiable information and/or codes will be retained after completion of data collection, describe how the information will be handled and stored to ensure confidentiality. ***Check all that apply.***

☒ **All data files will be stripped of individually-identifiable information and/or the key to the code destroyed.**

☐ **All specimens will be stripped of individually-identifiable information and/or the key to the code destroyed.**

☐ **Individually-identifiable information and/or codes linking the data or specimens to individual identifiers will be retained.** ***If this box is checked, describe:***

a. Retention period.
b. Justification for retention.
c. Procedure for removing or destroying the direct/indirect identifiers, if applicable.

☐ **Audio and/or video recordings (if applicable) will be transcribed/analyzed and then destroyed or modified to eliminate the possibility that study participants could be identified.**

☐ **Audio and/or video recordings (if applicable) will be retained.** ***If this box is checked, describe:***

a. Retention period.
b. Justification for retention.

☐ **Other (please specify), or provide additional pertinent information.**

Section M: CONSENT PROCESS

Important Note: *The IRB strongly recommends the use of consent templates that are available on the IRB website to ensure that all the elements of informed consent are included (per 45 CFR 116). If more than one consent document will be used, please name each accordingly.*

☐ **The PI is attaching a copy of all consent documents that participants will sign.**

☒ **The PI is requesting that the IRB waive requirement to document informed consent.** A signed consent form may be waived if one of the following criteria is met, ***check the box that applies.***

☐ 1. The only record linking the participant and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Each participant will be asked whether the participant wants documentation linking the participant with the research, and the participant's wishes will govern; or

☒ 2. The research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to participants and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.

The consent script or cover letter that will be used in lieu of a consent form is attached. Yes

☐ **The PI is requesting that the IRB approve a consent procedure which does not include, or which alters, some or all of the elements of informed consent set forth in 45 CFR 116, or waive the requirement to obtain informed consent.** An informed consent may be waived if the IRB finds that all of the following have been met:

1. The research involves no more than minimal risk to the participants;
2. The waiver or alteration will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the participants;
3. The research could not practicably be carried out without the waiver or alteration; and,
4. Whenever appropriate, the participants will be provided with additional pertinent information after participation.

Provide justification for requesting a waiver. **This is a Web-based survey on a secure SSL server. However, Internet communications are insecure and there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to technology itself. Once we receive the completed surveys, we will store them in a locked cabinet in my office and destroy any contact information that we have three years after the survey is complete. If you are not comfortable with the level of confidentiality provided by the Internet, please feel free to print out a copy of the survey, fill it out by hand, and mail it to Dr. Sweetser's address as provided below, with no return address on the envelope.**

Describe how, where, and when informed consent will be obtained from research participants (or permission from parent/s or guardian/s and assent from minor participants), if applicable. **The survey and consent form will be online. Participants will not sign the consent form. They will click whether they agree to participate or whether they do not agree to participate.**

Section N: VULNERABLE AND/OR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

1. **Check if some or all of the targeted participants fall into the following groups.** ***Important Note:*** *Some targeted populations require compliance with additional Subparts and the completion of an Appendix or of specific section (see last column).*

Population Type	Required to Complete
☐ **Pregnant women, neonates, or fetuses**	Appendix for Subpart B
☐ **Prisoners**	Appendix for Subpart C
☐ **Minors**	
☐ **Mentally-disabled/cognitively-impaired/severe psychological disorders**	
☐ **Physically-disabled**	
☐ **Terminally ill**	
☐ **Economically/educationally-disadvantaged**	
☐ **A specific group based on religion, race, ethnicity, immigration status, language, or sexual orientation**	
☐ **UGA Psychology Research Pool/Other UGA students/employees**	
☐ **Other** (please describe)	

2. **Explain justification for including the group(s) checked above in this particular study.**
3. **Is there a working relationship between any researchers and the participants** (e.g., PI's own students or employees)**?** (Choose YES or NO)
   a. If yes, please describe.
4. **Describe any additional safeguards to protect the rights and welfare of these participants and to minimize any possible coercion or undue influence.** *For example, amount of payment will be non-coercive for the financially disadvantaged, extra-careful evaluations of participants' understanding of the study, advocates to be involved in the consent process, or use flyers to recruit participants instead of directly approaching own staff or students.*

Section O: COLLABORATIVE PROJECT OR OUTSIDE PERFORMANCE SITE

Check one of the two boxes below:

☒ **This project does not involve any collaboration with non-UGA researchers or performance in non-UGA facilities.**

☐ **This project involves collaboration with non-UGA researchers or performance in non-UGA facilities** (e.g., local public school, participants' workplace, hospital)**.** ***If this box is checked, list all sites at which you will conduct this research.*** **Attach authorization/permission and/or current IRB approval.** *Checkboxes below are not clickable so place "X" before or over the box. To add a row, bring cursor to outside of last row, press "enter" key, and copy/paste the previous cells.*

Name of Institution	Location (County/State/Country)	Authorization/permission letter and/or current IRB approval.	
		☐ Attached	☐ Pending
		☐ Attached	☐ Pending

IMPORTANT NOTE: **If none of the following applies to your research, this is the END of the application form.**

Section P: METHODS AND PROCEDURES THAT REQUIRE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Check all that apply. ***Important Note:*** *The items listed below are* ***NOT*** *an inclusive list of methods and procedures that may be used in research studies. Some procedures require the completion of an Appendix or of specific sections (see last column).*

Method/Procedure	Required to Complete
☒ **Student research (For student's thesis/dissertation/others)**	Section Q (below)
☐ **Deception, concealment, or incomplete disclosure**	Section R (below)
☒ **Internet research**	Section S (below)
☐ **Blood sampling/collection**	Section T (below)
☐ **Clinical trial (Drugs, biologics, or devices)**	
☐ **Genetic analyses**	
☐ **Data/Tissue repository**	

☐ **HIPAA (Protected health information)**
☐ **DXA/X-RAY**
☐ **MRI/EEG/ECG/NIRS/Ultrasound**
☐ **Other** (please describe)

Section Q: STUDENT RESEARCH

Important Note: *The IRB recommends submission for IRB review only after the appropriate committee has conducted the necessary scientific review and approved the research proposal.*

1. This application is being submitted for: ☐ Undergraduate Honors Thesis ☐ Doctoral Dissertation Research ☒ Masters Thesis Research ☐ Other (please describe)

2. Has the student's thesis/dissertation committee approved this research? ☒ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Section R: DECEPTION, CONCEALMENT, OR INCOMPLETE DISCLOSURE

1. Describe the deception, concealment, or incomplete disclosure; explain why it is necessary, and how you will debrief the participants. ***Important Note:*** *The consent form should include the following statement: "In order to make this study a valid one, some information about (my participation or the study) will be withheld until completion of the study."*

2. Debriefing Form is attached. ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No;** If no, please explain.

Section S: INTERNET RESEARCH

If data will be collected, transmitted, and/or stored via the internet, the level of security should be appropriate to the level of risk. Indicate the measures that will be taken to ensure security of data transmitted over the internet. *Check all that apply.*

☐ A mechanism will be used to strip off the IP addresses for data submitted via e-mail.
☐ The data will be transmitted in encrypted format.
☐ Firewall technology will be used to protect the research computer from unauthorized access.
☐ Hardware storing the data will be accessible only to authorized users with log-in privileges.
☒ Other (please describe), or provide additional pertinent information. Information will be collected from participants via an SSL secure server. All information collected from participants will be kept confidential. Once the completed questionnaires are received, they will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office and any contact information will be destroyed three years after the questionnaire is complete. Results from this study will be published only in aggregate statistics in academic journals.

Section T: BLOOD SAMPLING / COLLECTION

If blood will be collected for the purpose of this research, please respond to all the following:

1. **Route/method of collection** (e.g., by finger stick, heel stick, venipuncture)**:**
2. **Frequency of collection** (e.g., 2 times per week, for 3 weeks)**:**
3. **Volume of blood for each collection** (in milliliters)**:**
4. **Total volume to be collected** (in milliliters)**:**
5. **Are participants healthy, non-pregnant adults who weigh at least 110 pounds?** (Choose YES or NO)
   a. If no, indicate if amount collected will exceed the lesser of 50 ml or 3 ml per kg in an 8-week period and if collection will occur more frequently than 2 times per week.
6. **Will participants fast prior to blood collection(s)?** (Choose YES or NO)
   a. If yes, describe how informed consent will be obtained prior to fasting.