

THE POWER OF EMOTIONS: ENGAGING NONPROFIT
STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN FACEBOOK

A Thesis
Presented
to the Faculty of
California State University, Chico

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Communication Studies

by
© Alyssa M. Daniels

Spring 2016

THE POWER OF EMOTIONS: ENGAGING NONPROFIT
STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN FACEBOOK

A Thesis

by

Alyssa M. Daniels

Spring 2016

APPROVED BY THE INTERIM DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES:

Sharon Barrios, Ph.D.

APPROVED BY THE GRADUATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Stephanie Hamel, Ph.D.
Graduate Coordinator

Nan Li, Ph.D., Chair

Stephanie Hamel, Ph.D.

Sarah Richardson, Ph.D.

PUBLICATION RIGHTS

No portion of this thesis may be reprinted or reproduced in any manner unacceptable to the usual copyright restrictions without the written permission of the author.

DEDICATION

*To my dog, Abby
who came into my life
at exactly the right moment*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is only complete because of the many people who have touched my life along the way. I would first like to express my gratitude to my thesis chair, Dr. Nan Li, for providing insightful advice and comments that truly helped me to expand on my thoughts. I greatly appreciate your patience and guidance throughout the research process.

I am also deeply indebted to Dr. Stephanie Hamel, for supporting me throughout my college education and for teaching the Communication Issues in Nonprofits course with such flair that I could not help but to fall in love with nonprofit organizations. I have taken many classes with you and each one has been a gem.

I would also like to thank Dr. Sarah Richardson, for reminding me to keep this thesis centered on impact and for teaching Ryan and I how to communicate with Abby, our little Border Collie, Jack Russell Terrier, and Corgi mix to whom this thesis is dedicated to. Abby hopes to attend many more of your training classes. Woof woof!

To my thesis buddy, Yuzhuo Sun, and the rest of my cohort: Kyle Stubbs, Gina Tigri, Sara Burkhamer, Kelsey Caldwell, Stephen Graydon, Dalton Cox, and Jacob Poff. Thank you for the esteem, emotional, informational, network, and tangible support - I couldn't have done it without you. Thank you all for being you. My numbers are, of course, quadruple-checked. By the way, did you know I've been writing a thesis?!

Special thanks to Benjamin Wade, for helping me keep my sanity during those long hours at the coffee shop. It would have been a lonelier journey without you.

I would also like to say thank you to my parents, Steve and Jan, for encouraging my voracious appetite for reading and for understanding when my schedule became too busy to visit.

Finally, I would like to thank Ryan Finnigsmier, who has been my companion in life for the past eight years. I love you more than I can possibly say. Thank you for always being by my side.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Publication Rights	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
List of Tables	ix
Abstract	x
CHAPTER	
I. Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	1
Purpose of the Study	6
Definition of Terms	7
II. Literature Review	9
Introduction	9
Stakeholders	10
Cocreational Perspective.....	10
Social Media	13
Dialogic Communication.....	16
Engagement	18
III. Methodology	24
Site of Research	24
Qualitative Content Analysis	27
Data Analysis Procedures	30
IV. Findings and Discussion	34
Findings.....	34
Discussion	56

V. Recommendations and Conclusions	62
Practical Implications	62
Future Directions for Research	65
Limitations	67
Conclusion	68
References	71

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1. Facebook Post Functions	35
2. Descriptive Statistics for Stakeholder Comments	36

ABSTRACT

THE POWER OF EMOTIONS: ENGAGING NONPROFIT STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN FACEBOOK

by

© Alyssa M. Daniels 2016

Master of Arts in Communication Studies

California State University, Chico

Spring 2016

To sustain their mission, nonprofit organizations must dedicate time towards building, maintaining, and negotiating relationships with stakeholders. Social media adoption by nonprofit organizations outpaces for-profit organizations, and these platforms offer easy access and the ability to directly engage in communication with stakeholders. However, little is known about how stakeholders engage with messages sent by nonprofit organizations through social media platforms such as Facebook. This thesis seeks to examine the Facebook posts of Austin Pets Alive! for types of organizational messages and stakeholder responses to these organizational messages through a directed approach to qualitative content analysis. Austin Pets Alive! is a nonprofit organization which has been critical in the development of Austin, Texas as the largest no-kill city in the United States, euthanizing less than ten percent of incoming shelter animals annually. Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) typology of organizational

microblogging functions provides the framework for analysis. Findings suggest that nonprofit organizations should work to foster dialogue and directly engage their stakeholders within posts, as well as consider the emotional aspect of their messages, to build stronger organization-public relationships.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Approximately 1.44 million nonprofit organizations registered with the United States Internal Revenue Service in 2012, which represents an 8.6% increase in the past decade (McKeever & Pettijohn, 2014). Nonprofit organizations accounted for 5.4% of gross domestic product in 2012 (McKeever & Pettijohn, 2014), and employed 10.3% of the domestic work force, or 11.4 million workers in the same year (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). This sector is considered one of the fastest-growing parts of the United States economy, with revenue growing 20% faster than the GDP from 1977 to 1996, and 33% faster from 1997 to 2007 (House, Rhodes, & Sinha, 2015). To keep up with their growth and connect with stakeholders in an increasingly digital world, nonprofit organizations tend to use at least one of the “Big Three” social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (Mansfield, 2012).

In terms of participation, Facebook dominates over the other two social media platforms. Facebook has 1.59 billion active users each month and 1.04 billion daily active users (Facebook Newsroom, n.d.), and according to a 2011 report by Pew Research Center, “52% of Facebook users . . . engage with the platform daily” (Hampton, Goulet, Rainie, & Purcell, p. 13). Facebook allows organizations of all types to initiate and maintain direct contact with their stakeholders, and conversations that arise from this contact are vital for social change efforts that undergird many nonprofit missions (Kanter & Fine, 2010).

With the near ubiquity of social media, organizations seemingly cannot afford to miss the opportunity to build relationships with their stakeholders. However, many nonprofit organizations often face financial difficulties, which have important consequences for the use of social media (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Nonprofit organizations tend to have few resources at their disposal when attempting to build and maintain a strong social media presence and in achieving their mission (Briones, Kuch, Liu, & Jin, 2011). One concern nonprofit advocates have is that “if [a nonprofit is] going to go to the effort to have social media, [they] need to make sure someone is updating that information” (Briones et al., 2011, p. 40). With limited staff, nonprofit organizations typically have a harder time maintaining their social media presence while still being able to assign enough resources towards their mission (Briones et al., 2011). Nonetheless, according to a 2013 survey of the top 400 charities and nonprofit organizations in the United States, 98% use at least one social media platform, with 92% of surveyed nonprofit organizations reporting a presence on Facebook (Barnes, 2013). In spite of difficulties, nonprofit organizations are clearly embracing the benefits that social media platforms have to offer. Social media adoption by charities, rapidly growing organizations, and higher education continues to rise faster than Fortune 500 companies (Barnes & Andonian, 2011).

Despite the growth of nonprofit organizations and the popularity of social media platforms, there is a paucity of research exploring how nonprofit organizations utilize social media platforms (Sisco, Pressgrove, & Collins, 2013). Historically, scholarly research has focused on for-profit organizations, perhaps under the assumption that findings from for-profit entities would equally apply to nonprofit entities (Sisco et

al., 2013). However, research suggests that differences exist between for-profit and nonprofit entities. Mansfield (2012) explains:

It's one thing for a large corporate brand to be successful on social media (because it is a large corporate brand!), but it's quite another for a nonprofit with no budget and a little-known brand name to be successful. For the most part, nonprofits' use of social media has been underestimated by the business sector, when in fact businesses could learn quite a lot from us. (p. xvii)

One major difference between for-profit and nonprofit organizations are the different reasons why each type of organization use social media. For example, whereas for-profit organizations typically adopt social media to promote their products and manage their brand image, nonprofit organizations are typically interested in using social media to build stronger relationships with stakeholders (Moore, 2000). Furthermore, for-profit and nonprofit organizations fundamentally exist for different purposes. More specifically, progress made towards a nonprofit organization's mission does not necessarily translate to revenue, whereas corporations expect to generate revenue from their social endeavors (Moore, 2000). Nonprofit organizations sell their vision for a better future to their stakeholders in hopes of receiving charitable contributions such as time, material goods, or services (Crutchfield & Grant, 2012; Moore, 2000). Mansfield (2012) considers the ramifications of this distinction between for-profit and nonprofit organizations:

When a business sells a product online for \$20, the buyer gets something tangible in return . . . A \$20 online donation only results in the buyer's having a sense that she is making the world a better place. That's a much harder sale . . . and yet online giving is rising faster than ever, in direct correlation with the rise of social media in the nonprofit sector. (p. xvii)

Furthermore, the ways in which stakeholders perceive and interact with organizational messages via social media platforms can differ between corporations, small businesses, and nonprofit organizations (Vorvoreanu, 2009). In one study,

participants expressed aversion and suspicion to the presence of large corporations, preferring to interact with those entities through telephone, email, or official websites instead of Facebook (Vorvoreanu, 2009). However, participants revealed that this aversion did not apply to small businesses and nonprofit organizations. Instead, participants seemed to support these smaller organizations and indicated that they were willing to interact with them within Facebook. Because repeated contact is necessary for a relationship to develop (Burke & Kraut, 2014), the capability of a large for-profit organization to develop meaningful relationships with stakeholders may be inhibited within social media platforms (Vorvoreanu, 2009). Overall, differences in purpose and perception between nonprofit and for-profit organizations may have a large impact on the formation and strength of relationships via social media platforms, and emphasize the need for additional research on social media use by nonprofit organizations and, particularly, in how stakeholders respond to efforts from nonprofit organizations to engage them.

Historically, scholarship has centered analysis on the organizational side of the organization-public relationship dyad, due to a perspective that stakeholders were passive audiences with limited ability to engage with the organization (Capriotti, 2011). Indeed, with social media platforms only arising in recent times, many organizations had difficulty envisioning ways in which stakeholders could take active participatory roles in organizations (Capriotti, 2011). Therefore, relatively few studies have investigated the public side of organizational communication, particularly when concerned with stakeholder responses to messages sent out by nonprofit organizations via social media platforms. To date, only three studies have investigated stakeholder interaction with

nonprofit organizations' messages (Guidry, 2013; Guidry, Waters, & Saxton, 2014; Saxton & Waters, 2014), and only one study has inquired about the content of, and motivations behind, members of the public posting messages on nonprofit organizations' Facebook pages (Smith & Gallicano, 2015). More effort needs to be expended in correcting the disparity between scholarly analyses of the organization-public relationship dyad, particularly since it seems clear that social media platforms have opened up greater possibilities for stakeholder interaction with organizations (Mansfield, 2012).

Moreover, the limited existing research has focused on Twitter, for both investigating the social media utilization of nonprofit organizations (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Lovejoy, Waters, & Saxton, 2012; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010; Smitko, 2012; Waters & Jamal, 2012) and stakeholder interaction with messages sent by nonprofit organizations (Guidry, 2013; Guidry et al., 2014). Prior to 2012, no published research on social media utilization by nonprofit organizations attempted to conduct an in-depth analysis of Facebook (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Even now, few studies have been conducted on Facebook use by nonprofit organizations (Cho & Schweickart, 2015), which seems to be an oversight given the immense popularity of Facebook and the value that such analysis could add to scholarly research.

Although Facebook and Twitter are both social media platforms, they are used for different purposes and have their own unique community and rules for engagement (Mansfield, 2012; Cho & Schweickart, 2015). In particular, Facebook is primarily used for initiating and developing genuine human connections with other people; it is based upon the notion of sociability (Burke & Kraut, 2014). On the other hand, Twitter has

taken steps since 2010 to revise their branding and position itself as primarily information-based instead of emphasizing socialization and relationship-building features common in other social media platforms (Mansfield, 2012; Twitter, n.d.). By analyzing Facebook in lieu of Twitter, considerable insights into the utilization of this platform and stakeholder responses to organizational messages may be gained.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to fill gaps in the current literature concerning the ways in which nonprofit organizations communicate with stakeholders and how stakeholders respond to messages from nonprofit organizations on social media platforms such as Facebook. Research thus far has primarily focused on for-profit entities, to the detriment of nonprofit organizations (Sisco et al., 2013). For-profit entities and nonprofit organizations differ in multiple ways, and these differences have consequences for the development of relationships with stakeholders (Mansfield, 2012; Moore, 2000; Vorvorneau, 2009). The importance of building relationships for organizations has been proven by the gradual shift towards a cocreational perspective (Botan & Taylor, 2004), and social media continues to have a large impact on organization-public relationships (Capriotti, 2011). However, the scant amount of research into nonprofit organizations' use of social media platforms to build relationships with their stakeholders has predominantly focused on Twitter, a platform that places an emphasis on information instead of relationship-building (Mansfield, 2012; Cho & Schweickart, 2015). Since Facebook is more popular than Twitter among nonprofit organizations (Barnes, 2013), and fundamentally exists as a relationship-building social media platform (Burke &

Kraut, 2014), scholarly research should focus on analyzing the ways in which nonprofit organizations communicate with stakeholders via the Facebook platform. Dialogic communication, in particular, is widely seen throughout scholarly literature as the pinnacle of communication between nonprofit organizations and stakeholders (Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001). But though dialogic communication is considered a key way in which an organization can develop a relationship with their stakeholders (Taylor et al., 2001), much scholarly research has found dialogic communication to be underutilized by nonprofit organizations when looking at the Internet and social media. In addition, despite the overall shift from a functional perspective to a cocreational one, research has continued to place a primary focus on the organizational side of the organization-public relationship dyad (Smith & Gallicano, 2015). More effort needs to be expended in correcting the disparity between scholarly analyses of the organization-public relationship dyad, particularly since it seems clear that social media platforms have opened up greater possibilities for stakeholder engagement with organizations (Capriotti, 2011; Mansfield, 2012). Rather than solely look at the organizational messages themselves, scholarly research should begin to explore how stakeholders respond to organizational messages via Facebook. Developing a better understanding of this topic will help nonprofit organizations to foster stronger relationships with their stakeholders, extend and enrich Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) typology of organizational microblogging functions, and represent one of the first qualitative forays into how stakeholders respond to organizational messages sent via social media platforms such as Facebook.

Definition of Terms

Stakeholder

A stakeholder is “an individual or a group that claims to have one or more stakes in an organization. Stakeholders may affect the organization and, in turn, be affected by the organization's actions, policies, practices and decisions” (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2009, p. 113).

Social Media

Social media refers to “digital technologies that allow people to connect, interact, produce and share content” (Lewis, 2010, p. 2).

Dialogic Communication

Dialogic communication “refers to a process of two-way, open, and negotiated discussion, where participants are able to exchange ideas and opinions freely, acknowledging the value of each other” (Kent & Taylor, 1998, as cited in Kim, Chun, Kwak, & Nam, 2014, p. 591).

Engagement

Engagement is “active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning” (Wenger, 1998, p. 174)

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study investigates social media utilization by nonprofit organizations, with a primary focus on exploring how stakeholders respond to different types of messages from nonprofit organizations via social media platforms such as Facebook. The remainder of this thesis is divided into four chapters. The current chapter will provide expanded definitions on key terms used throughout the thesis, review literature on the shift from a functional to cocreational perspective, explain the importance of relationships for nonprofit organizations, go into detail about social media and its impact on organization-public relationships, highlight the similarities and differences between Facebook, Youtube, and Twitter as social media platforms, review the past and present state of dialogic communication, describe the disparity that exists between scholarly analyses of the organization-public relationship dyad, provide an overview of what it means for a stakeholder to be engaged with an organization, and, finally, detail Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) typology for analyzing organizational communication with stakeholders via social media platforms, before presenting the research questions guiding this analysis. In Chapter III, Austin Pets Alive! is explored as the site of research and the methodology used to explore the present study are outlined. Chapter IV details findings to the research questions used to guide this thesis and explains the significance of the findings. Lastly, Chapter V concludes by discussing practical implications and suggesting possibilities for future research, in addition to explaining the limitations of this study.

Stakeholders

In order to begin a discussion about the nature of communication between nonprofit organizations and their stakeholders through the use of social media platforms, it is first necessary to examine what stakeholders are. It is widely acknowledged that both for-profit and nonprofit organizations alike have stakeholders and that organizations must closely monitor their communication with stakeholders in order to be successful: “All organizations, of all sizes and operating in different sectors and societies, must find ways to successfully establish and nurture relationships with their stakeholders, upon which they are economically and socially dependent” (Cornelissen, 2008, p. 12). However, much debate exists over the definition of stakeholders within scholarly literature (Apostol & Năsi, 2011; Laine, 2011; Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997; Sedereviciute & Valentini, 2011). For the purpose of this thesis, a stakeholder is “an individual or a group that claims to have one or more stakes in an organization. Stakeholders may affect the organization and, in turn, be affected by the organization's actions, policies, practices and decisions” (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2009, p. 113). This definition takes a broader view and acknowledges that organizations, whether nonprofit, for-profit, or otherwise, have an interdependent relationship with stakeholders in which they exert mutual influence over one another (Cornelissen, 2008).

Cocreational Perspective

In early years, stakeholder communication was considered a means to an end (Botan & Taylor, 2004). This functional perspective led to research focused on techniques to produce strategic messages designed to advance the goals of the

organization (Botan & Taylor, 2004). For instance, scholarship surrounding corporate communication was concerned with the ways in which communication could be used by organizations to improve its reputation and engage in relationship management with its stakeholders (Capriotti, 2011). In the past, organizations were also better able to control the distribution of information to their stakeholders, ensuring that the organization could be viewed in the best light (Capriotti, 2011). Traditional corporate communication meant that many organizations all but ignored ways in which stakeholders could take an active participatory role in the organization (Capriotti, 2011). Instead, stakeholders were apt to be viewed by organizations as passive audiences which “had limited possibilities to communicate or answer” back (Capriotti, 2011, p. 360). However, these aspects of stakeholder management have experienced change, such as a shift in perspective.

The new cocreational perspective views publics as an integral part in the process of creating meaning, and places importance on communication as a way to build, maintain, and negotiate relationships (Botan & Taylor, 2004). This perspective sees value in relationships among organizations and their stakeholders beyond the achievement of organizational objectives (Botan & Taylor, 2004). The cocreational perspective has spurred research into community theory, symmetrical/excellence theory, and dialogue theory, among other areas, which serve to further emphasize the importance of organization-public relationships (Botan & Taylor, 2004).

Nonprofit organizations in particular can be seen as relationship-driven, since they often rely on donations, volunteers, and the general public to advance their goals (Greenberg & MacAulay, 2009). These relationships benefit both the stakeholders and the nonprofit organization. On the stakeholder's side, nonprofit organizations provide

services and support, and allow similar-minded people to come together and mobilize around a particular cause (Greenberg & MacAulay, 2009; Kim et al., 2014). Interaction with nonprofit organizations fosters reciprocity and feelings of being connected with the mission and cause of the nonprofit, which is a factor in generating more support for the organization (Greenberg & MacAulay, 2009). As Hanlon (2006) states, “this sense of community is at the center of psychologist Abraham Maslow's famous hierarchy of human needs . . . It is an essential human truth that we all want to belong to something that is larger than ourselves” (as cited in Crutchfield & Grant, 2012, pp. 105-106).

For the nonprofit organization, these relationships are vital to achieving goals and developing financial, volunteer, and advocacy capital (Greenberg & MacAulay, 2009). Nonprofit organizations oftentimes depend on volunteers to support their efforts. In 2014, approximately 25.3% of the US population, or 62.8 million adults, volunteered their time to a nonprofit organization (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Many nonprofit organizations are also sustained in part by individual contributions. In 2014, individuals donated \$258.5 billion to nonprofit organizations, which represents a 4.0% increase from the previous year (Giving USA, 2015). Given the value of stakeholders to nonprofit organizations, Podolny (2005) asserts the following:

[Stakeholders] are much more likely to help a nonprofit achieve its larger goals if they are not just treated as free labor or deep pockets, but as valued members of a community . . . Ultimately, the community should be treated as an end in itself. (as cited in Crutchfield & Grant, 2012, p. 106)

The nature of this reciprocity means that nonprofit organizations must dedicate time towards building, maintaining, and negotiating relationships with stakeholders in order to sustain their mission.

Social Media

One way that relationships can be nurtured between organizations and their stakeholders is through the use of social media. Social media refers to “digital technologies that allow people to connect, interact, produce and share content” (Lewis, 2010, p. 2), and are considered “the epitome of Web 2.0, in which the network of users is the platform and the community drives the content” (Schmugar, 2008, p. 28). These capabilities have changed the landscape of organizational communication with stakeholders. Before social media, stakeholders did not have much ability to enter into conversations with organizations, and organizations were able to effectively control when and how they communicated with stakeholders (Lipschultz, 2014). With their emergence, social media platforms have “opened up new possibilities for organizations to connect with their stakeholders by allowing them to receive real-time feedback . . . and engage in conversations” (Lovejoy et al., 2012, p. 313).

In terms of the types of organizations capitalizing on the emergence of social media, nonprofit organizations in particular are among the most active users, outpacing both for-profit organizations and academic institutions (Barnes, 2011). They seem to have recognized the value of social media in developing relationships with their stakeholders. According to Avery et al. (2010), "social media are inherently interactive, communicative, and social" (p. 337), which means that social media has the great potential to be used by nonprofit organizations in order to build relationships with their stakeholders. Fostering a relationship between an organization and their stakeholders is considered a key aspect for any platform: “An online forum that fails to engender a sense

of community are quickly dismissed with a simple mouse click . . . successful technologies are not just usable; they *engage* users” (O'Brien & Toms, 2008, p. 938). However, it is up to the organization to develop relationships, since “technology itself can neither create nor destroy relationships; rather, it is how the technology is used that influences organization-public relationships” (Kent & Taylor, 1998, p. 324). In 2012, 76% of surveyed nonprofit organizations indicated that their goal for the year was to grow their base and 74% desired to engage members more via their social media platforms (NTEN, 2012).

To achieve their goals, nonprofit organizations tend to use at least one of the “Big Three” social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (Mansfield, 2012). Founded in 2004, Facebook first opened its doors to organizations in April 2006. On August 24th, 2015, Facebook hit a new milestone of 1 billion user logins in a single day, which emphasizes how nonprofit organizations cannot afford to ignore this social media platform when considering how to connect with their stakeholders (Facebook Newsroom, n.d.). As of 2015, more than 40 million organizations, nonprofit and for-profit alike, have active pages (Facebook for Business, 2015). This thesis chooses to focus on Facebook for three main reasons, other than popularity, which are explained below.

First, this thesis is interested in nonprofit communication with the broadest range of stakeholders’ possible. Although YouTube has some aspects of sociability, the platform is not recognized as an effective way to gain new stakeholders (Mansfield, 2012). Additionally, the cost of producing video content for YouTube can be high, which prevents some nonprofit organizations from using this platform to communicate with stakeholders (Information Resources Management Association, 2015).

Second, Facebook is innately focused on relationship-building (Burke & Kraut, 2014), which is a quality that is lacking in other social media platforms such as Twitter. To further explain, Twitter has taken steps since 2010 to revise their branding and position itself as primarily information-based instead of emphasizing socialization and relationship-building features common in other social media platforms (Mansfield, 2012; Twitter, n.d.). According to Mansfield (2012), “there is very little socializing on Twitter. Most Twitterers are sharing information about themselves, building a brand, or using Twitter as a breaking news source . . . the social networking aspect of Twitter is minimal compared to Facebook's” (pp. 92-93).

Third, stakeholders may be able to engage in deeper conversations with nonprofit organizations via Facebook than other social media platforms. For instance, Facebook posts are allowed up to 63,206 characters (Kolowich, 2016), whereas Twitter messages are limited to 140 characters per post (Mansfield, 2012). Likewise, stakeholder replies to organizational messages are allowed a higher character count on Facebook than on Twitter. These differences may allow nonprofit organizations to engage in deeper conversations with their stakeholders (Mansfield, 2012). Research has also discovered that organizational messages on Facebook receive a higher average number of comments than those on Twitter, perhaps indicating that stakeholders are more willing and able to engage in building relationships with organizations through Facebook than on Twitter (Phethean, Tiropanis, & Harris, 2013). Each of these reasons reinforces Facebook as the social media platform of choice when looking at how nonprofit organizations develop relationships and engage with stakeholders.

Dialogic Communication

One way for nonprofit organizations to build genuine relationships with stakeholders on Facebook is by fostering dialogic communication (Taylor et al., 2001). According to Kent and Taylor (1998), dialogic communication “refers to a process of two-way, open, and negotiated discussion, where participants are able to exchange ideas and opinions freely, acknowledging the value of each other” (as cited in Kim et al., 2014, p. 591). Dialogic communication involves a commitment on the behalf of the organization to engage in an ethical and genuine manner with their stakeholders (Kent & Taylor, 2002). By engaging in dialogic communication, organizations hope to build lasting relationships with their stakeholders (Kent & Taylor, 1998).

However, a great deal of research suggests that the dialogic promise of the Internet has not been fulfilled through nonprofit organization's utilization, regardless of the platform. Greenberg and MacAulay (2009) examined how environmental nonprofit organizations in Canada used a variety of Internet activities such as Facebook, Twitter, RSS feeds, and blogs in order to communicate with their stakeholders. These researchers sought to discover whether environmental nonprofit organizations use a 'broadcast' paradigm, which is defined as one-way information flow involving information dissemination, or a 'dialogical' paradigm, which is defined as two-way information flow involving the creation of member engagement and relationships with stakeholders. Through their analysis, Greenberg and MacAulay (2009) found that nonprofit organizations are overwhelmingly using a broadcast paradigm and simply disseminating information to their stakeholders through various platforms rather than building relationships through two-way information flow. Nonprofit organizations are not alone;

research suggests that activist organizations (Sommerfeldt, Kent, and Taylor, 2012), advocacy organizations (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009), and corporations (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010) also have yet to utilize the Internet to its full, dialogic potential.

As demonstrated above, dialogic communication has been thought of as essential in fostering a relationship between an organization and their stakeholders, but a majority of research has found that organizations are not using the Internet to its full dialogic potential. Clearly, there are “gaps between organizational relationship-building goals, implementation of online strategy, and actual dialogic engagement” (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009, p. 317). Despite the overall shift from a functional perspective to a cocreational one, however, research has continued to place a primary focus on the organizational side of the organization-public relationship dyad (Smith & Gallicano, 2015), for the purpose of discovering whether Internet usage by organizations is living up to its' purported dialogic potential, and how organizations interact with their stakeholders via the Internet (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). This predominant focus on the organizational side may hinder progress in understanding the nature of relationships between organizations and their stakeholders, as some factors have changed since the emergence of social media.

For example, stakeholder expectations of communication with organizations has changed: “Stakeholders not only expect authenticity and transparency, but they expect ongoing and interactive communication and information exchanges built on relationships that go well beyond one-way communication” (Morsing & Schultz, 2006, as cited in Waddock & Googins, 2011, p. 33). Stakeholders can now actively seek out and personally contact organizations that interest them, which has transformed passive

receivers of information into active participants (Capriotti, 2011). Looking at stakeholder engagement with organizations via social media permits the development of research from the public side of the organization-public dyad.

Engagement

Engagement, along with dialogic communication, are important factors in the development of relationships between stakeholders and organizations (Smith & Gallicano, 2015). An abundance of scholarship has examined what it means to be engaged with an organization (Cho & De Moya, 2014; Smith & Gallicano, 2015). Despite this, the definition of engagement is still undergoing debate, especially within public relations scholarship where the term originated (Smith & Gallicano, 2015). For some, engagement with an organization via social media platforms occurs when stakeholders actively interact with an organization, such as by liking, sharing, or commenting on their page (e.g., Cho & De Moya, 2014; Saxton & Waters, 2014). For others, engagement is understood as a state of mind and an emotional journey towards cognitive immersion, which may not require directly interacting with an organization (Oh, Bellur, & Sundar, 2010). While other definitions have their merits, engagement is defined as “active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning” (Wenger, 1998, p. 173) for the purpose of this thesis. When situating the definition alongside social media, stakeholders are thought to be engaged when they “initiate or participate in conversations with an [organization] and its publics via their social media platforms” (Cho & De Moya, 2014, p. 2). For the focus to be placed on the public side of the organization-public dyad, engagement should be conceptualized as an interactive two-

way activity, in which participators are interconnected, rather than one which places the focus solely on the organizations' engagement with their stakeholders (Smith & Gallicano, 2015).

Facebook offers three ways for a stakeholder to engage with organizational messages: Clicking the Like button, sharing a post, or replying with a comment (Cho, Schweickart, & Haase, 2014). As noted by other research, a comment can be conceptualized as the highest and most meaningful level of engagement a stakeholder may have with an organization, since constructing a comment takes more time and consideration than simply clicking the Like button or sharing a post (Cho et al., 2014; Phethean et al., 2013). While limited, some scholarly research has analyzed how publics initiate and engage in independent conversations with nonprofit organizations through their Facebook page (Cho & De Moya, 2014), and the propensity of stakeholders to engage with an organization by Liking, sharing, and commenting on organizational messages sent out through social media platforms such as Facebook (Saxton & Waters, 2014), as well as retweeting, favoriting, clicking on hyperlinks, or replying to organizational messages sent out via Twitter (Guidry, 2013; Guidry et al., 2014).

When analyzing public postings on two nonprofit organizations' Facebook pages, Cho and De Moya (2014) discovered that publics use seven types of message strategies in their conversations, including inquiries, requests, experience, grievance, advocacy, advisory, and self-promotion. Using the uses and gratifications theory, their analysis concludes that publics engage with nonprofit organizations for different reasons such as for information-seeking, social interaction, empowerment, exchange purposes, and personal identity. While this study highlights the pressing need for analysis from the

publics' point of view, rather than the organization, the study falls short of focusing attention on stakeholder comments posted in response to organizational messages.

Rather, Cho and De Moya (2014) looked at messages posted by the public on the nonprofit organizations' Facebook page, or "visitor posts," which may differ in content.

Other research looking at stakeholder engagement with messages by nonprofit organizations involve quantitative analyses. For instance, three studies focused on examining the total amount of engagement that nonprofit organizations garnered through their messages via Facebook (Saxton & Waters, 2014), or Twitter (Guidry, 2013; Guidry et al., 2014). Analysis reveals that stakeholders are more apt to Like organizational messages when they focus on promoting action or building community, but least likely to Like messages related to fundraising (Saxton & Waters, 2014). In terms of comments, stakeholders appear to most often engage an organization in conversation over community-building messages, and least likely to engage with fundraising and sales messages (Saxton & Waters, 2014). Finally, stakeholders popularly share informational messages sent out by organizations over any other type (Saxton & Waters, 2014).

Overall, stakeholders appear to engage the most with organizational efforts to build a community, but are also prone to engage with organizational posts asking stakeholders to act directly on the behalf of the organization (Saxton & Waters, 2014). Within Twitter, analysis similarly indicates that stakeholders engage more often with organizational messages involving community-building and call-to-actions (Guidry, 2013; Guidry et al., 2014). Specifically, large numbers of stakeholders engaged in dialogic communication with community-building posts and retweeted call-to-action posts (Guidry, 2013; Guidry et al., 2014).

However, all three studies analyzing stakeholder interaction with organizational messages via social media platforms examine the total amount of engagement, rather than looking at the content of the individual messages that stakeholders post in response to organizational messages. While the value of Liking and sharing organizational messages cannot be denied, for this thesis, stakeholder replies to organizational messages will be qualitatively analyzed, rather than counting the number of Likes or shares. These replies represent the epitome of engagement and dialogic communication, which are considered crucial for the development of relationships with stakeholders (Cho et al., 2014; Phethean et al., 2013).

More research is needed to fully assess the communication practices of nonprofit organizations with their stakeholders through the use of social media platforms such as Facebook, and in how stakeholders respond to these organizational messages. Specifically, the aim of this thesis is to determine how stakeholder responses to nonprofit organizational messages via Facebook may differ. This thesis adopted Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) typology of organizational microblogging functions, which is the only existing framework used to code and examine messages sent by nonprofit organizations (Saxton, 2014). Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) typology will form one basis of analysis for the current thesis, and is explained in greater detail below.

Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) performed a content analysis of Twitter using the '*Nonprofit Times 100*' list of the largest nonprofit organizations in the United States, and categorized tweets based on the purpose of the organizational message into three main categories: Information, community, and action. Information-based messages, or those communicating information about an organization's mission and goals, were found to

comprise 58.6% of all examined tweets. These informational messages exemplify one-way, non-dialogic interactions, with the organization simply providing information to their stakeholders with little to no expectation of further dialogue or action taken on behalf of the organization. Community messages attempt to form a relationship between the nonprofit organization and their stakeholders by asking direct questions in order to get a response, recognizing and thanking supporters, and responding to public messages. These community-building messages exemplify two-way communication, or dialogue, and comprised 25.8% of all tweets. Action-oriented messages comprised 15.6% of all tweets and focused on what stakeholders could do to advance the goals of the nonprofit organization. Therefore, these messages included promoting events, asking for donations or selling a product, asking for volunteers or employees, or directly appealing for their stakeholders to take a more active role in the nonprofit organization.

Research concerning how stakeholders respond to these types of organizational messages via social media platforms can directly influence organizational best practices regarding the generation of social media content. For instance, by explicitly looking at the messages that stakeholders send in response, one may be able to determine the types of organizational messages that elicit the highest levels of engagement and most favorable responses. It may not just be the amount of engagement, but the quality of the stakeholder responses and the feelings expressed within, which determines whether an organization is effective in building, maintaining, and negotiating relationships with stakeholders. With this analysis, nonprofit organizations will be able to understand what types of social media content tend to lead to an increase in meaningful stakeholder engagement, thereby enabling them to post more content that stakeholders engage

positively with. At the same time, nonprofit organizations may be able to limit or avoid posting content that seems to generate negative or low amounts of engagement. This may enable nonprofit organizations to grow their stakeholder base and influence the development of stakeholder relationships in worthwhile ways. As far as the author can determine, this is the first research study to qualitatively analyze the actual messages that stakeholders send in response to nonprofit organizational messaging efforts via Facebook as a social media platform. The following questions will be the focus of the present thesis:

RQ1: In what ways does a nonprofit organization use Facebook to communicate with their stakeholders?

RQ2: How do stakeholders engage with different types of Facebook posts from a nonprofit organization?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Site of Research

This thesis seeks to examine the Facebook posts of a nonprofit organization located in Austin, Texas for stakeholder responses to types of organizational messages through the use of qualitative content analysis. Austin Pets Alive! is well-suited for analysis due to several aspects of their organization, including their impact on the community they serve, active use of social media platforms, and stakeholder base.

APA! was first founded in 1997 to address the lack of life saving measures for shelter animals in Austin, Texas. Its mission is to “promote and provide the resources, education and programs needed to eliminate the killing of companion animals” (Austin Pets Alive!, n.d.-a, para. 16). Prior to 2008, approximately 50% of animals entering the city's shelter were euthanized (Austin Pets Alive!, n.d.-a). APA! investigated the reasons for the high kill rate in the city's shelter and found that a clear pattern existed in the characteristics of animals routinely euthanized. APA! decided to intervene through the development of multiple programs designed to save those most at-risk for euthanasia, including populations such as neonatal kittens, puppies with parvovirus, cats with feline leukemia or ringworm, and under-socialized dogs and cats (Auerbach, 2015). Under the leadership of Dr. Ellen Jefferson, who was voted Greenlights Nonprofit Executive of the Year in 2013, APA! built partnerships and advocated for Austin, Texas to become a no-kill community (Austin Pets Alive!, 2013). In order to be designated as no-kill, euthanasia rates must be below 10% and euthanasia must be strictly reserved for highly

unhealthy and untreatable animals, as commonly defined by the Asilomar Accords (Asilomar Accords, n.d.). In 2010, the city of Austin made a commitment to transform into a no-kill city and achieved it within a year, with the help of APA!. Currently, Austin holds the status as the largest no-kill city in the United States, saving more than 90% of incoming shelter animals (Auerbach, 2015). The impact of this nonprofit organization has not gone unnoticed: APA! is a “source of inspiration and hope in the movement to end the mass killing of pets, garnering the attention of the animal-loving public as well as the media” (Erin, 2014, para. 4). APA! is now the foremost no-kill nonprofit organization in the city, and because of their success in helping the city of Austin achieve no-kill status, APA! has been leading the no-kill movement in other communities in order to end the killing of animals in shelters across America (Auerbach, 2015). Since APA! continues to have a large positive impact not only on the animals within the Austin community, but also on the city of Austin and other communities, analysis is vital towards understanding their presumed success in communicating with stakeholders.

APA! has grown exponentially in the past few years. According to their statistics, APA! adopted out 384 animals in 2008 (Austin Pets Alive, n.d.-c), with an approximate live release rate of 50% city-wide (Austin Pets Alive!, n.d.-a). In 2014, just six years later, APA! succeeded in adopting out 7,125 animals, with a 99% live release rate for animals within the shelter (Asilomar Accords, 2015) and a 94% live release rate city-wide (Austin Pets Alive!, n.d.-b). In all, APA! has adopted out more than 30,000 animals (Bennett, 2015). To keep growing and progressing towards their mission, APA! recognizes the need to have a strong social media presence. They utilize several social media platforms, but have a major presence on Facebook, with over 95,000 followers

(Austin Pets Alive!, n.d.-d). According to recent reports, approximately one million people view APA!'s Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram posts each week (Auerbach, 2015).

As one of the most well-known nonprofit organizations in Austin, Texas, APA! has a large number of stakeholders. APA! employed 176 staff members in 2013 (Internal Revenue Service, 2013); every other position is filled by volunteers. Recent reports place their numbers at 3,000 volunteers (Internal Revenue Service, 2013) and 1,200 foster families for dogs (Lindholm, 2015). These volunteers donate more than 2,000 hours to the organization each week, which is equal to 50 full-time staff members (Austin Pets Alive!, n.d.-a). Based on the valuation of volunteer hours by the Independent Sector, APA!'s volunteers contributed \$2,334,109 to the organization in free labor for 2013 (Austin Pets Alive!, n.d.-a). The local community is also highly involved and has rallied behind APA! on multiple occasions. In the summer of 2013, APA!'s shelter flooded due to extreme rain conditions throughout the city. APA! sent out a plea for help via their social media platforms and received a high number of community members willing to donate their time and energy to clean the facilities, foster displaced dogs and cats until the flooding subsided, donate supplies and other necessities, and wash soiled laundry, among other services (Cohen, 2015). Much of the aid came from community members who were not current employees or volunteers; just regular concerned citizens who were willing and able to help (Morley, 2015). More recently, people rallied behind APA! to prevent the court-ordered death of a shelter dog named Neville, who bit a child on the organization's premises (Marketing, 2015b). Nearly 250,000 people signed the online petition to save his life, and APA! was able to get his case reconsidered

(Marketing, 2015b). Clearly, APA! has a large network of stakeholders behind their organization, who are willing to engage with the organization through the use of social media platforms such as Facebook.

Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis will be used to examine the first research question: In what ways does a nonprofit organization use Facebook to communicate with their stakeholders? According to Krippendorff (1989), qualitative content analysis “is indigenous to communication research and is potentially one of the most important research techniques in the social sciences” (p. 403). Qualitative content analysis is used “to classify written or oral materials into identified categories of similar meanings . . . [which] represent either explicit or inferred communication” (Cho & Lee, 2014, p. 3).

Social media utilization by nonprofit organizations has not been studied extensively in the past, but research conducted by Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) has uncovered types and dimensions of communication that one might expect to find. Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) typology of organizational microblogging functions will act as the framework to examine the first research question. Although this typology was originally developed for Twitter, some research has successfully applied the typology to Facebook (Saxton & Waters, 2014). Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) typology describes three categories of information, community, and action. For information-based messages, Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) do not specify any subcategories. For community-building messages, the subcategories include *giving recognition and thanks*, *acknowledgement of current & local events*, *responses to reply messages*, and *response solicitation*. For

action-oriented messages, the subcategories include *promoting an event*, *donation appeal*, *selling a product*, *call for volunteers & employees*, *lobbying and advocacy*, *join another site or vote for organization*, and *learn how to help*.

Since Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) typology exists to classify organizational messages, a directed approach to qualitative content analysis is therefore appropriate for the current study (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Directed approaches to qualitative content analyses aims to validate and conceptually extend an existing framework by using the framework as the initial guide in the analysis process; it is therefore a deductive process (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Moreover, a directed approach to qualitative content analysis is especially useful to apply when “existing theory or prior research about a phenomenon . . . is incomplete . . . [and] would benefit from further description” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281). However, research suggests that pre-existing coding systems are often modified or discarded during analysis, to allow for the data to emerge most appropriately (Sandelowski, 2000). Therefore, the researcher plans to remain reflexive throughout the process in order to accommodate new data and modify the pre-existing set of codes in Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) typology as necessary. This approach to qualitative content analysis for the first research question is therefore both a deductive and inductive process, as it depends on “preconceived codes or categories derived from prior relevant theory, research, or literature,” but also remains open to drawing codes, categories, and themes from the data (Cho & Lee, 2014, p. 4). The ability to remain flexible in using deductive and inductive approaches is considered a unique quality of qualitative content analysis (Cho & Lee, 2014).

Qualitative content analysis will also be employed to examine the second research question: How do stakeholders engage with different types of Facebook posts from a nonprofit organization? However, since there is little to no knowledge surrounding the phenomenon under investigation for the second research question, this is exclusively an inductive process where codes, categories, and themes are derived directly from the data rather than a mixed inductive and deductive approach appropriate for the first research question (Cho & Lee, 2014; Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). In an inductive approach, the researcher begins with observations and “frequently shifts directions and reanalyzes sections of text as emerging results provide new insights . . . [rather than beginning] with predetermined key words, categories, or variables” used in a deductive approach (Kondracki, Wellman, & Amundson, 2002, p. 225).

In both cases, the same data set will be under analysis. The data set in this thesis is considered archival data, which lends some strength to qualitative analysis. For example, archival data such as documents or posts are “unaffected by the interests or presence of a researcher” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 237). Since “researchers can engage in data collection with or without direct contact with persons studied, it can be an unobtrusive method” (Cho & Lee, 2014, p. 3). Because the organization and stakeholders do not know that their communication is being studied, the communication that takes place can be thought of as an accurate portrayal of their respective realities (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). The Institutional Review Board was contacted, though it was determined that submitting an application to the Human Subjects Research Committee was not necessary for this study.

Data Analysis Procedures

Facebook posts from August 2015 to December 2015 are the focus of data collection. Organizational messages were not chosen in 2016 because, at the time of data collection in early 2016, the researcher perceived that conversations within posts sometimes continue for several weeks. Choosing organizational messages from 2015 ensures, to the best of the researcher's ability, that conversations are finished and stakeholders will not continue to reply to the organization's posts. Initially, the researcher collected three months of organizational messages and stakeholder comments. However, this time span was soon expanded to include five months to ensure that categories, subcategories, and commonalities within stakeholder comments throughout the data set remained consistent and well developed. The researcher manually collected posts and comments from APA!'s Facebook page using a screenshot tool.

To focus analysis for the second research question, the researcher sought to restrict the number of stakeholder comments. Facebook employs an algorithmic sorting system with comments, which allows the most engaging comments to rise to the top and gain visibility (Cohen, 2013). Engaging comments are defined as those with more likes and replies than other comments, including likes and replies from the page owner (Cohen, 2013). This ranking system does not differentiate between negative and positive comments; both may rise to the top if the comment receives more engagement from users (Cohen, 2013). Comments that are reported as spam, and those that receive low amounts of engagement, however, are moved towards the bottom of the ranks (Cohen, 2013). Therefore, comments at the top should reflect stakeholders' sentiments on the post in question.

Furthermore, Facebook posts display the top two comments. If a post exceeds two comments, users may click a "view more comments" link to show up to the next fifty comments, and may click on the link repeatedly to view all comments within a post. Since Facebook comments are naturally arranged to show the top engaging comments, and clicking the "view more comments" link shows up to a maximum of fifty additional comments each time it is clicked, analysis will focus only on the top fifty comments in each Facebook post. By restricting analysis to the top fifty comments on each Facebook post in the data set, the researcher was able to limit the data set in a manageable way and conceptualize the majority opinion of APA!'s stakeholders. Data collection resulted in 312 Facebook posts and 3,306 comments total for analysis.

The researcher began analysis for the first research question by carefully reading through each organizational message in the data set, without looking at the associated stakeholder comments. More often than not, organizational messages involved both text and a photo. However, analysis focused on the text rather than the visual aspect of the organizational message. On the second read-through, the researcher started to color-code and group organizational messages into three initial categories of information, community, and action, by comparing each message to the definitions provided by Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) and considering the intent of the message. Then, the researcher looked at each category separately, and started the process of color-coding and sorting each individual post into appropriate subcategories. Throughout the process, the researcher referred to Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) typology of organizational microblogging functions to determine the best fit for each message. Some subcategories did not appear in the data set, and so were removed from consideration. This applied to

responses to reply messages and *selling a product*. Although Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) note that *responses to reply messages* is another primary example of dialogue between an organization and their stakeholders, the first portion of this analysis solely looked at organizational messages by APA!, which excluded stakeholder comments where *responses to reply messages* would be present. However, APA!'s responses to stakeholder comments was examined for the second research question.

Although this directed approach to qualitative content analysis proved effective, the researcher took a reflexive mindset and was keenly aware of the inductive and deductive nature of this process. Though Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) do not specify subcategories within the information function, the researcher was able to inductively separate information-based posts into three subcategories of *organizational activities*, *success stories*, and *learn more* after multiple passes through the data set. In the action category, the researcher also added the subcategory of *promoting special discounts* due to several organizational messages that appeared to serve that purpose. Additionally, the subcategory name *learn how to help* was modified to *learn how to help, then help* to more accurately reflect the nature of the subcategory. Once each organizational message received a code, the researcher read through the data set twice over to ensure that each organizational message fit appropriately into a category and subcategory. Overall, Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) typology of organizational microblogging functions does appear to translate well from Twitter to Facebook, with only a few adjustments.

Analysis for the second research question only began once analysis for the first research question had fully concluded, which means that categories and subcategories of organizational messages were already established. However, the

research question asked for an analysis of how stakeholders engage with different types of organizational messages, which is a newer area of research where little is currently known. Therefore, the researcher employed inductive reasoning and looked for patterns in the data set. To answer the second research question, the researcher began the analysis process much like the first. Initially, the researcher read through both the organizational messages and the stakeholder comments in each category and subcategory to gain an overall impression of the data set. Then, the researcher looked at each subcategory separately and recorded initial impressions about the comments in an online journal. After multiple passes through the data in each subcategory, which took place over several days, the researcher was able to discern commonalities in the data set and the most frequent responses to each organizational message. Additionally, the researcher looked at stakeholder comments within each overall category of information, community, and action to see if any themes across categories emerged from the data. Then, the researcher calculated descriptive statistics for stakeholder comments on organizational messages, to determine frequency for each subcategory. Lastly, the researcher read through the data set and chose exemplar quotes to represent each subcategory and to represent stakeholder comments. Except in the case of usernames, which were retracted from the data, exemplar quotes selected from the collected data set are faithfully represented and received minimal cleanup.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The first research question asked: In what ways does a nonprofit organization use Facebook to communicate with their stakeholders? As shown in Table 1 and discussed below, three broad categories of Facebook posts are evident: Information, community, and action. For each category, additional subcategories exist. For information-based messages, the subcategories are *organizational activities*, *success stories*, and *learn more*. For community-building messages, the subcategories are *giving recognition and thanks*, *acknowledgement of current & local events*, and *response solicitation*. For action-oriented messages, the subcategories are *promoting an event*, *donation appeal*, *call for volunteers & employees*, *lobbying and advocacy*, *join another site or vote for organization*, *learn how to help, then help*, and *promoting special discounts*. In instances where an organizational message could be placed into multiple subcategories, the post was assigned based on what the researcher classified as the message's primary purpose.

The second research question asked: How do stakeholders respond to different types of Facebook posts from a nonprofit organization? As shown in Table 2 and discussed below, stakeholders appear to respond differently based on the categorical type of organizational message and the content within. These findings are discussed in greater detail below.

Table 1 Facebook Post Functions

Category	Example	Freq.	(%)
Information (22.1%)			
Organizational activities	Many of you have asked for an update on Neville: Neville is getting a lot of attention and being taken out regularly while at Austin Animal Center. Our attorneys are still working very hard with Travis County Attorney's office to solidify the terms of his release. We hope to have more news in the next week. We promise to keep you up to date as soon as we know more! In the meantime here's a picture of Neville and his favorite toy. He's quite the ball hog!	29	9.3
Success stories	To bring some sunshine to this rainy day. After 1055 days with APA! and exactly six months in foster, Vickie has been adopted! A big congratulations to Vickie and her foster-to-forever mom Katie. This is for sure a great FOSTER WIN!	19	6.1
Learn more	Can FeLV+ cats get adopted and live good lives? Yes! And if they can, then don't we owe that to them? See what Steve Okino of Austin Pets Alive! has to say: http://chewonthis.maddiesfund.org/.../shelters-and-rescue-gr.../	21	6.7
Community (16.4%)			
Giving recognition and thanks	The most heartfelt thank you goes out to the entire Neville legal team that worked so hard to help #SaveNeville. Thank you to David Escamilla and the Travis County Attorney's Office for their deep commitment to protecting the community and seeking the service of justice. Another huge thank you to all of our supporters who saw their own story in Neville and rallied and petitioned to save his life. We are so happy to welcome Neville back to the APA! Family.	28	9.0
Acknowledgement of current & local events	Wishing you and yours a very Merry Christmas! We hope your furry family members get all the loves this holiday season! Cheers to more biscuits and belly rubs in the New Year!!!	17	5.5
Response solicitation	It's National Dog Day! How will you choose to celebrate? http://bit.ly.1tzi0yp Post pictures of the most celebrated dog in your life in the comments below!	6	1.9
Action (61.5%)			
Promoting an event	#UberPuppies is coming to Austin tomorrow! We're excited to be working with Uber ATX to deliver puppy playtime. Get your canine cuddle fix - Friday November 20th from 11am-3pm in the Downtown Austin area.	51	16.4
Donation appeal	Doing some Cyber Monday shopping today? Consider picking up a few things for your furry friends at APA!: Austin Pets Alive! Amazon Wishlist: https://amzn.com/w/3ANOWTR7Y70UO APA! Cat Program Wishlist: http://amzn.com/w/E82TAHUQLYW8	31	9.9
Call for volunteers & employees	It's a positive reality when it comes to volunteering at APA!. Join our amazing group of volunteers! Sign up for an orientation to get involved: http://www.austinpetsalive.org/get-involved/volunteer/	7	2.2

Lobbying and advocacy	Make sure our city knows that an animal shelter at Lamar Beach is a priority in keeping Austin no kill! Community Meeting #1 for Lamar Beach Master Planning project will be held tonight, Wednesday, October 14, 2015 from 6:30pm to 8:00pm in the Austin High School Cafeteria, 1715 W. Cesar Chavez St.	5	1.6
Join another site or vote for organization	The CultureMap 2016 Charity Challenge is now live. Help us win an advertising package from CultureMap Austin. You can vote daily until December 20th. http://austin.culturemap.com/poll/charity-challenge-2016-austin/	3	1.0
Learn how to help, then help	Diego has been waiting a LONG TIME for his forever family to come find him at APA!. Are you the one he's been waiting for? Read more about his journey on our blog: http://bit.ly/1MxXJ7O Adopt Diego: http://bit.ly/1JiAnBZ	83	26.6
Promoting special discounts	Don't miss out on your chance to adopt a Flawless Feline for \$9! The 9 Lives for \$9 special is available through the end of August. http://www.austinpetsalive.org/adopt/cats/	12	3.8
Total		312	100%

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Stakeholder Comments

Type of message	Post Freq.	Comment Freq.	Mean	Min	Max
All messages (100%)	312	5,844	18.7	0	620
Information (22.1%)	69	3,040	44.1	0	440
Organizational activities	29	1,973	68.0	0	440
Success stories	19	901	47.4	2	196
Learn more	21	166	7.9	0	82
Community (16.4%)	51	1,424	27.9	0	620
Giving recognition and thanks	28	1,010	36.1	0	620
Acknowledgement of current & local events	17	211	12.4	0	152
Response solicitation	6	203	33.8	1	152
Action (61.5%)	192	1,380	7.2	0	107
Promoting an event	51	248	4.9	0	107
Donation appeal	31	284	9.2	0	88
Call for volunteers & employees	7	20	2.9	0	8
Lobbying and advocacy	5	101	20.2	0	56
Join another site or vote for organization	3	3	1.0	0	2
Learn how to help, then help	83	679	8.2	0	81
Promoting special discounts	12	45	3.8	1	8

Information

Information posts comprise 22.1% ($n = 69$) of all organizational messages by APA!. Overall, information posts attracted an average of 44.1 comments per post, with 3,040 comments total. These messages typify the one-way, non-dialogic communication that research indicates is most common throughout social media posts by organizations of all types. When posting these messages, the organization does not necessarily expect or directly encourage a response or action from their stakeholders. Informational messages serve to inform stakeholders about the day-to-day activities that APA! engages in, disseminate information about organizational successes, and provide general information that may be of interest to the organization's stakeholders. Although Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) do not distinguish subcategories within information-oriented messages, the present study found that information posts could be broken down into three subcategories: *Organizational activities*, *success stories*, and *learn more*. Organizational messages demonstrating the information function, and how stakeholders respond to these types of posts, are discussed below.

Organizational Activities. This subcategory covers the activities of the organization itself, including day-to-day updates and reports on how each program is progressing throughout the year. These organizational messages comprise 9.3% ($n = 29$) of all posts and allow APA! to inform their stakeholders about media releases, important program updates, and other activities of the organization itself such as opening and closing times. Some posts on topics of note, such as the Neville case, local flooding, or Bastrop fire, were coded as informative in nature, as they sought to simply keep stakeholders up-to-date on the latest developments and often included a link for those

who wished to learn more information. For example, APA! routinely updated their stakeholders on the Neville case. Neville, a young Labrador Retriever mix in APA!'s care, was playing with other dogs in a supervised play area on September 22nd, 2015 (Marketing, 2015a). During this time, a family came to visit the dogs, and the family was warned to keep their young child off of the ground. Unfortunately, the child was allowed access to the dogs and grabbed hold of Neville, who then bit the child. Though the court system slated Neville for death, APA! advocated on his behalf through their social media outlets, which sparked a great amount of local and national attention. For instance, Buzzfeed featured the Neville case, a celebrity tweeted in support of Neville, and multiple Facebook pages and Twitter hashtags such as #StandWithNeville and #SaveNeville were created to encourage donations and help spread the news (saveneville, 2015). Through these efforts, APA! successfully got the case reconsidered. Neville gained his life back on November 10th, 2015, and was adopted out on December 1st, 2015. An example of an update on the Neville case is as follows:

Neville had an orthopedic assessment last week. Thanks to Dr. David Allman, DACVS from Mobile Veterinary Specialist, we learned a lot about Neville that we can pass on to his future adopter to set him up for success in his new home. And to all the Neville supporters...word is Neville may have met a potential adopter this past weekend. Stay tuned for more updates soon.

Stakeholders were highly responsive to *organizational activities* posts, averaging 68.0 comments per post, with 1,973 total comments across 29 posts. Although previous research indicates that stakeholders prefer organizational messages that promote dialogue over information dissemination (Saxton & Waters, 2014), stakeholders responded more to this subcategory of posts than any other. Posts about the Neville case and other topics of note, such as the Bastrop fire and local flooding, attracted the most

attention from stakeholders, who weighed in on the issues. In response to each of these issues, stakeholders commonly indicated their willingness to help: “Thank you for this update. I am still praying for [Neville] to find a forever home. I would LOVE to adopt Neville. Is there a waiting list or process to apply to have him come to my home?”; “Happy to help transport or help any way I can if animals need to be moved [away from the Bastrop fire]. I'll keep a close eye on the page for updates”; “Want to help [with the flooding] and can donate supplies! Please let us know what APA! needs!!” Stakeholders also commonly expressed good wishes towards Neville and APA!, and for positive outcomes with other issues: “Thank you so much for the update. I am sure all of us will continue to keep this precious boy in our prayers and best thoughts.” At the same time, stakeholders expressed anger over the family involved in Neville's legal case:

This all would've been prevented if the parents listened like adults, and did as they were told. Not the dog's fault those two idiots couldn't follow safety procedures ... The parents need to fuck off and take responsibility for their own stupidity.

Across posts in the *organizational activities* subcategory, stakeholders also occasionally brought up concerns about how APA! handled certain issues. For example, APA! partnered with Uber to bring puppies to different locations for the people who ordered them. While this received a lot of positive responses, “What a wonderful program! I watched this evening on NBC news and was so impressed. Keep up the good work. Just wish I lived closer and could volunteer,” there were also multiple stakeholders who saw potential problems with the partnership: “Is it safe for the dogs? Shouldn't there be a meet and greet first,” and, “not sure this is the most responsible way to find good homes....” Although APA! rarely engaged stakeholders in conversation around posts in this subcategory, other stakeholders routinely replied to one another and were quick to

come to APA!'s defense: “The puppies just came for 15 min visits supervised by an APA! Volunteer. All adoptions were done at the shelter.” Likewise, many stakeholders defended APA! about their decisions on the Neville case:

There are people posting here that they want APA shut down because of this incident [with Neville]. WTF?! How can you willingly justify CHOOSING to put a child in a potentially harmful situation by ignoring the advice and instructions of the shelter and then sue for the death of an innocent animal because of your negligence?

All in all, stakeholders were keenly interested in these organizational messages, even though they typified one-way, non-dialogic communication. Stakeholders commonly spoke of their appreciation for updates as well as stated their willingness to help out. Moreover, stakeholders reacted to the information provided, and were quick to defend APA! for their decisions. Although APA! rarely engaged stakeholders in conversation within these posts, stakeholders frequently replied to one another throughout all posts in this subcategory, spurring interest and dialogic communication within these posts.

Success Stories. Success stories comprise 6.1% ($n = 19$) of total posts, making it the least common type of information-based organizational message by APA!. However, success stories received 901 total comments, which equals an average of 47.4 comments per post across 19 total posts, indicating that stakeholders often commented on these types of posts. Most frequently, organizational messages in this subcategory updated stakeholders on animals adopted out of the shelter environment, as a way of applauding the success of their programs:

At 20 years young, Saba is the oldest cat adopted from Austin Pets Alive! Cat Program this year. He was with us only 23 days before finding his forever home! His adopter tells us “Grandpa Saba is the sweetest boy in the world. He loves to

follow [my kitties] around to know what they're doing. I love him to pieces, and am so glad I adopted him” Cheers to Saba and his family!

Many times, the animals featured as adoption success stories were particularly unique and emotional cases, such as long-stay shelter animals, seniors, foster fails, or animals with medical issues such as FeLV+, parvovirus, or ringworm.

In terms of responses, stakeholders most often mimicked the organization by giving their own congratulations: “What a great success story. Thank you for helping him find the right owner,” and, “What a sweet face!!!! Thank you and bless you for giving Saba a forever home!!!!” Stakeholders also seemed compelled to share their own success stories with animals that experienced similar issues: “I adopted a senior kitty from a shelter. She was only with me a few months before she passed away. Because of her I will only seek out older kitties. I love the seniors.” The same stakeholder who posted this response also shared a photo of their senior cat.

Additionally, APA! updated stakeholders on organizational successes, such as the following announcement:

We reached a huge milestone with the Austin Pets Alive! Cat Program back in July! We've Officially Adopted 15,000+ Cats through Austin Pets Alive!. 15,000+ fur babies found their forever. 15,000+ happy feline families. 15,000+ lives saved. Celebrate with us as we congratulate all those involved in our cat programs and all those 15,000 cats and kitties that have gone through APA! programs.
#15000CATS

Responses were similar across both adoption-related successes and program successes, as stakeholders posted photos of their own success stories and congratulated APA! on a job well done: “My sweet clown, Cassiopeia, formerly Okapi, adopted from foster June, 2012. She makes me laugh every day. Thank you, APA and fosters!!”; “1 of the 15,000! Miss Polly, adopted 1/2012 at age 12. Now 14.5 years old.” All in all, *success stories*

posts serve to emphasize the organization's accomplishments, both with individual animals and with their programs. Even though the nonprofit organization did not explicitly expect a response from their stakeholders through these messages, but rather simply disseminated information, stakeholders readily responded to this type of post.

Learn More. In this subcategory, stakeholders were encouraged to read more information about a topic, whether directly related to the organization or not. *Learn More* posts comprise 6.7% ($n = 21$) of all messages. Normally, these posts asked stakeholders to learn more about shelter animals in APA!'s care, without the expectation that stakeholders would respond to the post or mobilize around the topic. For example, one of the posts is as follows: “Meet Choco! He's our latest contestant for Paw Pals! and our first senior dog to be featured. Learn even more about Choco: <http://bit.ly/1T562e6>.” In this case, stakeholders are not directly asked to adopt, mobilize, or respond to the post, but may follow the link to learn more information about Choco. Other posts shared information about different programs within APA!, such as for barn cats and cats with FeLV+.

Across the 21 posts, stakeholders replied 166 times, for an average of 7.9 comments per post. However, almost half of the responses were isolated to one particular post, which informed stakeholders about a new addition to the shelter and included a link for those interested in learning more information: “APA! Rescued Jack Reacher a puppy that was left at a Texas area shelter with his legs bound together, covered in fleas and also tested positive for parvovirus. Learn more about his journey to APA! - <http://www.austinpetsalive.org/.../media-release-austin-pets.../>.” Jack Reacher's story was also broadcast on the local KVUE news station, which was evident by the replies this

story received. Stakeholders expressed outrage at those responsible for Jack Reacher's condition, "I hope they find the scum who bound his legs together and prosecute them and send the person to jail for a significant amount of time. This story is infuriating," and shared stories of their own animals with parvovirus: "Poor baby! Wishing him the best, from me and my APA-adopted parvo-survivor BigBlackDog who's currently snoring and farting next to my bed." Other stakeholders appreciated the spotlight on this particular story and asked to be updated: "Thank you APA for taking this little baby into your loving care. Please keep us updated on his journey...." Throughout this subcategory, stakeholders were appreciative, but often did not engage the organization or others in a dialogue around the stories and disseminated information, except in the case of Jack Reacher.

Community

Community-building messages comprise 16.4% ($n = 51$) of all messages by APA!. In terms of overall responses, stakeholders commented 1,424 times across 51 total posts, for an average of 27.9 comments per post. According to Kent and Taylor (1998), simply providing information to the public is a method of one-way communication, while more interactive methods of communication, such as directly asking for input from an audience, is fundamental for building relationships. According to previous literature, these more interactive and dialogic methods of communication are lacking in most nonprofit organizations (Greenberg & MacAulay, 2009). Community-building messages are the clearest expression of dialogue and relationship building, as organizations can use Facebook to converse with stakeholders and foster an online community with them.

Community-based messages consist of three subcategories, which took the form of recognizing key volunteers and other integral stakeholders, acknowledging outside events both in the local area and internationally, and asking stakeholders to respond to posts with their own experiences and thoughts. Two subcategories of messages, *giving recognition and thanks* and *acknowledgement of current & local events*, involve the organization portraying themselves as a supportive, ethical, and contributing member of the community. Although the organization does not directly ask their stakeholders to respond to these types of messages, the content of the posts show that the organization is interested in building a community. *Response solicitation*, on the other hand, is the clearest expression of dialogic communication between APA! and their stakeholders, since the organization directly asks their stakeholders to engage in conversation with them. Organizational messages demonstrating the community function, and how stakeholders respond to these types of posts, are discussed below.

Giving Recognition and Thanks. This subcategory encompasses 9.0% ($n = 28$) of all total posts, which was the fifth highest percentage of messages in the data set and the most common within the community function. This is in accordance with Fisher and Ackerman (1998), who assert that recognizing people for their services is exceedingly important for organizations. When an organization makes an effort to recognize and express gratitude towards people for their services, their stakeholders become more likely to donate time and money to the organization. Therefore, many of APA!'s posts involved recognizing and giving thanks to various people involved with the organization:

From animals and humans alike there is a most well-deserved, genuinely earned, high five, 'you're the best', 'we couldn't do it without you', long overdue, THANK YOU to all of our many APA! supporters. We honestly could not save as many

lives as we do without each and every one of you! Whether you are a donor, volunteer, foster or adopter – you all make Austin Pets Alive! the organization it is today and we are forever grateful and thankful that you are a part of our story!

This subcategory also extended to non-human entities, such as the city of Austin and other organizations: “Thanks goes out to A&E remodeling SPARR Contracting for all their hard work helping us fix up the cattery! Thank 'mew'!” By expressing gratitude towards stakeholders, other organizations, and the city of Austin, APA! demonstrates that they are a respectful organization that contributes to society.

Across the 28 posts, stakeholders replied 1,010 times, for an average of 36.1 comments per post. In response to posts in this subcategory, stakeholders routinely thanked the same people and organizations, as well as APA!, for their involvement: “Nope, Thank YOU Austin Pets Alive. We thank you soooooooo much”; “Thank you, APA!, for all you did to save [Neville] – and countless other pets who have been in your care!” More importantly, however, stakeholders expressed that they would show more support for these organizations in the future, in the form of buying products or using their services: “I firmly believe in supporting the awesome supporters of events like these!!! Thank you ZAPPOS!!!!”; “Never heard of BurgerFi but appreciate what they do to help APA. Going there tonight with the family. Thank you!” Others declared their intention to spread the word about organizations who supported APA!: “thanks to all of these APA supporters we will pass your names on to our friends!!!!” Through these posts, stakeholders can see that APA! is a respectful member of the local community. Furthermore, stakeholders often chose to thank or patronize the organizations mentioned, which may encourage those organizations to keep participating in the future.

Acknowledgement of Current & Local Events. In this subcategory, the nonprofit organization recognized events such as holidays and other local occasions. *Acknowledgement of current & local events* posts comprise 5.5% ($n = 17$) of all messages, which makes it a relatively small subcategory. These posts are important because they show that the organization is aware of events in the local area and not just using Facebook to further their own agenda. Most of these posts directly acknowledged holidays: “Wishing a Happy National Cat Day to our feline friends and those who love them. Extra skritches all day long!”

In some cases, acknowledgment was secondary to another goal, which caused the posts to get categorized into another subcategory. For example, “Every day is I Love You Day for our furry friends! #NATIONALILOVEYOU DAY” was categorized as an *acknowledgement of current & local events* post. However, messages such as the following were placed differently: “It's National Dog Day! How will you choose to celebrate? <http://bit.ly.1tzi0yp> Post pictures of the most celebrated dog in your life in the comments below!” This message was placed in the community-oriented subcategory of *response solicitation* due to the clear primary message of enticing stakeholders to engage with the organization by sharing their celebrations and pictures.

The 17 posts coded into this subcategory received 211 comments, for an average of 12.4 comments per post. Stakeholders most commonly responded to *acknowledgement of current & local events* posts by wishing APA! a happy holiday in return and thanking them for their efforts: “Happy Diwali!!”; “Happy Holidays to youuu!! Thank you for all the important and wonderful work you do year round for our furry babies!” Additionally, stakeholders posted updates concerning their own pets, with

or without an accompanying picture: “My black APA kitty got a new box for Black Cat Appreciation Day!” All in all, stakeholders mainly used these posts to display their own pets and communicate their appreciation for both APA! and the holiday season.

Response Solicitation. Posts in this subcategory comprise 1.9% ($n = 6$) of total posts, which made it one of the least common type of post by APA!. These organizational messages directly ask stakeholders to engage in a dialogue and respond to a question with their own experiences and feelings. *Response solicitation* posts, therefore, are the clearest example of dialogic communication within the data set, since the primary purpose of these posts is to foster a dialogue between the organization and their stakeholders: “It's National Dog Day! How will you choose to celebrate? <http://bit.ly/1tzi0yp> Post pictures of the most celebrated dog in your life in the comments below!”

Though rarely used, the six posts in this subcategory received 203 comments, which is an average of 33.8 comments per post. In line with previous research, stakeholders appeared highly responsive to *response solicitation* posts: “Posts that include a prompt for conversation or a question receive 70% above average engagement” (Hershkowitz & Lavrusik, 2013, para. 7). For instance, the above post received many responses from stakeholders, who posted pictures of their dogs along with a heartfelt statement: “This is Herbert! My daughter got him from an event y'all had 4 years ago. We love him to pieces!”; “And here we have Yoshi modeling the beautiful Austin skyline. Cheers to our best friends and a day full of appreciation for them!” Many stakeholders seemed willing to engage the organization in conversation when directly asked, and share their own personal experiences.

Action

Action-oriented messages comprise 61.5% ($n = 192$) of all messages by APA!. This is the main way in which a nonprofit organization achieves its goals and advances its mission because it involves stakeholders mobilizing on the behalf of the organization. According to Lovejoy and Saxton (2012), this function may be the end goal of organizational communication since nonprofit organizations cannot exist without moving some stakeholders from informed individuals to activists and donors. Sometimes, all stakeholders' need is to be asked in order to take action on the behalf of the organization. Most donations, for example, are given as a result of being asked to give a financial contribution; those who are asked give significantly higher contributions than those who are not asked (Toppe, Kirsch, & Michel, 2001). Action-oriented posts are about mobilizing stakeholders and resources to achieve a tangible outcome.

Action-oriented messages consist of seven categories, which take the form of promoting an event, asking for donations, requesting volunteers and employees, lobbying and advocacy appeals, asking stakeholders to vote for the organization or stay connected through other platforms, giving information on how to help the organization and then directly asking for help, and, finally, promoting special discounts. The lack of *selling a product* in the analysis was not surprising, given that Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) found that they comprised the smallest percentage of overall Tweets in their analysis. However, *promoting special discounts* was added as a subcategory. Organizational messages demonstrating the action function, and how stakeholders respond to these types of posts, are discussed below.

Promoting an Event. The second most common organizational message involved promoting an event, with posts in this subcategory representing 16.4% ($n = 51$)

of the data set. Posts in this subcategory intend to move stakeholders from informed individuals to active participants in the organization. These posts included information on upcoming events and specifically noted the date, time, or price of the event in either the text or an accompanying photo. By including such specifics, promotion of the event was considered the primary purpose of the organizational message:

It's that time of the year...Santa is coming to Austin Pets Alive! Get your pet's photo taken with Mr. Claus for the holiday season. Sunday, November 15th from 10am-2pm at Austin Pets Alive!'s Town Lake Animal Center location. All proceeds benefit APA!. These will be pet only photos with Santa, no family photo ops.

Stakeholders replied 248 times across the 51 posts in this subcategory, averaging 4.9 comments per post. Overall, many posts in this subcategory received zero to very few responses from stakeholders, although a few posts received a high number of responses. Commonly, stakeholders declared their intention to share the post with their networks, “sharing for awareness,” or tagged other friends and asked if they were interested in attending the promoted event: “[Username] – I think we are going to get #UberPUPPIES tomorrow, you should come by for 15 mins!” By sharing the posts and tagging friends, stakeholders ensured that others in their network would become aware of the event, even if those others were not pre-existing stakeholders of the organization. Some stakeholders asked questions about events: “Is [the Santa event] for cats too?” In many cases, APA! or other stakeholders connected to the organization answered these questions, to ensure no confusion around the event: “Yes. Cats in carriers are welcome!” By looking at the post frequency of this subcategory, it is clear that the moving stakeholders from passivity to mobilization is key for nonprofit organizations such as APA!, though stakeholders did not always respond to these events via social media.

Donation Appeal. Directly asking stakeholders for donations comprised 9.9% ($n = 31$) of all messages, which made it the third most common type of organizational message. These messages encompass asking for a donation to be made to APA! or for stakeholders to support another company that is generously donating a portion of their sales to APA!. The latter example is as follows:

Our friend Drea from MELLY just dropped off a donation of 75 collars to us for our pups here at APA!. Don't forget that for every collar purchased on mellycollars.com, MELLY donates one to a deserving rescue. It's not just a collar, it's a MELLY! Thank you MELLY Collars!

Similar to the *giving recognition and thanks* posts, stakeholders showed that they were appreciative of organizations that support APA! and willing to support them as well: “Picked up two new collars for my pups. Thanks Melly for supporting organizations like Austin Pets Alive.” In response to direct donation appeals, stakeholders most commonly asked questions about the donations, “Do you still need collars and leashes?” and publicly declared their decision to donate: “Thanks for the reminder; I donated!” APA! engaged with their stakeholders throughout this subcategory, more often than any other, and commonly answered questions or thanked those who donated.

Stakeholders were highly responsive to donation appeals indicating a pressing need, such as after floods, fires, and other emergencies. For instance, an overnight storm flooded the facility in October 2015. During this flood, all shelter animals needed to be moved to safety by volunteers and staff, and the high waters ruined supplies and left much debris to be cleaned up. Afterwards, APA! made multiple appeals for leashes, bleach, laundry detergent, plastic trash bags, and other supplies. These types of posts received a much greater amount of attention, normally exceeding more than 20

comments, than appeals for regular donations, which received less than three comments on average. Stakeholders clearly wished to involve themselves in the nonprofit organization when asked, and the response rate of APA! indicates that these donations of time and money are of much value to the organization.

Call for Volunteers & Employees. On occasion, APA! felt the need to ask for additional volunteers or employees to help out with the organization. This was not a common subcategory, comprising 2.2% ($n = 7$) of all messages:

Our bottle baby kitten program is overwhelmed and in urgent need of foster homes. If you have time throughout the day, and a safe and quiet room, consider taking in one of these kittens so we can save it and many more. We provide you with training. If you can help, please email bbfostermanager@austinpetsalive.org or foster@austinpetsalive.org.

In terms of responses, stakeholders commented 20 times across seven posts, equaling an average of 2.9 comments per post. Although responses were not common, current and former volunteers spoke of their own positive experiences to encourage others to mobilize on behalf of the organization: “I love fostering for APA – they have the best marketing team and I only had Hudson for three weeks. Please foster!”; “I loved fostering so much so I kept the momma and two kittens. Now I have 5 cats which make it impossible to foster but I keep sharing these posts.” Others declared their intent to help: “Going in tomorrow for training and kitten pick up!”; “Just submitted my application!” While neither posts nor comments were frequent, stakeholders demonstrated their commitment to the organization and desire to help through this subcategory.

Lobbying and Advocacy. Posts in this subcategory involve directly asking stakeholders to lobby or advocate on behalf of the organization. This type of action-oriented message did not commonly occur throughout the data set, totaling 1.6% of all

posts ($n = 5$), which is consistent with Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) findings. The following post is an example of this type of messaging:

Help Keep APA! in the Heart of Austin! The City of Austin is hosting a Master Planning Community Stakeholder Meeting at Austin High School Cafeteria TONIGHT from 6:30-8:30pm. They will be talking about their preliminary plans for the entire Lamar Beach area (we occupy a small portion of it) . . . Austin Pets Alive! has nowhere else to go and so it is critical that we have a unified voice in support of APA! staying at our current location.

In this post, stakeholders are asked to advocate for APA! in front of Austin's City Council. Other posts in this subcategory asked stakeholders to donate to Neville's legal defense fund or otherwise advocate for his survival.

In terms of response, stakeholders were likely to engage APA! and others in a dialogue over these issues. The five posts in this subcategory received 101 comments overall, which amounts to 20.2 average comments per post: The highest response rate within action-oriented messages. Stakeholders were most responsive to Neville's plight, though still confirmed their interest in keeping APA! located in the Lamar Beach area: "I will be there." For Neville, stakeholders reacted to these posts in five ways. First, stakeholders declared their commitment to help, "I've signed [the petition], donated, and left a voicemail for the judge," or, secondly, suggested alternative methods of advocacy: "Neville's attorneys should consult with the The Lexus Project, Legal Defense for Dogs, they are experts when it comes to animal court cases." Third, stakeholders shared their own experiences with dog bites to empathize with the situation:

I had my ear mostly ripped off by a dog when I was about 4 years old . . . it still breaks my heart that she was forced to die because I didn't know any better . . . Please don't burden that child with the same guilt that I have.

Fourth, stakeholders expressed discontent with the family engaged in the Neville case: “Some nerve of two irresponsible parents who want an innocent dog to die for acting like a dog! Disgusting.” Lastly, stakeholders often engaged others in conversation around the topic and encouraged others to continue with their efforts. However, similar to the response within the *organizational activities* subcategory, APA! rarely responded to stakeholders within their own posts. In any case, though this was a small category, stakeholders clearly wanted to engage APA! and other stakeholders in a dialogue around issues of lobbying and advocacy.

Join another site or vote for organization. As the least-used type of organizational message, this subcategory contains 1.0% ($n = 3$) of all messages in the data set. This subcategory involved asking stakeholders to vote for the organization on another website or directly asking them to stay connected to the organization through other social media: “The CultureMap 2016 Charity Challenge is now live. Help us win an advertising package from CultureMap Austin. You can vote daily until December 30th. <http://austin.culturemap.com/.../charity-challenge-2016-aust.../>.” As the frequency of this subcategory may indicate, APA! seems less interested in participating in voting contests or in promoting their other social media platforms. Likewise, stakeholders were unlikely to respond to these types of posts, with only three comments across the three posts, for an average of 1.0 comments per post.

Learn How to Help, Then Help. This subcategory involved organizational messages that provided information to stakeholders, but had a secondary component and major goal of asking stakeholders to help the organization in a tangible manner. Therefore, getting stakeholders to mobilize was considered the intent of the

organizational message. As the most common subcategory within action-oriented messages and the most common organizational message overall, this subcategory comprised 26.6% ($n = 83$) of all messages. Most commonly, APA! provided information on shelter animals in their care and then either directly or indirectly asked their stakeholders to visit and take action in the form of adopting the animal. For example:

Kilo wonders if you have a place in your home and your heart for him. This 2.5 year old, male, Australian Shepherd/Lab mix is 36 lbs and available for adoption at Austin Pets Alive!. He'd love to find his forever home this holiday season! Learn more and adopt Kilo: <http://bit.ly/1TaBQgq>

Less commonly, APA! provided information and then asked stakeholders to mobilize on other topics such as poop scoop laws or general messages on how to help the organization. For example: “Pet waste left on the ground harms human health and contaminates our water. Scoop the poop...every stinkin' time! www.ScoopThePoopAustin.org.”

Stakeholders commented 679 times across the 83 posts contained in this subcategory, averaging 8.2 comments per post. Similar to the way stakeholders responded to *call for volunteers & employees* messages, many stakeholders promoted the message within their own networks and advocated on behalf of the organization. For example, when APA! posted messages about shelter animals in their care with the end goal of getting the animal adopted, stakeholders commented about their own positive experiences with the featured animal: “My favorite boy! Come check him out and you will love him too!”; “Alexandria (Sandy) has also been a houseguest with me, she is a perfect little lovebug! So well behaved and sweet.”

Additionally, both APA! and their stakeholders were highly responsive to questions about the adoptability of animals within APA!'s care. For instance, a stakeholder asked a question about a pitbull mix named Oliver: “He's gorgeous! I just checked out his bio for more info, do you know if he's good with other dogs? We have a pittie mix at home (who turns 4 tomorrow!) and she's super social.” A self-proclaimed volunteer with the organization replied to the comment as follows:

He does okay with super social females. You should email adopt@austinpetsalive.org. They will hook you up with his favorite volunteer who can tell you everything about him. Staff at our TLAC location would also be happy to facilitate a meet and greet with your pup. [I] suggest coming to meet him once without your pup to see if he'd be a good fit in your family. I'm a volunteer and have had him at my house for a sleepover and he's a hoot!!

In these ways, stakeholders who are already active within the organization take to Facebook to encourage others to mobilize on behalf of APA!.

Promoting Special Discounts. On occasion, APA! advertised discounts on their services. Organizational messages of this nature comprise 3.8% ($n = 12$) of all messages and serve to entice their stakeholders to take advantage of special discounts. Much like the *promoting an event* subcategory, these organizational messages included specifics such as dates, prices, and restrictions, which made the promotion of a special discount the primary purpose of the message. Oftentimes, these special discounts coincided with specific events: “Austin Pets Alive! presents the Austin Kitty Limits Adoption Special just in time for weekend two of ACL Fest. It all kicks off tomorrow October 9th through Sunday the 11th. \$39 all cats over 3 months.” Otherwise, these special discounts occurred throughout the month: “Think 9 times the love this August! It

is 9 Lives for \$9 month at all APA! Catteries. All cats and kittens are \$9. Includes foster cats and all sites. Includes pre-adopts. *Some exclusions may apply.”

Overall, stakeholders did not tend to reply to these posts, with only 45 comments total on 12 messages, for an average of 3.8 responses per post. Stakeholders sometimes discussed money in response to these posts, either about not having enough money to take advantage of the discount, “I won't get paid in time,” or proclaiming that spending full-price on other pets was well worth it: “I still think our \$165 for Elise this summer was a bargain. We love our flood puppy.” Otherwise, stakeholders tended to share these posts to their networks, “[Username] you should go get a kitty for free,” or asked questions about the limits of the discount: “How exactly does this work? Are there any fees not covered by Zappos? Thanks!” In any case, stakeholders were relatively non-responsive to this type of organizational message.

Discussion

This study sought to answer two research questions regarding how a nonprofit organization uses Facebook to communicate with their stakeholders and how stakeholders respond to those organizational messages. What follows is a discussion around the findings of this research.

As demonstrated by the analysis of this study, APA!'s organizational messages are composed of 22.1% information-based messages, 16.4% community-building messages, and 61.5% action-oriented messages. Thus, this nonprofit organization does not primarily use information-based messages, which is a departure from most scholarly research as of now. However, APA! also does not use community-

building messages as their main strategy, which is the two-way dialogic communication that scholarship suggests is underused in social media utilization by nonprofit organizations. Rather, APA! focuses their social media efforts on action-oriented messages.

Although Austin, Texas has achieved no-kill status, meaning that at least 90% of all incoming shelter animals are saved from euthanasia within the city, that status is one that can quickly be revoked. For Austin to maintain the designation of no-kill, nonprofit organizations such as APA! must constantly pull shelter animals out of danger from euthanasia and adopt them out, in addition to maintaining their programs. Therefore, it makes sense that communication with their stakeholders via social media platforms revolves around action. This nonprofit organization must encourage their stakeholders to act in order to save shelter animals from the threat of euthanasia, which means continually asking them to consider donating time and money to the organization.

In terms of engagement with organizational messages, stakeholders most commonly commented on information-based messages ($M = 44.1$), followed by community-building messages ($M = 27.9$), and then action-oriented messages ($M = 7.2$). The four subcategories that received the most engagement included *organizational activities* ($M = 68.0$), *success stories* ($M = 47.4$), *giving recognition & thanks* ($M = 36.1$), and *response solicitation* ($M = 33.8$), which were contained within the information and community categories. Subcategories that received the least engagement included *join another site or vote for organization* ($M = 1.0$), *call for volunteers & employees* ($M = 2.9$), *promoting special discounts* ($M = 3.8$), and *promoting an event* ($M = 4.9$), which were all contained within the action-oriented category.

Most of the highly engaging subcategories have a strong emotional dimension, indicating that stakeholders can be enticed to engage in dialogic communication with an organization and other stakeholders over particularly emotional posts, regardless of the intent of the organizational message as information-based, community-building, or action-oriented. For APA!, emotional stories appeared to involve senior, young, disabled, or abused pets, long-stay pets, pets with black-colored coats, and pets with medical issues such as parvovirus, FeLV+, or ringworm. Stakeholders were also highly responsive to emotional stories about organizational needs, such as local flooding, the Bastrop fire, and the Neville case. Organizational messages that did not receive a lot of response or initiate dialogue with the community included those involving healthy adult pets without a particular need and posts about the regular needs of the organization without an accompanying feeling of urgency behind the request.

Information-based messages gained the most responses from stakeholders as a whole, but stakeholders more often engaged with posts involving emotional events. For example, most posts concerning Neville were coded into the *organizational activities* subcategory, which could explain why this subcategory received the highest amount of engagement at 68.0 average comments per post. APA! most commonly shared *success stories* about particularly hard-to-place shelter animals, such as seniors and long-stay dogs, to great effect. Within *learn more*, the post which received the greatest number of comments from stakeholders involved a puppy who “was left at a Texas area shelter with his legs bound together, covered in fleas and also tested positive for parvovirus”; a clearly heart-rending event.

Community-building messages garnered much attention from stakeholders, though not as much as information-based messages and not as little as action-oriented messages. Within *giving recognition & thanks*, stakeholders overwhelmingly commented on posts concerning Neville, as the organization sought to express their gratitude to those involved in his case. In *acknowledgement of current & local events*, stakeholders appreciated the chance to interact with the organization and reveled in “Black Cat Appreciation Day,” a particular holiday that APA! chose to highlight. Though the literature is mixed on the topic, popular belief holds that black animals are less likely to be adopted out of a shelter environment than animals of a lighter coat color in part due to superstitious beliefs (Kogan, Schoenfeld-Tacher, & Hellyer, 2013). Stakeholder may have felt compelled to dispel this negative stigma by posting pictures and commenting about their similarly black-coated animals. Lastly, there was the *response solicitation* category. Interestingly, stakeholders frequently commented on these posts regardless of emotional content, which supports previous research in finding that stakeholders prefer organizational messages which promote dialogue over those that disseminate information (Saxton & Waters, 2014).

One reason why action-oriented messages did not receive many responses from stakeholders may be because the category, as a whole, did not lend itself to emotion. Subcategories such as *promoting an event, call for volunteers & employees, join another site or vote for organization*, and *promoting special discounts* were among the least commented on in the data set. This finding corroborates previous literature on stakeholder reactions to nonprofit organizations' messages via social media, which discovered that stakeholders are least engaged by certain action-oriented posts, such as

those directed at promoting events (Saxton & Waters, 2014). Posts that lacked the ability to evoke emotion dominated each of the aforementioned subcategories. Nevertheless, a few subcategories within the action category received a higher rate of comments than others, such as *lobbying and advocacy*, *donation appeal*, and *learn how to help, then help*. Within these subcategories, several posts involved emotional events and received many comments. For *lobbying and advocacy*, stakeholders were most highly engaged with the Neville case, which sought to save the life of a shelter dog in APA!'s care. For *donation appeal*, stakeholders were highly engaged with posts asking for aid after a flooding event, and requesting aid to cover the medical costs of 23 adult dogs and puppies who were rescued from the Bastrop fire. For *learn how to help, then help*, stakeholders most frequently commented on posts concerning senior animals, puppies, and long-stay shelter animals.

This finding, though certainly not anticipated, is not without precedence; organizations have been demonstrated to use a variety of emotional appeals to help meet organizational ends (McKeon, 2004). When looking at fundraising in particular, potential donors give more money to hypothetical situations involving the emotional plight of an identifiable victim, (i.e., a 7-year old girl named Rokia from Mali, Africa, who is “desperately poor, and faces a threat of severe hunger or even starvation”) than situations involving statistical data and non-identifiable victims, (i.e., three million Zambians experiencing hunger due to rain deficits) (Small, Loewenstein, & Slovic, 2007, p. 152). Moreover, situations involving identifiable victims and statistical data still garner less money than those solely involving an identifiable victim (Small et al., 2007). In an interview, Small explains further: “The more vivid the story—through narrative or

through imagery—the more emotionally arousing. And emotions are what triggers the impetus to help” (Ni, 2008, para. 3). Simply put, emotions inspire engagement.

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In light of the findings of this study, this chapter begins by providing practical implications for APA! and other nonprofit organizations. Nonprofit organizations may use these recommendations to increase their engagement and further the development of relationships with their stakeholders. In addition, this chapter will explore directions for future research and address limitations of the study, which will lead up to the conclusion.

Practical Implications

Perhaps most importantly, nonprofit organizations may benefit from posting organizational messages that have an emotional tie to their specific audience, rather than posting any particular mix of information-based, community-building, or action-oriented messages. As demonstrated by this analysis, emotional organizational messages seem to increase stakeholder engagement with the organization and other stakeholders. Since repeated contact is necessary for a relationship to develop (Burke & Kraut, 2014), and nonprofit organizations depend on their stakeholders to support their efforts (Greenberg & MacAulay, 2009), increasing stakeholder engagement with the organization and others within the network may help advance organizational goals. On the stakeholder's side, increased interaction with a nonprofit organization helps nurture feelings of being connected with their mission and cause (Greenberg & MacAulay, 2009), as well as foster feelings of belonging, which are essential human needs (Crutchfield & Grant, 2012). Nevertheless, nonprofits must remain honest and ethical in their approach to social media

and the content that they post, so as to not emotionally manipulate their stakeholders. A commitment to genuine and ethical communication must be at the base of engagement with stakeholders: “Organizations that see publics as merely means to ends, that is, simply as 'customers,' will have difficulty building lasting relationships with their publics” (Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003).

In addition, given that stakeholders were highly responsive to posts asking directly for dialogic engagement (i.e., *response solicitation*), regardless of any emotional aspect, nonprofit organizations should also actively seek dialogue through their messages. As explained above, engagement with a nonprofit organization benefits both the organization and the stakeholder. Engaging in dialogic communication, in particular, is widely upheld in research as the pinnacle of communication with stakeholders and necessary for the development of genuine and lasting relationships with stakeholders (Taylor et al., 2001). To this end, nonprofit organizations could attempt to engage stakeholders in direct conversation by asking for input and creating contests. For example, APA! and other nonprofit organizations focused on shelter animals could periodically post a picture of a newly acquired shelter animal and ask stakeholders to suggest names. Or, nonprofit organizations could hold caption contests by posting a photo and asking stakeholders to provide a caption. In addition, stakeholders seemed to leap at any chance to show off photos and personal experiences with their adopted or fostered animals throughout the dataset. Therefore, nonprofit organizations could directly ask stakeholders to post photos of their shelter animal and share stories about why they chose to share their life with that particular animal. These suggestions would allow

stakeholders to directly engage with the organization, which can help the development of organizational-public relationships.

Moreover, nonprofit organizations should seek to engage their stakeholders in dialogue within posts. Oftentimes, organizational messages that received more engagement were those in which APA! responded to stakeholders. This was most apparent throughout the *donation appeal* subcategory. For example, one stakeholder commented the following: “Hey guys, if you have amazon prime, you can use the prime now app and send it will arrive today for free! Sent bleach and clorox wipes!” In response, APA! thanked the stakeholder, “Thank you [username]!” and other stakeholders replied to the stakeholder and APA! in kind, “Great idea, [username]! Do you still need the same items [APA!?] – just making sure before I send some...” APA! acknowledged the second stakeholder as well: “Yes. We can still use everything on the list. Thank you [username]!” In essence, “people appreciate being heard” (Facebook for Nonprofits, n.d., para. 9). By replying to stakeholders, even just to express gratitude for their contributions and answer questions, nonprofit organizations demonstrate that they care, and this may spur other stakeholders towards greater involvement.

Additionally, throughout the data set, it became clear that many stakeholders were already active with APA! as volunteers, foster families, or employees. These stakeholders appeared willing to answer questions, share stories of former shelter animals in their care to entice others to adopt them, discuss positive experiences as stakeholders in the organization, or otherwise advocate on APA!'s behalf within their networks. In these ways, stakeholders acted as mobilizers themselves, encouraging others to follow their example and become more active in the organization or help in other ways, such as

through one-time donations or adoptions. APA!, and other nonprofit organizations with highly active stakeholders, have the opportunity to encourage these stakeholders towards further involvement via their social media platforms. For instance, nonprofit organizations could periodically solicit responses from stakeholders about their experiences with fostering shelter animals, adopting an animal, attending an event, or volunteering.

Lastly, nonprofit organizations focused on animal welfare may benefit from seeking to feature stories about individual animals. In this research, APA!'s Facebook page served as a platform for stakeholders to converse with others and rally around the Neville case. In fact, the organizational message that received the highest number of comments in the subcategories of *organizational activities*, *giving recognition and thanks*, and *lobbying and advocacy* dealt with the Neville case. The Neville case illustrates how nonprofit organizations can take an animal experiencing a crisis event and create a story that resonates with stakeholders and compels them to engage with the organization. In this case, the specific story surrounding Neville seemed to compel broader participation and reaffirm APA!'s dedication to a no-kill mission. Other nonprofit organizations dealing with shelter animals could broadly replicate this by featuring stories about animals experiencing crisis events and following the story throughout all of its developments, focusing on the personality of individual animals within their care, and by creating a sense of urgency within their posts.

Future Directions for Research

Several recommendations for future research can be made. In this analysis, stakeholders most often responded to organizational messages that had an emotional component. Since this was not an anticipated finding, it may be worthwhile for other research to directly assess emotional messages sent by nonprofit organizations and the ways in which stakeholders respond to messages of this nature. It may also be worthwhile to study the Neville case separately from other organizational messages, since it received a great amount of local and national attention and seems to raise questions about organizational responsibilities around training employees, communicating proper procedures to visitors, and the process of adopting a shelter animal. At the same time, future research should attempt to look at other storylines similar to Neville. The Neville case engaged many stakeholders around the broader story of no-kill and demonstrates the power of social media in spurring stakeholders to engage in dialogic communication with one another and act on the behalf of an organization when a crisis occurs. Nonprofit organizations dealing with shelter animals may benefit from further understanding how to entice stakeholders to engage around their broader mission.

Furthermore, to help correct the disparity between organization-public relationship research, future studies should continue to look at nonprofit organizations' social media efforts from the public's viewpoint. This may mean utilizing qualitative measures such as interviews, which would allow researchers to gain insight into the reasons why stakeholders engage nonprofit organizations through their social media platforms. Qualitative surveys may also be sent out to current and former volunteers, foster families, and employees of nonprofit organizations to assess their engagement with

social media platforms, particularly to see if there are any factors which make these stakeholders more or less likely to engage with certain types of social media posts.

Lastly, future research should look at the role of visual communication in organizational messages. In this study, the analytical focus was on the textual aspect of each post and the comment sections, but photos often accompanied organizational messages. In fact, posting photos alongside textual messages is considered a best practice for increasing engagement on Facebook, as messages with photos receive the highest average number of interactions including comments, likes, and shares (Ross, 2014). It would be worthwhile to analyze the photos that are posted by organizations, since photos seem to have a large impact on stakeholder engagement.

Limitations

Though this study has clear benefits for nonprofit organizations, a couple limitations should be noted. Most importantly, comment frequency within certain categories may be misleading, especially when concerned with posts about Neville. As a topic, the Neville case attracted a high level of local and national attention, which no other organizational message received within the data set. This spotlight appears to have greatly inflated the number of comments within the subcategories in which these messages were placed. For instance, 12 posts about Neville were placed in the *organizational activities* subcategory due to their primary purpose of disseminating information about the ongoing case. These 12 posts, out of 29 total posts in the subcategory, attracted 1,495 comments, which makes up a majority of the 1,973 comments on this subcategory as a whole. When taking Neville into account, the average

number of comments per post within the *organizational activities* subcategory drops from 68.0 to 28.1, shifting this subcategory from the most responsive in terms of stakeholder engagement down to the third most responsive. The subcategories *giving recognition and thanks* and *lobbying and advocacy* also become less responded to, respectively moving from 36.1 to 7.5 average comments and from 20.2 to 2.7 average comments. As a whole, when removing posts about Neville from the analysis, stakeholders were most responsive to *success stories* with 41.6 average comments per post, then to *response solicitation* with 33.8 average comments per post, then to *organizational activities* with 28.1 average comments per post. This adjustment does not alter the overall findings: Stakeholders are most responsive to information-based organizational messages, then to community-building messages, and then to action-oriented messages. Despite this, the fact that stakeholders were highly responsive to the Neville case serves to emphasize how important it is for nonprofit organizations to consider the emotional potential of their posts.

Second, this analysis did not take other aspects of stakeholder engagement into account. Facebook also allows users to Like or share posts, in addition to commenting. Analyzing these other aspects of stakeholder engagement would have been useful, to allow further insight into how stakeholders react to organizational messages. Therefore, other research should assess the frequency of Likes and shares as well as comments to gain a more comprehensive view of organizational messages and stakeholder engagement.

Conclusion

Nonprofit organizations are increasingly involved in spreading their mission and connecting with stakeholders via social media platforms. As a site for research, Austin Pets Alive! allows insight into the types of Facebook posts sent by nonprofit organizations and the ways in which stakeholders engage with organizational messages via social media platforms. Most commonly, Austin Pets Alive! sent out action-oriented messages (61.5%), followed by information-based messages (22.1%) and community-building messages (16.4%). However, stakeholders within this analysis appear most responsive to information-based messages, followed by community-building messages and action-oriented messages.

When considering action-oriented organizational messages in particular, some stakeholders acted as mobilizers themselves by commonly answering questions, sharing stories of former shelter animals in their care, discussing positive experiences as stakeholders in the organization, and otherwise advocating on APA!'s behalf within their social media networks. Particular attention should be paid to highly active stakeholders, since they appear integral in spurring others towards deeper engagement. In addition, while directly soliciting responses from stakeholders is effective in generating dialogic communication, the emotional aspect of the organizational message appears most essential. Organizational messages inspiring the highest amounts of stakeholder engagement included those involving senior, young, disabled, or abused pets, long-stay pets, pets with black-colored coats, and pets with medical issues such as parvovirus, FeLV+, or ringworm, as well as urgent organizational needs such as local flooding, the Bastrop fire, and the Neville case. These findings emphasize the importance of

considering the emotional potential of organizational messages, to build stronger organization-public relationships.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

- Apostol, O., & Näsi, S. (2011). Institutional implications for stakeholder modelling: Looking at institutions in a centralised economy. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 96, 33–38. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-011-0941-7>
- Asilomar Accords. (n.d.). *A guide to the Asilomar Accords definitions: “Healthy,” “treatable,” “unhealthy & untreatable”*. Retrieved from http://www.asilomaraccords.org/definitions_maddies_fund.pdf
- Asilomar Accords. (2015, March 5). *Asilomar advanced animal statistics*. Retrieved from <http://www.austinpetsalive.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/APA-2014-Asilomar-Table-corrected.pdf>
- Auerbach, K. (2015, November 5). *How Austin became America's largest no-kill city*. Retrieved November 15, 2015, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kristen-auerbach/how-austin-became-americas-largest-no-kill-city_b_8482294.html
- Austin Pets Alive!. (2013, November 15). *Dr. Ellen Jefferson honored as non-profit executive of the year!*. Retrieved November 15, 2015, from <http://www.austinpetsalive.org/2013/11/dr-ellen-jefferson-honored-non-profit-executive-year/>
- Austin Pets Alive!. (n.d.-a). *About*. Retrieved November 15, 2015, from https://www.facebook.com/austinpetsalive/info/?tab=page_info
- Austin Pets Alive!. (n.d.-b). *Austin's Progress*. Retrieved March 26, 2016, from <http://www.austinpetsalive.org/about/austin-progress/>

- Austin Pets Alive!. (n.d.-c). *Our numbers*. Retrieved November 15, 2015, from <http://www.austinpetsalive.org/about/our-numbers/>
- Austin Pets Alive!. (n.d.-d). *Timeline*. Retrieved March 25, 2016, from <https://www.facebook.com/austinpetsalive/timeline>
- Avery, E., Lariscy, R., Amador, E., Ickowitz, T., Primm, C., & Taylor, A. (2010). Diffusion of social media among public relations practitioners in health departments across various community population sizes. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 22, 336–358. <http://doi.org/10.1080/10627261003614427>
- Barnes, N. G. (2011). *Social media usage now ubiquitous among US top charities, ahead of all other sectors*. Retrieved from <http://www.umassd.edu/media/umassdartmouth/cmr/studiesandresearch/charity2010.pdf>
- Barnes, N. G. (2013). *Picture this: Top charities master visual and social media*. Retrieved November 15, 2015, from <http://www.umassd.edu/cmr/socialmediaresearch/charitiessocialmedia/>
- Barnes, N. G., & Andonian, J. (2011). The 2011 Fortune 500 and social media adoption: Have America's largest companies reached a social media plateau? Retrieved from <http://snr.org/sites/default/files/F500%202011.pdf>
- Bennett, R. L. (2015, June 10). *Something to bark about: Austin's 'no-kill' plan has saved over 30,000 pets' lives*. Retrieved from <http://austin.com/heres-something-to-bark-about-austins-no-kill-policy-saved-lives-30000-pets/>
- Bortree, D. S., & Seltzer, T. (2009). Dialogic strategies and outcomes: An analysis of environmental advocacy groups' Facebook profiles. *Public Relations Review*, 35, 317–319. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2009.05.002>

- Botan, C., & Taylor, M. (2004). Public relations: State of the field. *Journal of Communication, 54*, 645–661. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2004.tb02649.x>
- Briones, R. L., Kuch, B., Liu, B. F., & Jin, Y. (2011). Keeping up with the digital age: How the American Red Cross uses social media to build relationships. *Public Relations Review, 37*, 37–43. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.12.006>
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2015, February 25). *Volunteering in the United States, 2014*. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/volun.nr0.htm>
- Burke, M., & Kraut, R. (2014). Growing closer on Facebook: Changes in tie strength through social network site use. *Chi, 4187–4196*.
<http://doi.org/10.1145/2556288.2557094>
- Capriotti, P. (2011). Communicating corporate social responsibility through the Internet and social media. In Ihlen, Ø., Bartlett, J. L., & May, S (Eds.), *The handbook of communication and corporate social responsibility* (pp. 358-378). Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Carroll, A., & Buchholtz, A. (2009). *Business and society: Ethics and stakeholder management 7th edition*. Mason, OH: South Western Cengage Learning.
Retrieved from http://my.metadata.vn/share/proxy/alfresco-noauth/api/internal/shared/node/MG32yqFOTLSUYXFv9OWPOg/content/Business_and_Society_Ethics_and_Stakeholder_Management_7th_Edition.pdf
- Cho, M., & De Moya, M. (2014). Understanding publics' engagement with non-profit organisations through Facebook: A typology of messages and motivations behind public-initiated conversations. *Prism, 11*, 1-12. Retrieved from <http://www.prismjournal.org/homepage.html>

- Cho, J. Y., & Lee, E. (2014). Reducing confusion about grounded theory and qualitative content analysis: Similarities and differences. *The Qualitative Report*, *19*, 1–20.
- Cho, M., & Schweickart, T. (2015). Nonprofits' use of Facebook: An examination of organizational message strategies. In R. D. Waters (Ed.), *Public relations in the nonprofit sector: Theory and practice* (pp. 281-295). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Cho, M., Schweickart, T., & Haase, A. (2014). Public engagement with nonprofit organizations on Facebook. *Public Relations Review*, *40*, 565–567.
<http://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2014.01.008>
- Cohen, D. (2013, March 25). *Facebook rolling out replies, ranked comments*. Retrieved from <http://www.adweek.com/socialtimes/replies-ranked-comments/416961?red=af>.
- Cohen, J. (2015, May 26). *Flooding update*. Retrieved November 19, 2015, from <http://www.austinpetsalive.org/2015/05/flooding-update/>
- Cornelissen, J. (2008). *Corporate communication: A guide to theory and practice*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Crutchfield, L. R., Grant, H. M. (2012). *Forces for good: The six practices of high-impact nonprofits*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2007). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *62*, 107–115. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x>
- Erin, D. (2014, June 26). *No kill no problem: The story of Austin Pets Alive! part 4*. Retrieved March 26, 2016, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dawn-erin/no-kill-no-problem-the-animal-shelters_b_5486298.html

- Facebook for Business. (2015, April 29). *More support for small businesses: Educational events and live chat*. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/business/news/small-business-support>
- Facebook for Nonprofits. (n.d.). *Strengthen relationships*. Retrieved from <https://nonprofits.fb.com/topic/strengthen-relationships/>
- Facebook Newsroom. (n.d.). *Company info*. Retrieved March 25, 2016, from <http://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>
- Fisher, R. J., & Ackerman, D. (1998). The effects of recognition and group need on volunteerism: A social norm perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25, 262- 275.
- Giving USA. (2015, June 29). *Giving USA: Americans donated an estimated \$358.38 billion to charity in 2014; Highest total in report's 60-year history*. Retrieved from <http://givingusa.org/giving-usa-2015-press-release-giving-usa-americans-donated- an-estimated-358-38-billion-to-charity-in-2014-highest-total-in-reports-60-year- history/>
- Greenberg, J., & MacAulay, M. (2009). NPO 2.0? Exploring the Web presence of environmental nonprofit organizations in Canada. *Global Media Journal Canadian Edition*, 2, 63–88.
- Guidry, J. P. D. (2013). *A tale of many tweets: How stakeholders respond to nonprofit organizations' tweets* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from <http://pqdtopen.proquest.com/doc/1458617928.html?FMT=AI&pubnum=1546657>

- Guidry, J. P. D., Waters, R. D., & Saxton, G. D. (2014). Moving social marketing beyond personal change to social change: Strategically using Twitter to mobilize supporters into vocal advocates. *Journal of Social Marketing, 4*, 240–260.
<http://doi.org/10.1108/JSOCM-02-2014-0014>
- Hampton, K., Goulet, L. S., Rainie, L., & Purcell, K. (2011, June 16). *Social networking sites and our lives*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/2011/06/16/social-networking-sites-and-our-lives/>
- Hershkowitz, S., & Lavrusik, V. (2013, May 2). *12 best practices for media companies using Facebook Pages*. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/notes/facebook-media/12-pages-best-practices-for-media-companies/518053828230111>
- House, C., Rhodes, H., & Sinha, E. (2015). Measuring research and development expenditures in the U.S. nonprofit sector: Conceptual and design issues. 1-166.
<http://doi.org/10.17226/21657>
- Hsieh, H., & Shannon, S. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*, 1277-1288.
- Information Resources Management Association. (2015). *Social media and networking: Concepts, methodologies, tools, and applications*. IGI Global.
- Internal Revenue Service. (2013). *Form 990: Return of organization exempt from income tax*. Retrieved from <http://www.guidestar.org/FinDocuments/2013/742/893/2013-7428933360-0b024526-9.pdf>
- Kanter, B., & Fine, A. H. (2010). *The networked nonprofit: Connecting with social media to drive change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Kent, M. L., & Taylor, M. (1998). Building dialogic relationships through the world wide web. *Public Relations Review*, 24, 321–334. [http://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111\(99\)80143-X](http://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111(99)80143-X)
- Kent, M. L., & Taylor, M. (2002). Toward a dialogic theory of public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 28, 21–37. [http://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111\(02\)00108-X](http://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111(02)00108-X)
- Kent, M. L., Taylor, M., & White, W. J. (2003). The relationship between Web site design and organizational responsiveness to stakeholders. *Public Relations Review*, 29, 63–77. [http://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111\(02\)00194-7](http://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111(02)00194-7)
- Kim, D., Chun, H., Kwak, Y., & Nam, Y. (2014). The employment of dialogic principles in website, Facebook, and Twitter platforms of environmental nonprofit organizations. *Social Science Computer Review*, 32, 590–605. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0894439314525752>
- Kogan, L. R., Schoenfeld-Tacher, R., & Hellyer, P. W. (2013). Cats in animal shelters: Exploring the common perception that black cats take longer to adopt. *The Open Veterinary Science Journal*, 7, 18-22.
- Kolowich, L. (2016, January 20). *The handy character count guide for blog posts, Facebook pages & more*. Retrieved from <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/character-limit-social-media-blog-posts>
- Kondracki, N. L., Wellman, S., & Amundson, D. R. (2002). Content analysis: Review of methods and their applications in nutrition education. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 34, 224-230.
- Krippendorff, K. (1989). Content analysis. In E. Barnouw, G. Gerbner, W. Schramm, T. L. Worth, & L. Gross (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of communication* (Vol.

- 1, pp. 403-407). New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from http://repository.upenn.edu/asc_papers/226
- Laine, M. (2011). The nature of nature as a stakeholder. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *96*, 1–6. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-011-0936-4>
- Lewis, B. K. (2010). Social media and strategic communication: Attitudes and perceptions among college students. *Public Relations Journal*, *4*, 1-23.
- Lindholm, A. (2015, February). *Creating and sustaining a dog foster network*. Retrieved November 19, 2015, from <http://www.maddiesfund.org/creating-and-sustaining-a-dog-foster-network.htm>
- Lindlof, T. R. & Taylor, B. C. (2011). *Qualitative communication research methods* (3rd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lipschultz, J. H. (2014). *Organizational communication: A critical approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lovejoy, K., & Saxton, G. D. (2012). Information, community, and action: How nonprofit organizations use social media. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *17*, 337–353. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2012.01576.x>
- Lovejoy, K., Waters, R. D., & Saxton, G. D. (2012). Engaging stakeholders through Twitter: How nonprofit organizations are getting more out of 140 characters or less. *Public Relations Review*, *38*, 313–318. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2012.01.005>
- Mansfield, H. (2012). *Social media for social good: A how-to guide for nonprofits*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

- Marketing. (2015a, October 8). *Press statement regarding Neville*. Retrieved March 25, 2016, from <http://www.austinpetsalive.org/2015/10/press-statement-regarding-neville/>
- Marketing. (2015b, November 17). *People make it possible*. Retrieved November 19, 2015, from <http://www.austinpetsalive.org/2015/11/people-make-it-possible/>
- McKeever, B. S., & Pettijohn, S. L. (2014). The nonprofit sector in brief 2014: Public charities, giving, and volunteering. *Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy*, 1-17. Retrieved from <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/413277-The-Nonprofit-Sector-in-Brief--.PDF>
- McKeon, T. G. (2004, August 14). *Can you feel the love...or not? Nonprofit organizations and the use of emotion*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association: San Francisco, CA.
- Mitchell, R., Agle, B., & Wood, D. (1997) Toward a theory of stakeholder identification and salience: Defining the principle of who and what really counts. *Academy of Management Review* 22: 853–886.
- Moore, M. H. (2000). Managing for value: Organizational strategy in for-profit, nonprofit, and governmental organizations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 29, 183–204. <http://doi.org/10.1177/089976400773746391>
- Morley, A. S. (2015, May 28). *Austinites step up to rescue shelter animals after Texas floods*. Retrieved March 24, 2016, from <https://weather.com/tv/shows/responding-by-storm/news/austin-animal-shelter-rescue#/1>
- Ni, P. (2008, February 5). *Why vivid storytelling inspires giving*. Retrieved from http://ssir.org/articles/entry/why_vivid_storytelling_inspires_giving

- NTEN. (2012). *4th annual nonprofit social network benchmark report*. Retrieved from https://www.nten.org/NTEN_images/reports/2012_nonprofit_social_networking_benchmark_report_final.pdf
- O'Brien, H. L., & Toms, E. G. (2008). What is user engagement? A conceptual framework for defining user engagement with technology. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science & Technology*, *59*, 938-955. <http://doi.org/10.1002/asi.20801>
- Oh, J., Bellur, S., & Sundar, S.S. (2010, June). *A conceptual model of user engagement with media*. Paper presented to the mass communication division at the 60th annual conference of the International Communication Association, Singapore.
- O'Reilly, T. (2005). What is Web 2.0: Design patterns and business models for the next generation of software. 1–16. Retrieved from <http://oreilly.com/lpt/a/6228>
- Phethean, C., Tiropanis, T., & Harris, L. (2013). Engaging with charities on social media: Comparing interaction on Facebook and Twitter. *Internet Science*, 113-120. http://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-18609-2_2
- Ross, P. (2014, April 8). *Are photos still king on Facebook?*. Retrieved from <http://www.socialbakers.com/blog/2149-photos-are-still-king-on-facebook>
- Rybalko, S., & Seltzer, T. (2010). Dialogic communication in 140 characters or less: How Fortune 500 companies engage stakeholders using Twitter. *Public Relations Review*, *36*, 336–341. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.08.004>
- Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing & Health*, *23*, 334–340.

- saveneville. (2015, October 15). *Petition to save Neville the dog reaches over 235k signatures*. Retrieved March 20, 2016, from <http://www.buzzfeed.com/saveneville/petition-to-save-neville-the-dog-reaches-over-210k-1wz9i>
- Saxton, G. (2014, April 22). How organizations use social media: Engaging the public. Retrieved from <http://social-metrics.org/how-organizations-engage-with-social-media/>
- Saxton, G. D., & Waters, R. D. (2014). What do stakeholders Like on Facebook? Examining public reactions to nonprofit organizations' informational, promotional, and community-building messages. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 26*, 280–299. <http://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2014.908721>
- Schmugar, C. (2008). The future of social networking sites. *McAfee Security Journal, 28-30*. Retrieved from http://api.ning.com/files/hPrYXHhW-44P1muqnBQbO*QOxdkwv744TBPphzJe59kuWQsk8V2rNT58Y8qtA9Ffw1V1b*cRNJ8t0ZvBsJ1mwNMzgMTpsCe/msj_future_social_networking.pdf
- Sedereviciute, K., & Valentini, C. (2011). Towards a more holistic stakeholder analysis approach. Mapping known and undiscovered stakeholders from social media. *International Journal of Strategic Communication, 5*, 221–239. <http://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2011.592170>
- Sisco, H. F., Pressgrove, G., & Collins, E. L. (2013). Paralleling the practice: An analysis of the scholarly literature in nonprofit public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 25*, 282–306. <http://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2013.806869>

- Small, D. A., Loewenstein, G., & Slovic, P. (2007, March). Sympathy and callousness: The impact of deliberative thought on donations to identifiable and statistical victims. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *102*, 143-153.
<http://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2006.01.005>
- Smith, B. G., & Gallicano, T. D. (2015). Terms of engagement: Analyzing public engagement with organizations through social media. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *53*, 82–90. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.05.060>
- Smitko, K. (2012). Donor engagement through Twitter. *Public Relations Review*, *38*, 633–635. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2012.05.012>
- Sommerfeldt, E. J., Kent, M. L., & Taylor, M. (2012). Activist practitioner perspectives of website public relations: Why aren't activist websites fulfilling the dialogic promise? *Public Relations Review*, *38*, 303–312.
<http://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2012.01.001>
- Taylor, M., Kent, M. L., & White, W. J. (2001). How activist organizations are using the Internet to build relationships. *Public Relations Review*, *27*, 263–284.
[http://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111\(01\)00086-8](http://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111(01)00086-8)
- Toppe, C. M., Kirsch, A. D., & Michel, J. (2001). *Giving and volunteering in the United States: Findings from a national survey*. Washington, DC: Independent Sector.
- Twitter. (n.d.). *What is Twitter?*. Retrieved November 20, 2015, from <https://business.twitter.com/en-gb/basics/learn-twitter>
- Vorvoreanu, M. (2009). Perceptions of corporations on Facebook: An analysis of Facebook social norms. *Journal of New Communications Research*, *4*, 67–86.

- Waddock, S., & Googins, B. K. (2011). The paradoxes of communicating corporate social responsibility. In Ihlen, Ø., Bartlett, J. L., & May, S (Eds.), *The handbook of communication and corporate social responsibility* (pp. 24-43). Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Waters, R. D., & Jamal, J. Y. (2011). Tweet, tweet, tweet: A content analysis of nonprofit organizations' Twitter updates. *Public Relations Review*, 37, 321–324.
<http://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2011.03.002>
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.