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Editorial Note

This August 2012 issue represents the inception of the *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research (IJIR)*. We have already begun the process of having *IJIR* listed in Cabell's Directory in order to ensure that papers published within these pages will get the citations and attention that they deserve.

Our current issue breaks new ground by introducing interdisciplinary research into the *International Academy of Business Disciplines (IABD)* – expanding our membership to include fields of study outside of the strict dictates of business, and our member's horizons by allowing cross-collaboration and camaraderie between academic silos. This issue includes academic papers from authors in the United States, Germany, and Spain as well as reviews by colleagues in the U.K., Spain, Japan, and the United States. These collaborations have made this current issue a strong first representation of the journal.

We would like to acknowledge our Editorial Review Board as well as the two External Reviewers and all of the authors who submitted papers for review. We want to especially thank Dr. Ahmad Tootoonchi, Dean of the College of Business at Frostburg State University for his efforts as creator and founder of this journal. We owe him a great debt of gratitude for his unflagging efforts on our behalf. We also express our appreciation to the President of Frostburg State University, Dr. Jonathan Gibralter, and the Board of Directors of the International Academy of Business Disciplines for making *IJIR* possible.

The *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* is committed to maintaining high standards of quality in this publication. We look forward to hearing from you about any new ideas, comments, or suggestions for the future. Please do not hesitate to contact us at www.ijir.net or the email address below.

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BUSINESS STUDENTS' REPORTED PERCEPTIONS OF THE QUALITY OF STUDENT-FACULTY RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

Much recent attention has been given to classroom incivilities reflecting student behavior, however, instructor care and respect toward students has received little attention. We examine perceptions of three groups (undergraduate accounting students, MBA students, and corporate trainees) regarding instructor care and respect. College instructor care and respect toward students is clarified by (1) explaining such behavior and the lack of it; (2) providing information from learner samples; (3) exploring (a) caring, respectful behaviors and (b) uncaring, disrespectful behaviors; and (4) specifying instructor behaviors which may convey that students are respected and cared about, and which help build positive, inclusive classroom environments.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is about the care and respect college instructors demonstrate towards students in their regular classroom interactions. When students perceive that they are not treated with care and respect there are untoward consequences, and as faculty, we should have some knowledge and understanding of those consequences for student learning and for the quality of our relationships with our students. Until recently, this topic was not given much attention in the literature of higher education.

Some recent research shows that the topic is important in the minds of students, if not instructors, as a substantial proportion of students can readily report instances where they were treated in an uncaring and/or disrespectful manner by their instructor. The whole matter of care and respect is not a one-way issue as there are many examples of student behavior that clearly demonstrate a level of incivility towards instructors.

As instructors, we need to do the best job possible in terms of our skills, knowledge, and dispositions to help our students learn and grow. Demonstration of care and respect falls into the last category – dispositions. Treating students well is the right thing to do. In a practical and self-interest sense, instructors have to demonstrate positive behavior toward students because, in most colleges and universities, the students rate the instructors' performance; students "vote with their feet and computer mice," and as consumers, our students have many opportunities to seek education from a variety of sources. With YouTube, Twitter, texting, and other digital social connections, students can spread the word quickly and widely that professor X is perceived as having some real problems with her/his students.

In this paper, we will clarify the issue of care and respect of college instructors toward students by (1) defining and explaining the behavior that may demonstrate caring and respectful behavior as well as the lack of that behavior; (2) providing data and information from three distinct samples of adult learners (undergraduate accounting students, MBA students, and a small sample of learners of college age who were participating in corporate training); (3) exploring and categorizing the various forms of behavior that students regarded as (a) caring and respectful, as well as (b) uncaring and disrespectful; and finally (4) a specification of several actions and behaviors in which instructors may engage that send the message to students that they are respected and cared about and which also help in building positive, inclusive classroom environments.

BACKGROUND

The study reported in this paper began a few years ago. A colleague, Professor Thomas Hawk, received an email from a student ten weeks into a semester course in which the student, a woman who was returning to collegiate schooling after a gap in time of several years, asked him to "please not give up on her" in the course. Her anxiety about her performance, trepidation about mastering the course content, and her ability to keep up caused her to believe that this behavior might stimulate the instructor to give up on her and her learning. Hawk (see, Hawk and Lyons, 2008) anticipating that this student already thought she had been given up on, talked directly with her and asked how she felt she was progressing in the course. The student told him that what he was doing in the course to help her and encourage her learning was just fine, well beyond her expectations, yet she was anxious. When asked if she had been "given up on" in past courses, her response was a resounding "yes." She said she could report several different instances in which such perceptions were experienced and reinforced.

This somewhat unexpected response gave rise to an interest in exploring the issue of students perceiving that they may have been given up on by an instructor and what consequences such perception had for the student. We believe the information provided in this study serves as an alarm for instructors because it reveals that our students are paying strict attention in terms of their perceptions and expectations of instructor behavior. The questions asked of students that bring this research to life are:

1. Have you ever had the feeling that a faculty member or instructor had "given up" on you and your learning in a course?
2. What did the faculty member or instructor do or not do to give you that feeling?
3. What did you do as a result of that feeling or perception?
4. What are ways that a faculty member or instructor can communicate to you that he/she has not given up on his/her commitment to you and your learning in a course?

In later discussions with the students, those who reported feeling as though they had been given up on at some point in their academic career (at least 36 per cent of students surveyed in one of our three samples) almost unanimously attributed the giving up by their instructors to a lack of caring and respect for the student and the student's learning on the part of their instructors. While most instructors would take it for granted that they and their peers, in general, do care for and

respect students, the proportion of students who report a lack of care and/or respect is of a magnitude to demand our attention. Failure to demonstrate care and respect for students may have several undesirable consequences such as diminished student effort and commitment to academic work likely matched with poor performance, negative ratings of instructor performance, damaged reputation of an academic program of study and, depending on the severity of the perceived lack of respect or care, attrition resulting from student withdrawal from a program of study.

Given the student focus on respect and care, it seems reasonable to explore the respect and care literature as it may inform us about the dominant theme in the student responses. The literature is reviewed next, followed by the data and information provided by students to the four questions listed above.

Caring for Students in the Pedagogical Sense

There is little information in the literatures of the business disciplines, education, psychology, or philosophy that explicitly addresses the matter of caring in the teaching-learning context, although there are some exceptions. In their study, Hawk & Lyons (2008) found only two citations dealing with ethics and care in three leading business ethics journals (Business and Society Review, Business Ethics Quarterly, and Business and Society).

There is a large body of literature that embraces the concept of care, not in the pedagogical context, but in general. To fully explore that literature is beyond the scope of this paper. However, we present some fundamental ideas so as to help introduce the student – instructor relationship with regard to care and respect. The work of Gilligan (1982), Noddings (2002), and Tronto (1993) express that caring is more of a process than it is a product or result. Care occurs in a context and is largely relational.

As Hawk & Lyons (2008) report, within the broad umbrella of an ethic of care, there is a smaller literature on an ethic of care within the learning/teaching context, or pedagogical caring. The contextual and relational characteristics still prevail. In this framework, the instructor or teacher is the one caring and the student is the one cared for.

Hult (1980, p. 242-3) identifies three levels of recognition in the pedagogical relationship.

1. The teacher recognizes and understands the student as a unique individual self.
2. The teacher recognizes the student as a person in the sense of being a member of the category of all persons having certain ethical rights which the teacher is obligated to respect.
3. The teacher recognizes the student as student, as one who has certain needs and expectations that a pedagogical service is to be delivered, and has rights which protect and guarantee that these expectations are fulfilled.

The first level leads the teacher to discover what is unique or novel regarding each student. The second level asks or requires the teacher to respect each of the students as a person. The third

level, that suggests a contractual relationship to an extent, leads the teacher to regard both the student and himself as role occupants. In the role as teacher, the teacher evaluates the student's performance as well as his/her own performance. In the faculty - student relationship, class size may or may not limit or constrain caring behavior as the caring relationship could manifest in a one-to-one exchange or in a one-to-several exchange. Within some reasonable limits to class size, the caring relationship is not necessarily constrained by class size.

Demonstrating Respect in the Pedagogical Context

The literature on respect in the university classroom is even thinner than the literature on caring. The respect literature, however, also embraces the notion of *civility* to some extent and we report briefly on that concept in the section following this one.

The first two levels of pedagogical recognition proposed by Hult (1980, p.242-3 and see in the section immediately above) correspond to the concept of "recognition respect" and the third to the concept of "appraisal respect" introduced by Darwall (1977). Recognition respect is owed to virtually all individuals who should be taken seriously by others, in this instance, course instructors. Darwall (1977) suggests that the other form of respect, appraisal respect, is an attitude toward a person for whom we seek to help express their excellence in some specific pursuit. A caring and respectful instructor would have such an attitude toward students.

Classroom Incivilities and Disrespecting Students

Linked to the concept of respect is the notion of classroom incivilities. This area is receiving substantial attention in the popular press and literature if not in the research of pedagogy. In a recent article, Bjorklund (2009) attests to the growing interest in the topic of classroom incivility. Most faculty can report recent instances of student behavior in class related to the sound of unique phone ring tones, students texting one another during class or even engaging in computer games during class and other clever uses of mobile technology. With recent developments such as the iPhone, Kindle, and the iPad, students have even more opportunities to distract themselves and others.

Buttner (2004) used an inductive, qualitative approach to examine 228 undergraduate student accounts of respectful and disrespectful behavior of instructors in their undergraduate business classrooms. Her content analysis of students' responses to two questions yielded seven categories of respectful and disrespectful instructor behavior, that include: treatment of students, giving task-related help to students, responsiveness to students' unusual situations, affirming students' efforts, and maintaining classroom integrity.

She found that respectful behavior was exemplified by recognition of students' perspectives and by the treatment of students, including showing concern and sensitivity to students' situations. She noted disrespectful instructor behavior in terms of poor treatment of students and an unwillingness to provide course-related assistance.

In summation, we as instructors should be aware, continually, that our students are unique individuals, leading to the realization that our relationships with them need to be contextual and

concrete. Pedagogical caring and pedagogical respect would have us develop a repertoire of skills and dispositions that enhance the pedagogical relationship and a portfolio of pedagogical activities that offer guided participation and practice as well as scaffolding approaches to help our students become more competent in the content and skills of the course, more self-directed in their learning, and more cultivating of the value of relationships. Faculty must extend recognition respect to all students as unique, developing human beings as well as appraisal respect for the academic progress they achieve.

In the next section of this paper, we offer the details of our study of three samples of learners relative to their responses to four questions (see above, Background). Then, we present some information and guidance pursuant to care and respect in the classroom.

STUDY METHODS AND RESULTS

We identified three distinct types of students to survey with the four questions. The student groups represent convenience samples and the questioning took place over several semesters in a mid-Atlantic, public university in the United States for the college samples and in a training session for supervisory employees in a large corporation also in the mid-Atlantic region. While the primary focus of the study was to examine responses of college students to our questions, we included the corporate sample purely for contrast. In general, the basic approach of the study makes use of a qualitative method of emergent data (see, Wolcott, 1992). Nearly all participants fell within the 20 to 30 age range and the proportion of men and women per each sample was nearly equal. The important information from each of the four questions is displayed in table form.

TABLE 1. HAVE YOU EVER HAD THE FEELING THAT AN INSTRUCTOR HAD "GIVEN UP" ON YOU AND YOUR LEARNING IN A COURSE?

Student Group	Number of Course Sections	Number of Students	"Yes" Responses N	"Yes" Responses %	"No" Responses N	"No" Responses %
MBA Students (2 different courses)	14	210	93	44	117	56
Accounting Students	2	50	18	36	32	64
Trainees	1	29	16	55	13	45
Total	17	289	127	44%	162	56%

In Table 1 we see that the college students report of having been given up on is less than that of the trainee sample, yet more than one-third of the accounting students reported having been given up on by an instructor and even more (44 per cent) of MBA students report the same thing. These figures seem somewhat alarming to us. The trainee sample most likely is less homogeneous than the college samples as these participants have highly varied backgrounds and

educational attainment is varied as well. These differences may help explain why 55 per cent of the trainee sample reported perceptions or beliefs of having been given up on by an instructor.

TABLE 2. WHAT DID THE FACULTY MEMBER OR INSTRUCTOR DO OR NOT DO TO GIVE YOU THAT FEELING?

[Responses Categorized by Level of Severity and Type of Respect]

Lack of Recognition Respect		Lack of Appraisal Respect	
	Mild Severity		
2b.	Instructor showed little/no concern for helping me to catch up after a lengthy but legitimate absence.	2a.	Instructor had no enthusiasm for the course material.
		2c.	Instructor was detached from the class; really didn't teach the subject.
	Moderate Severity		
2d.	Instructor showed a lack of compassion, and understanding.	2m.	Instructor made no attempt to determine whether students were struggling.
2e.	Instructor did not speak or communicate with me.		
2f.	Instructor declined to call on me in class; expressed dissatisfaction with any of my attempts.		
2g.	Instructor did not attempt to help with my requests for assistance.		
2l.	Instructor exhibited a generally discouraging attitude.		
	Strong Severity		
2h.	Instructor told me directly that I would not be able to pass the course no matter what I did.	2k.	Instructor failed to return graded assignments.
2i.	Instructor would not answer my questions and told me I should already know that.		
2j.	Instructor became irritated when students asked questions; insulted students.		

Students and trainees who reported perceptions of having been given up on by an instructor were asked to give a description or example of the behavior that they believed supported their perception. In all three samples, all participants provided descriptions of the behavior. Interestingly, as we observed the participants respond to this item, we noticed that after being

asked, virtually all of these participants immediately put pen to paper. There was no hesitation; there were no blank stares and no questioning looks. While there may be several explanations for this behavior, it occurred to us that these participants might have carried in memory rather vivid recollections of the behavior they were about to describe in writing.

For this exploratory research, the three groups of participants were treated as a single group of adult learners without making distinctions regarding how each separate group responded. All of the descriptions which the participants supplied were then assembled and, by means of a hand sort, independently placed into 13 categories. Small differences in our interpretations were reconciled and duplicate responses were eliminated. Insofar as possible the response language was kept in the words of the participants. This information appears in Table 2 above. Intuitively, we believed that these descriptors were not equally influential for students. Having categorized the *given up* descriptors into 13 categories, the descriptors were ranked as to level of severity: mild, moderate, and strong. This ranking was determined through consensus and with input from faculty colleagues. Obviously, this is not a highly scientific process and placement of behaviors into the various categories is open to interpretation. Using the definitions of Darwall (1977) with regard to recognition and appraisal respect, the behavior descriptions were also sorted into these two respect categories.

TABLE 3. WHAT DID YOU DO AS A RESULT OF THAT FEELING OR PERCEPTION?

Doing Nothing

3a. Did nothing.
3b. Basically - I gave up on the course.
3c. Just got through the course.

Passive Coping

3d. Decided to avoid this instructor in the future.
3e. Stopped asking questions.

Active Coping

3f. I relied solely on the text, other materials and gave up on the lecture.
3g. I talked with other participants to help resolve my confusion about content.
3h. Sought out other instructors to help me.

Approaching Instructors

3i. Approached instructor about my learning but received an unacceptable response.
3j. Told instructor how I felt about things – then determined to succeed in spite of him. I just decided to work harder.

The last question asked of our sample participants required them to identify the specific ways in which an instructor can demonstrate or communicate to the participants that she/he has not given up on them and their learning in a course of study. All sample participants, regardless of whether they had or had not perceived that they had been given up on by an instructor were encouraged to

respond to this question. Virtually all of the participants responded to this question, and they did so without hesitation. A summary of responses appears in Table 4 below.

TABLE 4. WHAT ARE WAYS THAT A FACULTY MEMBER OR INSTRUCTOR CAN COMMUNICATE TO YOU THAT HE/SHE HAS NOT GIVEN UP ON HIS/HER COMMITMENT TO YOU OR YOUR LEARNING IN A COURSE?

Instructor Preparation and Enthusiasm

4a. Being well-prepared and interested in each class session and enthusiastic about subject.
4b. Admitting fallibility, not knowing.

Establishing a Safe and Encouraging Environment

4c. Taking a personal interest in each student, knowing them.
4d. Giving personal words of encouragement.
4e. Continually encouraging and supporting students in class and individually.
4f. Exercising patience.
4g. Showing impartiality.

Recognizing Student Learning Differences

4h. Listening actively and carefully to students.
4i. Recognizing and acting on the uniqueness of each student.
4j. Adapting/adjusting to class learning pace and individual learning paces.
4k.Taking time to learn new ways to help students learn.
4l. Changing learning facilitation style to match that of students.

Involving Students and Checking for Comprehension

4m. Monitoring understanding of all students and retracing steps until all understand.
4n. Approaching students individually to check on comprehension and understanding.
4o. Asking probing questions to get students involved.
4p. Providing additional assignments aimed at helping students to understand.

Providing Constructive Developmental Feedback

4q. Giving frequent feedback on progress and progress reports during the term.
4r. Beginning feedback with something positive.
4s. Recommending appropriate student services.
4t. Asking students how the instructor can help them improve their performance.

Instructor Availability

4u. Being available to students especially after class and by email.
4v. Encouraging availability to students outside of class, one-on-one.
4w. Responding quickly to personal student communications.
4x. Answering student questions directly and clearly.

Once more, with mutual agreement, we distilled all 24 of the response types into six categories: (1) instructor preparation and enthusiasm, (2) establishing an encouraging and safe environment, (3) recognizing participant learning differences, (4) involving students, (5) providing constructive and/or developmental feedback, and (6) instructor availability to learners. The titles of the six categories are somewhat arbitrary and open to interpretation.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

We choose to frame the discussion of results in two clusters: first, a contrast of our study data with the findings of the research of Boice (1996) and Buttner (2004). Second, we examine the findings from the perspectives of pedagogical caring and respect.

Two of Boice's categories of instructor behavior that did not convey care and respect towards students were (1) discouraging students' questions and/or participation and (2) being aloof and distant from students, and both were clearly reflected in the results of the present study. As Boice (1996) studied classroom incivilities on the part of instructor and students, it may be that instructor behavior in the face of student incivilities results in a withdrawal of care and respect towards students. That is, we may have a cause and effect relationship. This idea is supported by the research of Hirschy (2004) who reports that classroom incivilities have consequences for both the students and the instructor. Further, faculty may not have the training or skills to effectively manage the causes of classroom incivilities.

Also compared were the seven categories of the respectful/disrespectful statements from Buttner's (2004) research with the responses of the participants from our three samples to question 2 in Table 2. With the exception of Buttner's category, affirmation of students' efforts, we are able to find descriptors for all other categories, and, in some cases, we find several descriptors for a given category. These comparisons serve as a validation of the general findings of Buttner and help to give greater shape to the landscape of student perceptions of instructor behavior. We had the same findings as Hawk and Lyons (2008) when it comes to seemingly important factors such as: (1) a mention of clearly stated course learning goals, (2) clearly stated grading criteria, and (3) comments about the course syllabus or plan. That is, there was no mention of these elements by any participants in our three samples.

With regard to pedagogical caring and respect, the learners who responded to the question in Table 2 provided their own interpretations of the behaviors they said they experienced. The primary interpretation was that the instructor had given up on them and their learning in the course of study. Reviewing the information in Table 2 clearly supports this interpretation as the information presents the instructor as one who does not engage in a caring relationship and who does not accord the learner recognition and/or appraisal respect.

The information in Table 2 may be interpreted to suggest that if instructors desire for the classroom environment to be one of mutual caring and respect, instructor-learner, then instructors may have to take the initiative to create opportunities for learners to offer feedback on how well the learning is taking place in the course. This initiative may also help avoid classroom incivilities (see Baier, 1994; Clark, 2009). Instructors may take initiative to encourage students to be active seekers of feedback (Ashford, Blatt, & Vande Walle, 2003) for the learner's own growth and to help learners move beyond passivity and conventionality when it comes to inquiring about what is done in the classroom. In the next and final segment of this paper, we provide suggestions and guidance to instructors that flow from the information identified in our surveys.

BEHAVING IN CARING AND RESPECTFUL WAYS TOWARD LEARNERS

Learning that a high percentage of learners indicated that they perceived that at least one instructor in their post-secondary education had given up on them and their learning in a course came as a bit of a surprise. We were not surprised, however, by the descriptions of the behaviors they offered as indicative of giving up nor were we surprised by the several behaviors they explained that were indicative of a caring and respectful pedagogy.

Demonstrating or modeling pedagogical caring and pedagogical respect are the appropriate actions for an instructor. Caring helps us to reach all of our students. Students who experience an environment of care may be more committed to study in a course and may be more motivated to perform. In a related vein, the research on interactional justice in organizations and in workplace environments (Namie, 2000; Namie & Namie, 2001) indicates that employees who are respected and who are treated well frequently perform better on the job. Further, Buttner's (2004) findings indicate that when students are not treated with care or respect, many of them report accounts of how their self-esteem suffered and how their behavior toward the course and the instructor changed. Many said that they declined to participate in class discussions, arrived late or left early, missed class, dropped the class, or engaged in a combination of these actions.

Depending on the sample under consideration, the questions placed before the learners in the present study reveal that from 36 to 55 per cent of them believe that one or more instructors had given up on their learning in a course of study; however, there is a constructive side to the inquiry. Table 4 presents a number of behavioral indicators that learners felt were characteristic of instructors who had not given up on their learning. Many of those indicators are the mirror opposites of the indicators presented in Table 2. Furthermore, the five broad groupings in Table 4 of (1) instructor preparation and enthusiasm, (2) encouragement and providing a safe environment, (3) recognition of diversity of student learning approaches, (4) checking on comprehension, and (5) constructive feedback are congruent with the characteristics of pedagogical caring and respect. These groupings also parallel, at least partially, the accounts reported in Buttner (2004).

The foregoing information and analysis suggests that there are a number of specific actions that instructors can take to model and cultivate pedagogical care and respect in their courses. Our review of the literature, the results from Buttner (2004), (Hawk & Lyons, 2008), the results from our own surveys reported earlier in this work, and what we have learned from our own classroom practices offer a number of practical suggestions. Instructors should:

- *make sure course performance expectations and learning requirements are clear.*
- *strive to provide an encouraging and supportive environment for students to risk their ideas and questions, to offer their voices, to listen carefully, and to reflect on what is happening in class and in their own learning.*
- *get to know individual students through the use* of *beginning-of-course questionnaire and/or personal interaction*.
- *recognize that it is likely necessary to provide different approaches to instruction because students do not all learn in the same way.*
- *provide much constructive feedback on student performance.*

- *model caring and respectful behavior to all students.*

Table 5 summarizes many of the course attributes that we have found to communicate pedagogical caring and respect.

TABLE 5. COURSE ATTRIBUTES THAT COMMUNICATE CARING AND RESPECT

1. Sending out a welcome letter to the learners before the start of the course.
2. Providing the course guide or syllabus, on-line or hard copy, to the learners before the start of class.
3. Providing feedback and evaluation rubrics on all graded activities in the course guide or syllabus.
4. Providing a desk name card for each learner during the first class session.
5. Having the learners complete a personal data sheet during the first class session.
6. Administering learning style instruments to the learners at the first class session and sharing results.
7. Using open-ended questions to stimulate discussion.
8. Providing sufficient wait-time after questions to allow for reflection and crafting of responses.
9. Choosing learning activities that are active and involve the participants in their own learning processes.
10. Giving clear and thorough written developmental feedback on all aspects of written papers.
11. Giving the learners opportunities to hand in drafts of written work for developmental feedback.
12. Offering the learners a mid-course opportunity to give you formative feedback on how the course is going.

FINAL COMMENTS

One thing that emerges from this research and the research of others is the inference derived from student comments and reported perceptions that students want instructors to create and moderate inclusive and democratic classrooms. These classrooms embrace openness, mutual respect in terms of recognition and appraisal respect, and focus on helping students achieve instructional and personal goals. Elenas (2006) has defined a democratic classroom as one where all participants are welcome and students believe they can contribute to discourse.

Stone-Norton (2008) and Ladson-Billings (2001) help to shape the concept of the inclusive classroom by identifying several of the features we have listed above in our suggested practices. This includes, for example, asking for student feedback on class activities, using diverse teaching techniques, inviting student participation, and demonstrating authentic care and respect toward students.

With reference to democratic and inclusive teaching environments, Jinkins (2003) has suggested that in post-secondary education courses instructors should place a priority on their interactions with students and on interaction of students with each other. This interaction can be moderated

with the use of a variety of teaching methods and tools such as cases, simulations, and group projects. And, in courses that are conducted partially or wholly online, Machuca (2007), who studied the teaching of accounting to students online, suggests that a caring attitude toward students may be expressed by some one-to-one time with each student via chat technology or by phone and by moderating teaching methods so as to reach different (verbal, visual, etc.) learners' styles. Finally, in Smith's (2006) study of both accounting graduates and public accountants, he found that the two groups rated most highly these teaching methods: in-class discussions, in-class experiential exercises, and case work in class. Each of these methods involves students in active participation and thus demonstrates a positive valuing of student-as-participant.

Future exploratory research in the domain of pedagogical care could focus more on care effects by gender, differences among learners in different disciplines, and on various aspects of student performance to include participation and involvement in class discussions, absenteeism, performance on tests and quizzes, and grades. Instructors have the opportunity to model an ethic of care in their classrooms, in their relationships with their students, and in their relationships with their discipline, their colleagues, and themselves. Students who experience that modeling may be more willing to adopt an ethic of care in their own lives and become models for others.

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WHAT THE FRACK? ACTIVISM IN THE MARCELLUS SHALE REGION

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ABSTRACT

The Marcellus Shale extends from southern New York across Pennsylvania, and into western Maryland, West Virginia, and eastern Ohio. The production of commercial quantities of gas from this shale requires large volumes of water to drill and hydraulically fracture the rock. Concerns about the availability of water supplies needed for gas production and questions about waste water disposal have been raised by water-resource agencies and citizens throughout the Marcellus Shale region. Both activist and energy-company coalitions are engaged in communication with the goal of establishing the legitimacy of their positions. This paper 1) reviews activism theory and issue management literature, 2) provides background on the Marcellus Shale issue and the coalitions involved in the public debate, 3) examines the coalitions' website messages and media coverage in their attempts to establish the legitimacy of the issue positions, and 4) advances understanding of activist and corporate communication and adaptation.

INTRODUCTION

Amwell Township, in rural southwestern Pennsylvania, sits atop one of the largest fields of natural gas in the world (Griswold, 2011). As in other areas across Pennsylvania and extending throughout the Marcellus Shale region, towns in Amwell Township and many local residents have benefitted from the economic boom resulting from energy corporations' building more than 60 wells for drilling natural gas in the area. Landowners have received lucrative long-term lease deals that have allowed them to get out of debt, improve their farms, and purchase luxuries they never dreamed would be possible. Drillers who live near the wells have brought revenue to local motels, shops, and restaurants. Some local residents believe the gas industry has had a positive impact on the township, and "is definitely the right thing for Western Pennsylvania….We need this natural gas to keep functioning" (Griswold, 2011, p. 8).

Other Amwell Township residents are not so sure that the economic benefits are worth the environmental and health risks. Pets and farm animals have died; children and adults have become ill with stomach pains, extreme fatigue, and other ailments related to toxic levels of arsenic and benzene, known human carcinogens found in foul-smelling drinking water near drilled areas. One local family was told to leave their home and not go back because of the dangers to their health. Said one resident about the gas company responsible for drilling: "They've ruined our lives…. No amount of money that we'd ever get from royalties would ever replace my children's health" (Griswold, 2011, p. 9).

On a larger scale, both the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Department of Health have come under fire for their handling of health complaints about illnesses due to gas drilling. The agencies were criticized for failing to respond to "complaints of headaches, nausea, vomiting, sore throats, nosebleeds, eye irritation and rashes" associated with the poor air quality and emissions due to fracturing (Fulton, 2012). While the Department of Health says it investigates every resident's claim, the agency did not begin recording complaints related to gas drilling until 2011, although about 5,000 Marcellus Shale wells have been drilled since 2005 (Begos, 2012; "Pennsylvania Department of Health…," 2012). The Pennsylvania DEP announced in July 2012 that it will undertake a one-year "monitoring project" of the "release of air pollutants" near Marcellus Shale gas drilling facilities ("Long-term ambient air…," 2012).

The Amwell Township case demonstrates how an organization's behavior can create tensions among residents of a community (and, in the case of the Marcellus Shale issue, across a state and region), and lead to communication and actions by activists and organizations directed at eliciting support and change. Additionally, the handling of health complaints due to gas drilling by the lead Pennsylvania agencies and criticisms from residents that their "actions don't match their words" (Begos, 2012, para. 1) provide just the site for study of how citizens hold public policy decision-making and implementing bodies accountable and mobilize to apply pressure when there is a failure to meet their expectations.

Public policy activism has been tied to the beginning and evolution of the profession and study of public relations (Coombs & Holladay, 2007). Individuals organize in groups in order to influence one or more target organizations through action. Public relations scholars argue that these activists are co-creators of the relationships between organizations and their publics, contributing to the development and resolution of issues and, ultimately, to social good (Smith & Ferguson, 2010). Heath (2006) and Heath & Waymer (2009) argued that "the dialogue of society is best when it helps organizations be more reflective and work for legitimacy; it voices perspectives to help society be more fully functional" (p. 201). One important social role of activists and their organizations is to elevate a society's value standards, as environmental groups have pushed for higher environmental standards in the U.S.

Smith and Ferguson (2001) argued for longitudinal studies of activists that examined the interactions between community members, activist organizations, and their targets' responses. While many studies have examined either activist or organizational campaigns, it is the clash of messages between activist and target organizations that produces and reproduces issue definitions and influences the development of the conflict (Smith, 1995). Greater understanding of this clash is required in order to understand and predict how relationships between activists and organizations develop (Smith & Ferguson, 2010).

This is such a longitudinal study, examining the communication of coalitions of community members, activist organizations, the energy industry, government, and regulatory agencies in Pennsylvania supporting and opposing the Marcellus Shale natural gas drilling. The article begins with a review of activism and issue management literature, then proceeds to background on the Marcellus Shale issue and the coalitions under study. The public relations efforts of two

coalitions on either side of the issue are then analyzed, and the article concludes with a discussion of directions for future research in activist-target communication.

ACTIVISTS AND TARGET ORGANIZATIONS

Interacting with activists is something that many organizations resist (Smith & Ferguson, 2001). In early research, activists were viewed as problems for organizations (see L. Grunig, 1992). J. Grunig (1989) argued that "when members of active publics join activist groups, they contribute to the constraints on organizational autonomy that create a public relations problem and bring about the need for a public relations program" (p. 3). Smith (1995) argued that activists are often treated as threats to other organizations because they may disrupt an organization's routine, influence the development of issues that may be threatening to an organization, use tactics that may appear threatening, and are perceived as being made up of members whose commitment to a "cause" is threatening.

In the last decade, the public relations efforts of activists have become a legitimate part of public relations scholarship (Smith & Ferguson, 2010). Moving away from a corporate-centric view of public relations, recent scholars acknowledge that part of the historical evolution of public relations is connected to activism. Coombs and Holladay (2007) claim that activists were practicing public relations before the existence of large corporations, and their efforts to be heard and press for change "spurred the growth of corporate public relations" (p. 75). Corporations viewed activists

> as barriers to overcome or challenges to meet, and helped create the 'need' for modern public relations. If we shift the focus a bit, activism can be seen 'as' modern public relations. In the 1960s activists utilized public relations to attract the attention of the corporate elite, developing and utilizing many of the modern tools of public relations. (Coombs & Holladay, 2007, p. 52)

Analysis of the communication activists engage in to voice their concerns and advocate change reveals their purposes, strategies, and tactics. The next section discusses key findings in the literature related to how activist organizations pursue their desired goals.

Activist Purposes, Strategies, and Tactics

Activist organizations use public relations for two primary, interrelated purposes: to rectify the conditions identified by the activist publics and to maintain the activist organization or sustain the movement (Smith & Ferguson, 2010). The focus in this study is on the first purpose. For example, environmental groups pursue environmental issues; anti-war activists seek an end to an armed conflict. Activist organizations operate in the "tensions between what is and what ought to be" (Heath & Waymer, 2009, p. 201), or oppose institutional behaviors that violate what the activists believe would be more legitimate and socially responsible. This legitimacy gap (Sethi, 1977) can create the strain that motivates activists and leads them to execute strategies to get their messages out and push for change. Activists pursue a preferred resolution to an issue, which provides the first goal of activist public relations, the outcome desired by the organization. There are three sorts of goals activist organizations pursue: (1) to elicit or resist change on the part of a target organization or, more broadly, an industry or field; (2) to seek public policy or regulatory

changes that would, in turn, effect change in institutional or public behavior; or, most broadly, and/or (3) to change social norms (Smith & Ferguson, 2010).

Activists and their institutional targets both use public relations strategies (messages and actions) and tactics (tools) to gain support for their positions on issues. Direct issue strategies are those designed to clearly debate an issue and the merits of particular policy options, and to influence the outcome or decision about an issue. They include arguments used to refute activist or institutional claims, or arguments designed to influence decision makers. Typically, they are pursued using issue advertising, press statements, position papers, letters to the editor, etc. Indirect issue strategies are those designed to create a favorable environment of public opinion about the advocates and their positions that ultimately create the premises upon which direct strategies are judged and/or accepted. These include things like corporations sponsoring "educational" programs on the industry; taking proactive steps to change practices; community involvement and engagement, etc.

A number of studies have examined how activists use public relations to achieve their goals. These studies have primarily looked at public relations strategies, or the general approach to communicating to achieve a goal, and tactics, or the particular tools used in public relations, such as press releases, Web sites, and other computer-generated, technology-dependent techniques (Knight & Greenberg, 2002). Several of the studies in this area seek to add to our understanding of and refine the typologies of tactics used by activists and by institutions in responding to activism. In a review of 34 cases of activism, L. Grunig (1992) concluded that activists' tactics ranged along a continuum and included contact with the media (see also Ryan, 1991), direct solicitation campaigns aimed toward the public or regulators, lobbying, public forums, petition drives, litigation, pseudoevents, public education, picketing, boycotts, and sit-ins. For example, activists sometimes approach organizations directly, only to be rebuffed and therefore compelled to turn to methods that are more confrontational (Ryan, 1991).

When leaders from Operation PUSH initially approached Nike about its minority hiring practices, they were publicly criticized by the shoemaker's spokesperson. Operation PUSH promptly organized a boycott of Nike products, which resulted in a great deal of publicity (Smith, 1992). In a study of an Addyson, Ohio, Bayer/Lanxess Chemical Plant after harmful air and water emissions, Zoller (2009) found that citizens groups petitioned the company to make changes, attempted to document neighbors' complaints, generated media coverage about the issue and began to press state and federal environmental protection agencies to make a finding against the chemical maker. Through nearly five years of meetings, trading accusations about motives and expertise, and pressure from both citizens and regulators, Lanxess established a Public Advisory Group and invested over $2 million in equipment upgrades to reduce emissions and avoid future malfunctions.

Recent studies focus specifically on how activist organizations marshal digital and social media to spread their messages and rally supporters. For example, the American Family Association capitalized on Internet technology's ability to instantaneously and inexpensively communicate with members and followers of the organization when it mobilized thousands of people to pressure organizations to stop advertising on television programs that promote lifestyles and values that are in opposition to the AFA, and to boycott organizations that offered benefits to

same-sex couples and donated money to homosexual organizations and events. The AFA developed the boycottford.com Web site, posting numerous documents "exposing and indicting Ford's pro-homosexual agenda" and links to Web sites that provide Ford's "gay-themed advertisements" (Coombs & Holladay, 2007, p. 72). Word of the boycottford.com Web site spread virally, and more than 700 Web sites had links to the AFA Web site within three days. This mobilization blitz was effective: within one week Ford dealers met with the AFA, and soon after the AFA suspended its boycott.

Activists organize around issues they believe impact them and about which they have strong positions. The next section reviews the issues management process and the communication of activist organizations in the issue lifecycle.

Issues Management

Activism research centers on the identification, development, and resolution of issues. Botan and Taylor (2004) argued that "at the heart of issues management is a belief that organizations and publics can engage each other in ways that allow for one or both parties to change" (p. 654). The goal attainment function of activism clearly centers on issues, which evolve over time and tend to be either a question ready for decision (Jones & Chase, 1979), organizational decisions that create problematic conditions for publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Grunig J., 1989), or a condition to which people attach meaning and create arguments (Crable & Vibbert, 1985). Thus, if an environmental organization believes that government policy would resolve an environmental problem, it utilizes public relations tactics designed to generate support for legislative remedies (Smith & Ferguson, 2001). Issues management literature suggests that issue advocates must draw attention to the problem, position themselves as legitimate advocates, and successfully argue for their recommended resolutions to the problem (Crable & Vibbert, 1985; Heath, 1997; Vibbert, 1987). Through its public relations activities, an organization communicates its positions on issues, solicits support for action and, ideally, engages target organizations in policy discussions.

Issues management theorists have contended that issues are cyclical—that is, they rise and fall in status on the public's agenda (see Crable & Vibbert, 1985; Downs, 1972; Hainsworth, 1990; Jones & Chase, 1979). As issues gain status, activist organizations gain attention, members, and resources. When issues appear to be resolved or otherwise fall from the public's agenda, activist organizations suffer. Activists "recognize issues earlier and package them to shape the interpretation of others" (Zietsma & Winn, 2008, p. 71). To survive, activist organizations must adjust to changes in their "issues environment" (Jopke, 1991; Smith, 1995). To be successful, they must establish their legitimacy and undermine the legitimacy of their target organizations, which is the subject of the next section.

The "Legitimacy Dance"

Activism "is a crucial factor in the evolutionary history of issues management" as it "creates or builds on the legitimacy gap between the activists and the target organization, whether business, government, or other nonprofit" (Heath & Waymer, 2009, p. 196; Heath, 1997). This legitimacy gap, which requires the exigence of a solution, provides the "motivation" for activism and social movement, and the "grounds" for the five stages of activism: strain, or stress, mobilization,

confrontation, negotiation, and resolution, which are "the key elements of activism" (Heath & Waymer, 2009, p. 206). This strain "is the motive that attracts followers and sustains nonprofits in their efforts to correct what they target or frame as the evils of society" (p. 213), while "activist organizations employ the strategy of 'incremental erosion'… challeng[ing] the legitimacy of its target by chipping away at premises that are needed by the business" (Heath & Waymer, 2009, p. 197) to sustain its current operation. During the "strain" phase in the development of activism, the definition and framing of issues contributes to the interaction between activists and organizations (Heath & Palenchar, 2009; Jaques, 2004).

Coalitions on multiple sides of an issue are engaged in communication with the goal of establishing the legitimacy of their positions. Activists and their targets perform a "legitimacy dance," each questioning the other's issues, motives, and right to exist. Institutions and activists seek to (a) gain legitimacy for their role as advocates for particular issues and (b) to gain support for their positions on those issues, and the subsequent public policy or organizational actions being pursued. They face a dual legitimacy challenge (Smith & Ferguson, 2010). On one hand, they must establish the legitimacy of their organization, values, issues positions, and their role as advocates for a particular issue(s). On the other hand, they must undermine the legitimacy of their target organizations and/or the values and issues positions they represent. One important step in the early stages of an issue's life cycle is establishing the issue's legitimacy, or acceptance of the issue by increasingly broader segments of the public (Crable & Vibbert, 1985).

Activists, then, organize around local, regional, national, and/or international issues, employing communication strategies to apply pressure and seek their desired solutions, which typically involves corporate or public policy change. The next section provides examples of public policy issue activism and results.

Public Policy Activism

There seldom are any "single" issues in complex public policy debates. Issues intersect with each other, thus making the analysis of the dance between activists and others more complex. Smith (1995) examined the evolution of the nuclear freeze issue in the 1980s as it evolved from a disarmament issue to an environmental issue. Ferguson (1999) examined the communication and mobilization of a faith-based coalition directed at influencing the 1994 midterm congressional elections. The Ohio Citizen Action Good Neighbor Campaign directed toward the Bayer/Lanxess Chemical Plant (Zoller, 2009) sought public policy, regulation, and equipment upgrades due to dangerous air and water emissions. The public policy debate in Addyson, Ohio, is relevant to the current study, because in both activism is focused on environmental issues.

The Addyson case demonstrates the process by which an activist organization can elicit change on the part of an organization (Smith & Ferguson, 2010). However, the case illustrates other dimensions of the interplay between activists and corporations. Bayer/Lanxess had developed a conduit through which it could consult with its community—the Public Advisory Group, a common corporate mechanism for engaging with activists (Heath & Palenchar, 2009). The Westside Action Group (WAG), a local citizens group, questioned the legitimacy of the advisory group, and the company questioned the ability of WAG to understand the science behind its emissions problem. The contest between the various groups included advocacy through the

media, but also moved from direct pressure to engagement through meetings to the lobbying of regulators by citizens' groups (Smith & Ferguson, 2010). This progression represented the interplay between activists' and the corporation's strategies as the issue evolved. As Zoller (2009) noted, "Activists seek to build sources of legitimacy, power, and urgency that increase their likelihood of being heard by a corporation" (p. 94). As the citizens group sought to influence the company's actions, it sought to gain power by marshaling expert information and the regulatory power of the Environmental Protection Agency (Smith & Ferguson, 2010).

The Marcellus Shale dispute offers another example of the clash between communities, environmental activists, and an industry seeking to utilize a natural resource. Background on the Marcellus Shale dispute reveals the full range of issues in this environmental dispute.

MARCELLUS SHALE BACKGROUND

For over 75 years, geologists and gas companies knew that there was natural gas lodged within the Marcellus Shale Formation, which stretches from New York through Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia. However, the pockets of natural gas encountered early on were seen as a nuisance, since the uncontrolled bursts of natural gas disrupted drilling in shallow gas wells (Harper, 2008). While these bursts raised awareness of the presence of gas, they were too short-lived to be sustained in any profitable way. The Marcellus Shale formation varies in depth from several hundred to several thousand feet, and in many places lies under layers of sandstone, limestone, and, most significantly, the aquifers that supply water to many communities throughout the region.

Interest in Marcellus Shale's potential as a source of natural gas re-emerged in the 1980s, when the U.S. Department of Energy commissioned a thorough geological survey of the area (Harper, 2008). Between the early 1990s and 2003, several factors converged to propel further exploration of the area (Harper, 2008; Pennsylvania Geological Survey, n.d.). First, the steadily increasing price of natural gas, fueled by increased worldwide demand, made it a valuable commodity. Relatedly, international tensions prompted many in the U.S. to seek less dependence on foreign sources of natural gas. Another factor was the development of drilling technology that would allow gas companies to reach and extract a continuous flow of natural gas. Range Resources drilled the first well in Washington County, Pennsylvania, in 2003, and by 2005 was producing natural gas (Harper, 2008).

The boom in the Marcellus Shale region really began in 2007. Terry Engelder of Pennsylvania State University and Gary Lash of the State University of New York-Fredonia believed that previous studies by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) had underestimated the potential amount of natural gas that could be extracted from the Marcellus Formation. The USGS estimated that the deposit contained 2.7 trillion cubic feet of natural gas; Engelder and Lash claimed that the more accurate amount was closer to 500 trillion cubic feet (Frazier, 2011; Messer, 2008). The results were announced in a press release issued by Penn State and attracted national media attention, prompting an influx of energy companies to open shop across the Marcellus region, primarily in Pennsylvania (Frazier, 2011).

The impact on the region was swift and substantial. In 2005, only four deep wells existed in Pennsylvania. By 2008, 271 new wells had been added, and in 2010 alone, 1,386 new wells were drilled, accounting for 50 percent of all the new natural gas wells in the U.S. (Maykuth, 2011). Similarly, the amount paid to lease the drilling rights from landowners had risen from about $50 an acre in 2005 to over $3,000 per acre (Brubaker, 2011). Thousands of gas workers flowed into the state from around the country, and an army of trucks descended on the largely rural landscape.

Such rapid development in a region rich in other natural resources, such as farmland and forests, was bound to raise concerns. The issues surrounding the development of the Marcellus Formation are complex and interrelated. They include:

- Environmental issues: While natural gas itself is generally seen as a cleaner form of energy than coal or oil, the process of extracting and transporting it impacts forests, air quality and, as will be seen later, water quality.
- Economic/socioeconomic impact: With natural gas prices hovering around $100 per barrel, the potential economic benefit to the states, counties, and municipalities across the region is great. While many of the gas developers have headquarters out of state, a number of local businesses, from manufacturing to realtors, may benefit from increased work.
- Infrastructure: The impact of thousands of trucks over rural, sometimes undeveloped roads, is substantial. In addition, the flow of new workers into the region means communities often have to provide additional services, such as schools and public safety. Tax revenue is generally needed to support these services.
- Leases: Companies seeking to drill must secure the rights to the land, either from private landowners or, for publically owned lands, the state. The amount of royalties paid and the conditions under which the land can be used (e.g., how large the drilling site is, where access roads may be built) can sometimes be contentious.
- Legal issues: Related to the question of leases are land rights; local governments sought to understand their ability to regulate well locations, and those concerned about their household water quality needed to understand their legal remedies.
- Taxes: This issue takes many forms, but the most significant is the extent to which gas producers pay taxes on the proceeds made from selling the gas extracted. As states struggle with the ongoing effects of a weak economy, any stream of tax revenue is welcome. However, Pennsylvania is one of the few states that does not levy such a tax.
- Water resources: Water is essential to the gas extraction process; however, drinking water quality may also be affected should anything go wrong with the drilling. Given that much of the water in the Marcellus region flows down state toward Philadelphia and other cities, this issue became a statewide concern.

The nature of the Marcellus Formation makes it challenging to extract the natural gas, and the solution companies have developed to address that challenge makes water resources one of the most significant issues in the debate over Marcellus Shale.

Hydraulic fracturing is a process by which fissures holding pockets of natural gas deep within the shale are broken up so that gas may be released and pumped to the surface (Sjolander, Clark, Rizzo, & Turack, 2011). The process involves driving a conventional vertical well deep into the

ground, then gradually turning a pipe horizontally along the seams of the shale. This horizontal pipe could stretch for as long as 5,000 feet. In order to expand the natural fissures that contain gas and to smooth the way for it to come to the surface, between 3 and 5 million gallons of water mixed with a small amount of chemicals is pumped under high pressure into the shale (Brzycki, 2011). While hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, allows companies to pull more gas from the ground, the process also poses a number of potential water quality threats. The process forces chemically-tinged water into the shale; while much of it returns to the pipe, some may be forced beyond the shale into other layers. The pressurized water may rupture the pipes carrying it, thus releasing the chemical mix into the ground water. The water used in fracking usually returns to the surface during drilling, where it must be stored and disposed of. The water used in the process must be hauled to and from the drilling sites, and, for some time, no universal plan existed for the disposal of the waste water. For example, some municipalities allowed the water to be dumped in their waste water treatment facilities until it was discovered that they might not be able to filter out all the chemicals used.

While all the issues mentioned above are important and interwoven, this study focuses on the issue of fracking and its impact on water quality. This issue has generated much of the public debate about drilling in the Marcellus Shale Region of Pennsylvania, primarily related to three important water-resource concerns raised by gas production: 1) supplying water for well construction without impacting local water resources; 2) avoiding degradation of small watersheds and streams as substantial amounts of heavy equipment and supplies are moved around on rural roads; and 3) determining proper methods for the safe disposal of the large quantities of potentially contaminated fluids recovered from the wells (Soeder & Kappel, 2009, para. 9).

The next section outlines the methods used in examining the direct and indirect issue strategies activists and their target organizations employed in their website communication and in key media outlets since the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) launched an investigation of fracking and its impact on water quality in March 2010.

METHODOLOGY

Pro-drilling and anti-drilling actors and coalitions entered the public debate in 2008, with both the Marcellus Shale Coalition and Marcellus Protest, and their supporters, developing website presences and generating increasing media coverage and public discussion. This study analyzes their discourse surrounding the Marcellus Shale development between the March 2010 EPA announcement that "it will conduct a two-year study to investigate potential adverse impact of hydraulic fracturing on water quality and public health" and March, 2012.

This analysis examined the direct and indirect issue strategies mentioned earlier. Direct strategies were those meant to advance advocates' positions on an issue. In this case, the issue of water quality related to fracking was the focus. Therefore, direct strategies meant to either change fracking regulations or to defend the status quo were examined. Indirect strategies generally seek to legitimize both activists and corporations responding to activist pressure. Scholars (Coombs, 1992; Crable & Vibbert, 1985; Heath & Palenchar, 2009) have identified a variety of legitimacy strategies through which advocates seek to establish their authority to "speak" on public policy

issues (Coombs, 1992). The current analysis was thematic, seeking direct and indirect strategies in practice and grouping them into lines of arguments prominently featured in the discourse during the two years under study.

The sources for this discourse were the Web sites of the two leading pro- and anti-fracking advocates: the industry group called The Marcellus Shale Coalition and the activist umbrella organization Marcellus Protest. In order to verify the extent to which these strategies influenced the public discourse and policy decisions, this study examined public communication in prominent Pennsylvania (*Philadelphia Inquirer, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* and *Williamsport Sun-Gazette)* and national *(The New York Times* and *Christian Science Monitor*) media by key anti-drilling organizations, which are identified in the next section.

MARCELLUS SHALE ACTIVISM

The coalition of activist organizations against drilling can be located through Marcellus Protest, an alliance of western Pennsylvania groups & individuals "building a broad movement to stop the destruction of our environment and communities caused by Marcellus Shale gas drilling as well as to support other directly affected communities" (About Marcellus Protest, n.d.). The website is an information clearing house about Marcellus Shale gas drilling and activism and related issues, and notes that more than 90 organizations are active in this issue. The organizations that are represented most in media coverage, with their leaders as sources when issue developments occur, are Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future (PennFuture), Damascus Citizens for Sustainability (DCS), Delaware Riverkeeper Network (DRN), PennEnvironment, Earthjustice, and the Philadelphia chapter of Sierra Club. Anti-drilling activists (especially DCS, to whom the film was dedicated) were aided by the release of *Gasland*, an anti-drilling HBO documentary that presented a "devastating, though factually challenged, industry portrait" ("Shale gas industry," 2010). Said Jan Jarrett, executive director of PennFuture, "Whatever you think of the film, it's had a huge impact" ("Shale gas industry," 2010), winning Sundance Film Festival and Academy Awards.

This section examines the indirect and direct strategies employed by the Marcellus Shale activist coalition in order to argue about the issue of fracking, establish its legitimacy as an advocate, and to question the legitimacy of pro-drilling energy companies and positions.

Indirect Strategies

Activists used indirect issue strategies to create a favorable environment of public opinion about the advocates and their positions by (1) building the premises of their direct strategies into their organizational identity, (2) establishing the right of activists and local citizens to have a voice in drilling decisions and, and (3) arguing for transparency.

Most organizations begin building their identity through mission statements and other messages meant to establish the values that will guide organizational decisions and discourse (Cheney & Vibbert, 1987), and which are visible on their websites. In addition to the positioning of the activist coalition identified on the MarcellusProtest.org site, opposition to gas drilling features prominently on activists' websites. For example, Damascus Citizens for Sustainability identifies

itself as "a collaborative effort to preserve and protect clean air, land and water as a civil and basic human right in the face of the threat posed by the shale gas extraction industry" (www.damascuscitizensforsustainability.org/about-us/). Founded in January 2008, some consider DCS "the leading group in the opposition movement, mounting a highly visible and pointed campaign to ultimately halt gas drilling's march toward this area" (Hust, 2010, para. 5). PennFuture, focused on conservation of natural resources, lays out a "10-point plan to set world-class standards for drilling, and to make sure those standards are enforced" (Media Room/Testimony, n.d.).

A second indirect strategy centered on establishing the legitimacy of activists in participating in decision making about gas drilling, and the related strategy of arguing for transparency in the process. For example, activists stressed that "citizens need to be at the table, not locked out of the room" (Couloumbis, 2011, para. 20). Likewise, activists warned town councils that they would be committing "political suicide" if voters were not allowed to decide the issue of local drilling (Crompton, 2011, para. 9). Meetings on the issue draw large crowds of citizens who look to help from local and state government and regulatory agencies because they "believe local people should be able to decide" (Majors, 2011, para. 14). The call for energy companies' and government bodies' transparency and release of documents was often connected to promoting citizen activists' voice in decision making. PennFuture's Jarrett suggested that limited public access to recommendations about whether to tax or regulate energy companies "begs the question about whether the outcome is completely controlled and predetermined by the administration," (para. 17). Likewise, Jarrett and other environmental leaders pressed for information to be made accessible in Pennsylvania as it is in other drilling states (Napsha, 2011).

Direct Strategies

Direct issue strategies employed by activists, designed to clearly debate an issue and the merits of particular policy options and to influence the outcome or decision about gas drilling 1) called for regulations on fracking to ensure safe environmental and health standards are met, and 2) opposed natural gas development in the absence of thorough investigation and safe standards.
Activists' first direct strategy was to call for stronger regulations and standards, based on environmental studies (which they pressed to have access to in the indirect strategy discussed earlier) and reported dangers to residents' and animal health. Activists claimed that state government and agencies were failing to protect public health, and were not exercising their power to regulate (Majors, 2011). When Gov. Corbett rescinded the previous administration's stricter regulations on natural gas drilling, PennFuture claimed the state Department of Environmental Protection was giving up a "valuable tool for evaluating and reducing air pollution" (Worden, 2011, para. 5). Environmental activists pushed for, and were successful in, broadening the application of a new local impact fee on energy companies to pay the cost of drilling-related damage not only to community infrastructures but also to the restoration of land, wildlife, and outdoor recreation areas (Couloumbis & Olson, 2011).

Second, activists lobbied council members to oppose gas development, saying that the hydraulic fracturing process used to extract gas represents an imminent threat to the city's water in the absence of conclusive studies and regulations to ensure safe drilling standards. For example, PennEnvironment and Delaware Riverkeeper Network called for the Philadelphia Water Department to be more assertive and "take an aggressive stand against natural gas development"

(Maykuth, 2010, para. 1). In August 2011, environmental groups filed a federal lawsuit to stop the Delaware River Basin Commission from adopting any regulations to allow more drilling until a "broad, cumulative-impact study is completed" (Bauers, 2011, para. 13).

Pro-drilling organizations, identified in the next section, also attempted to influence public discourse and policy decision making with their communication strategies and tactics. The next section analyzes their public communication in prominent Pennsylvania (*Philadelphia Inquirer, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* and *Williamsport Sun-Gazette)* and national *(The New York Times* and *Christian Science Monitor*) media.

THE ENERGY INDUSTRY RESPONDS: INSTITUTIONAL TARGET STRATEGIES

The Marcellus Shale Coalition (MSC) is a membership-based trade association formed in 2008 whose 200-plus members range from major energy companies involved in drilling to associated businesses such as law firms, water treatment and disposal companies, and even realtors.

Because the MSC views itself as "the leader in framing the issues in the Marcellus Shale region" ("Making Connections"), this analysis will focus on how this institutional target engages with activists. The organization employs a blend of centralized and decentralized approaches to managing issues. The MSC itself is the source of most formal statements, press releases, and social media messages related to Marcellus Shale issues; however, coalition members conducted nearly 1800 outreach events and 543 site tours in 2010 ("Making Connections," 2011). Not only did these approaches serve to extend the reach of the MSC, but also allowed the Coalition to distance itself when specific member organizations faced controversy.

This section examines the indirect and direct strategies employed by the MCS in order to argue about the issue of fracking, establish its legitimacy as an advocate, and to question the legitimacy of other players in the debate.

Indirect Strategies

Indirect issue strategies seek to position an institution as a credible advocate on the issue. MSC sought to create such an environment by (1) building the premises of its direct strategies into its organizational identity; (2) claiming that its approach to communication was transparent, and (3) privileging "local" over "national" or "outside" media and regulators.

Like anti-drilling activists, the Marcellus Shale Coalition attempted to unify the identity of allied energy companies through mission statements and other messages meant to establish the values that guide its actions. MSC created the premises for its claims by declaring it was "an organization committed to the responsible development of natural gas from the Marcellus Shale geological formation and the enhancement of the region's economy that can be realized by this clean-burning energy source" (About Marcellus Shale Coalition, n.d.).

When the EPA announced it would conduct a comprehensive review of fracking ("EPA Initiates," 2010), the MSC response read, in part: "The members of the Marcellus Shale Coalition develop and drill wells in an *environmentally responsible* manner, including the use of

hydraulic fracturing to complete a well for production" ("MSC Statement on EPA Study," 2010 emphasis added).

Another way in which the MSC established the premises of its direct strategies was to establish and publicize its "Guiding Principles." Announced in October, 2010, with the help of the popular former Pennsylvania governor and Homeland Security Chief Tom Ridge ("A Commitment to the Community," 2010), the principles were subtitled "Our Commitment to the Community," another indirect strategy that will be explored below. Among the principles were: "We implement state-of-the-art *environmental protection* across our operations;" "We continuously improve our practices and *seek transparency* in our operations;" and "We encourage spirited public dialogue and *fact-based education* about *responsible* shale gas development" ("Guiding Principles," 2010, emphasis added). Throughout the document, MSC was positioning itself as a responsible, transparent representative of the energy industry.

Establishing the MSC's approach to debate as "transparent" and "fact-based" is a second major indirect strategy. In public arguments, one means by which parties establish legitimacy is by fighting fairly—that is, they appear to support standards of civil dialogue. MSC's executive director argued that "...seeking greater transparency in our operations…is one of the Marcellus Shale Coalition's Guiding Principles. We recognize the need to operate and communicate in a clear and forthright manner. It's good business, and it's good public relations" (Klaber, 2011, p. 40).

The final major indirect strategy is to privilege "local" approaches to engaging in disputes over fracking. This strategy took two forms. First, MSC tended to privilege local media coverage over national, implying that local coverage was less biased against MSC. In our review of media stories, those in the mid-sized Williamsport *Sun-Gazette* tended to represent industry perspectives more thoroughly than the Philadelphia *Inquirer* or Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette*. Second, MSC favored local regulatory solutions over federal. The Pennsylvania state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) was often cited as the principal authority over regulatory decisions influencing fracking.

Direct Strategies

In engaging anti-fracking activists and other critics, the MSC utilized three related direct strategies: (1) insisting on transparent, fact-based review of any charges of ground-water contamination; (2) using "local" third party legitimacy to bolster its position, and (3) strategic defiance, criticizing "outside" actors but generally not local ones.

Flowing from the indirect strategy promoting the value of transparency, the MSC addressed issues by advocating for fact-based approaches. When the EPA announced it was going to launch a review of fracking, the MSC's statement, after pointing out that no evidence of water contamination as a result of fracking had been found, indicated that "The MSC will provide information and participate as appropriate in EPA's study…an objective evaluation of hydraulic fracturing will reach the same conclusion…that it is a safe and well-regulated process that is essential to the development of natural gas" ("MSC Statement on EPA" 2010).

In succeeding months, the MSC voluntarily released a list of chemicals used in fracking ("MSC on New Hydraulic Fracturing," 2011); joined environmentalists' calls for baseline measures of water quality across the region in order to demonstrate that oil production did not make the water any worse ("MSC: New, Fact Based Standards," 2011); and argued that many other things could contaminate ground water ("About that water," 2010; "In the know on H20," 2010).

In addition to marshaling scientific evidence to refute critics, the MSC relied on third-party endorsements of its claims that fracking is a safe practice. More specifically, the MSC highlighted support it gained locally, primarily from state government officials and other regional organizations. The most frequently cited third party was the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

In its first response to the federal EPA's review, the MSC cited the fact that no problems have been found in wells cleared by fracking: "There have been no identified groundwater contamination incidents due to hydraulic fracturing, as noted by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, other state regulators and the U.S. Groundwater Protection Council" ("MSC Statement on EPA," 2010). A later release featured a DEP regulator reiterating that claim and adding "it's standard operating procedure in Pennsylvania. And it's important to point out that we've never seen an impact to fresh groundwater directly from fracking" ("In his own words," 2010). The contrast between local and federal perspectives was emphasized in this statement: "As EPA's study moves forward, it's critical to consider what the top officials responsible for regulating fracturing in the Commonwealth have said" ("In his own words," 2010).

In the following months, 34 press releases and statements featured quotes from DEP officials, or the results of DEP studies. In only two did the MSC question the DEP's regulatory action. In order to forestall criticism that the MSC may have been working too closely with the state regulators, one release reported that "Pennsylvania officials' oversight and regulation of hydraulic fracturing…is among the strongest in the nation" ("National Panel," 2010).

Finally, the MSC utilized a form of what Oliver (1991) labeled defiance, which typically not only involves rejecting critics' arguments but also undermining their legitimacy. In this case, though, the defiance was largely directed at "non-local" critics, both activists and the media. For instance, after the Philadelphia city council banned its own municipally-owned Gas Works from buying Marcellus-produced gas, the MSC labeled the action "misguided" and based on a report that advanced "a political narrative that is completely unmoored from the facts" ("MSC statement on Philadelphia," 2011).

A more striking example of defiantly undermining the legitimacy of "outside" critics was the MSC response to an Associated Press story alleging problems with wastewater disposal. Calling the story a "hit piece," the MSC cited stories slamming the AP story from local outlets such as the *Central Pennsylvania Business Journal*, the *Allentown Morning Call*, the *Washington Observer Reporter*, and the Wilkes-Barre *Times Leader*, among others ("AP style?", 2011).

Like the pro-drilling coalition, activists utilized both indirect and direct strategies to bolster their own legitimacy and undermine that of their opponents. The next section summarizes two features

of direct and indirect strategies found in this study that may guide further research and practice, and offers suggestions for future research in natural gas drilling and other public policy issues.

CONCLUSION

This study offers a snapshot of the intricacies of the interaction between activists and their institutional targets. The use of direct and indirect strategies, key components of nearly every public relations program, was highlighted. Indeed, one justification for having a public relations function is to create a favorable environment, through indirect strategies, that allow an organization to ask for public acceptance of its products, services and positions it takes on issues.

This analysis demonstrates two features of direct and indirect strategies that may guide further research and practice. First, indirect strategies provide rhetorical flexibility by appealing to values and legitimacy. Indeed, both the Marcellus Shale activists and their targets appealed to the same values to guide the public deliberation over the region's development. For instance, both sides argued that "transparency" should guide the research and investigation into the benefits and harms of drilling. However, activists questioned the degree to which the MSC lived up to that standard, thus raising legitimacy questions. Values themselves become the subject of debate during the policy process.

Second, the direct strategies enacted by both sides not only attacked and defended each side's legitimacy, but also attack and defend the legitimacy of other actors in the policy-making process. For instance, the Marcellus Shale Coalition invoked the legitimacy of the DEP, while Marcellus Protest sought to undermine that strategy by questioning the DEP's lack of independence from the industry. The legitimacy of the DEP as a regulatory body in this process thus became an issue itself. Complex issues often are debated at the local, regional, state, and federal levels, and the locus of policy decision-making becomes part of the policy debate. One extension of the present work examines how each side in the Marcellus Shale debate bolstered and undermined the legitimacy of various decision-making bodies (Smith & Ferguson, 2012).

The debate over Marcellus Shale development is only beginning, thus providing the opportunity for longitudinal studies of the interaction between pro- and anti-natural gas drilling coalitions. Like the Marcellus Shale formation itself, the rich interaction between activists and their institutional targets in this case can be mined at various levels, and further research will examine the layers of other issues involved in this significant energy policy debate. For example, while broad studies like this one yield insight into the major strategies of activists and their institutional targets, much of the debate occurs at the community level and often pits groups of residents against each other. In addition, the energy industry has engaged in a significant amount of image advertising, seeking to position natural gas as a clean, inexpensive energy alternative. Recently, America's Natural Gas Alliance (ANGA) has sought to partner with university public relations students to create and promote a campaign meant to legitimize natural gas. Future research into how specific activist and target organizations, in specific locations, debate specific issues related to natural gas drilling, and the image repair strategies they engage, would yield additional understanding about multiple areas of activist-target communication in the public sphere.

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ASSESSING THE ABILITY OF VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AS A SOCIAL MARKETING TOOL

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent participating in a virtual community contributes to the success rate when overcoming a societal problem, as compared to other factors such as the sex, age and motivation of an individual. The German community of practice stop-simply.com, which seeks to support individuals who wish to quit smoking, was used as a basis for the study. The value of this study lies in highlighting the growing impact of virtual communities in affecting behavioral change. The study suggests that social marketing with a clear focus on virtual communities can prove to be an effective strategy on tackling social issues.

INTRODUCTION

The application of marketing theory to social causes, such as smoking, has the potential to bring about benefits to the quality of people's lives and society as a whole (Andreasen, 2006; Bagozzi, 1975; Donovan, 2011; Kotler & Zaltmann, 1971).

Today, smoking is one of the global public health issues dominating social marketing. According to the World Lung Foundation and the American Cancer Society, tobacco will kill six million people worldwide (Shafey, Eriksen, Ross & Mackay, 2009). In Germany, 33.9% of adults smoke, and 140,000 people are dying every year as a result of smoking (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit, 2009).

Addiction to cigarettes can be likened to suffering from chronic disease, which explains why many smokers fail to overcome their unhealthy habit at the first attempt. Indeed smokers are often caught in a cycle of recovery and relapse, over a period of several years.

Evidence from the field of medical science shows that 70 per cent of 45 million American smokers express the desire to overcome their smoking addiction. Nearly 20 million smokers will engage in smoking cessation activities each year, of which typically only four to seven per cent will achieve permanent success (Shafey, et al., 2009).

What is characteristically missing from these attempts to overcome addiction is the presence of any form of support mechanism. Indeed, Fiore, Jaen, and Baker (2008) suggest a positive correlation between "quit rates" and the presence of support mechanisms, such as social initiatives and intensive counseling. Increasingly online platforms are providing these types of support mechanism, to enable smokers to overcome their addiction in a virtual environment.

Dr. Satow launched the www.stop-simply.com community of practice in Germany in 2007 with the expressed purpose of assisting people who wished to stop smoking. The stop-simply site is a non-profit business model, initiated with the Department for Health- Psychology of the Freie Universität Berlin, in response to concern over the level of smoking-related deaths and the social impact of such grave statistics. The site is currently hosted by a number of voluntary psychologists.

Despite a plethora of smoking-related research, drawing meaningful conclusions about specific groups of smokers seeking help is problematic due to variations in samplings and use of different test instruments. As a consequence, a meaningful picture of smokers seeking help via virtual communities has to date not been well researched. In addition, the majority of research to date has centered on the consumption levels of heavy smokers and the associated risks to the individual (Owing, 2005). The study associated with this paper seeks to identify the success factors attributed to the virtual community of www.stop-simply.com. Such success factors demonstrate how social issues, such as smoking, can be effectively overcome through the use of online social marketing.

This paper has the following structure: a review of the relevant literature, the proposal of the research hypothesis, an explanation of the research methodology, a report on the research findings, an outline of the implications for social marketing activities, a statement of research limitations and suggestions for future research on this topic.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Social Marketing

Social marketing evolved as a discipline in the early 1970s, when Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltmann realized that the same marketing principles that were being used to sell products to consumers could be used to market ideas, attitudes and behaviors (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). Kotler, Roberto, and Lee (2002) differentiated social marketing from other marketing areas by explaining that social marketing seeks to influence social behaviors not to the benefit of the marketer, but to the benefit of the target audience and ultimately society in general. The concept was further developed by Andreasen and Kotler, who suggest that the aims, content and success of a marketing plan are primarily defined in terms of its social benefits (Andreasen & Kotler, 2007).

Although traditional marketing is employed by numerous organizations that demonstrate social responsibility and ethical behavior, there is a marked difference between a commercial and a social marketing approach. Kannengießer and Schnee (2007) identify that the key difference between social marketing and other areas of marketing is the underlying motivation. The social

marketer's objective focuses on the social welfare gains, whereas the traditional marketer's objective is concerned with boosting sales and profits, attracting donations or maintaining the image of the organization. Donovan and Henely (2003) suggest that another key difference between social marketing and traditional marketing is that the former is not implemented in the form of a conscious plan, whereas a traditional marketing strategy is articulated as a formal plan.

Social welfare underpins social marketing and, while focused on the wants, needs, aspirations, lifestyle and freedom of choice of people, it seeks to generate aggregated behavior change (Lefebvre, 2011). Behavioral change is the measure of success in any social marketing endeavor (Donovan, 2011). This is irrespective of whether the change is a result of an upstream approach, (e.g. practitioner-led) a downstream approach (e.g. a government initiative) or a hybrid of both approaches that takes advantage of their symbiotic interplay (Hoek & Jones, 2011). In order to change behavior, knowledge of the underlying motivation for change is the key. Virtual communities, due to their transparency, provide an effective means of uncovering these motivations and, therefore, serve to promote such changes in behavior.

Virtual Communities

A generally accepted definition of a virtual community cannot be found in scientific literature or in literature orientated towards its application. The plethora of terms and definitions abounding in the field can be explained by the multi-disciplinary nature of the research area, as well as by the numerous observable characteristics of virtual communities in practice. The terms virtual association, online community and web community are often used synonymously. The following definition can serve as a basic principle for further reflection:

> A virtual community is a number of people who team up due to a common interest, a common problem or a common assignment and for whom the interaction is independent of space and time as well as of their actual physical location. (Leimeister, Bantleon, & Kremar, 2002, p. 3)

The challenge of space and time was overcome by innovative information and communication technologies (ICT). There are many application areas of virtual communities in and between organizations. These areas include customer relationship management, internal knowledge transfer and ICT-enabled forms of organization for both customer and supplier (Herstatt & Sander, 2004).

Unlike communication in the real world, virtual communities are based on computer-supported communications, which have both advantages and disadvantages. An advantage can be that users can communicate anonymously with one another on sensitive or private topics. Conversely, anonymity can allow the spread of false or negative opinions, to the disadvantage of other users.

There are an increasing number of commercially-orientated virtual communities, which are driven by economic interests (Hagel & Armstrong, 1997). Relevant for the customer is the transparency of the product or service being offered, the active shaping of price and content of the service, additional services, entertainment and dependability, which can be gained though interaction with suppliers and other customers (Mörl & Groß, 2008). This led to the emergence

of the term Community of Practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), which will now be discussed in more detail.

Community of Practice

The idea of a community of practice originated in the 1980s at the Institute for Research and Learning, which was funded by the Xerox Corporation (Daniel, Sarkar, & O'Brien, 2004). Based on Orr's study at Xerox (Hara & Kling, 2002), Communities of Practice have been popularized by Brown and Duguid (1996).

Communities of practices are successful and effective in collecting and sharing knowledge and experiences between participating members, as well as in attracting and engaging new members through excitement (Daniel et al., 2004). The term community of practice was coined in 1991 by Lave and Wenger when they were rethinking how the practice element could be successfully applied to business, education, governance, and the social sector (Lave & Wenger, 1991). They emphasized that successful learning always takes place in a social context and that the community is important for building and sharing knowledge and experience.

Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002, p. 4) state that "Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis."

Communities of practice have been successfully applied by organizations in the fields of business, education and the social sector, to actively create and share knowledge, innovate and create a direct link between learning and performance.

With the increasing popularity of the Internet, the practice has also been applied to online communities mostly in the context of knowledge management (Bourhis, Dubé, & Jacob, 2005) and learning (Riel & Polin, 2004).

Despite the wealth of literature on communities of practice, little research has been conducted to explore how it might encourage healthy behaviors, such as quitting smoking.

THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE STOP-SIMPLY

The main aim of Stop-Simply.com is to help people to quit smoking. Exploring this community and communicating with people online who want to stop smoking provides individuals with the support to overcome their own smoking addiction. Furthermore, it motivates smokers to build optimistic individual and collective self-efficacy expectancies through discussions with psychologists. These are some of the solutions that have been employed to stop smoking (Satow, Lippke, & Schwarzer, 2009).

The www.stop-simply.com community comprises three main elements:

1. An online quit smoking course. The course is a self-paced online training course with eleven sections. Each section has its own objective, e.g. the objective of the first section is to

motivate and the objective of the second section is to plan the behavioral change. Each section uses instructional texts, graphics, exercises and videos to support the objective. The concept behind the sections is based on the Health Action Process Approach developed by Schwarzer (Schwarzer & Fuchs, 1995).

2. A discussion forum with mentors with an additional chat function. All members of www.stop-simply.com can post questions, answers and comments to the related discussion forum. Questions are either answered by other members or by mentors. Mentors are members who have successfully stopped smoking on www.stop-simply.com and are now helping others. The chat function allows members to communicate synchronously.

3. The provision of free counseling by therapists. In addition to the discussion forum, members can post questions to a team of psychologists experienced in treatments to quit smoking.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

A preliminary review of the available data, in conjunction with relevant sources of literature on this subject, leads the authors of this paper to propose the following hypothesis: virtual communities have the ability, above other determining factors, to influence behavioral change on a variety of social issues. "Determining factors" are sex, age, motivation, smoking duration and smoking intensity (number of cigarettes per day).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since the www.stop-simply.com website was launched in 2007, more than 19.000 members joined the community. Most members were referred to stop-simply.com by Google or other search engines and were located in German-speaking countries, such as Germany, Austria, and/or Switzerland. During the free registration process, all members were asked about their age, sex, motivation and smoking behavior. The following analysis is based on 14,168 members with complete and consistent data sets.

Motivation: Motivation plays an important role in behavioral change. For this study, smoking self-efficacy (motivational strength) was measured using a 4-point likert item (Elfeddali, Bolman, Candel, Wiers, & De Vries, 2011; Folan, Fardellone, Bartscherer, Jacobsen, & Kohn, 2011; Martinez et al. 2011; Schwarzer & Fuchs, 1995). For example, on the Stop-Simply.com site, one point on the scale states, "I am very confident that I will not smoke today and tomorrow."

Smoking behavior: Smoking behavior was measured by self-reports for the first time after one week and for the second time after ten weeks. There is evidence from many studies, that self-reports are valid indicators (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983). On stop-simply.com members are maintaining their smoking status on a regular basis in their personal account.

Community activity: The level of community activity was measured by counting the number of posts to the stop-simply.com discussion forum. Such posts are either responses to questions, comments or new threads.

All members were assigned to one of the following three groups, depending on their interaction with other members on stop-simply.com:

Online Course Only: Members of this group only attend the online course on stop-simply.com and do not use the discussion forum or the chat function. They do not post any messages and do not respond to any questions asked by other members in the discussion forum. The online course provides no interaction with other community members and, therefore, do not belong to the community of practice.

Light Community Users: Members of this group attend the online stop-smoking course and are actively involved in the community of practice. They typically post one to fifty comments, answers or messages and regularly use the chat function.

Heavy Community Users: This group attends the online stop-smoking course and are highly active in the community of practice. They typically post at least 50 answers, comments or messages in the discussion forum and regularly use the chat function.

To analyze the effect in more detail, linear regression analyses have been computed with the statistical software package R and the quit rate after 10 weeks as criterion. To control the effects of sex, age, smoking duration, smoking intensity and motivation, these variables were entered into the equation in step one. In the second step, community activity (number of posts) data was entered into the equation.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The majority of all members are female (63%). The average age is 38.32 years. On average, members have smoked for 21.44 years, at a rate of 24.09 cigarettes per day, when they joined stop-simply.com.

Online Course Only: 8057 members attended the online course on stop-simply.com only and did not use the discussion forum or the chat function. The average age was 36.86 years, and there were 4704 females and 3112 males (missing gender information: 241). Members of this group had been smoking on average for 19.98 years, at a rate of 22.97 cigarettes per day, before they registered for stop-simply.com.

Light Community Users: 859 members were classified as light community users. There were 600 females and 227 males in this group (missing gender information: 32), with an average age of 39.92 years. Members of this group had been smoking on average for 23.20 years, at a rate of 24.97 cigarettes per day, before they registered for stop-simply.com.

Heavy Community Users: 175 members (136 were female and 36 male; missing gender information: 3) were classified as heavy community users. The average age of this this group was 43.53 years. These members had smoked for 25.77 years, at a rate of 23.17 cigarettes per day, before they registered for stop-simply.com.

Quitting rates were computed for all three groups and are shown in figure 1. One week after registration and the start of the online course, 23% of those members who attended the online course only (group one) were still not smoking. In group two (light community users), 51% were successful. The highest success rate can be observed in group three (heavy community users): 74% of this group, who attended the online course and were heavily active in the community, were still not smoking after one week. A similar trend was observed after ten weeks: The stoppage rate in group one (online course only) was 10%, in group two (light community users) 27%, and in group three (heavy community users) 64%. This indicates a positive correlation between the likelihood of success in stopping smoking and the level of community activity.

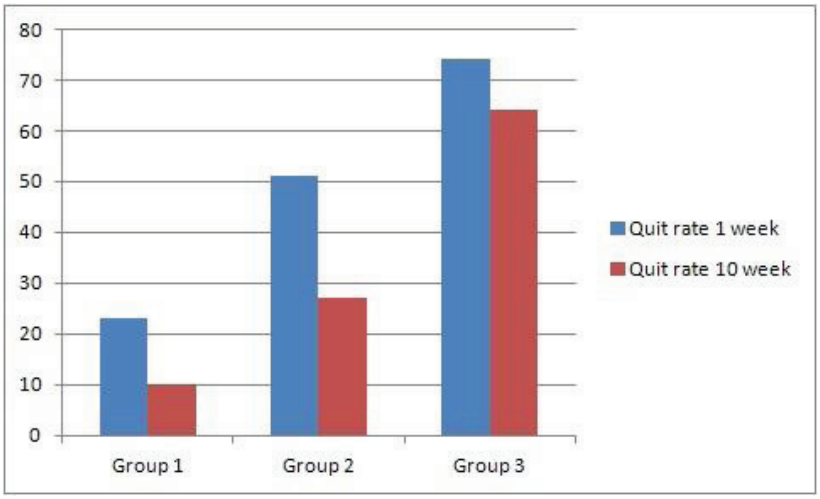

FIGURE 1. QUIT RATE AT ONE AND TEN WEEKS

As shown in figure 2, important predictors of the quit rate after ten weeks are the smoking duration (in years), the motivation (self-efficacy) and the number of cigarettes (per day). However, the most important variable is the level of community activity (the number of posts). This variable added significant value to the equation and shows the highest regression coefficient.

Predictor	**Standardized regression coefficient**
Sex	0.03**
Age	0.03
Number of cigarettes per day	-0.04*
Number of years smoking	0.08**
Motivation (confidence)	0.05***
Community activity (number of posts)	0.14***
R^2	0.03

FIGURE 2. PREDICTIVE OF THE QUIT RATE AFTER TEN WEEKS

The results clearly show that social interaction and collaboration with others in the www.stop-simply.com had the highest impact on the “quit rate” and, therefore, on behavioral change.

The “quit rate” for light community users was three times higher than for members who only attended an online stop smoking course, but did not actively participate in the community. The success rate for heavy community users was more than six times higher than the latter. The degree of community activity was the best predictor of the “quit rate” after ten weeks - compared with other variables such as sex, age, motivation, smoking duration and smoking intensity (number of cigarettes per day).

There are three reasons for this impressive effect: 1. Members who actively contribute to the community show their commitment in a very public way. Their personal successes and failures are visible to all other members of the community. 2. Members who actively communicate with other members receive a lot of tips and tricks, e.g. how to deal with withdrawal symptoms. 3. Members who actively take part in the community are motivated on a daily basis by others, e.g. virtual parties take place for those who manage not to smoke during the day.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL MARKETING ACTIVITIES

This study shows that virtual communities have a greater impact on the adoption of healthy behavior compared with other variables, such as the initial motivation of an individual. Based on this analysis of www.stop-simply.com, the results suggest that social marketing in communities of practice communities can be very successful following these guidelines:

a) Social marketing activities should pay attention to the psychological and social group processes in communities. The community interaction must be motivating and supporting especially for new members. Promising social marketing activities are: Training for community moderators and mentors and incentives for active community members; visibility for those members, who have shown the desired behavior (according to member preferences).

b) Social marketing activities should make it easy for new members to get in contact with the community. Promising social marketing activities are: Reminders and invitations for new members to participate actively in the community; online and hotline support for beginners.

c) Social marketing activities should focus on familiarity and excitement. The community should become a "place" where people have the freedom to ask for candid advice, share their opinions, and try their ideas without fear of judgment or repercussions.

LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study was confined to only the stop-simply online community and therefore does not reflect the potential effects of other online communities on tackling smoking addiction. In addition, the study focused on an online community that is active in German- speaking countries only and may, therefore, not reflect international trends. Furthermore, the study does not examine the success rate of individuals who have no involvement with the stop simply community.

The analyzed data was taken from a defined period and does not reflect natural fluctuations in the success rates of a particular group. It was nonetheless felt to represent the typical success rates of each group of users of the stop-simply.com site.

Moreover, the lack of published literature on overcoming unhealthy behavior through the use of virtual communities makes it difficult to present secondary data that supports the study outlined in this paper.

Future research could include examining the impact of virtual communities on the success rate of individuals overcoming undesirable social behaviors. This could include a focus on alcohol or drug abuse. Furthermore, social issues, such as "burn-out" and gambling addiction, could be examined in more detail.

There exists no definitive description of the term virtual community and of its users. Greater clarity in the form of further research could have a positive impact on the development of research design in this area.

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CONTEMPORARY WORKPLACE PUNISHMENT AND DISCIPLINE RECOMMENDATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Although it is generally accepted that supervisors and managers should avoid punishment for its supposed negative side effects, this paper illustrates that once again conventional wisdom with respect to correcting worker misbehavior is wrong and that truth is not always politically correct or as reassuring as one would like. Given that disciplining employee misconduct can be helpful in numerous workplace contexts, a set of guidelines contributing to more effective application of negative sanctions for business is presented.

INTRODUCTION

American way of life is replete with encouragement to be cheerful, upbeat, and positive (Ehrenreich, 2009). This view seems to have been adopted by a relatively new field of research, Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS), which studies how organizations develop human strengths, foster vitality and resilience, unlock potential, and pursue what has come to be known as ennobling behavior (Dutton & Sonenshein, 2009; Luthans & Youssef, 2007). POS investigates positive deviance, or the ways in which organizations and their members flourish and prosper in especially favorable ways (Cameron & Caza, 2004). New paradigms like POS invariably involve collective acceptance by those who work within them of the fresh concepts, methods, and research strategies that distinguish that paradigm from what came before. Endorsement of those new features can become so strong that proponents risk overlooking, or even disparaging, both findings from previous research and potentially valuable alternative approaches (Hackman, 2009).

Such seems to be the case regarding workplace punishment. With the accent on positive organizational phenomena there has been a tendency to minimize the importance and contributions of negative behaviors including discipline, negative sanctions, penalties, aversive control, and correction. Despite the generally accepted belief suggesting that workplace punishment should be avoided and that positive consequences should be emphasized, it remains an important aspect of almost all supervisors' jobs (Butterfield, Trevino, Wade, & Ball, 2005). Miner and Brewer (1976) found that 83 percent of the companies they surveyed used punishment or threats of punishment to deal with employee problems. Sims (1980) suggested that "managers eventually do use aversive behavior [punishment] even though they may be reluctant to admit it" (p. 57). This is due to the non-humanitarian aspects invoked by the thought of punishment as a motivator (Nehrbass, 1979) and the beliefs of human relations and human resources approaches

to management which assume, either implicitly or explicitly, a human potential or growth-oriented perspective that runs counter to punishment and correction approaches which implies coercion and restraint, not growth (Miles, 1975). Some argue that punishment in organizations is "old-fashioned and reflects a 'tribal mentality' and reverts to the retributive justice theme of 'an eye for an eye'" (Arvey & Ivancevich, 1980, p. 125) and thus promote the use of positive consequences to shape behavior (Luthans & Kreitner, 1975). Not only, they say, is punishment less effective than positive reinforcement but it also results in undesirable side effects (Skinner, 1948). Arvey and Ivancevich (1980), note, however, that there is little empirical evidence for either of these criticisms. Further, punishment has been used effectively in clinical and laboratory settings (Harris & Ersner-Hershfield, 1978) as well as in organizational situations (Arvey, Davis, & Nelson, 1984; Podsakoff & Todor, 1985).

Regardless, the use of punishment by managers and supervisors in organizations to address worker misconduct continues to be a common occurrence and involves the presentation of some unpleasant event or removal of a positive event following an undesirable employee behavior which decreases the frequency of the worker's response (Kazadin, 1975). Misconduct is defined here from the punishing agent's perspective as behavior that falls short of the agent's moral or technical work standards (Trevino, 1992). Given this definition, employee theft, drug or alcohol abuse, tardiness, excessive absenteeism or sick leave use, insubordination, and below standard work performance may all qualify as misconduct (Redeker, 1984).

The importance of aversive control is further highlighted by the fact that most employee handbooks and organizational policy and procedure manuals give considerable discussion to punishment and worker disciplinary procedures. Almost all managers report that they find it necessary to occasionally impose negative sanctions ranging from verbal reprimands to employee suspensions or firings (Butterfield, Trevino, & Ball, 1996; Casey, 1997). Additionally, many followers realize the importance of punishment when it is used carefully. One study showed that almost 50 percent of workers believed that managers are too lenient with poor performers and more discipline was necessary (Veiga, 1988). This overemphasis on refraining from aversive organizational control techniques must allow for the possibility that, at times, they are necessary and appropriate and can be positively related to enhanced performance (e.g., O'Reilly & Puffer, 1989; Podsakoff & Todor, 1985). Linking negative sanctions to poor performance or unwanted behaviors can actually improve group performance, decrease undesired behaviors, and increase employee satisfaction (Podsakoff, Podsakoff, & Kuskova, 2010). It is an important form of leader behavior that provides followers with a clear signal regarding what is unacceptable. In contrast, employees who deserve, but do not receive, punishment provide an example to others that such behavior will not be disciplined. This is a dangerous signal that is likely to encourage the same types of behaviors leaders want followers to refrain from exhibiting.

Finally, Podsakoff (1982) reviewed the evidence and concluded that high performing leaders typically used both positive *and* negative sanctions while Arvey, Davis, and Nelson (1984) argued that effective management requires supervisors to exhibit *both* reward and punishment behavior towards employees. Thus, punishment should not be automatically eliminated as a tool to motivate and redirect workers. Accordingly, we offer some recommendations about how

leaders can improve their effectiveness in administering aversive consequences in organizational settings.

GUIDELINES FOR INCREASING WORKER DISCIPLINE EFFECTIVENESS

This section provides a number of guidelines to enhance negative sanction's usefulness in the 21st century. These aversive control procedures are appropriate only after a supervisor has determined—perhaps through a process similar to Mager and Pipe's (1984) analyzing performance problems—that an employee does not have a skill or ability deficiency (perhaps because of a lack of training), or that there are obstacles beyond the employee's control, such as inadequate equipment or disruptive colleagues. The point is that if the cause of an employee's problem is outside his or her control, then punishment is not proper. If an employee can perform but does not, then punishment may be needed and the following guidelines then come into play. These guidelines are largely taken from the basic reinforcement paradigm applied to organizations (organizational behavior modification) developed by Luthans and Kreitner (1975, 1985), Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, and the organizational justice literature (Cropanzano, Bowen, & Gilliland, 2007). Table 1 summarizes these guidelines followed by a discussion of each recommendation.

TABLE 1. CONTEMPORARY EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES

1) Tie punishment directly as possible to the particular worker misconduct.
2) Provide employee alternative, appropriate behaviors.
3) Time discipline so that it is not too soon or not too late.
4) Maintain privacy of discipline (generally).
5) Ensure fairness and justness of discipline. a. Distributive justice b. Procedural justice c. Interpersonal justice d. Informational justice
6) Maintain appropriate documentation of the corrective discipline.

Tie punishment directly as possible to the particular worker misconduct

This guideline involves the issue of contingency which refers to the principle that in order for punishment to be effective it must be associated with or linked to a particular inappropriate behavior (Arvey & Jones, 1985; Luthans & Kreitner, 1975, 1985). Setting up contingencies involves designating behaviors and assigning consequences to follow which entails creating, either directly or implied, 'if-then' behavioral rules (Ruben & Ruben, 1985; "if you eat your dinner then you can have dessert"). Examples of effective punishment behaviors employing appropriate use of organizational contingencies might include the following: supervisor displeasure shown when a follower's work is below departmental standards; reprimanding a follower if her work is consistently below her capabilities; recommending no pay increase for a worker if his performance is below goal; and giving undesirable job assignments to followers who are late to work. Previous research has shown that contingency is associated with punishment effectiveness (Arvey & Jones, 1985; Hinkin & Schriesheim, 2004). Moreover,

Podsakoff, Todor, Grover, and Huber (1984) found that appropriate contingent punishment did not adversely influence satisfaction with supervisors while Atwater, Camobreco, Dionne, Avolio, and Lau (1997) found that managerial contingent punishment was related to charisma. Only when noncontingent punishment (i.e., arbitrarily or without reference to the follower's performance) was used did satisfaction with supervisors suffer. This is consistent with Atwater, Dionne, Camobreco, Avolio, and Lau (1998) who found that contingent punishment positively impacted leader effectiveness while noncontingent punishment negatively impacted manager success.

Noncontingent punishment has also been associated with more highly negative emotions such as anger (Mikula, 1986) and moral outrage (Bies, 1987). Additional support was also provided by Korukonda and Hunt (1989) who found that positive affect toward the leader is aroused by both contingent and non-contingent rewards; however, only contingent punishment resulted in significantly improved performance. This suggests that how a leader administers punishment can impact the perception followers have of their supervisors. Non-contingent and arbitrary punishment suggests a bad leader whereas contingent punishment enhanced outcomes without distorting follower perceptions. When managers eliminated positive comments on performance, a negative and direct relationship developed between worker effectiveness and worker satisfaction occurred (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 2004), suggesting that ignoring positive behavior will cause eventual extinction; conversely, ignoring negative behavior is a form of endorsement and acceptance. When managers ignore negative behaviors, they are, in effect, supporting them (Thornton, 2011).

Behavioral psychologist and premier performance management expert Aubrey Daniels (2001) similarly speaks to the importance of contingency when he said that "Always be positive is the worst advice you could ever give or receive" (p. 44). There are times when a person's conduct does not warrant the supervisor being positive and rewarding such behaviors can be detrimental to a well-functioning company or the long-term success of a worker or group. Indeed, rewarding individuals indiscriminately by always being positive fails to teach and clarify for workers what are the rules. Making punishment contingent on specific follower behaviors and informing followers of this contingency can be a valuable tool for managers in aligning worker behavior with organizations' purposes. Employees generally recognize that it is useful to have information on what leader's desire and what they do not want.

Provide employee alternative, appropriate behaviors

Behavioral reinforcement studies from the educational arena (e.g., Educational Services Center, 1998; *What Teachers Need to Know about Learning*, n. d.) overwhelmingly advocate providing students with alternative, constructive behaviors to replace specific maladaptive behavior. Application of such a behavioral guideline is also proper within an organizational behavior context; i.e., a manager's criticism of an employee should be followed by teaching a new alternative behavior to replace the specific inappropriate behavior (Daniels, 2001). Hellriegel and Slocum (2007) note that punishment trains a person in what not to do, not in what to do. Therefore, an effective supervisor must clearly specify what the employee should do to avoid punishment in the future and offer an alternative behavior. When punishment to eliminate inappropriate behavior is used in conjunction with positive reinforcement to teach alternative

behaviors, emotional side effects such as fear and dislike of supervisors, and attempts to escape or avoid work are less likely to occur (*What Teachers Need to Know about Learning*, n. d.). Providing alternative, productive behaviors to trainees has also been a fundamental learning principle incorporated into many management development programs, including the popular Interaction Management workshop of Development Dimensions International, a highly successful management training and consulting organization emphasizing behavioral methods and techniques (Pesuric & Byham, 1996).

Time discipline so as not to be too soon or not too late

Timeliness is also important for worker punishment because it increases the perceived connection between the punishment and the misconduct (Arvey & Ivancevich, 1980; Arvey & Jones, 1985). Punishment tends to work immediately and so if a behavior needs to stop without delay, as in matters of ethical and safety violations, then punishment can be used as an effective strategy (Daniels & Daniels, 2005).

Nevertheless, it may be best to not take punitive action without some review. There can be many extenuating circumstances associated with inappropriate behavior. Therefore, supervisors must evaluate the situation thoroughly before deciding on any punitive action. Additionally, delaying criticism may be prudent if the manager is unsure how to administer discipline correctly or has concerns regarding procedural issues (Butterfield et al., 1996). Atwater, Waldman, Carey, and Cartier (2001) found that both managers and recipients recognized that managers often make mistakes in the employee correction process. They also noted that managers often make mistakes because they were often "out of control" (Atwater et al., 2001, p. 267). Thus, it may be desirable to delay punishment if a manager's emotional state would likely lead to an unduly harsh interaction with a worker. All too often, persons in authority tend to criticize subordinates only when they are upset, angry, and no longer able to hold their temper in check (Baron, 1988). Because of the criticizer's strong emotions, feedback is typically delivered in a biting, sarcastic tone that includes threats of termination, demotion, transfer, and other negative outcomes (Heldmann, 1988). Such criticism is highly dysfunctional.

Hence some delay in administering punishment may be appropriate—but not too much of a postponement. This is because many managers who wait too long to deliver negative feedback to others often let it fester and then blow-up at the target employee thus creating an even more problematic situation (Larson, 1986). The feedback they supply then is likely to be ineffective and may exact serious costs for organizational commitment, job-related motivation, and negative attitudes toward supervisors or toward appraisal procedures generally (Ilgen, Mitchell, & Fredrickson, 1981).

Maintain privacy of discipline (generally)

Consistent with good behavioral feedback principles discussed earlier, researchers suggest that worker punishment should be carried out in private whenever possible (Arvey & Ivancevich, 1980; Arvey & Jones, 1985). Evidence has suggested that punishment tends to create less defensiveness and to be more instructive to subordinates when carried out in private (Sims,

1980). In addition, private punishment may be considered more benevolent since employees are not humiliated in front of co-workers (Butterfield et al., 2005).

Still, supervisors must be concerned with group performance and so punishment may provide an opportunity for the work leader to deter others from engaging in future instances of the offense by showing what can happen when undesirable behavior is exhibited (Carlsmith, Darley, & Robinson, 2002). Bandura's (1986) social learning theory posits that people learn from one another, via imitation, modeling, and by observing the consequences that others experience following their behavior. Punishment viewed as a social event may serve to uphold social norms within a group, signal appropriate and inappropriate behaviors to observers, and deter misconduct in social group members. Social learning theory suggests that individuals are less likely to engage in modeled behavior if they perceive that there will be punishing consequences than if they anticipate positive outcomes. Also, O'Reilly and Puffer (1989) found that participants in their studies were more willing to work hard, felt more satisfied, and perceived more equitable treatment from their supervisors when they observed them punishing poorly performing team members than when such individuals received no reprimand. Similarly, Podsakoff and Todor (1985) found that supervisors who failed to discipline worker misbehavior occasioned feelings of inequity and lowered motivation, commitment, and cohesiveness among productive group members. Research by Schnake and Dumler (1989) supported this view and found that supervisors who failed to discipline others' inappropriate behavior was perceived as punishment by those performing at high levels and that leaders who punished unwanted employee behavior was viewed as rewarding by these high performers! Finally, employees are more likely to model caustic behavior of others if they must work closely with them in order to do their job (Wagemen, 2000). This is noteworthy given that task interdependence is growing as organizations move toward the use of self-managed work teams and decentralized organizational structures (Erez, LePine, & Elms, 2002).

Thus, for punishment to have social meaning, worker discipline needs to be made known to observers in some way (Trevino & Ball, 1992). There are a number of reasons why letting all employees know what happens to those who misbehave can be beneficial. Accordingly, it is important that some consideration be given to publicly disciplining wrong doers so that other potential offenders learn by example and discover the costs of misbehavior. A justification for punishment lies in its ability to minimize future offenses. As one manager indicated when discipline was imposed, "other workers learned that they can't get away with anything like that in the future" (Butterfield et al., 1996, p. 1493). Public punishment, however, does not mean public humiliation. Degrading or belittling followers in the presence of others is likely to create animosity toward the manager and promote a culture of fear. But public admonishments are distasteful to many and Trevino and Ball (1992) offer a compromise position with respect to privacy: an organization might publicize information about offenses and managerial responses without identifying the offender or the specifics of the incident. Such a practice has been used successfully at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

Ensure fairness and justness of discipline

Employee discipline is one of the most litigated issues in the workplace (Zwerin, 2005). One means of preventing legal challenges while ensuring the effectiveness of disciplinary actions is

to ensure the fairness and justness of the punishment process. Organizational justice—members' sense of the moral propriety of how they are treated—is the "glue" that allows people to work together effectively (Cropanzano et al., 2007, p. 34). Justice defines the very essence of individuals' relationship to employers and is especially important with respect to issues of worker misconduct. Coworkers need to perceive that the punishment given to the recipient was fair. If observers view the punishment as fair, rarely do they have negative attitudes concerning the event. Additionally, Ball, Trevino, and Sims (1994) observed that positive outcomes result because subordinates perceive punishment as just. More specifically, fairness has been found to be positively associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior and negatively associated with absenteeism and turnover intentions (Conlon, Meyer, & Nowakowski, 2005).

All else being equal, employees trust authorities who allocate outcomes fairly (distributive justice); make decisions in a consistent, unbiased, and accurate way (procedural justice); and communicate decision-making details in a respectful (interpersonal justice), comprehensive, and honest manner (informational justice; George & Jones, 2008). Trust increases fairness and this is important because authorities who treat employees justly encounter fewer legal challenges and a more positive workplace environment (Lind, 2001). Leaders who want to increase the (perceived) fairness of punishment behaviors so as to increase their effectiveness must address these four considerations which are presented in greater detail below.

Distributive justice

A distributive justice approach suggests that the negative sanction(s) imposed (e.g., temporary suspension, fine) should involve a consistent, fair, and appropriately severe outcome (Butterfield et al., 2005). That is, for a given incident of misconduct, a subordinate is expected to receive punishment similar to and appropriately severe compared to what others have received in similar situations. There is a long-time workplace principle that states, "It is better to not have a rule than to have a rule which is enforced unfairly" (Cronin, 2006). This principle recognizes the reality that firms multiply their problems and create problems for themselves when they issue an employee handbook containing disciplinary procedures and then permit supervisors to play favorites and enforce punitive measures on a selective basis.

Determining severity of punishment involves a number of considerations. Certainly, one concern involves what has taken place before with other similar misconduct and whether the contemplated negative sanction is consistent with previous management action. Other factors involve the two broad justifications for the use of punishment (Carlsmith et al., 2002). One perspective holds that when an individual violates its rules in some normatively unallowable way, the scales of organizational justice are out of balance and sanctions against the individual restores this balance. Under this perspective, the perpetrator deserves to be punished in proportion to the past harm he or she committed. An opposing perspective holds that harmony is best served by the prevention of future harm and that the justification for punishment lies in its ability to minimize the likelihood of future transgressions. Thus, the severity of punishment should be consistent with what has been done historically and whether the discipline is perceived as deserving and acts as an appropriate deterrent to future misconduct.

Inconsistent disciplinary actions undermine goal achievement (Bielous, 1998), decrease employee morale (Podsakoff, 1982), and send the message to employees that certain inappropriate behaviors may, at times, be acceptable (Bellizzi, 2006). Weiss (1997) states that disciplining employees inconsistently is among the most serious human resource situations affecting workplace ethics and Bielous (1998) identified the uneven bending of rules for particular individuals as one of the five worst disciplinary mistakes organizations make.

The impartial application of punishment, however, can be difficult. Lucero and Allen (2006) reported an example of two employees who were fighting and were found to be equally responsible. In this case termination of both employees may have been warranted but on further investigation one worker was found to have been employed only a few months during which he had performance and attendance problems while the other was a long-tenure worker with an excellent performance and attendance history. Even though the offense was the same for both workers it could be persuasively argued that the long-tenure employee with only this single infraction should receive a less severe discipline than the problematic short-term worker.

Another consideration involves mitigating circumstances. These are conditions that represent a broad set of concerns that include: the severity of the incident, the intent of the protagonist, the employee's responsibility for any harm done, participation of other employees, and any supervisory involvement or neglect. In addition, the employee's work record, length of service, discipline history, and potential for rehabilitation need to be considered when deciding on a fitting level of punishment for an offense (Koven & Smith, 1985). Even though the general rule is to impose similar punishment for similar offenses, managers must weigh an assortment of factors and impose different penalties if reasonable distinctions among like cases can be made. For this reason, 'no tolerance' approaches which support the same treatment for all may be inappropriate.

Procedural justice

Individuals are not only concerned with the outcomes they receive but also with the fairness of the process used in determining the punishment rendered. Workers are likely to accept unfavorable outcomes as fair if they perceive the discipline procedure to be reasonable and where authorities adhere to rules of fair process (Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001). That is, the process of determining if punishment is necessary may be as important to employees as the punishment itself.

In determining procedural justice, a framework involving a number of questions may be addressed by management (Daugherty, 1966; Lucero & Allen, 2006) including:

1. Was there forewarning? Before employees can be properly disciplined they must be told what constitutes misconduct. Organizations should provide clear policies—clear enough for every worker to understand—that are disseminated to each employee to read. Then, each employee should sign a document acknowledging receipt and understanding of the policy. After that, each new hire should also sign a document acknowledging receipt and understanding of the policy before beginning work.

2. Is the regulation or policy reasonable? The rules leading to worker punishment must be reasonable. Reasonable rules are those that promote the efficient, orderly, and safe conduct of business or that define behaviors that employers can realistically expect from their employees (Daugherty, 1966).
3. Was there a full investigation and was it objective? Before making a decision regarding discipline the organization must investigate the apparent rule violation. The just cause standard requires full and fair investigations before worker discipline can be imposed. This should prevent the discipline from being imposed when there is little or no evidence of rule violation (Ruben, Elkouri, & Elkouri, 2003). A preliminary conversation with the accused employee is advisable. Shapiro and Brett (2005) suggest that the ability to express one's view, often referred to as "voice," plays an important role in how individuals judge the fairness of procedures.
4. Was there sufficient indication of guilt? The investigation must yield enough evidence to warrant the conclusion that the employee was guilty of the infraction. Was there reasonable evidence to implicate the worker? Often this involves conflicting views of an incident. Managers must consider issues, including an individual's past record of truthfulness, as well as any apparent motivation he or she might have to lie (Hill & Sinicropi, 1980).
5. Do the procedures have built in mechanisms for appeals (Colquitt, Lepine, & Wesson, 2011)?

Interpersonal justice

A third form of organizational justice is concerned with the perceived fairness of the interpersonal treatment workers receive from their managers (Colquitt, 2001). This is also known as interactional justice and focuses on the manager/subordinate relationship relative to how individuals treat each other (Cropanzano et al., 2007). It is important for supervisors to be courteous and polite and to treat employees with dignity and respect to promote interpersonal justice (Greenberg, 1990a). Additionally, managers should refrain from making disparaging remarks or belittling subordinates when administering aversive control (Bies, 2005). From a slightly different perspective, it can be said that interpersonal *injustice* occurs when authorities are rude or disrespectful to workers, or when they refer to them with inappropriate or offensive labels (Bies, 2001). This fairness dimension is being extended to workplace abuse and harassment known as bullying which is coming under increasing legal scrutiny (Von Bergen, Zavaletta, & Soper, 2006).

A related issue concerns performance feedback. As Schein (1989) noted, "… The only reliable way to improve performance is to give performance feedback" (p. 67) and negative feedback is often necessary (Ilgen et al., 1981). Importantly, however, Baron (1988) found that it was generally not the delivery of negative feedback, per se, that produced such unconstructive outcomes as increased levels of conflict, resentment, and aggression; rather, it was the manner in which such information was conveyed that seemed to play a crucial role. Baron (1988) found that performance discussions about poor performance using constructive criticism (feedback that is specific, considerate, and contains no threats or suggestions that an individual's poor performance is due to negative internal attributions such as the person being stupid or lazy) did not lead to such negative effects. In comparison to constructive criticism, *destructive criticism* is

characterized by negative feedback that is general, inconsiderate and harsh in tone, contains threats of termination or reassignment, and attributes poor performance to internal causes, has been found to generate stronger feelings of anger and tension among recipients and to increase recipients' tendency to adopt ineffective techniques for dealing with poor performance (e.g., making endless excuses, refusing to change). Clearly, managers should engage in constructive suggestions with their disciplined subordinates regarding how they might improve their performance in the future.

Informational justice

This aspect of organizational justice captures employee perceptions of the extent to which employers explain to workers their decisions, the honesty of the explanations, and the procedures used to arrive at them. When manager's explanations of their disciplinary decisions are thorough, and when subordinates perceive these explanations as well-reasoned and truthful, perceptions of informational justice are likely to be high (Colquitt & Shaw, 2005). Research has shown that reactions to bad news are more positive when clear explanations are given (Bies, Shapiro, & Cummings, 1988). Likewise, Shaw, Wild, and Colquitt (2003) noted that individuals are generally more likely to perceive their workplace as fair and are less likely to exhibit retaliatory response to negative outcomes when these outcomes are accompanied by explanations from organizational representatives.

An employee who is punished for no discernible reason may believe the punishment to be unjustified and that the negative sanction was random or a personal attack by the supervisor rather than a consequence for unwanted behavior. The employee will likely have a negative emotional reaction and the punishment may have an undesired effect on individual and group work behavior (Podsakoff et al., 1984). When perceived as unfair, employees may retaliate in order to counter the apparent injustice and to restore some semblance of equity.

This seems to have happened in a study by Greenberg (1990b) that nicely illustrated the impact of informational justice on manufacturing workers' reactions to a pay cut for a 10-week period brought on by economic circumstances. In one plant no pay cut was initiated (control group); in a second plant workers were told in a short, impersonal explanation that they would receive a 15% pay reduction and in a third plant employees were offered a longer, more sincere explanation why they would be receiving a 15% cut in compensation. Theft levels were then tracked before, during, and after the 10-week pay cut period using company shrinkage data. In the plant without the pay cut, employee theft remained about 3% throughout the study. In the plant with the long, sincere explanation the employee theft increased from 3% to about 4.8% and then fell back to normal levels of 3% after the pay cut period ended. In the plant given a short, impersonal explanation, employee theft rose dramatically from 3% to 8% during the pay cut period before falling back to previous 3% levels once employee pay was reinstated. Clearly, the higher levels of informational justice had a significant impact on employee theft.

Maintain appropriate documentation of the corrective discipline

No discussion of worker misconduct can end without addressing documentation. The world is becoming increasingly litigious and one of the most essential guidelines for handling any and all

worker disciplinary action is documentation. The goal of documentation is to memorialize the firm's efforts to address problematic behavior (Clancy & Warner, 1999). When followed regularly, accurate and contemporaneous documentation will add authenticity and credibility to the events leading to the supervisory action and will help the organization prevail against claims of wrongful discharge, breach of contract, and discrimination. Furthermore, documentation will make it difficult to doubt the motives of the manager. Taking notes during or immediately after a discipline interview will create a record of what happened and support personnel decisions.

Maintaining a journal with dated notes of any and all conferences that take place in the manager's office should become routine, and in a litigated matter, could prove invaluable. Retrieval of those notes when needed will provide detailed and recorded observations that memory cannot provide. While showing fairness and equity, documentation reflects sound and rational judgment on the part of management. Notes, journals, and observations are the "back-up" to any memorandum. Therefore, they should be kept as part of the supervisor's file in a secure area. If there are no documents, the employee is much more likely to win should there be a court case (e.g., *Lloyd v. Georgia Gulf Corp*., 1992). Employment punishment administered and then overturned by a court, mediator, arbitrator, or an organization's human resources department reduces its effectiveness over the long run.

To increase the value of the documentation should litigation arise it is important that individuals stay with the facts and provide details but be concise and do not editorialize, neutralize their tone, keep emotion out, and avoid sarcasm (Bruce, 2011). Additionally, Attorney West, principal at Employment Practices Specialists in Pacifica, California, indicated that it is critical to get the employee's explanation for performance issues and to include it in such documentation. According to West this does several things:

1. Ties the employee to his or her "story." From a legal perspective, that's important, West notes. If you do not pin the employee down to a specific explanation, a clever attorney may later come up with another explanation that could be plausible to a jury or government agent.
2. Shows two-way communication. Including the explanation indicates that authorities want to find out if there is something positive that they can do to improve things.
3. Demonstrates supervisory fairness. Juries are often more motivated by their sense of fairness than by the specifics of the law in question.
4. May help a manager correct employee performance. Supervisors should be perceived as wanting to help employees improve and be productive staff members.
5. May reveal a reasonable explanation. It is normal to assume that there is no reasonable explanation, but there may be. For example, perhaps materials run out at certain times and that is interfering with production, or perhaps there is a child with a terrible illness, and that is responsible for an employee being 10 minutes late (HR Daily Advisor, 2011).

CONCLUSION

Management training generally takes a proscribed view of punishment, emphasizing alternatives to punishment (Casey, 1997). Likewise, more academically-oriented management and business texts appear to stress positive emotions and positive managerial behavior and seldom address

punishment (e.g., Daft, 2003), indirectly suggesting that worker discipline is not an essential part of the managerial role. For example, a cursory review of a current popular organizational behavior textbook by Ivancevich, Konopaske, and Matteson (2005) revealed that the authors dedicated five pages to punishment-related topics and seventy-seven pages to reward-related subject matter. Moreover, in many textbooks, the discussion of punishment has focused primarily on the presumed negative side effects such as anger, resentment, avoidance, and retaliation (Luthans, 1995; Moorhead & Griffin, 1995). This has led many readers to conclude that punishment should be avoided, regardless of its effectiveness in guiding behavior. Consequently, managers and supervisors learn little about applying punishment properly even though it is an important aspect of virtually all managerial jobs and is a common occurrence.

Many instances of life's unpleasantness teach us what to do by means of punishment and aversiveness. Falling off a bike, drinking too much alcohol, or going out in the rain without an umbrella all lead to punishing consequences (getting bruised, suffering a hangover, and getting wet), and we often learn to change our behavior accordingly. Furthermore, certain types of undesirable behavior may have far-reaching negative effects if they go unpunished. For instance, an employee who sexually harasses a coworker, a clerk who steals money from the petty cash account, and an executive who engages in illegal stock transactions may all deserve punishment.

Even though many experts question the value of aversive control and believe that managers use it inappropriately, punishment does have a place in managerial behavior. The process of punishing wrongdoing, though, need not be callous, unduly harsh, or sadistic. The focus must remain on changing behavior to improve performance. The purpose of this article was intended to promote skilled and constructive use of worker discipline and punishment when it is warranted by offering several guidelines to enhance its effectiveness. The recommendations on the productive use of aversive control suggested in this paper are consistent with theoretical perspectives and empirical findings in the literatures of organizational behavior modification, social learning theory, and organizational justice. This paper should not be interpreted as implying that managers should blissfully punish every undesired behavior. If supervisors find they are using punishment more often than positive reinforcement, then they are doing something wrong.

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SPANISH TEENAGERS´ ATTITUDE AND ACCEPTANCE OF MOBILE ADVERTISING

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to test the main message-driven factors influencing consumer attitude and acceptance of mobile advertising. A conceptual model is developed – and empirically tested to examine the influence of four message-driven factors (informativeness, ubiquity, frequency, and personalization) as antecedents of consumer attitude and behavior towards mobile advertising messages. Data is collected – through a personal survey – from 355 Spanish teenagers in Spain, who are users of mobile services. We use structural equation modeling via EQS 6.1 to test the model. Data analysis shows that frequency is the dimension accounting the most – and significantly – of the four message-driven factors analyzed on attitude toward mobile advertising. Attitude has a significant effect on acceptance of mobile advertising messages.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid proliferation of mobile phones along with their technological development has created a whole new channel for advertising known as mobile advertising (Saadeghvaziri & Seyedjavadain, 2011). This increasing role of mobile marketing communications translates into a continuous growth in advertising budgets. Investment in mobile advertising is expected to see the most growth in the next five years within alternative media (second only to consumer-generated media) (PQ Media, 2008). Thus, marketers´ interest places mobile advertising in a strategic role within advertising services (Zhang & Mao, 2008).

While consumer-driven factors such as perceived control, trust or sacrifice (Merisavo et al. 2007), perceived utility and expressiveness (Nysveen, Pedersen, & Thorbjørnsen, 2005) perceived informative value and entertainment (Bauer, Barnes, Reichardt, & Neumann, 2005) have deserved a lot of attention, there has been little research into message-driven factors that are easily controlled by marketers. This paper's main goal is to fill this research gap analyzing such factors – informativeness, ubiquity, frequency and personalization – as drivers of attitude toward mobile advertising and user's acceptance of mobile advertising.

We focused our research on teenagers as mobile phones are essential to many youth lifestyles and it has been noted that the improving capabilities of mobile phones as personal and portable

multi-media devices have led mobile phones to become indispensable to young consumers, attracting marketers´ attention (Grant & O´Donohoe, 2007). Mobile phones have become integrated into young people's everyday lives (Oksman & Raitiainen, 2001; Skog, 2002) and are used to connect and synchronize peer networks (Tully, 2002). Being connected all the time, everywhere through mobile networks can be seen as a great opportunity for marketers as mobile communications create new opportunities for marketers to advertise, build, and develop customer relationships, and receive direct response from customers (Sultan & Rohm, 2005). As teenagers use mobile phones extensively (Soroa-Koury & Yang, 2010) they are expected to be the future focus of a great deal of Short Message Service (SMS) advertising campaigns due to their changing consumer behavior and media habits (Van der Waldt, Rebello, & Brown, 2009).

CONCEPTUALIZING MOBILE ADVERTISING

Mobile marketing has been defined by academics from different perspectives ranging from *mobile advertising* to *wireless marketing* and *wireless advertising*, with most of the definitions focusing on the technology used (Leppäniemi, Sinisalo, & Karjaluoto, 2006). From a communicative perspective, mobile marketing communications have been conceptualized by the Mobile Marketing Association as "the set of actions that enable firms to communicate and relate to their audience in a relevant, interactive way through any mobile device or network" (Mobile Marketing Association [MMA], 2010, p. 7). This set of actions includes the sending of SMS messages, the use of graphic or display formats, marketing using search engines through mobile Internet, bluetooth technology, couponing or the use of applications and entertainment content – including mobile advergaming (MMA, 2010). This broad set of technologies and strategies allows a wide range of marketing actions and communications whose main advantages to marketing are as follows (Bauer et al. 2005; Haghirian, Madlberter, & Tanuskova, 2005; Kargin, Basoglu, & Daim, 2009; Scharl, Dickinger, & Murphy, 2005; Shankar & Balasubramanian, 2009; Zhang & Mao, 2008): a) Scope and versatility: thus for example, SMS make it possible to go from mass marketing to one to one marketing; b) Permanence and viral scope: SMS remain in the customer's inbox until they are eliminated so they can be resent if users consider them of interest; c) Ubiquity and immediacy: technology makes it possible to personalise the moment when users receive the message; d) Interactivity: the same channel the firm uses to contact the customer can be used by the customer to reply and contact the brand; e) Speed and adaptability: the time needed to start up a campaign is minimum and feedback is immediate so changes can be made as necessary; f) Convenience: SMS can access customers wherever they are and at any time, and g) Location: current technology makes it possible to personalize the place where customers receive the message and to launch the message only if customers are in a given location.

So, mobile advertising provides consumers with personalized information based on their time of day, location, and interests (Scharl et al. 2005) and it has been defined as "using a wireless medium to provide consumers with time- and location-sensitive, personalized information that promotes goods, services, and ideas, thereby benefiting all stakeholders" (Quah & Lim, 2002).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF SUCCESS FACTORS FOR MOBILE ADVERTISING

The term "success factors" was introduced by Daniel (1961) and originally applied to the evaluation of information systems by Rockart (1979). Since then, the term has gained widespread acceptance as the necessary conditions for success in a given market including the mobile advertising market (Scharl et al., 2005). The factors involved in this model influence the consumer's attitude towards mobile advertising services, perception of these services, and eventual behavior. This theoretical framework also assumes user acceptance of information technology (Davis, 1989) and the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), both suggesting a relationship between the consumer's attitude and the observable behavior.

Success factors in attitude toward mobile advertising

Attitude toward advertising has been considered as a main factor in advertising success since it has been considered as a contributing factor to attitude toward the ad (Lutz, 1985). It is accepted that scepticism to advertising can decrease positive attitudes toward the ad (Balasubramanian, Karrh, & Patwardhan, 2006) and even can lead to advertising avoidance. Consumer's behaviors such as zapping or zipping are well-known examples of this advertising avoidance. So attitude toward advertising has been considered as a contributing factor of advertising effectiveness (Lutz, 1985; Zanot, 1981). Attitude is also an important construct for information systems research and the relationships between attitude, intention, and behaviour have been studied and confirmed in numerous studies (Tsang, Ho, & Liang, 2004).

Previous research on mobile advertising detected that in general, consumers have negative attitudes toward mobile advertising (Grant & O´Donohe, 2007; Tsang et al., 2004; Van der Waldt et al., 2009; Xu, 2006). Nevertheless this attitude can be more positive in permission-based contexts (Barwise & Strong, 2002; Tsang et al., 2004) or when there is a perceived informativeness of mobile advertising (Saadeghvaziri & Seyedjavadain, 2011). It has also been claimed that uses and gratifications positively moderate attitudes toward mobile advertising (Jun & Lee, 2007). While previous research on attitude toward mobile advertising focused on consumer and innovation-based drivers (Bauer et al. 2005) or other personal-drivers such as perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and perceived trust (Karjaluoto, Lehto, Leppäniemi, & Jayawardhena, 2008), little attention has been paid to message drivers. While informativeness is one such factor studied in a location-based context (Xu, Oh, & Teo, 2009), some other key factors such as ubiquity, frequency, and personalization remain rarely explored as drivers of consumer's attitudes toward mobile advertising.

Informativeness

Informativeness is defined as the extent to which the advertising media provides users with resourceful and helpful information (Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005) and is strongly related to the advertising value in traditional media vehicles (Ducoffe, 1995). In a mobile advertising context, informativeness can increase the perceived advertising value of mobile advertising leading to favourable attitude formation (Bauer et al. 2005; Xu et al., 2009) and a positive attitude toward mobile advertising (Saadeghvaziri & Seyedjavadain, 2011). Bauer et al. (2005) found that

mobile advertising messages delivering a high information value lead to a positive attitude towards mobile advertising - which in turn leads to the behavioral intention to use mobile advertising services. Tsang et al. (2004) also found informativeness positively correlated to the overall attitude toward mobile advertising, along with entertainment and credibility. Therefore, the following hypothesis is posited:

H1: The better the perceived informativeness of mobile advertising the better the attitude toward mobile advertising.

Ubiquity

Ubiquity has been defined as the usage flexibility of time and location of mobile phones (Okazaki, Li, & Hirose, 2009) and represents a unique feature of mobile phones (Barnes & Huff, 2003). From a technological perspective, ubiquity has been conceptualized – along with universality, uniqueness and unison – as one of the main characteristics of u-commerce, a new marketing context based on time and space transformations (Watson, Pitt, Berthon, & Zinkhan, 2002). In a mobile marketing context, ubiquity is considered one of the main attributes that mobile advertising services can provide (Bauer et al., 2005) to both marketers and consumers, extending the time and space aspect of traditional mass media advertising (Muk, 2007; Watson et al., 2002) to deliver advertisements without limitations of time and space (Friman, 2010). As consumers carry their mobile phones all the time, everywhere, marketers can benefit by targeting them at the right time, in the right place, using consumers' profiles and location-based services. For example, using location-based marketing services, marketers can deliver advertising messages only to those users who are physically located near the retailer whose products or services are advertised (Varshney, 2003). In turn, consumers that are targeted when near a shop with special offers or at special hours – such as 2 for 1 or the very popular *happy hour* in pubs – can benefit from this timely advertising information. In this context, it has been suggested that users will be more satisfied if mobile advertising messages are relevant and are sent to them at the right time and in the right situations (Xu, Liao, & Li, 2008). Grant & O´Donohoe (2007), for instance, report the importance of *communication timeliness* for young people to accept mobile marketing communications – for example by alerting them to buy tickets for a concert that are going to be on sale in an hour. From a uses and gratifications (Katz, Has, & Gurevitch, 1973) framework, ubiquity can then be conceptualized as a perceived information benefit based on aspects of time and space when receiving mobile advertising. Bauer et al. (2005) found information needs – along with entertainment and social needs – to be a contributing factor of overall perceived utility of mobile marketing which lead to a positive effect on attitude toward mobile marketing. So, we can assume that ubiquitous, timely targeted mobile advertising messages can increase a positive attitude toward mobile advertising. Therefore, the following hypothesis is posited:

H2: The better the perceived timely information delivered by mobile advertising, the better the attitude toward mobile advertising.

Frequency

Mobile phones increase the availability, frequency, and speed of communication (Scharl et al., 2005). The ubiquity of mobile advertising – all the time, everywhere – can encourage marketers to deliver a high amount of advertising messages due to the very low cost of SMS messaging when compare to traditional media. So, it has been suggested that "organizations must consider the best time and message frequency for the target group and topic" (Scharl et al., 2005, p. 167) in order to achieve the best effectiveness. On the other hand, ad exposure frequency affects the way consumers perceive and value advertising (Ducoffe, 1995). As the number of advertising messages rise, the attitude towards the promotional vehicle worsens and leads to consumers' avoidance (Ha, 1996). This advertising clutter (Elliot & Speck, 1998) has a great impact on consumer perceptions and behaviours and is considered one of the main factors leading to negative attitudes towards advertising. In a mobile advertising context, Haghirian et al. (2005) found that a high frequency of exposure to mobile advertising decreased the value of advertising. Grant & O´Donohoe (2007) also found young people to widely dislike an excessive use of advertising messages even when it was permission-based. Therefore, the following hypothesis is posited:

H3: The greater the amount of mobile advertising messages received, the worse the attitude toward mobile advertising.

Personalization

Personalization is considered – along with ubiquity, interactivity and localization – as one of the main attributes of mobile advertising (Bauer et al., 2005; Quah & Lim, 2002; Scharl et al., 2005; Xu, 2006; Xu et al., 2008). Personalization, that is, using location-based mobile advertising services and users´ preferences, implies achieving a greater fit between marketers´ goals and consumer's interests and needs in a more efficient way (Vaughan-Nichols, 2009). So from a marketing perspective the purpose of personalization is to increase the element's personal relevance to an individual (Blom, 2000) enhancing consumer responsiveness to personalized messages (Howard & Kerin, 2004). In a mobile marketing context, consumers increasingly expect tailored and location-based services, thereby underlining the importance of personalized mobile marketing (Watson et al., 2002). Along with time and location, marketers can target mobile advertisements based on consumers´ preferences (Balasubramanian et al., 2006; Watson et al., 2002) which is supposed to increase the impact of these messages (Scharl et al., 2005). This type of personalized mobile marketing is related to permission-based marketing (Godin & Pepper, 1999). In fact "mobile advertising is permission-based by law [in many countries] in order to keep mobile phones clear of spam" (Merisavo et al., 2007, p. 43). While giving this permission, consumers are usually asked questions about the products or services they are interested in to be advertised. Personal information contained in databases usually include leisure activities, holidays, music and media interests, type of Internet access, occupation, marital status, car ownership and income (Barwise & Strong, 2002). This consumer-advertising fit can be positively valued by consumers because it can help them to save money and time as does mCRM (Mobile Consumer Relationship Marketing) using databases and consumers profiles to deliver more valued mobile personalized services (Sinisalo, Salo, Leppäniemi, & Karjaluoto, 2007). Xu

et al. (2008) found empirical support for personalization to be a significant factor of user attitudes toward mobile advertising. Therefore, the following hypothesis is posited:

H4: The better the fit of mobile advertising messages with the consumer's interests the better the attitude toward mobile advertising.

Attitude toward mobile advertising and acceptance

User acceptance is considered to be a critical success factor of mobile advertising (Merisavo et al., 2007). The framework for this user acceptance of mobile advertising can be found in Ajzen & Fishbein´s (1980) Theory of Reasoned Action. This theory assumes that people choose consciously to perform or not a specific behavior considering and evaluating different reasons concerning the behavior before performing it. Attitude toward mobile advertising can be considered a main factor when considering using mobile advertising services and has been detected as a strong predictor of user acceptance of mobile advertising (Bauer et al., 2005; Soroa-Koury & Yang, 2010; Tsang et al., 2004; Xu et al., 2008; Xu et al., 2009). Furthermore, positive attitude toward advertising refers to favourable evaluations and predisposition toward it (Saadeghvaziri & Seyedjavadain, 2011). Therefore, the following hypothesis is posited:

H5: The better the attitude toward mobile advertising, the better the acceptance of mobile advertising messages.

In Figure 1 we present a graphic representation of the conceptual model and the proposed hypotheses.

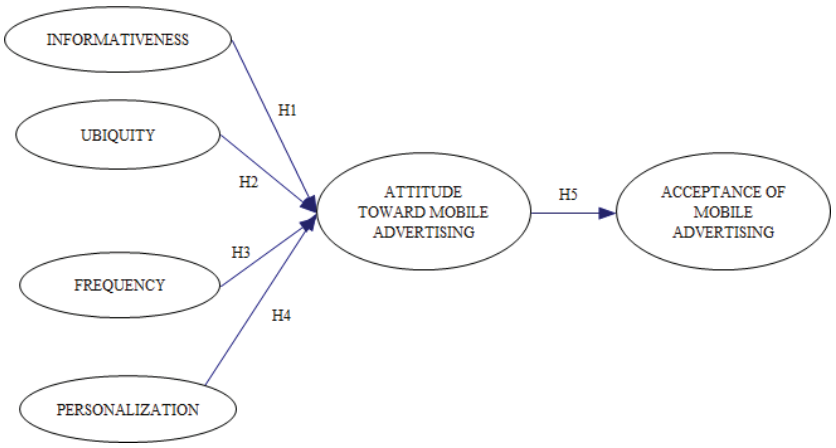

FIGURE 1. CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND PROPOSED HYPOTESIS

METHOD

Sample and data collection

The hypotheses presented in Figure 1 were tested using structural equation modeling via EQS 6.1 by means of a structured questionnaire. Survey respondents for this study were recruited in a Spanish High School during May and June 2011. The survey instrument was pre-tested with a

convenience sample of High School students (n=25) in order to refine the survey instrument. A final sample of 355 secondary school students – all users of mobile phone services – with ages ranging from 14 to 16 years was used. Of the respondents, 61.5% were male and 38.5% were female. Demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE

Characteristics	%
Gender	
Man	61.5
Woman	38.5
Studies	
Secondary School (2nd year)	30.5
Secondary School (3rd year)	35.3
Secondary School (4th year)	34.2
Age	
14 years	29.6
15 years	36.6
16 years	33.8
Occupation	
Student	100

Measures

We used a five-point Likert scale questionnaire – distributed in person at the High School – to measure the independent variables. Most of the items are based on previous research. One item was adapted from Saadeghvaziri & Hosseini (2011) to measure informativeness. Ubiquity was measured using an item from a scale developed by Bauer et al. (2005). Personalization was measured adapting an item developed by Merisavo et al., (2007) and frequency was measured using a self-created item. Attitude toward mobile advertising was measured using a scale adapted from Taylor & Todd (1995). Acceptance of mobile advertising was measured using a scale developed by Merisavo et al. (2007). The measurement items and sources are shown in Annex 1.

Reliability and validity assessment

To assess measurement reliability and validity, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) containing all the multi-item constructs in our framework was estimated with EQS 6.1® (Bentler, 1995) using robust maximum likelihood estimation (Satorra & Bentler, 1988).

As evidence of convergent validity the CFA results indicate (see Table 2) that all items are significantly ($p<.01$) related to their hypothesized factors (Hatcher, 1994), the size of all the standardized loadings are higher than .60 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988) and the average of the item-to-factor loadings are higher than .70 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). The results suggest that our final measurement model provides a good fit to the data on the basis of a number of fit statistics (S-Bχ2=72.271, df=33, p=.000; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA]=.058; Normed Fit Index [NFI]=.95; Non-Normed Fit Index [NNFI]=.95; Comparative Fit Index [CFI]=.97).

Table 2 also demonstrates the internal consistency of the constructs. In terms of reliability, all Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951) are above the recommended value of .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Given that this coefficient tends to underestimate reliability (Bollen, 1989), and assumes that items have been measured without error, which is not plausible, we also offer the composed reliability index which had to be above the recommended value of .70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and the average variance extracted which had to be over .50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Taken together, all the indicators demonstrate sufficient evidence of measurement instrument reliability.

TABLE 2. INTERNAL CONSISTENCY AND CONVERGENT VALIDITY OF THE THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT MEASURES

Variable	Indicator	Factor loading	Robust t-value	Loading average	Cronbach´s alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Informativeness	INF	1.000	35.835	-	-	-	-
Frequency	FRE	1.000	18.002	-	-	-	-
Ubiquity	UBI	1.000	21.169	-	-	-	-
Personalization	PER	1.000	20.687	-	-	-	-
Attitude	ATT1	.820	15.853	.86	.92	.92	.74
	ATT2	.866	20.627				
	ATT3	.865	25.244				
	ATT4	.883	25.427				
Acceptance	ACC1	.610	11.036	.72	.75	.77	.52
	ACC2	.725	12.877				
	ACC3	.819	14.367				
S-B $\chi 2$ (df =33) =72.2715 (p<0.00); NFI=.95; NNFI=.95; CFI=.97; IFI=.97; RMSEA=.058							

Note: AVE=Average Variance Extracted.

Evidence for discriminant validity of the measures was provided in two ways (see Table 3). First, none of the 95 per cent confidence intervals of the individual elements of the latent factor correlation matrix contained a value of 1.0 (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Second, the shared variance between pairs of constructs was always less than the corresponding AVE (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

TABLE 3. DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY OF THE THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT MEASURES

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Informativeness	-	.08	.09	.08	.10	.08
2. Frequency	[.18;.38]	-	.07	.30	.09	.07
3. Ubiquity	[.20;.39]	[.15;.42]	-	.07	.16	.12
4. Personalization	[.20;.41]	[.47;.62]	[.21;.49]	-	.08	.10
5. Attitude	[.22;.42]	.16;.44]	[.30;.49]	[.24;.45]	**.74**	.29
6. Acceptance	[.11;.34]	[.12;.34]	[.25;.45]	[.21;.43]	[.44;.63]	**.52**

Note: Diagonal represents the average variance extracted; while above the diagonal the shared variance (squared correlations) are represented. Below the diagonal the 95% confidence interval for the estimated factors correlations is provided.

RESULTS

We tested the proposed conceptual model (Figure 1) using structural equation modeling. The empirical estimates for the main-effects model are shown in Table 4. The results indicate that the data fit our conceptual model acceptably (S-Bχ2=53.002, df=33, p=.000; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA]=.041; Normed Fit Index [NFI]=.96; Non-Normed Fit Index [NNFI]=.97; Comparative Fit Index [CFI]=.98).

TABLE 4. STRUCTURAL MODEL RESULTS.

Hipótesis	Path	Standardized Path Coefficients (β)	Robust t-value
H1 (+)	Informativeness → Attitude	.122**	(2.803)
H2 (+)	Ubiquity → Attitude	.052*	(2.302)
H3 (-)	Frequency→ Attitude	.503**	(6.985)
H4 (+)	Personalization→ Attitude	.039*	(2.127)
H5 (+)	Attitude→ Acceptance	.547**	(7.158)
S-B χ2 (df = 33) = 53.0029 (p<0,00); NFI=.96; NNFI=.97; CFI=.98; IFI=.98; RMSEA=.041			

*<.05; **p<.01.

Results of the estimated model show that frequency and informativeness are the dimensions accounting the most – and significantly – of the four message-driven factors analyzed on attitude toward mobile advertising (β=.503; p<.01; H3 accepted and β=.122; p<.01; H1 accepted). The other two factors also influence attitude toward mobile advertising, even though not showing as strong a path as frequency. Thus, hypotheses H2 and H4 are also supported: ubiquity (β=.052; p<.01; H2 accepted) and personalization (β=.039; p<.01; H4 accepted). These results suggest that the user will have a more positive attitude toward mobile advertising if mobile advertising messages are limited, perceived to have information value, are targeted timely – in terms of time and place – and fit the user's preferences and needs.

Attitude toward mobile advertising has a significant effect on acceptance of mobile advertising messages (β=.547; p<.01; H5 accepted). Thus, while positive attitude toward mobile advertising increases so does accepting the use of mobile advertising messages as part of the services engaged with mobile communications. Our model suggests that improving consumer's attitude toward mobile advertising – through useful, timely, personalized and not overexposed messages – is a key factor for mobile marketing success.

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This paper broadens existing knowledge on consumers' acceptance of mobile advertising. While previous research focused on consumer-driven factors leading to mobile advertising acceptance (i.e., trust, expressiveness, or entertainment) this paper focuses on message-driven factors that are easy for marketers to control. Knowledge of these factors benefits both theoretical and practical issues improving marketers´ possibilities of success in their marketing efforts. Main findings of this study show that informativeness, frequency, ubiquity, and personalization are contributing factors to mobile advertising attitude which in turn leads to mobile advertising acceptance. From a marketer's point of view this translates into using these characteristics as the

main features of successful mobile advertising messages. Regarding *informativeness*, as mobile phones become more complex and expand their capabilities with mobile Internet, users could expect their mobile phones to be a new platform for achieving information about brands and products. So, the better the perceived information utility (*informativeness*) of mobile advertising messages, the better the attitude and acceptance toward mobile advertising. Because *ubiquity* is a very particular characteristic of mobile phones consumers also expect information utility to be shaped by time and space. Receiving timely advertising information, at the right place and at the right time, is a main advantage of mobile advertising that can not be delivered by any other medium. This location-based framework for delivering accurate mobile advertising is also related to *personalization* of the messages. Content-based messages, using consumers´ profiles and permission-based databases technology, can therefore improve consumers´ attitudes and acceptance of mobile advertising by delivering relevant advertising messages that fit with consumers´ interests and needs. Furthermore companies must correctly identify their publics and know their tastes, needs, and desires so that they can offer personalized messages that people will open and read.

Regarding *frequency*, companies must also consider the number of messages being sent to their audiences so as not to saturate them. As frequency of mobile advertising messages emerges as an important factor of mobile advertising success, companies should also consider the number of delivered messages in order to avoid perceived advertising clutter and those not desirable effects on their customers linked to advertising clutter. This is especially important as consumers familiarize with mobile advertising messages and are increasingly exposed to these commercial attempts. This finding also empirically tested previous findings suggesting that marketers should consider message frequency in order to improve mobile advertising success (Scharl et al., 2005).

As Oksman & Raitiainen (2001) and Skog (2002) suggest, teenagers are not homogeneous audiences for mobile phones. Factors such as social background, gender, urban/rural lifestyles, and technological literacy can widely vary their usage patterns and attitudes, so a main limitation of this study is that it focuses on just one homogeneous demographic group and cannot be generalized to other demographic or psychographic groups. Future research should address this limitation in order to generalize the findings of this study to a broader social group. The moderating role of age and gender should also be analyzed because gender-related aspects can affect attitudes toward advertising (Karjaluoto et al., 2008).

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ANNEX 1.

MEASUREMENT ITEMS AND SOURCES

INFORMATIVENESS	Inf1	Mobile advertising gives me information about brands and products	Based on Saadeghvaziri & Hosseini (2011)
FREQUENCY	Fre1	I feel receiving too much mobile advertising messages on a daily basis	Self created
UBIQUITY	Ubi1	Mobile advertising gives me timely information	Based on Bauer et al. (2005) and Saadeghvaziri & Hosseini (2011)
PERSONALIZATION	Per1	I feel mobile advertising fits my preferences and interests	Based on Merisavo et al. (2007)
ATTITUDE	Att1 Att2 Att3 Att4	I like mobile advertising I think mobile advertising is an interesting thing I think mobile advertising is a good idea Mobile advertising seems something positive to me	Taylor & Todd (1995)
ACCEPTANCE	Acc1 Acc2 Acc3	I feel positive about mobile advertising I am willing to receive mobile advertising messages in the future I would read all the mobile advertising messages I receive in the future	Merisavo et al. (2007)

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