
QRBD

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FROM THE EDITORS

This issue of *Quarterly Review of Business Disciplines* opens with the research of Charles Lubbers and Kyle Miller, University of South Dakota, and Michelle O'Malley, Ball State University. Their study examines student perceptions of game-day and in-game promotions to determine their correlation with attendance at college football games. Louis Falk, Douglas Stoves, and Hilda Silva, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, and independent research Audrey Falk trace the relatively recent coverage of mass shootings in the US by the media and explore its impact on the school environment. George and Donna Danns, University of North Georgia, divulge the statistically significant correlations of optimism, pessimism and realism of entrepreneurs and examine their implications for extended theoretical understanding of entrepreneurial dispositions. Tricia Hansen-Horn, University of Central Missouri, and Danielle LaGree, Kansas State University, explore systematic self-reflection in relation to what public relations people call themselves and what they should be called.

Wonseok Choi and Lawrence Zeff, University of Detroit Mercy, expand on their previous research into the relationship between technology and group performance and how cultural differences impact interpersonal relations. Their research in this issue investigates the direct impact of culture on students and their use of, and preference for, technology.

Margaret A. Goralski, *Quinnipiac University*, Editor-in Chief

Charles A. Lubbers, *University of South Dakota*, Associate Editor

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GAME-DAY EXPERIENCE AND OTHER FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENT ATTENDANCE AT DIVISION I FOOTBALL GAMES

Charles A. Lubbers, University of South Dakota

Kyle J. Miller, University of South Dakota

Michelle O'Malley, Ball State University

ABSTRACT

This study examines how student perceptions of game-day and in-game promotions correlate with attending college football games. Using a quantitative survey of students at a Midwestern, state, flagship, Football Championship School (FCS) university, this study examines factors that influence student attendance of the school's football games. Topics under study include what communication sources students prefer to use to learn about university athletic events or promotions, what factors influence the students' likelihood of attending, and how important are different elements of the game day activities to the students' decision to attend university athletic events? The results found that students prefer email and word-of-mouth information sources. The results also demonstrated that game-day activities that promote socialization, as well as rivalry games were the most likely to be significantly associated with past game attendance. High mean scores for socializing with friends and pre-game tailgating reinforce the importance of the social aspects of the game.

Keywords: Sports Marketing; College Football; Game-day Experience; Tailgating; FCS Football

INTRODUCTION

University athletics is big business (Williams, 2007). College football is often one of the most visible and prominent sports in a university athletic department. However, when aspects such as fan attendance and game revenue severely decrease, that financial and social impact can affect an entire athletic department's budget (Blount, 2018; Russo & The Associated Press, 2020), as well as sports marketing and promotion. In 2011 alone, programs in Division I (the highest division in NCAA college football) spent more than \$6 billion total, with many public institutions also relying on student fees, university self-support or state assistance for funding assistance (Lubbers & O'Malley, 2019).

Before COVID-19, sports marketers were charged with the imperative to increase game attendance, while nationwide attendance has been dwindling (Anders, 2019; Dodds, 2020; Evans, 2019; Wilder, 2020). In the aftermath of COVID-19, where the National Basketball Association is holding games without fans, the attendance imperative will be more difficult to achieve (Rader, 2020, April 27). In the past, game attendance increased revenue not only for the game, but for licensed gear, fan loyalty, TV coverage, all of which bring revenue to the university.

Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) attendance has seen declines at large programs, such as Florida, Michigan, Ohio State, Penn State and Alabama. In fact, decreasing fan numbers were prevalent in eight of the last nine FBS seasons, including the subdivision's lowest attendance since the mid-1990s (Anders, 2019; Dodds, 2020; Evans, 2019; Wilder, 2020). These attendance concerns include college students, who are a pivotal part of college football attendance and in-game atmosphere. Media outlets have also noted decreases in student attendance, including schools such as Ohio State and Michigan (Anders, 2019; Baumgardner, 2014).

Understanding differences between FBS and FCS classifications, such as media exposure and prestige perceptions, is crucial for college football research (Simmons, Popp, McEvoy, & Howell, 2017). This is especially true regarding student fan support. University size, ease of attending, and athletic marketing among NCAA athletic divisions (i.e. I, II and III), are also major factors in understanding successful promotions and fan attendance (McKnight, Paugh, Waltz, & Kirkbride, 2016). FCS schools are often understudied, and provide interesting examinations of programs and conferences which have a greater reliance on ticket revenue (Falls & Natke, 2015). This study explores ways to reach the ever-changing student population to help increase game attendance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Student Attendance Importance

College students are pivotal stakeholders to university culture; as such, there is a need to continually study students' perceptions and value on athletic events, attendance, and importance. Lubbers and Joyce (2013) described factors, such as information sources, game schedules, game opponents (especially rivalries), and social interaction, that were key aspects in gauging if and why students attend college athletic events.

Although issues of fan and student attendance, game opponents, rivalries, and importance of social interactions are important across all divisions of college football, Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) schools, the second level of Division I football universities, often work on a fraction of a FBS budget, and utilize payments from games versus FBS schools for a large portion of athletic and institution funding and exposure. FBS schools also receive millions of dollars in national television contracts (Palanjian et al., 2014). While this can have a negative impact in game attendance, this is a revenue stream FCS schools often do not receive. Revenue shortfalls have plagued FCS programs. In 2018, median revenues dropped two percent with a five percent increase in expenses (NCAA, n.d.; Temple, 2012). While attendance drops in FCS were very slight (only a drop of about 20 fans from 2018 to 2019), and past research indicated ticket sales were only five percent of FCS revenue for university athletics, there is an importance to gauge student feedback for game attendance and promotions (Haley, 2020; Latta & Mitchell, 2018; Lubbers & O'Malley, 2019).

University Sports Marketing Communication

Study of effective communication platforms is highly needed. Simmons et al. (2017) noted a major flaw at FCS schools was students' lack of awareness about university college football games. University sports marketing has traditionally used television, radio, newspapers, the university

website and posters to advertise games to the local community. In addition, students, faculty, staff and ticket holders are emailed reminders of the upcoming games. Castleberry & Espel (2018) noted university emails are highly valued by college students in receiving athletics information.

Social media is another way for providing fans (including students) alerts for upcoming games and game outcomes (Burns III, 2018; DeShazo, 2015; Mason, Tucci, & Benefield, 2017; Tomko, 2011). Facebook and Twitter are popular technologies used to market athletic information, while additional platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr and Pinterest often depend on market psychographics, and if those technologies are often used by students (DeShazo, 2015; Zullo, 2018).

For smaller athletic programs, social media is crucial for examining and boosting student attendance. At the Division II level (one level below FCS programs), media such as Twitter, Instagram, online broadcasts, and digital advertising, were vital in boosting athletic program publicity (Zullo, 2018). Mason, Tucci, and Benefield (2017) analyzed Division II college basketball promotions. While programs have extremely loyal fans, there is a need for providing digital platforms for that fandom engagement (like blogs or social media), plus game incentives and promotions to hook casual fans into attending. In particular, social media can be used to promote athlete features, provide game updates, and virtual partnerships between the university and local business community (Mason, Tucci, & Benefield, 2017). However, to depend solely on social media is unwise, as television, radio, newspapers and posters all reach a local audience. Often, programs aim to increase radio and television access for fans who are geographically unable to attend (Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000).

Across multiple analyses, social media usage was not a factor in increasing wanting to attend. That said, social media should be used to “create hype and excitement” (Haught et al., 2016, p. 26) about going, as well as marketing game pageantry, such as attendee involvement, and multiplatform social media campaigns. As social media is a strong element of current college students’ generational identity (Napoli, 2014), particularly content creation and individual expression, analysis of these factors is crucial for insights into student demographics and attitudes on university athletic messaging.

The role of social media in marketing collegiate football is explored further in this research. In particular, this study examines what platforms may resonate best with students for promotional and overall football game information, and if students are swayed to attend because of these promotions or information. To analyze the effectiveness of digital and traditional communication methods used in university athletic marketing to college students, the following research question is posited.

RQ1: What communication sources do students prefer to use to learn about university athletic events or promotions?

Factors influencing Attendance

Behavior is a key factor in examining athletic event perceptions and marketing trends. Understanding fan behaviors is important, as there must be analysis of fans’ motivations and behaviors to attend, instead of simply whether they attend (Laverie & Arnett, 2000; Mahony,

Madrigal, & Howard, 2000). The more fans are attached to a team, and thus motivated to attend, the more their fandom becomes a significant personal behavior (Shapiro, Ridinger, & Trail, 2013). This understanding will keep fans coming back. The key factors are rivalry games, friends or family attending, team performance, opponent quality, and team record (Castleberry & Esper, 2018; Falls & Natke, 2015; Lubbers & Joyce, 2013).

Team Performance. Fan perceptions of the team and league's importance, their emotional and psychological investments, and overall fan loyalty (e.g. winning versus losing seasons), are all important facets in understanding the success of athletic marketing and promotions (Drenten et al., 2009; Falls & Natke, 2015; Hill & Green, 2000; Kim et al., 2019; Laverie & Arnett, 2000; Palanjian et al., 2014; Simmons et al., 2018; Yoshida & James, 2010). Falls and Natke (2015) and Lubbers and Joyce (2013), specifically describe how conference and rivalry games often result in stronger fan team interest and attendance, especially if their team is winning. Opponent quality -- specifically if the game is a perceived marquee event -- and the overall game product (teams, athletes, etc.) are also crucial factors in fan interaction and perceptions of the quality of the game day experience (Castleberry & Espel, 2018; Yoshida & James, 2010)

Social Interaction. When fans do express devotion to a program, those sporting events are often avenues for increased social interaction (Castleberry & Espel, 2018; Kim et al., 2019). This is true for student engagement, as well. Students often attend athletic events for "social and entertainment value" (Lubbers & Joyce, 2013, p. 521); at a small Division II school, almost 60 percent of students went to football games to socialize with friends, while additional studies noted "school and friend commitments" as factors in the amount of student football game attendance (Castleberry & Espel, 2018; Simmons et al., 2017, p. 20).

Fan Behavior - Escapism and Entertainment. Deep personal identities, where fans create deep emotional attachments adding a human component to a sports team, are also highly influential in deciphering sporting attendance and engagement. Laverie and Arnett (2000) describe this as salience, where any study of fan motivation must include how important the team is to them. As a form of attachment, fans often see sporting events as a method of escape -- that is, getting away from everyday lifestyles and activities -- and a form of satisfaction and entertainment fulfillment, with fans more influenced by entertainment factors the more games attended (Kim et al., 2019; Palanjian et al., 2014; Yoshida & James, 2010). Entertainment can also be in the form of promotions, a prime tactic for increasing student involvement at games. Simmons et al. (2018) note game promotion must go beyond simply communication that games exist; rather, it must include benefits for students to attend, such as socialization and giveaways. Common games included for college football promotional events include homecoming and Senior Day (Simmons et al., 2018).

Constraints

However, constraints inhibiting student attendance are also important to recognize. For instance, prior social engagements with friends, family, and/or schoolwork could inhibit the likelihood of students attending games (Simmons et al., 2017). Commitment can also play a factor, since students may often attend games at the expense of social factors like friends and family wanting to attend or overall socialization (Mahony et al., 2000). Additionally, when a FBS game is played

at the same time, the students' FBS fandom is another constraint. Larger FBS programs airing on television at the same time is a constraint that could impact student attendance and devotion to a FCS game (Lubbers & Joyce, 2013; Simmons et al., 2017).

Fan Types

Types of fans are another important construct to examining whether a person is likely to attend a game. Greene, O'Neil, Russell, and Johnston (2018) noted college student-age demographics, as well as faculty and alumni, was the largest group adopting fandom of a new college football program, specifically due to its association with the university.

Past studies have categorized fans, in attempts to analyze specific fan behaviors, motivations, and intentions. University athletic marketers should recognize a vast array of different fan characteristics, and promote accordingly to each. In sports fandom, there is often a range from superfans who devotedly attend and follow each game, to casual fans with middle-of-the-road interest, to students who have never attended a game, or have little to no interest in attending (Castleberry & Espel, 2018; Laverie & Arnett, 2000; Mahony et al., 2000; Simmons et al., 2018).

Haught et al. (2016) discussed four specific types of fans. Proud University Fans are rigorous about the in-game and sporting experience, atmosphere, and team(s), including tailgating, spirit squads, crowd energy, and the team's performance and statistics, including social media coverage. Escaping Football Follower(s) care more about the game's "pageantry" (Haught et al., 2016, p. 26) than in-game concessions, and look to games as a means of leisure. The Football Experience Fan often uses social media to escape boredom during the game, and may care more about singular players than the overall team. Finally, the Reluctant Fan has slight interest, but may be very disengaged with any social media or in-game atmosphere (Haught et al., 2016, p. 26). Examination of fan behaviors and loyalty should also answer the amount of fans who could fall into particular categories, thus providing "customized" (Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000, p. 22) strategies for how involved a fan could be in a particular team. For example, Mahony et al. (2000) examined different levels of fan loyalty -- high, spurious, latent, and low -- to determine particular factors in those groups that university athletic promotions could target specifically to increase chances of attending.

Therefore, to study the effect of these attitudes and behaviors on student college football attendance, the researchers pose the following question.

RQ2: What factors influence the students' likelihood of attending?

Game Day Experiences

In-Game Impact. While social media and traditional media, plus overall fan attitudes, are crucial for understanding student attendance and engagement at football games, a third component to this study is the game day experiences themselves. A university team's on-field performance and game day opponent play significant factors in fan attendance. Even among a team's passionate fans, a team's on-field struggles greatly impact the level of devotion and attendance, especially among college students. (Lubbers & Joyce, 2013; Padgett & Hunt, 2012; Simmons et al., 2018). Rivalry

and conference games can help increase fan attendance, though opponents are also a factor. A perceived mismatched opponent has a negative effect on a university program's ticket sales (Falls & Natke, 2015). Fans can also utilize social media for information and entertainment during the game, thus adding another layer to a game day experience (Haught et al., 2016).

Physical stadium constraints can also affect game-day experiences. For instance, while socialization is one attitudinal factor, the size of the student section itself can also sway a student's decision to attend, as well as other components like the facility's sound system and aforementioned in-game entertainment (Castleberry & Espel, 2018).

Tailgating. Another often-covered aspect of in-game experiences in college football studies is tailgating. Several past studies indicated the vast importance this one element had on the socialization and college football experience. Fans found tailgating is not just a socialization with family and friends, but an escape from their normal everyday lifestyles (Drenten et al., 2009; James, Breezeel, & Ross, 2001). In particular, involvement and social interaction, as well as fan and personal identities, were major motivations in why people tailgate. For example, not only is tailgating a ritualistic event, but also a sense of camaraderie and group interaction (Drenten et al., 2009). These are also motivations the researchers are analyzing in this study. Specifically, the current investigation examines the impact of individual and group social interaction on in-game experiences like tailgating and collective identity, and if these factors are also a large part of students' attitudes on attending college football games.

Concessions. Food and beverage consumption itself is another notable aspect to understanding fan behavior and game experiences. Hill and Green (2000) noted stadium and concessions quality did not impact professional rugby league fan attendance. However, concessions can impact other game elements, including ticket cost. Krautmann and Berri (2007) indicated professional sports teams can use concession revenues to lower ticket prices. At the college football level, these are also important aspects for further study, as increased attendance can boost revenue streams like concessions (Falls & Natke, 2015). For instance, are concession prices a factor in student game attendance? As concessions are also a large part of the in-game experience, this is another aspect to analyze the vitality of specific game day elements to understanding student likelihood of attending college football games.

Other elements, such as restroom availability and cleanliness, the size of the student crowd, university bands and spirit squads, and even pre- and post-game traffic all impact the level of fan attendance and motivation to attend (Castleberry & Espel, 2018; Hindulak, 2011). In particular, university spirit squads, music, tailgating, and in-game fan chants and experiences are highly-visible aspects of the college football game day experience, and often nostalgic parts of university culture (Hindulak, 2011; NBC Sports, n.d.; Ryan & Greenstein, 2018).

Based on the previous review of literature, the researchers ask the following question.

RQ3: How important are different elements of the game day activities to the students' decision to attend university athletic events?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

While the McKnight et al. (2016) study focused on correlations between university components, such as graduation and enrollment, this study takes an exclusive look at student perceptions of game day and in-game promotions' influence on attending college football games. To examine what factors are crucial for this attendance, the following research questions are posited:

RQ1: What communication sources do students prefer to use to learn about university athletic events or promotions?

RQ2: What factors influence the students' likelihood of attending?

RQ3: How important are different elements of the game day activities to the students' decision to attend university athletic events?

METHOD

The previous review of literature identified numerous variables that may influence a student's decision to attend a university athletic event. A self-administered, print or online survey questionnaire was used in the current investigation in an attempt to answer the research questions posed. Undergraduate students at a medium-sized, public university in the Great Plains region of the United States that competes in football at the Division I, FCS level, were asked to complete a survey questionnaire to collect information on their past attendance of University football games and what encourages or prevents them from attending.

In addition to demographic questions for classification purposes, one section attempted to determine if various information/communication sources were preferred sources of information on the decision to attend. Additionally, questions asked about their past attendance of the university's football games. Finally, closed- and open-ended questions were used to determine what encourages and discourages student attendance and how we might better promote these events. Specifically, one section asked about the influence of the game quality (teams' records, rivalry games, opponent quality). The second section obtained information on the importance of twelve elements of the game day experience. Two final sections asked specific questions related to concession offerings and the tailgating experience prior to the game.

A draft of the questionnaire was created and was pretested on students in an undergraduate research course. University athletic marketing staff also reviewed the instrument and suggested changes. Changes were made based on the pretest and the athletic marketing staff comments.

Thirty-two students in an undergraduate research class were tasked with the collection of print or online survey responses. The number collected by each student varied, but they averaged 14 per student. The students completed the university's ethical treatment of human subjects training and received instructions and guidelines on survey administration. Survey administrators were asked to meet quotas in respondent sex, academic class/year, and college/school enrolment similar to the percentages for the entire university provided by the university's Office of Institutional Research.

The sampling technique used a nonprobability, available sampling frame, but incorporated the quota variables mentioned in the previous paragraph. Since the research results were to be used by the Athletic Marketing office to inform marketing materials targeting undergraduate students, a

filter question at the start of the survey assured that all the respondents were currently attending the university. The surveys were administered by the student researchers in November of 2018, and were either collected face-to-face in print form or digitally using an online survey management system. Since the sampling involved convenience sampling and did not use a sampling frame/population, it is not possible to calculate a response rate.

The University Athletic Marketing staff suggested differentiating the respondents into the categories of “non-fans,” “occasional fans,” and “true fans.” A description of how the categories are defined is provided below. The occasional or “social fan” was identified by the marketing staff to be much easier to encourage to attend one or two additional games per year, than it would be to encourage the non-fan to attend even one, or to encourage the true fan to add to their already high number of games attended.

Data were analyzed using SPSS-PC. In addition to basic descriptive statistics for frequency, measures of central tendency and dispersion, correlation and regression analyses were conducted to determine the relationships between variables.

RESULTS

The method described above resulted in the collection of data from 452 respondents. Nearly all of the respondents (n=445) provided their current age and that data indicates that the vast majority (95%) were within the traditional college-age range of 18-22. The respondents’ self-identified gender preference showed that nearly 55% of the respondents self-identified as female and 45% as male. Both the age and sex percentages were very similar to those for the University’s overall undergraduate figures. Additionally, the percentage of students in the sample was within +/- 5% of the percentage of the enrollment in the University’s Colleges and Schools.

The only place where the sample was not near the university percentages was for the variable of the year in school. Nearly all the respondents answered the question. The sample contained 63 (14.0%) first year, 86 (19.1%) second year, 136 (30.2%) third year, and 154 (34.2%) fourth year student respondents. First and second year students are underrepresented in the sample, while the third and fourth year students are overrepresented.

Respondents reported the number of games they had attended during the current and previous season. Table 1 presents the results of these questions, and demonstrates that roughly one-third of the students did not attend a game during the season. An additional 32 (2017) to 41% (2018) attended one or two football games per season. The remaining 23% in 2018 and 36% in 2017 attended three to seven games.

The researchers divided the respondents into three fan categories. Non-fans (89, 19.8%) reported attending no games either year. Social fans (289, 64.2%) reported attending at least one game for one of the years but did not fall into the next category. The true fans (72, 16%) attended three or more games for each year they reported a number. To facilitate correlation-based analyses, a composite variable combining the number of games attended in both years was created. The total number of games reported for both years ranged from 0 to 11 with a mean of 3.35 games.

# Games	2018	2018 %	2017	2017 %
0	160	35.7	144	32.7
1	94	21.0	73	16.6
2	91	20.3	66	15.0
3	49	10.9	54	12.3
4	34	7.6	45	10.2
5	19	4.2	55	12.5
6	1	.2	2	.5
7			1	.2
Total	448	100.0	440	100.0

The remainder of the section presents the results to answer the three research questions posed.

RQ1: What communication sources do students prefer to use to learn about university athletic events or promotions?

Table 2 presents the mean values for the twelve communication/information sources included on the questionnaire. Respondents chose a value to indicate the degree of preference for learning about athletic events using that source. The seven-point scale allowed respondents to indicate if they did not prefer the information source (a value of 1) or that it was a strong preference (a value of 7).

Only three of the information sources had a mean score above the middle point of the scale – 4.0: email; word-of-mouth (WOM); and Facebook. Three additional sources, all social media platforms had mean scores very near the middle point: Twitter; Instagram; and Snapchat. Advertising in legacy media channels – newspapers, radio and television – were at the bottom of the table. The mean scores for the three methods of

Information Source	Total Sample		Social Fans	
	Mean Score	SD	Mean Score	SD
Email	4.74	2.106	4.81	2.052
Word-of-Mouth	4.69	1.964	4.67	1.979
Facebook	4.30	2.056	4.29	2.053
Twitter	3.98	2.178	3.99	2.174
Instagram	3.93	2.134	3.99	2.146
Snapchat	3.84	2.193	3.91	2.182
Posters	3.78	2.025	3.84	2.035
Univ. Website	3.68	2.006	3.58	1.966
Handout	2.75	1.853	2.83	1.857
Radio Ads	2.55	1.807	2.53	1.805
Television Ads	2.53	1.821	2.46	1.750
Newspaper Ads	2.48	1.800	2.46	1.771

advertising on legacy media channels were approximately 2.5 on the 7-point scale and held the bottom positions on the list of 12 information sources. Clearly, among the student population surveyed, traditional legacy media advertising was not the preferred method of finding out about athletic events.

Since the occasional fans were presumed to be a likely target market for the campaign, a separate analysis of communication channel preferences was conducted for the 289 occasional fans and is included in Table 2. Interestingly, there was no difference in the order of their preferences, and only extremely small differences in the mean scores. Thus, it appears that information source

preferences do not differ between the occasional fan and the overall respondent pool, and would therefore not be a targeting factor in any campaign.

Table 3. Means For Importance of Attendance Factors				
Attendance Factor	Total Sample		Social Fans	
	Mean Score	SD	Mean Score	SD
Rivalry Game	5.63	1.727	5.81	1.556
Friends or Family Attending	5.49	1.762	5.49	1.710
X Team Performance	5.23	1.827	5.33	1.736
Opponent Quality	4.54	1.834	4.64	1.755
X Team Record	4.35	1.890	4.36	1.866

RQ2: What factors influence the students' likelihood of attending?

Previous research cited in the review of literature indicated that the home team's performance/record, game opponents, and/or a rivalry game were all factors that could influence game attendance. Those factors as well as the social factor of having friends and family attend were included as variables that may be general motivators or barriers to attending that are not necessarily part of the game-day experience.

Table 3 presents the mean scores for these general factors. Respondents chose a value to indicate the importance of each factor in the decision of whether to attend a University football game. The seven-point scale allowed respondents to indicate if a factor was very unimportant (a value of 1) or was very important (a value of 7). Table 3 exhibits the mean and standard deviation values for each of the five attendance factors and is presented for the full sample and just the occasional fans.

All five of the factors were deemed important, as they are all over the scale median score of 4.0. However, some are more important than others. The respondents seem to prize the social element of the game (rivalry game and friends and family attending) over the measures of the quality of the football, such as the home team's record and the quality of the opponent. Again, there were no differences in the mean rankings between the total sample and that of the social fans. Additionally, the mean values were fairly similar, with the occasional fans evaluating rivalry game, home team's performance and opponent quality as being only slightly more important than the total respondent responses.

A regression analysis was conducted in an effort to determine if the respondents' ratings of the importance of the five measures (predictor variables) could predict their reported game attendance

(dependent variable). The analysis did not yield a statistically significant F value ($F=1.932$; $p = .088$), indicating that these five measures were not able to predict the number of games attended. A post hoc correlation analysis was conducted and determined that correlations between the predictor variables were extremely high. As can be seen in Table 4, while only two variables were significantly correlated with game day attendance (at the .05 level), all but one of the predictor variables were significantly correlated with each other. Additionally, 8 of the 9 significant correlations for the predictor factors were at the .000-level. Therefore, they were not providing a unique contribution to the regression equation. The one predictor variable correlation that was not significant (friends or family attending and university team record) is not surprising, as the football team's record is unlikely to be the primary reason for people to visit and/or attend a game.

Table 4. Correlation of Game Attendance with 5 General Factors

		Team Performance	Team Record	Opponent Quality	Opponent Rivalry	Friends- Family Attendance
Games Attended	Pearson Corr.	.116*	.093	.038	.114*	-.014
	Sig.	.014	NS	NS	.016	NS
Team Performance	Pearson Corr.		.641**	.532**	.668**	.197**
	Sig.		.000	.000	.000	.000
Team Record	Pearson Corr.			.572**	.494**	.082
	Sig.			.000	.000	NS
Opponent Quality	Pearson Corr.				.565**	.101*
	Sig.				.000	.033
Opponent Rivalry	Pearson Corr.					.281**
	Sig.					.000

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

The two general factors that are significantly correlated with game day attendance, team performance and opponent is a rival, are consistent with past research that found those to be important factors in the decision to attend an athletic event.

RQ3: How important are different elements of the game day activities to the students' decision to attend university athletic events?

The greatest emphasis in the questionnaire content was to assess the importance of a wide variety of game-day experiences on the decision to attend. The analysis is divided into three sections. The first section identifies 12 elements of the game-day experience that have been studied as variables in previous investigations. The remaining two sections focus in on two important elements of that experience, the tailgating experience and the concessions.

Twelve measures of the game-day experience. Table 5 presents the mean scores for the total respondent group, as well as the respondents in the occasional fan category, for the twelve game-day experience factors. Respondents chose a value to indicate the importance of each factor in the decision of whether to attend a University football game. The seven-point scale allowed respondents to indicate the importance of a factor and ranged from very unimportant (a value of 1) or was very important (a value of 7).

Both the total respondent pool and the occasional fans rated the social elements of

Table 5. Game-Day Experience Means				
Game-Day Experience	Total Sample		Social Fans	
	Mean Score	SD	Mean Score	SD
Socializing with Friends	5.86	1.470	5.90	1.415
Pre-game Tailgating	5.74	1.811	5.99	1.660
Size of the Student Crowd	5.42	1.753	5.60	1.544
Free Giveaways	5.07	1.908	5.00	1.915
Seating Comfort	4.73	1.821	4.77	1.862
Internet Connectivity	4.60	2.003	4.57	2.026
Concessions	4.53	1.956	4.46	2.002
Promotional Games	3.83	2.013	3.82	2.006
University Band	3.32	1.968	3.33	1.960
University Cheer Team	3.31	1.968	3.35	1.967
University Dance Team	3.14	1.927	3.19	1.922
Parking Availability	3.12	2.066	3.10	2.082

socializing with friends, the pre-game tailgating and the size of the student crowd as the most important factors in the decision to attend the football game. The occasional fans rated all three of these as more important than the total fan base, and even flipped the first and second factors, so that tailgating was deemed even more important than socializing with friends. Clearly the responses of the social fan group support the name of the social fan, but all the student responses also just as clearly demonstrate the importance of these social factors.

It is also important to note that the traditional game-day elements of the promotional games/activities, the University band, the University cheer team and the University dance team were below the mean and appear to have little importance on the decision to attend. The final factor below the median score of 4.0 was that of parking availability. While parking can be extremely important at some sporting venues, at the venue used for these football games there is abundant parking at the facility and in the surrounding area. Additionally, many students simply walk to the facility, so parking does not register as an important factor.

A regression analysis was conducted in an effort to determine the correlation of the respondents' rating of the importance of the 12 game-day experience measures (predictor variables) and their reported game attendance (dependent variable). The regression model developed had an F value of 1.833 that was statistically significant at .041. The coefficients table for the model is presented in table 6.

Table 6. Coefficients for 12 Game-Day Experience Measures ^a

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.427	.695		3.492	.001
Seat Comfort	-.038	.090	-.024	-.419	.676
Parking Avail	-.155	.080	-.112	-1.940	.053
Promotional Games	-.057	.090	-.040	-.632	.528
Free Giveaways	.141	.098	.094	1.438	.151
Dome Concessions	-.045	.095	-.031	-.472	.637
USD Cheer Team	.006	.118	.004	.053	.957
USD Dance Team	-.015	.120	-.010	-.125	.901
USD Band	.106	.086	.073	1.231	.219
Socializing with Friends	.162	.111	.083	1.454	.147
Pre-game Tailgating	-.210	.093	-.133	-2.258	.024
Internet Connectivity	.095	.082	.066	1.162	.246
Size of Student Crowd	.165	.103	.101	1.604	.109

a. Dependent Variable: Games Attended

Table 7 presents the results of a post hoc correlation analysis of the 12 dimensions with the variable of game attendance. Only the correlations of socializing with friends and the size of the student crowd were statistically significant. Again, the results note the connection between the likelihood of attending a game and the importance of the ability to socialize. While not statistically significant at our standard of .05, internet connectivity and the University band would be significant at more lenient .1.

Table 7. 12 Factor Correlations with Game Attendance

		Seat Comfort	Parking Availability	Promotional Games	Free Giveaways	Concessions	Cheer Team
Games Attended	Pearson Corr.	.011	-.069	-.001	.066	.024	.045
	Sig.	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
		Dance Team	Band	Socializing with Friends	Pre-game Tailgating	Internet Connectivity	Size of Student Crowd
Games Attended	Pearson Corr.	.035	.087	.101*	-.053	.085	.107*
	Sig.	NS	.069	.035	NS	.075	.026

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

The remaining sections on the game-day experience focus on the areas of the pre-game tailgating and the in-facility concessions. Past research and anecdotal evidence indicated the importance of

these two areas, so more specific information was collected on each to determine what elements of each was important to the students.

Five measures of the in-facility concessions.

Table 8 presents the mean scores for the total respondent group, as well as the respondents in the occasional fan category, for five game-day experience factors related to the in-facility concession offerings. Respondents chose a value to indicate the importance of each factor in the decision of whether to attend a University football game. The seven-point scale allowed respondents to indicate the importance of a factor, ranking from very unimportant (a value of 1) to very important (a value of 7).

Attendance Factor	Total Sample		Social Fans	
	Mean Score	SD	Mean Score	SD
Food Quality	4.97	1.847	5.06	1.843
Prices	4.85	1.968	4.85	1.954
Food Variety	4.76	1.870	4.87	1.869
Wait Time	4.43	1.890	4.49	1.852
Staff Friendliness	4.40	1.879	4.50	1.845

All five of the factors related to concessions were seen as being important, having means over the median of 4.0. Food quality, food variety and prices were the most important factors. The occasional fan group agreed on the same three factors being the most important, but felt that food variety was more important than the overall respondent pool.

A linear regression analysis was conducted with the five factors related to concessions as predictor variables for the dependent variable of game day attendance. The model explained virtually no variance, the associated F value was not significant and none of the coefficient t values were significant. Student responses related to concessions demonstrated no ability to predict game attendance.

Five measures of the tailgating experience. The final section of analysis related to the game-day experience focuses on the pre-game tailgating experience. Table 9 presents the mean scores for the total respondent group, as well as the respondents in the occasional fan category, for five game-day experience factors related to pre-game tailgating. Respondents chose a value to indicate the importance of each factor in the decision of whether to attend a University football game. The seven-point scale allowed respondents to indicate the importance of a factor, ranging from very unimportant (a value of 1) to very important (a value of 7).

Attendance Factor	Total Sample		Social Fans	
	Mean Score	SD	Mean Score	SD
Large Crowd	5.47	1.805	5.65	1.668
Weather Conditions	5.44	1.817	5.47	1.788
Restroom Access	5.30	1.825	5.43	1.746
Food Provided	4.83	1.896	4.79	1.939
Longer than 4 Hours	4.07	1.970	4.01	1.931

Both the total respondent group and the occasional fans agreed having a large crowd, weather conditions and access to restrooms were the most important factors related to the tailgate. While the weather conditions are beyond the scope of the marketing staff, the other four factors can be influenced by actions of the Athletic Department.

A linear regression analysis was conducted with the five tailgating factors as predictor variables for the dependent variable of game day attendance. The associated F value of 2.686 was statistically significant at .021. The coefficients table for the model is presented in table 10. Only the variable of desiring to have the tailgate longer than four hours had a t value that was statistically significant. The negative coefficient indicates that the more important having a longer tailgate was to the student respondent, the less likely that respondent was to attend the game. The results related to the length of the tailgate can be seen as further support for the notion that socializing, in this case at the tailgate, takes precedence over attending the football game.

Table 10. Coefficients for Regression of Five Tailgating Measures ^a

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.008	.536		7.474	.000
Restroom Access	-.155	.094	-.099	-1.651	.099
Large Crowd	.145	.096	.091	1.516	.130
Food Provided	-.046	.088	-.030	-.519	.604
Weather Conditions	.068	.095	.043	.720	.472
Longer than 4 Hours	-.194	.075	-.133	-2.583	.010

a. Dependent Variable: Games Attended

DISCUSSION

In light of COVID-19, and having the games potentially (at this writing) being played without fans present, getting fans to come back to the university to watch their team will be an ongoing battle. For FCS teams where the fan base is marginal, filling seats at the games will be imperative for the university.

Newspapers, TV and radio paid advertising showed poor results. While this is still an important tool to reach older audiences, no one should be that surprised that it doesn't reach the student population. However, this should not mean that these mediums should be abandoned, they are great methods for reminders and attracting local audiences who might not be students.

Word-of-Mouth, Facebook, and emails were the preferred way of reaching the students to tell them about the games. According to Edison's Infinite Dial, (March 2019), Facebook users from 12-32 have dropped in percentage to 62% overall (Edison Research, 2019). This still means that students are Facebook users, just not at the rate that previous generations have been. Because these are not sponsored emails or Facebook posts, the posts are the equivalent to word-of-mouth online, which is a very important tool according to this study.

Considering that the subjects who were occasional fans went to the games because of their friends, they found out about the game through word-of-mouth, through a personalized email, and through, most likely, a Facebook group post. This intimate connectedness drives the social fan to the games. In addition, Internet connectivity and socialization were the only factors tested that had a positive correlation with the subjects. Internet connectivity helps the occasional fan be front and center on social media, in strengthening those relationships.

While other studies, as referenced in the literature review, suggested giveaways and promotional games as reasons to attend, this study indicates otherwise. Although these factors are an important part of the in-person experience of a football game, it doesn't appear to have enough pull to get students there. Likewise, the band, cheer team, dance teams, concessions, seat comfort are all a part of the in-person experience, but those components alone are not enough to draw the subjects to attend the game in person.

For the case of tailgating, while it will even bring fans to the venue, this study suggests that the longer the tailgate the less likely fans will attend the game. This counterintuitive finding could suggest that the fans are having so much fun that they don't move from their tailgating spot to their seats. This finding could also mean that over four hours for a tailgate party, plus a three-hour football game is too much time to spend on a social event. It should be noted that tailgating is part of the fan experience and the traditions of most universities. Just because it doesn't move people from the parking lot to inside the venue, doesn't mean that it isn't important for the sporting event.

Based on the results of the current investigation, the occasional fan should be called the social fan. These student social fans look for places where they can meet their friends in person, and have those small connections online. They want to go with their friends to the game and record their game day online. From this study, ensuring that students know that their friends will be attending the game is crucial to having the social fan attend.

Limitations

This study only surveyed students attending one FCS Division I university. Replication on other campuses will be important to determine if the results are applicable to a wider variety of campus settings. Even a large convenience sample is still a convenience sample. While the sampling methods eliminates the ability to generalize, this study is important because it gives a framework for universities to explore fan-base in an era of dwindling attendance.

Sports Marketing Implications

These findings suggest that the way that university sports marketing departments reach students may be different than they have done in the past. Highly targeted messages, such as personalized emails, word-of-mouth and social media would appear to be more successful than the traditional posters and legacy media.

As sports marketing looks toward the future, online gaming platforms are the students' new social media. Almost 90% of students are gamers, compared to 56% of the population. These gaming platforms allow users to connect with friends without the polarization that traditional social media has become (Mahoney, S. 2020). Therefore, this may be another opportunity to reach students on a personal level to encourage them to attend the football games.

An area for further research would be the use of newer social media outlets, such as TikTok. TikTok is now the sixth largest social media platform, with 42% of US users being people within the 18-24 age range (Sehl, 2020, March 2). YouTube may be another area of study. According to Statista (2019), 95% of 18-25 year-olds rated YouTube as their #1 social media platform.

Additionally, university sport marketing departments might be wise to think about having “true fans” be rewarded by helping others go to the game. If people are asked by a friend to go to the game, they are more likely to attend. What if the true fans were rewarded for inviting people to go with them to the game that the true fan is already planning to attend? The energy of a true fan is palatable, and may increase their friend’s level of game attendance. Why wouldn’t a student want to go to a game with their new found friend, as opposed to working on their paper at the library?

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CULTIVATION AND REPORTING OF CAMPUS THREATS

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ABSTRACT

The consumption of media has been established as one of the elements responsible for changing the general population's perceptions. Specifically, cultivation theory (depending on the amount of media use) points to an enhanced representation of a characterization conveyed through the media. This depiction has the potential to create an inaccurate portrayal (stereotype) leading to an increased level of anxiety. The proliferation of reported incidents (real or perceived) associated with mass shootings in the U.S. over the last 20 years is an example. This paper traces the relatively recent coverage of mass shootings in the U.S. by the media and the side effects on the school environment. Included are factors that contribute to an increase of reports concerning violence and shootings. Followed by a discussion of components that may be responsible for this escalation and an examination of the procedures that could be put into place to handle this increase.

Keywords: Media, Cultivation Theory, College Campuses, Mass Shootings, Behavioral Intervention Teams, Active Bystander

INTRODUCTION

Mass shootings in schools became more frequent in the last 20 some odd years. From 1999 – 2014 there were 124 days between shootings. Between 2015 and 2018 there were 77 days between shootings (Are School Shootings Becoming More Frequent, 2019). Accompanying this increased frequency of shootings is a rise in number of reports, both false and accurate. A “false report” is one that is made by “...a person who, with intent to deceive, knowingly makes a false statement” (USLEGAL.com, 2020). This means that the false report is required to carry with it the intent to harm. An inaccurate report does not carry the intent aspect, rather, it simply could mean that someone erroneously reported the information or did so without having knowledge of all aspects of the situation. These are known as “false positives” (Sokolow, Lewis, Van Brunt, Schuster & Swinton 2015).

This false report phenomenon may be based on traumatic events experienced by individuals, misperceptions, or simply intended to be malicious hoaxes (Miller, 2019). Most reports of live false shootings are based on loud gun fire like sounds. Examples of the type of sounds that have invoked this sort of response includes balloons popping, a malfunctioning water heater, the crushing of bottles, and a motorcycle backfiring (Berman & Smith 2019; Miller, 2019).

The other major category of false reports concerning mass shootings is based on the perception that a shooting is going to occur. This assumption may be founded on some kind of information that has been transmitted or imagined. In many instances a posting on social media sets off a chain of events that leads to a false report. Kingkade (2019) writes that a majority of the mass shooting perpetrators post some kind of message on a public forum before they commit the act. Logically it makes sense that interpretations of a post can lead to false reports / alarms. Kingkade quoting a student “Everyone is on edge more; everything is taken out of proportion . . . Teenagers haven’t changed. It’s just with social media, they see it now - schools and everyone -and it changes everything” (para 4). While well intentioned, law enforcement and school officials have no alternative other than to treat each potential threat as real until it’s not.

Kingkade contends that the rise in the level of reporting results from the recent emergence of the “See Something-Say Something” campaigns post 9/11. The encouragement of individuals to report what they see to avoid future tragedies combined with the increased awareness of such events, work together to multiply reports after an incident. Concerned administrators are placed on heightened alert after an event. Their perception also adds to the increased number of reports after these incidents. Bosman (2018) noted that after the Stoneman-Douglas shooting, reports ramped up significantly. “Florida had at least 31 incidents in the week after the shooting, more than any other state, followed by Ohio, with 29; and Kentucky was third, with 24. Other states that experienced unusually high numbers of threats, false alarms or other incidents included California, Georgia, Mississippi, New York, Texas and Virginia” (para 6). An alternative explanation for the false reporting of mass shootings may have to do with the portrayal of the shooters in the media. The media coverage of these mass shooting events is often unavoidable. As the story unfolds it is looked at from every conceivable angle and repeatedly revisited hundreds of times. Cultivation Theory (a Communication Theory) specifically addresses the perceptions of television viewers-based consumption and depiction in the media.

CULTIVATION THEORY

Cultivation theory (aka cultivation analysis) is a theory composed originally by G. Gerbner and later expanded upon by Gerbner & Gross (1976). Gerbner began research in the mid-1960s endeavoring to study media effects, specifically whether watching television influences the audience’s idea and perception of everyday life, and if so, how. Cultivation theory postulates that high frequency viewers of television are more susceptible to media messages and the belief that they are real and valid.

Cultivation theory is one of the main branches of media effects research. Cultivation theorists posit that television viewing can have long-term effects that gradually affect the audience. Their primary focus falls on the effects of viewing and the changes in the perception of the viewer. The theory asserts that television does not so much persuade us, as paint a convincing picture of what the world is like (West & Turner, 2018).

Heavy viewers of TV are thought to be ‘cultivating’ viewpoints that seem to believe that the world created by television is an accurate depiction of the real world. This occurs through a process called Mainstreaming. Mainstreaming is the constructing of a social reality that is based upon cultural

dominance. Heavy television viewers develop more commonality with other heavy viewers no matter the background as long as they share the dominate culture (p. 410).

Resonance is another element within Cultivation Theory and expands on the way cultivation can operate. Resonance is “a behavior that occurs when a viewer’s lived reality coincides with the reality pictured in the media” (p. 411). Essentially, if a heavy viewer of television lives in an environment that is similar to the one replicated in a television setting the cultivation effect is augmented. Gerbner (1998) refers to this as providing “a double dose of messages that resonate and amplify cultivation” (p. 182).

Cultivation as a result of mainstreaming or resonance generates effects at two distinct levels: “first order – learning facts from the media and second order – learning values and assumptions from the media” (West & Turner, 2018, p. 411). First order deals with more concrete facts, such as percentages – how many police officers fire their gun a year? The second order deals with overall concepts – should police officers be allowed to carry a gun?

The theory suggests that this cultivation of beliefs is based on a mindset already present in our society and that the media take those positions which are already present and display them bundled in a different packaging to their audiences. One of the main tenets of the theory is that television and media cultivate the status quo, they do not challenge it. Many times, the viewer is unaware the extent to which they absorb media, portraying themselves as moderate viewers when, in fact, they are heavy viewers.

The delta between those considered to be light viewers and heavy viewers is called the cultivation differential. This describes the extent to which a viewpoint on a particular topic is shaped by exposure to television.

One notable and often discussed piece of the theory is known as the “mean world syndrome”. In a nutshell, heavy viewing of television and the associated violence leads the viewer to believe that the world is a much more dangerous place than it is, with a possible serial killer, terrorist or rapist lurking around every corner.

Cultivation theory is mostly known for its preoccupation of the study of violence exhibited on television. In fact, the development of this theory led to the creation of the Violence Index – a yearly content analysis of primetime network programming to determine the amount of violence represented (p. 406). However, while a vast amount of cultivation studies are concerned with violence there are several that have expanded to cover gender, demographics, cultural representations, and political leanings among others.

SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

Over the last couple of decades society seems to be portrayed as becoming more uncivilized. The stories that are spread often point to death, destruction, spitefulness, and a general community anger. It seems as if every day a story concerning violence and particularly mass shootings is reported. Mass shootings did not get a lot of attention until they entered school zones. Approximately 20 years ago, possibly the most notorious shooting in U.S. schools transpired – the

Columbine Massacre. On April 20, 1999 at Columbine High School, two shooters opened fired killing 13 people. This event seems to be the catalyst of a long string of mass school shootings. Mass school shootings are defined as an incident in which 4 or more victims, not including the suspect are killed (Smart 2018). While no shootings should be minimized some had a wider effect than others. In addition, several of these shootings did not make national news coverage as they resulted in few fatalities.

In the two decades since the Columbine massacre, there have been 231 school shootings in the United States. As the timeline is followed the next mass school shooting occurred on March 21, 2005 at Red Lake Senior High School, Red Lake, MN. There were 7 deaths and 5 injured. In this incident 1st responders arrived quickly enough to injure the shooter before the shooter ultimately turned the gun on himself.

A little over a year later October 2, 2006, another mass school shooting transpired at West Nickel Mines School in Nickel Mines, PA. In this instance there were 5 victims - all girls. The shooter targeted only girls allowing the boys and adults to escape.

Arguably, the next most infamous case of a school shooting was at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007. In this event 32 victims were killed. This particular occurrence has the distinction of being the deadliest school shooting in U.S. History. The shooter had time to visit multiple campus locations.

On February 14, 2008, Northern Illinois University in Dekalb, IL was the ensuing location of a mass school shooting. Five people were killed, and 16 others were injured. According to the police report Columbine had influenced this shooter (Northern Illinois University Report 2008). Within the following 4 years school shootings had occurred but none of these incidents rose to the mass category level. On April 2, 2012, Oikos University in Oakland, CA. had the unfortunate distinction of being the next school to suffer a shooting. The shooting was the 4th deadliest on an American College Campus, as 7 people were killed.

Eight months later, on December 14th, 2012, the event that debatably brought schools shootings back to the public conscientious occurred - the Sandy Hook Elementary School Massacre. There were more than 26 deaths associated with this incident. The news coverage was so prevalent that the President of the United States wiped away a tear while discussing it (Keneally, 2019). This shooting also resulted in a push for Federal changes in the gun laws.

Following Sandy Hook within a year, on June 7, 2013 a mass shooting occurred at Santa Monica College, Santa Monica, CA. Five people were killed by a shooter who was described as “ready for battle” (para. 41) since he had so much weaponry and was wearing a protective vest.

The next shooting occurred on October 24, 2014 at Marysville-Pilchuck High School, Marysville, WA. Four students were fatally shot by another student who had arranged for a meeting to take place during lunch.

The following year on October 1, 2015, nine victims were shot on the Umpqua Community College Campus. This shooting seemed to resonate with the American Politicians for a call toward gun control.

The mass school shootings looked as if they were going to subside until February 14, 2018 - the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Parkland, FL. Shooting. There were 17 deaths in this event. The reaction to this particular shooting differed from the others. The teens who survived this attack launched a national push for gun control, resulting in the March For Our Lives Rally. Approximately 3 weeks after, Florida passed new gun laws. Which in turn sparked a “student-led push for gun reform” across the country (Shapiro, 2018).

Three months later another shooting occurred on May 18, 2018 at Santa Fe High School in Santa Fe, TX. Ten people were killed during this mass school shooting.

Is this rise of reported shootings on campus a reflection of societal change, or a result of the media’s increased reach? With the help of new technology and the advent of social media, public access has exploded. Not only does the public consume the various media but they also create it. The formats used to disseminate and create information have merged and converged. This convergence has allowed a consumer to create, distribute, and devour content through one device – the mobile telephone.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

News Media

The uniqueness of television has possibly impacted the rise of shootings within the U.S. by displaying many instances both real and fictional within its broadcasted content. Television is fundamentally different from all other forms of media. Initially, except for the cost of the receiver – it is free to watch. In the U.S. alone it is estimated that 120.6 million homes contain television sets (Nielson, 2019). Television is the most used media to receive local news (Pew Research Center 2019).

The television medium is ageless, as all age groups consume the flat screen. To watch television, you don’t need to know how to read. In addition, there are a myriad amount of studies that suggest television has a lot of influence and shapes the way people think and relate (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli & Shanahan, 2002).

Arguably the news media’s reporting of shooters across the U.S. has led to an increase in activity. The sensationalizing of these news stories and the exploits of the shooters, the victims, and the survivors has created a notorious path to fame. In some respects, the fame is based on characteristics, while in others it is based on heroics, and sympathy.

Typically, memorials are held, and reminders are placed at the scene. In many cases, protests are organized. Survivors are interviewed and their accounts of the shooting are dissected by both traditional and fringe media. Perhaps, leading to conspiracy theories and multiple accusations from among various players.

This notorious fame as a result of the event seems to be a reflection of the role of the media. Every time there is a mass shooting, it appears to turn into a media circus in which every aspect is scrutinized. The behavior of the person doing the shooting is analyzed in depth, searching for the underlining cause. The victim's lives are put under a microscope (whether they survived or not). The movements of the first responders as well as the actors on scene are inspected. The policies of organizations are examined. Every action or reaction from every person involved is studied. In addition, because of the timeliness of the various means used to receive the breaking news associated with a shooting- the public becomes a participant. Voyeurs rush to the scene, family members arrive to the area trying to find their relatives and would be heroes arm themselves and scurry to the location.

Political

The media spotlight does not end after the initial event. The event and the players become elevated as it is used as a political tool to further specific agendas. Politicians have routinely utilized noteworthy events to catapult their issues into the spotlight. Taking advantage of the collective attention on a significant event such as a school shooting should not be a surprise.

After the Sandy Hook shootings in Connecticut, calls for both gun control and more services for the mentally ill quickly became the rally cry. President Obama commented that he "...would do everything in his power to "engage" in a dialogue with Americans, including mental health professionals and law enforcement" (Tapper & Larotonda 2012, para 2). There were similar comments made by both Sen. Joe Manchin and Sen. Ted Cruz.

Equally, comments were made by those opposed to any restrictions on firearms. Congressman Louie Gohmert of Texas opined that he wished the principal had an assault rifle in her office to protect the students of the school. Similarly, conservative talk show host Mark Levin commented about the greater need to protect life, citing the Oklahoma City bombing as an example (Kim 2012).

Similar arguments have erupted after almost every mass shooting or mass violence event. So why has the needle not moved in either direction? Both sides of the argument claim to have the moral high ground related to the issue, whether it be linking the crime to the availability of guns or a constitutional mandate. However, those in the debate seek the argument most closely affiliated with their world view, using the surveys or opinion to bolster their points. Thus, embracing the Rahm Emanuel philosophy, "Never let a good crisis go to waste" (Emanuel, n.d., para 1) – in the move to score points with the base and ensure reelection or increase political positioning.

A Pew Research Center poll found that Americans have a "complex relationship" with guns, with approximately "seven-in-ten, including the 55% of those who have never personally owned a gun – say they have fired a gun at some point (Parker, Horowitz, Igielnik, Oliphant & Brown, 2017). The author goes on to write that the feelings that gun owners have towards their guns is equally resolute as those opposed to them. With both parties being represented in congress, it is not surprising that the needle fails to move. Regardless of the situation or scenario tragedies such as the one at Sandy Hook become an opportunity to engage others in the conversation. With the hope

that this time, more will see the world from their point of view and finally get the change they seek.

Entertainment

The entertainment industry in general has gloried shootings in films, as well as video games. While there is no direct proof that the violence portrayed in movies or games leads to a mimicking of behavior, there are other indicators that suggest that the option for violence is at very least is an alternative. The link between exposure to violent media and aggressive behavior is easily drawn (Romano, 2019). The fact that the majority of video games have violent themes cannot be understated.

In addition, advertisers would not spend billions of dollars a year if they did not think the various conduits within the entertainment industry influenced people to buy stuff. Similarly, the same conclusions that advertisers use can be drawn concerning the portrayal of violence within the industry (Strauss, 2019). The depiction of violence within the industry is bound to have some impact on the end consumers – perhaps leading to the differing roles taken by the participants of the shooting event.

Marketing

As mass shootings become more ingrained into the public consciousness companies try to capitalize by creating products designed to protect on-campus members – primarily children. Most of the for-sale products developed have to do with personal protection from an attack. Bullet Proof Backpacks are one of the choices. BulletBlocker, a company that sells bulletproof backpacks has seen sales jump 300 percent since the Florida shooting. Major retailers such as Home Depot and Bed, Bath and Beyond carry this type of backpack (Chan, 2019). Bulletproof hoodies are also a popular choice from makers such as Wonder Hoodie. Wonder Hoodie offers a free replacement “If you get shot (God forbid) with our hoodies on” (Kid’s, 2020, para 12). Another choice marketed for your offspring’s use during school shootings are bulletproof blankets. These blankets are designed to specifically shield small children from gunfire” (Moss, 2015, para 1). Bullet proof vests are another option. A search on the shopping site Amazon.com yields 233 results for “Bulletproof Vests for Kids” (Bulletproof, 2020).

It might be a sign of the times, but it doesn’t appear to take advertisements to sell these products. Parents who have experienced these traumatic shootings seek out these protective devices. Thousands of Americans are searching for security through an explosion of products marketed to those scared of being shot or of losing loved ones to gun violence (Chan, 2019).

EDUCATIONAL RELATED ASPECTS

The reality of the school shootings being considered routine or commonplace is not accurate. The number of mass shootings and those injured in the violence remains relatively low when examining all of the deaths caused by gun violence. The Gun Violence Archive reports a total of 15,858 deaths by gun in 2019, with 135 of those deaths due to a mass shooting event (.009%). Suicide clearly represents the greatest total of the deaths by gun representing over 50% of those who perish by

firearms (Gun Violence Archive, 2020). However, the reality as experienced by both parents and children attending schools allude to growing concerns and anxiety related to feeling safe in school. According to a Gallup poll, 35% of parents reported feeling concerned about their off-spring's safety in school. This includes a rise in student reporting of anxiety when asked about feeling safe in school (Jones, 2018). This fear has increased 3-fold from 12 percent to 34 percent in the last 5 years (Washburn, 2018). Although this number is high, it was not as high as post Columbine when a similar poll was administered. Jones (2018) suggests that this may be the result of desensitization or a normalization of school shootings.

To that end, in many cases parents have started to think of ways to safeguard their children. In some cases, parents are arming their children with self-protection items including hockey sticks, mini baseball bats, and rocks to help with their defense. In addition, to increase the odds of survival, parents are purchasing skateboards for their kids to be used to break windows and escape if necessary (Gajanan, 2019). In the instance of hostage situations or kidnappings parents are supplying their children with GPS trackers designed specifically for kids (Schuster 2018).

The tightening of security at schools may help to lessen the fear factor. Relative recent security changes include security booths outside of the main entrance. A visitor tag is issued and required to pass that point. By using visitor tags, school systems make it easier for staff members to identify who should be and who should not be on school grounds.

Surveillance cameras are another tool that has been incorporated for best practices of school safety. Indoor surveillance cameras are used in many locations within the school to keep students, staff members and others who are inside safe. They are employed to monitor those who enter from the outside of the building, as well as within classrooms, hallways, and gymnasiums. Outdoor surveillance cameras are placed on the perimeter of the property including in the parking lot, playgrounds along with other exterior areas of the campus.

Metal Detectors are extra devices that are used to prevent students, parents and others from bringing weapons into the school building. Portable metal detectors can be setup for afterschool events such as, football games, and graduation ceremonies. Armored doors and bulletproof windows are installed to stop bullets from penetrating the classroom. An additional gadget that can be mounted is a Justinkase. this is a metal device that is placed under a door and latches to the door jamb to prevent anyone from entering. If the door lock is shot out, the Jusitnkase can keep the door shut (Top 5 Security Products to Keep Our Children Safe, 2013).

The assigning of police officers to schools is an additional strategy that has found traction. In 2016 42% of all public schools in the U.S. had a school resource officer present on campus. Their mandate is to “serve various roles: safety expert and law enforcer, problem solver and liaison to community resources, and educator” (Raymond 2010 para. 1).

Lipscomb (2019) noted, 41 states and Washington DC had mandatory drills that were meant to prepare students in the event of a lockdown or code red. The goal of these safety training strategies is to minimize mass casualties in the event of an active shooter or active threat. These drills teach rapid lockdown and evacuation strategies. Referred to as “active shooter training”, some kids learn to run and hide as early as preschool.

These measures are in direct opposition to the efforts made by parents in the 1970's, who sought to have the impact of schools limited by controlling the access to student records. The Family Educational Right to Privacy Act (FERPA) sought to limit access of records to only those with a legitimate educational purpose for accessing such records. However, since the advent of social media, coupled with public demand, school administrators have increasingly needed to plunge themselves into student's private lives. Without this involvement, the schools leave themselves open to accusations of missing critical signs that could otherwise prevent school violence.

CAUSALITY

Violence in school, whether it is secondary or post-secondary is not a new phenomenon. Issues surrounding school bullying have been well documented and, in some cases, romanticized. Many authors as well as movies such as Charles Dickens with *Oliver Twist*, and the Christmas Story, have romanticized the notion of bullying as a rite of passage to be overcome. There were also reports in an 1862 London Times article regarding a murder involving two soldiers. The story detailed that the accused, John Flood, was subjected to bullying which caused him to act. His sentence was ultimately overturned by the Queen (History of Bullying, 2012).

While the majority of bullying or issues of school violence do not result in deaths or mass killing, when such reports surface, there is significant attention paid to the incident. There are many famous, or now infamous, attacks that have captured national attention. The reports center around not only the deaths that have occurred, but also focus on the causality. This would be a normal response as we try to avoid having history repeat itself. However, in an effort to explain, often times there are attempts to reduce the event to a single cause, such a bullying, or access to weapons. While both could be considered contributing factors, certainly neither are considered to be factors that stand in isolation.

When one looks at many of the immediate reactions to school violence, the majority of the efforts appear to be levied toward a singular causality. Finding singular causality is something that appeals to most people as it gives individuals the illusions that they have some control over issues that they know that they cannot control. As an example, in looking at reports coming from the aftermath of the Stoneman Douglas shootings, a commission was authorized to examine the events and make recommendations. What the commission determined was not focused on the prevention of the violence. It was focused on the reactions to it. As Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtier stated, "It is going to happen again. Anybody who thinks it's not going to happen again is just being unrealistic, is being naïve and probably has their head in the sand. It is going to happen again" (News Service of Florida, 2019, para 3). This ceded that the best defense was how to minimize the body count and abandon efforts to prevent these terrible events from occurring again.

Many of the schools who experienced violence appeared to invest in the strategy of focusing on the physical presence in the schools. When analyzing the attacks, 80% of the schools that were involved in the shootings had some sort of physical security measure in place. Close to a quarter of these schools had a lockdown procedure and 46% had a school resource officer. Another important fact discovered was that 51% of the attacks ended without any external intervention (Protecting America's Schools, 2019).

In the Stoneman Douglas shooting, the Sheriff's department assigned an armed deputy to the school with the intent of securing it. The armed presence was to act as deterrent to would be attackers, as well as to respond if violence were to break out. However, as was determined by the Commission, the deputy hid in safety as the shootings were occurring. While giving a cursory nod to the prevention methods available, the commission focused significant efforts on the response and mitigation of the threat (Marjory Stoneman Commission Report, 2019). Similar findings came as the result of the Columbine, Sandy Hook and Oregon task forces.

What is also consistent among these reports is that efforts need to be taken to improve the climate of the schools. The improvement of the relationships between faculty and staff, schools and the communities they serve, and the reporting of concerning behaviors are seen as equal in efficacy to the overall response. Johns Hopkins University (Sheldon, 2019) found that in schools with active improvement programs a majority of the respondents reported a feeling that their institutions were safer. Of course, the resources of the schools and locations also influenced the perception related to safety.

An additional finding was that the schools that were involved in the study did not report that they had significant concerns or problems with school safety. This is in agreement with the study of crime in schools. In the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report they determined that most crimes transpiring in the schools (both violent and nonviolent) did not occur in any greater number than those outside of the school.

In 2019, the United States Secret Service commissioned a study titled Protecting America's Schools: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence that specifically looked at violence in schools and more importantly how to prevent it. For this study a detailed analysis of targeted school violence was conducted. In particular, the study investigated past attacks and examined causality, school prevention methods, weapons being used and resolution. The focus of the study was on middle and high school incidents.

One of the significant findings of the (Protecting America's Schools) study was that there was no cookie cutter or consistent profile of the attackers on the schools. While the majority are white males (63%), no other factors indicated a tendency or proclivity towards violence. Variations in the grades of the attackers, motives, socioeconomic backgrounds were such that there cannot be a direct line drawn to effectively prevent incidents based on these measures.

An added issue that has been prominently tied to causality is in the area of mental illness. "According to national prevalence rates, nearly 20% of children are diagnosed with at least one mental health and/or behavioral disorder" (p. 23). While 91% had psychological, behavioral and neurological/developmental disorders, it should be realized that the majority of people who are diagnosed in these categories do not commit violent crimes. However, in a study of attitudes about mental health, the perception by most individuals (74%) in assessing others indicates that the majority of people get their opinions and knowledge of mental illness from the media and not from mental health professionals (Borinstein, 2020). The same study also indicates that 81% of those surveyed believed the best way to deal with mentally ill people was to "put them behind a locked door".

These attitudes have created a “boogey man” where those with mental illness are considered to be a danger to others. Findings such as those that have been attributed to the Stoneman Douglas and the Sandy Hook shootings, where the firearms were obtained by someone who was considered to have a mental illness only seek to further the link between mental illness and violence. Recent legislation has sought to create “red flag” laws where those who have had a mental health issue are to have firearms taken from them by force (Szabo, 2019). However, as has been documented in the Protecting America’s Schools findings, the linkage between mental illness and violence is not founded in the data.

Additionally, as written in the Protecting America’s Schools report there are few consistencies among the attackers. One hundred percent of the attackers experienced some stressors, including social stressors. Sixty-six percent of these individuals also had multiple motivations that could be attributed to these stressors. However, these stresses are no greater than others have experienced. Eighty-nine percent of the attackers had shared “concerning communications” within two days of the attack and 66% had clearly indicated their attack to their intended targets (Protecting America’s Schools, 2019, p. 47).

In analyzing the data that has emerged from the Protecting America’s Schools in an attempt to find a known profile or enough commonalities to compare school shooters, the outcome is clear: There is no such animal. There exists such a wide variety of circumstances, personalities, and lived experiences that it would be impossible to predict the exact formula for what creates a school shooter.

Many schools invested heavily in physical presence and barriers to prevent school violence. However, these actions that taken place at secondary schools, where entry points can be limited and the population within the school can be relatively easily controlled. Unfortunately, this does not translate to a higher education setting. Bound by different physical spaces and an expectation of open access, Universities have vulnerabilities even under the best of conditions. Therefore, a different methodology relative to identifying and preventing threats at the University level is required.

HIGHER EDUCATION DYNAMICS

On April 16, 2007, a lone gunman, Seung Hui Cho, shot 32 students and faculty on the campus of Virginia Tech University, before taking his own life. The scale of the loss of life shocked the Higher Education community. The governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Tim Kaine, put together a panel to “...seek answers to the many questions that would arise from the tragedy” (Mass shootings at Virginia Tech, 2007, p. vii). The report that was developed, then became the blueprint for campuses to follow and to act upon to prevent other such tragedies from occurring in the future.

The scope of the review by the committee was sufficiently broad so as to allow a complete review of all laws, policies and campus responses. The report addressed many issues that exposed shortcomings of higher education policies, campus security, access to campus buildings, campus alert systems training for educators, and laws on the state and federal level. The net result was a series of sweeping reforms across multiple platforms in an effort to address the areas of concern.

At the campus level, one of the most significant findings was that “University officials in the office of Judicial Affairs, Cook Counseling Center, campus police, the Dean of Students, and others did not communicate with one another or with Cho’s parents - noting their beliefs that such communications were prohibited by the federal laws governing the privacy of health and education records” (p. 2). The knowledge that each department had concerning Cho’s mental health, odd behavior and classroom submissions was never brought together to assess the level of impairment, or the full level of danger that was about to be unleashed on the campus. The report made note “Although various individuals and departments with the University knew about each of these incidents, the University did not intervene effectively. No one knew all the information, so no one connected all the dots” (p. 2). Addressing this issue requires cross functional teams to be developed in order to assess behaviors and to evaluate threats to University campuses.

This finding created the foundation of what would become Behavioral Intervention Teams (BIT). The purpose of the BIT teams is to facilitate “the identification and support of individuals who demonstrate behaviors that may be early warning signs of possible troubled, disruptive or violent behavior” (The Value of Campus Behavioral Intervention Teams, 2016, para. 1).

Other major changes that are linked to violence on campus included the debate related to whether or not to allow guns on campuses. In Virginia, the panel recommended that the ability to “regulate the possession of firearms on campus if it so desires” (Mass shootings at Virginia Tech, 2007, p. 76) remains with the institution. This was included in the report because Cho was in violation of the campus firearm policy when he came armed onto campus. However, there was an equal debate that the lack of firearms made campuses less safe, therefore making colleges fertile ground for massacres such as Virginia Tech. Although the clear majority of campuses still restrict the ability of students to carry on campus, states, such as Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Mississippi, Ohio, Oregon, Utah, Tennessee, Texas and Wisconsin have laws in effect that allow students to carry on campus (The Campaign to Keep Guns off Campus, n.d.). The issue of whether or not to allow guns on campus as a means of curtailing future acts of violence at universities remains hotly debated.

SUGGESTIONS TO MINIMIZE INCIDENTS

As campuses encourage students, faculty and staff to report concerning behavior, it is understood that there are a large number of false positive reports. This in part, is due to the wide variety of experiences influencing each individual, that ultimately determines how they will interpret and react to situations. However, the desire to gain as much information as possible by school and university officials requires that there be a low threshold for reporting. While maintaining the low threshold, it is also critical to create a culture where reporting concerning behavior is a norm. There needs to be clear expectations of community members to relay information to be acted upon. Similarly, the response of the institution needs to be predictable and transparent as well. By outlining both the expectations and response, the institution can begin to mitigate barriers to reporting,

One of the most effective strategies for managing narratives is to have a well-trained BIT, that is able to discern what reports have potential to grow into serious situations and which reports will require being set aside. The BIT will work to develop plans and intervention strategies meant to

assist students in supporting both the students who have reported the behaviors, but also the individuals who have been identified. By creating these cross functional teams, it ensures that a holistic approach and review is brought to bear. The net result is that campuses are more likely to identify issues early and thus help in preventing tragedies such as those at Virginia Tech.

An added tool in the arsenal is training. Training should focus on learning to recognize signs of students who may be escalating and to report those behaviors as soon as they become aware of the potential for harm, thus creating a group of “active bystanders.” Active bystander is defined as “someone who not only witnesses a situation but takes steps to speak up or step in to keep a situation from escalating or to disrupt a problematic situation” (Safety Net Coalition, n.d.). The reason why this becomes a critical step is that frequently attackers will give clues as to their impending attacks. The Protecting America’s Schools (2019) study found in examination of 35 attackers, that “100% of them exhibited concerning behaviors prior to their attack” (p. 43) and that approximately one third of these displayed their intent online. However, “two-thirds of these were observed by classmates or adults and were not reported” (p. 44). Teaching people what to look for as well as how to report the cases becomes a critical piece of the solution to reducing the successful attacks on schools.

The advantages to active bystanding training are numerous. First, it has the benefit of allowing individuals to become more engaged in a proactive rather than reactive stance. This approach can be used to engage potential attackers before they arrive at the schoolhouse door. Thus, reducing the pressure on schools to provide “last ditch effort” prevention strategies of physical barriers and resource officers among others - that have proven themselves to be far from absolute. Making the reporting of disturbing behaviors the norm, potentially can lead to more positive outcomes.

A second benefit is that active bystanding training can be customized to be taught to all age groups, with less traumatic impact on students. This occurs by making sure that students understand that active bystanding is about providing help to students rather than preventing a tragedy. It allows individuals to focus on their positive roles rather than the anxiety that is associated with “real life” active shooter drills.

The focus on the stories that result from these tragedies is something that will continue. America’s desire to focus on the fantastic and macabre is well documented. The news outlets and social media platforms will continue to promote and tell the stories to generate interest, followership, and to promote their agendas.

However, this same system can be applied to developing training tools that can be used to help identify fact verses fiction. Training such as active bystander, can be offered without “awfulizing” (Dryden, 2007) the horrors of mass shooting events and focus on solutions rather than using fear as a motivation. Thus, shifting toward a more positive prevention type outlook.

Unfortunately, because there exists the need to maintain a low threshold for reporting (perceive something, report something) given the current issues with cultivation, there is no easy answer to lowering the number of false positive reports.

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ANALYZING THE INTERCONNECTIONS AMONG ENTREPRENEURIAL OPTIMISM, PESSIMISM AND REALISM

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ABSTRACT

There is a preoccupation in the entrepreneurship literature with the optimism of entrepreneurs and marked neglect of their pessimism and realism. This article posits that in addition to optimism, though often overlooked, “pessimism” may be a coexisting disposition in the entrepreneurs’ mindset, integral to explanations of their role performances. We developed an Entrepreneur Optimism - Realism - Pessimism (EORP) Model, which incorporates optimism, pessimism and realism within a common conceptual framework. Optimism and pessimism are dispositions that focus on current and future outcomes and the two intersect at what we term an axis of realism – the complex of challenges and outcomes from entrepreneurial activities. The EORP model is tested utilizing data derived from a survey of youth entrepreneurs in the developing country of Guyana. The findings revealed statistically significant correlations among the optimism, pessimism and realism of entrepreneurs and may have implications for an extended theoretical understanding of entrepreneurial dispositions.

Keywords: Youth entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial optimism, entrepreneurial pessimism, entrepreneurial realism, entrepreneurial outcomes, entrepreneurial challenges, youth entrepreneur challenges and outcomes, axis of realism.

INTRODUCTION

Scholars have attributed optimism as a primary reason why entrepreneurs are generally disposed to start businesses, endure the many challenges, achieve successes and persist despite business failures (Chen, Liao, Redd & Wu, 2013; Crane & Crane, 2007; Dawson & de Meza, 2018; Kappes & Sharot, 2015; Trevelyan, 2008). Optimism is a tendency to view events or situations in a positive light and to continue to expect favorable or successful outcomes. Entrepreneurs often are portrayed as incurable optimists. They have a can-do attitude and view the glass as half-full. Crane and Crane (2007) characterized this optimism of entrepreneurs as “dispositional optimism - the global expectations that good things will be plentiful in the future, and bad things scarce” (p. 13) and posit that such optimism is a defining characteristic of entrepreneurs.

There is a preoccupation in the entrepreneurship literature with the optimism of entrepreneurs and marked neglect of their pessimism and realism. This paper is concerned with an analysis of the challenges faced and, personal and business outcomes realized (indices of realism) and the relationships of these to the optimism and pessimism of youth entrepreneurs in a developing country. We posit that optimism and pessimism are linked dispositions in the entrepreneurs’

mindset, separable only in analysis. Just as optimism characterizes the role performance of entrepreneurs, though often overlooked, pessimism and realism may also play a part.

Youth entrepreneurs worldwide face greater obstacles and challenges in the startup, growth and expansion of their businesses than their older counterparts. Yet, many persist, are resilient and able to sustain their enterprises. Youth entrepreneurship, therefore, may present empirical realities that compel recognition of pessimism and realism and not only optimism as part of any meaningful theoretical analysis. Youth entrepreneurship also has not been the focus of the scholarship on optimism and entrepreneurship. This paper addresses these lacunae in the entrepreneurship literature.

Defining Entrepreneurship

There is no commonly accepted unifying definition of entrepreneurship and scholars use the term flexibly for their own purposes (Wiklund, Wright & Zahra, 2019). Goel, Vohra, Zhang, and Arora (2007) defined entrepreneurship as “the activity of establishing and managing a business for profit and growth” (p.10). Of relevance to this paper, Hisrich, Peters and Shepherd (2005) recognized more than just the monetary outcome and viewed entrepreneurship as “the process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort; assuming the accompanying financial, psychic and social risks; and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction and independence” (p. 8).

A youth entrepreneur is seen in this study “as any young person between the age of 16-35 who has the ability to recognize an opportunity when it shows and uses it to create value and wealth by starting a new or growing an existing venture in any sector” (Gwija, Eresia-Eke & Iwu, 2014, p. 12). For youth entrepreneurs in this study, their business is the primary source of income and it consumes most of their time and resources. Further, we share the position that links youth entrepreneurship to self-employment (Chigunta, 2002; Green, 2013; OECD, 2017).

This paper investigates the levels of optimism and pessimism of youth entrepreneurs in the developing country of Guyana and determines whether these levels correlate with their perceived challenges and outcomes. The combined challenges and outcomes of youth entrepreneurship are characterized as comprising an “axis of realism.” In this paper, we build a conceptual model that explicates the relationships among optimism, pessimism, perceptions of challenges and personal/business outcomes and, test the application of this model using data from a youth entrepreneur survey conducted in the developing country of Guyana.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Optimism and Entrepreneurship

Most businesses created by entrepreneurs tend to fail (Dawson & de Meza, 2018; US Small Business Administration (SBA), 2019) with half of all startups failing within the first five years (SBA, 2019) and only 33.3% surviving for at least 10 years (Outar, 2018). Additionally, new business ventures lose money in the first three to four years and after a decade in business the average entrepreneur earns 35% less than they would have otherwise (Kappes & Sharot, 2015).

Business owners also work much longer hours than their counterparts do in paid employment (Hamilton, 2000). If business failure is an occupational hazard and the opportunity costs are so high, why then do entrepreneurs start businesses and persist even in the face of failure and economic losses? Why do they seemingly have a capacity to absorb failure? Scholars and business leaders alike often attribute the optimism of entrepreneurs as the primary reason. Some argued that entrepreneurs are more optimistic than non-entrepreneurs (Dholakia, 2019; Kappes & Sharot, 2015; Puri & Robinson 2013) and saw opportunities where others did not (Silver 1985). It is either that people who are optimistic are more likely to start their own businesses or that starting a business makes people more optimistic (Kappes & Sharot).

Optimism in this sense is “a tendency to overestimate the probability of doing well - or conversely underestimate the probability of failure” (Dawson & de Meza, 2018). These researchers found that optimistic thinking was highest when outcomes were uncertain and flourished when success was perceived to be under the individual’s control. It is no surprise then that optimists are attracted to the uncertain and turbulent world of entrepreneurship (Dawson & de Meza, 2018). Positing that entrepreneurs tended to have a “superiority illusion,” Kappes and Sharot (2015) noted that while entrepreneurs were relatively realistic about the chances of success of a business like theirs, they had a more optimistic view of the chances of their own business success. It is argued that optimism supports creative thinking and persistence in entrepreneurs; helps to produce action; and, facilitates rebounding after failure (Dholakia, 2019). It is optimism, itself, that determines whether an individual even attempts to start a new venture (Crane & Crane, 2017; Fields, 1987). Fields argued that the entrepreneur must be an optimist and be able to persevere through failure. Nobel laureate, Daniel Kahneman acknowledged that there are low odds of success in any entrepreneurial venture and posited that lots of entrepreneurial progress is driven by what he called “delusional optimism.”

While optimism may be a necessary trait for business owners, researchers cautioned that excessive entrepreneurial optimism can be linked to the high failure rates of new ventures as entrepreneurs often hold unrealistic expectations, which may lead them to be mistakenly optimistic and ignore negative information (Gartner, 2005; Geers & Lassiter, 2002). Hmieleski and Baron (2009) pointedly demonstrated a negative relationship between entrepreneurs’ optimism and the performance (revenue and employment growth) of their ventures. The conclusion can be drawn then, that optimism can be both functional and dysfunctional for the entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurship Pessimism and Realism

The literature on entrepreneurship pessimism is sparse. Lopez and Garcia (2011) found that while potential technology-based entrepreneurs were more optimistic than non-potential technology entrepreneurs, there were no statistical differences in the pessimism and realism of these potential and non-potential entrepreneurs. The importance of Lopez and Garcia’s finding is the acknowledgement of not only optimism, but also pessimism and realism as aspects of the mindset of entrepreneurs. Chiang (2001) posited that dispositional pessimism resulted in the expectations that bad things would happen.

Liang and Dunn (2010) argued that even though optimism is common among entrepreneurs, it does not imply that realism and pessimism do not exist also. They stated the “There is a lack of understanding what realism and pessimism mean and how they impact entrepreneurs” (p. 4). These

authors developed a conceptual model that interpreted relationships between optimism, realism, pessimism and entrepreneurial characteristics. They typified entrepreneurs as optimistic, pessimistic and realistic using responses to the Life-Orientation Test Revised (LOT-R). They found strong positive correlations among entrepreneurs' optimism and independence; optimism and being in control; optimism and level of creativity; and, optimism and a willingness to take risk. They found that "realistic entrepreneurs" did not have a strong tendency to be independent, in control, creative or to take risk. Expanding on their 2010 research, Liang and Dunn (2011) confirmed the hypothesis that entrepreneurs who were typed "pessimistic" in that study believed that their businesses were not up and running well; their sales were lower than expected; profits were low; they were not happy and not financially better off. Further, Binder (2017) using panel data from German households found that "worries" about their financial situation and job security appeared to be the driving factors behind the self-employed. Worrying about their financial state and future financial security then, may be associated with pessimism among self-employed/entrepreneurs.

But, pessimism in entrepreneurs may not be a "lamentable thing." Paul (2011) posited that both optimism and pessimism bring feelings along with them and such feelings may push one into action. Further, pessimism and not only optimism may be a productive strategy for dealing with uncertainty. Paul asserted that: "Successful people often employ pessimism in a strategic way to motivate and prepare themselves for the future ... It's simply not the case that optimism is "good" and pessimism is "bad"- although that's how we've been encouraged to think about them. Rather, both are functional. And both have value" (p. 62). Further, Paul quotes psychologist, Edward Chang (2001) as saying: "The phenomenon of defensive pessimism shows that there are times when pessimism and negative thinking are actually features of a positive psychology, since they lead to better performance and personal growth" (p. 62).

Entrepreneurship Challenges and Outcomes

In this paper, entrepreneurial realism embodies the challenges entrepreneurs face and the outcomes they realize. Access to finance is probably the key challenge for young entrepreneurs (UNCTAD, 2015; Gwija, Eresia-Eke & Iwu, 2014; Dzisi, 2014; Danni & Danni, 2019a). Typically, lenders view young people as risky; lacking credit history, work history, bank accounts and having insufficient collateral to secure loans or lines of credit (UNCTAD, 2015; Danni & Danni, 2019a). Among other challenges faced by youth entrepreneurs are lack of business skills and entrepreneurial education, inability to recruit employees outside the family nucleus, limited innovation, and access to finance (OECD, 2017). Others have the lack of management experience and the unavailability of youth support structures as further challenges to youth entrepreneurship (Gwija, Eresia-Eke & Iwu, 2014; Danni & Danni, 2019b). Youth entrepreneurs in developing countries may also be impacted by social and cultural factors, such as negative orientations to business (Dzisi, 2014); low risk tolerance and fear of failure; environmental factors such as floods, pollution, and global warming; and, legal and administrative hurdles such as obtaining licenses and permits, and registering their business (Go Africa Go Germany Program, 2011).

Business and Personal Outcomes. In contrast to the conventional view that entrepreneurs are in business just for profit, Liang and Dunn (2011) found that entrepreneurship is more adequately characterized as a "beyond-profit-seeking activity." They argued that other personal and business

outcomes included greater autonomy, broader skill utilization, and the possibility of pursuing one's own ideas. Entrepreneurs expected considerable financial rewards coupled with additional advantages such as independence and personal development (Pinfold, 2001). Kuratko, Hornsby and Naffziger (1997) posited that entrepreneurship rewards or outcomes could be divided into four distinct groups - extrinsic rewards, intrinsic rewards, independence/autonomy, and family security. Extrinsic rewards included acquisition of personal wealth, increasing income and opportunities while intrinsic rewards included gaining public recognition, enjoying the excitement and personal growth. The independence/autonomy factors included maintenance of personal freedom, security and self-employment; being own boss and controlling employment destiny while family security factors included securing a future for family and building a business to pass on.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK – THE EORP MODEL

In this paper, we postulate that in addition to optimism, “pessimism” and “realism” may be co-existing considerations in the entrepreneurs’ mindset. We contend that optimism and pessimism are paired constructs, a duality, and that the consideration of one is better understood in relation to the other in the analysis of the entrepreneur in society. We posit that optimism and pessimism are not mutually exclusive although they can be treated as separate for analytic purposes.

Figure 1. Entrepreneur Optimism - Realism - Pessimism (EORP) Model

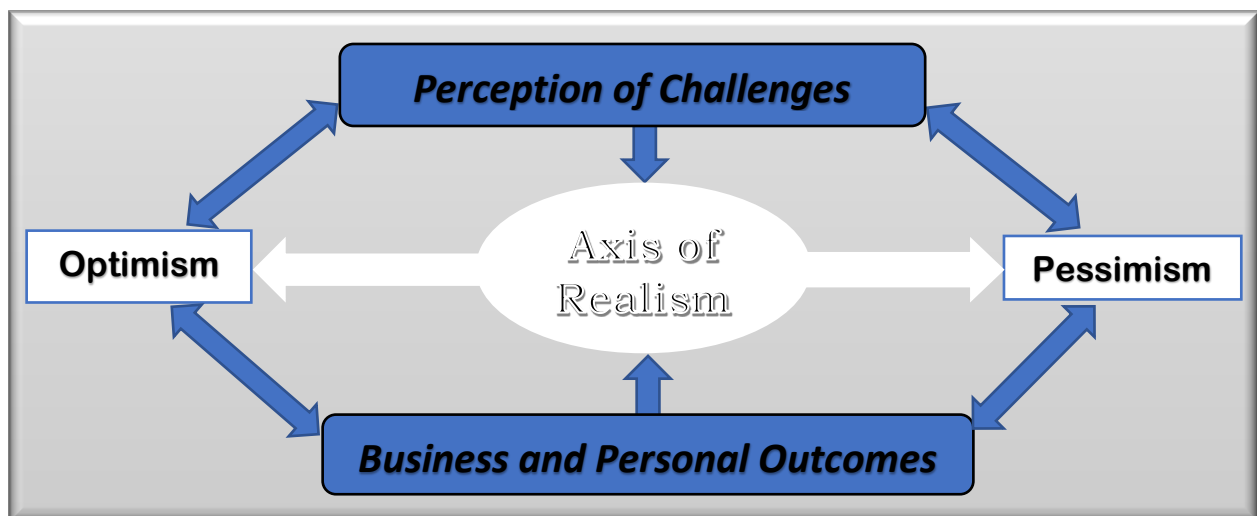


Figure 1 above, the Entrepreneur Optimism - Realism - Pessimism (EORP) Model articulates our conceptual framework. As used in this model “optimism” is an outlook or disposition of entrepreneurs to view events, situations and other business-related activities in a positive light and to continue to expect favorable or successful outcomes from these in the future. “Pessimism” is an outlook or disposition of entrepreneurs to view events, situations and other business-related activities in a negative light and to continue to expect unfavorable or unsuccessful outcomes from these in future. “Realism” is the acknowledgement of the manifestations, circumstances and situations that exist shorn of optimistic and pessimistic biases. In this model “realism” takes objective account of both entrepreneurial challenges and outcomes. It is akin to what William James (2007) refers to as that “empirical aggregate of things objectively known,” (p. 324) and is partly manifest in the collection of property saturated with the entrepreneur’s own labor.

Both optimism and pessimism are dispositions that focus on current and future outcomes and the two intersect at what we term an *axis of realism*. The *axis of realism* is the yield factor – a complex of challenges and outcomes from entrepreneurial investment and activities shorn of the entrepreneurs' aspirations and expectancies. *Challenges* are the perceived or real hurdles or pathway factors that entrepreneurs must cope with or overcome in order to assure the successes of their businesses. Challenges are the obstacles to entrepreneurial success and may include obtaining loans, lack of collateral, procuring markets and the economic environment. *Outcomes – business and personal* - are the observable and/or measurable successes and failures derived from involvement in entrepreneurial business ventures. We share the position that entrepreneurship can also be characterized as a beyond-profit-seeking activity. We go beyond profit to understand and explain entrepreneurs' perceptions of the successes and positives of being in business. *Business outcomes* in the model include such factors as profit and loss, business expansion and decline. *Personal outcomes* may include meeting personal/family needs, interacting with others and being their own boss.

The meaningful adequacy of the EORP Model is that it incorporates optimism, realism and pessimism within a common theoretical framework and does not treat these as isolated factors in the mindset of entrepreneurs. This model makes allowance for entrepreneurs to commit either to the optimism or pessimism side while being mindful of perceived challenges and outcomes - the axis of realism. The individual entrepreneur may react to the same challenges and outcomes that constitute the axis of realism either optimistically or pessimistically. It is the glass half-full or glass half-empty mantra. This model, however, does not seek to explain why entrepreneurs choose to act with optimism or pessimism or any combination of these in the conduct of their businesses, only that they may do so. Nor does it seek to explain the willingness and capacity of entrepreneurs to acknowledge and deal with the axis of realism that impacts their business. We also do not aim to account for the processes involved in the translation of optimism and pessimism from the entrepreneur's mindset to phases of their actions. Rather, the intention is to recognize and describe the actualization of these dispositions as determined by the empirical affirmations of the entrepreneurs themselves.

Four core propositions inform our EORP Model:

Proposition 1: There is a negative relationship between the optimism level of entrepreneurs and their perception of the level of challenges faced.

Proposition 2: There is a positive relationship between the pessimism level of entrepreneurs and their perception of the level of challenges faced.

Proposition 3: There is a negative relationship between the pessimism level of entrepreneurs and the business and personal outcomes realized.

Proposition 4: There is a positive relationship between the optimism level of entrepreneurs and the business and personal outcomes realized.

RESEARCH METHOD

This paper seeks to determine:- the levels of optimism and pessimism among youth entrepreneurs; their perceptions of the types and levels of challenges they face; the business and personal outcomes derived from their entrepreneurial ventures; perceptions of business success as measured

by their assessment of the adequacy of the profit they make; and, the correlations (if any) among youth entrepreneurs' levels of optimism and pessimism, the average level of challenges they face and their business success. Stemming from the Entrepreneur Optimism - Realism - Pessimism (EORP) Model and the propositions derived therefrom, we advance four hypotheses.

- H1 - Youth entrepreneurs are likely to display a high level of optimism.
- H2 - The lower the level of challenges youth entrepreneurs perceive the higher their level of optimism.
- H3 - The higher the level of challenges youth entrepreneurs perceive the higher their level of pessimism.
- H4 - The higher the level of challenges youth entrepreneurs perceive the lower their level on an optimism-pessimism scale.

This article utilizes data from a survey of youth entrepreneurs in the urban areas of Linden and Rose Hall/Port Mourant, Guyana. The survey of youth entrepreneurs is part of a broader mixed method study conducted by the authors to determine the factors impacting youth entrepreneurship in the developing country of Guyana.

Survey of Youth Entrepreneurs

Youth entrepreneurs in the surveyed communities operate mainly as self-employed informal/semi-formal economic operatives where most of their businesses are not registered, taxes and social security obligations invariably are not adhered to and, limited official records are available. Because of the unavailability of official records, access to youth entrepreneurs for interviewing was accomplished through the assistance of community leaders; fanning out teams of researchers in key business districts and other areas in the towns to identify youth entrepreneurs; and, by utilizing the snowball technique to find and interview additional respondents. One hundred and seventy-eight youth entrepreneurs were identified and interviewed using a survey instrument. Seventy-seven respondents derived from the town of Linden and 101 derived from the Rose Hall/Port Mourant urban communities.

The survey instrument comprised demographic, business characteristics, business operations and economic assessment questions. Included in these broad categories were questions on business type, startup capital, revenue, profit, access to loans and other forms of financing, entrepreneurial skills and training, number of employees, working hours, family and other support systems, perceptions about business successes and challenges facing youth entrepreneurs. The questions used in this survey were largely derived from pre-existing surveys on youth entrepreneurship (African Leadership Academy, 2016; Gwija, Eresia-Eke, & Iwu, , 2014; Fatoki & Chindoga, 2011).

For purposes of this paper, selected questions were combined to construct 4 new variables - optimism score, pessimism score, optimism-pessimism score, and an average challenge score.

Optimism Score and Pessimism Score. The optimism score and the pessimism score both serve as empirical indicators of the levels of optimism and pessimism respectively of youth entrepreneurs in the survey. We posit that perceptions of being happy, proud, liking what they do

and willing to do their businesses for a long time are indicative of entrepreneurial optimism. While perceptions of feeling frustrated, worried and overwhelmed are indicative of entrepreneurial pessimism. Utilizing a Likert scale from 1 to 4, with 1 being “*not at all*” and 4 being “*very much so*,” respondents provided responses to the following questions. When I think of my business, I feel: a. happy; b. proud; c. I can do this for a long time; d. I like what I do; e. frustrated; f. worried; and, g. overwhelmed. A composite variable called the *optimism score* was constructed from the sum of the numeric responses given by respondents to categories a to d above. This composite variable is used to measure the multidimensional concept of “optimism” for each respondent and can range in value from 4 to 16 with 4 being very low on the optimism scale. Similarly, a composite variable called the *pessimism score* was constructed from the sum of the numeric responses given by respondents to categories e to g above. This composite variable is used to measure the multidimensional concept of pessimism and can vary in value from a possible 3 to 9, with 9 being the highest on the pessimism scale. Only data from respondents that answered all relevant questions were utilized to form the respective scores.

Construct validity for “optimism score” and “pessimism score” respectively was determined using Pearson’s correlation tests to detect convergent and divergent validities. For the “optimism score,” we tested the intercorrelations of the individual measures used and the constructed composite variable and found statistically-significant moderate to high convergence between each pair tested (see correlation matrix in Table 1). In particular, the individual measures showed very high correlation with the construct. As the discriminant variable, the combined pessimism score was used and we found divergence as expected.

Table 1: Correlation matrix for Optimism measures, Optimism score and Pessimism score

	Feel - Happy	Feel - Proud	I can do this for a long time	I like what I do	OPTIMISM SCORE
Feel - Happy	1				
Feel – Proud	0.668	1			
I can do this for a long time	0.324	0.396	1		
I like what I do	0.335	0.485	0.522	1	
OPTIMISM SCORE	0.743	0.812	0.788	0.712	1
PESSIMISM SCORE	-0.275	-0.11	-0.179	-0.06	-0.215

Note: Bolded coefficients are significant at $p < .01$ level

Table 2: Correlation matrix for Pessimism measures, Pessimism score and Optimism score

	Feel - frustrated	Feel - worried	Feel - overwhelmed	PESSIMISM SCORE
Feel - frustrated	1			
Feel - worried	0.600	1		
Feel - overwhelmed	0.300	0.362	1	
PESSIMISM SCORE	0.794	0.832	0.723	1
OPTIMISM SCORE	-0.299	-0.233	-0.011	-0.215

Note: Bolded coefficients are significant at $p < .01$ level

Similarly, for the “pessimism score” construct, we tested the intercorrelations of the individual measures used and the constructed composite variable and found statistically-significant moderate to high convergence between each pair tested (see correlation matrix in Table 2 above). The individual measures showed very high correlation with the construct. As the discriminant variable, the combined optimism score was used and we found divergence as expected.

Optimism-Pessimism Score. The combined optimism-pessimism score for each respondent was derived by subtracting her/his total pessimism score from her/his total optimism score. This score was used to determine the distribution of youth entrepreneurs on a combined *Optimism-Pessimism Scale*. Composite optimism-pessimism scores were created only for respondents who provided answers to all seven measures (a to g) earlier referred to. The optimism-pessimism scores can range from 13 on the high end to negative 8 (-8) on the low end.

Average Challenge Score. A key component of the *axis of realism* introduced in the EORP Model is the youth entrepreneur’s perceptions of challenges faced. For this study, an *average challenge score* is a derived variable created by averaging the numeric responses provided by respondents to a list of 29 probable challenges. For each probable challenge, respondents had to state whether they strongly disagree, disagree, agree or strongly agree that it was a challenge facing them as an entrepreneur. Scores were assigned as follow: 1- Strongly disagree that it is a challenge, 2 – disagree, 3 – agree and 4 – strongly agree. Respondents were availed both the numeric values and their meanings to assist in their choices. The higher the average score, the higher the perception of challenges faced by the youth entrepreneur. We report broadly on the perceptions and levels of challenges facing youth entrepreneurs in the survey and use the derived average challenge score to provide an understanding of any correlation between the perceived level of challenges and the optimism and pessimism scores for respondents.

Business and Personal Outcomes. The EORP Model also introduced the concept of “*business and personal outcomes*” as another key component in the “axis of realism.” We derived a measurable variable of *business success* as an outcome by utilizing the statement, “I do not make enough profit” as a proxy for “business success” as perceived by the youth entrepreneurs themselves. Respondents provided answers ranging from 1 to 4 on a Likert scale with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 4 being “strongly agree.” Results from this question were used to determine any correlations between the optimism and pessimism scores of respondents and their measured perception of their business success. Additionally, answers from two survey questions were used to provide insights into the thinking of youth entrepreneurs about the personal and other outcomes from their entrepreneurship ventures. These questions are “What are some of the successes of your business?” and “What are some of the positives of being in business?” These were open-ended questions and were not scored or scaled by respondents so they cannot be linked, in any statistical way, to the optimism or pessimism scores derived for each respondent. They were coded using key words and results reported.

RESULTS

One hundred and seventy-eight (178) youth entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 35 were interviewed. Seven-seven (43.3%) respondents were from the town of Linden and 101 (56.7%) were from the Rose Hall/Port Mourant community. Of the 178 youth entrepreneurs, 84 or 47.2%

were females and 94 or 52.8% males. Seventy-one (39.9%) were between the ages of 18 and 25; 45 or 25.3% were between 26 and 30 years old; and, 62 or 34.8% fell within the 31 to 35 years age group. When asked to identify their race, 54 respondents (30.3%) identified as “Black/African,” while 73 (41%) identified as “East Indian” and 51 (28.6%) identified as “mixed race.” Ninety-nine of the 178 youth entrepreneurs (55.6%) reported that secondary school was their highest level of education, while 12 (6.7%) attained only primary education. Forty-eight respondents (27%) reported that Technical/Vocational education was their highest level of education and 16 respondents (9%) attended university. In sum, 64 respondents (36%) had tertiary or post-secondary education. Sixteen respondents (9%) and eight respondents (4.5%) were currently in technical/vocational school and university respectively.

Business start-up and Business Characteristics

Of the 178 respondents, 153 or 85.9% owned one business; 18 or 10.1% owned two businesses; and, 7 owned 3 businesses each. The most dominant business category in which respondents operated was retailing/vending with 38% or 73 respondents naming this category. Other popular business categories were beauty and grooming services (12%) snack preparation (9%), livestock rearing (7%) and transportation services (7%). Besides these more prevalent categories, youth entrepreneurs engaged in event planning, catering, agriculture, appliances/computer repairs, carpentry/welding/ block making and garment manufacturing. They owned restaurants, bars and meat shops; and, provided art and craft services, tutoring, printing and other services. The survey data revealed a few significant differences in gender ownership of businesses. There were male youth entrepreneurs in all the represented categories of businesses except for garment manufacturing. However, there were no female respondents owning appliances/computer repair shops, in agriculture, construction related services or transportation businesses.

Almost 28 % of respondents were in business for two years or less; 29.5% were in business for three to six years; 26.1% were in business for seven to 10 years while, 15.5% reported being in business for 11 years or longer. Only 3.4% reported being in business for over 15 years. One hundred and fifty-two respondents (85.4%) earned most of their income from their owned businesses while 15 (6.2%) had jobs or gigs along with their businesses and 6 others said they assisted their spouses to earn other income. One hundred and twenty-seven of the 178 youth entrepreneurs (71.3%) started their business at 18 years or older while 48 or 27% of respondents started their business at ages younger than 18; 69.1% of the respondents started their businesses between the ages of 16 and 25 years. One hundred and twenty-seven respondents (71.3%) were the sole owners of their businesses while 49 (27.5%) were in business with others including parents, siblings and other relatives. One hundred and twenty-six respondents (70.8%) reported having no employees.

Optimism, Pessimism and the Optimism-Pessimism Score

Utilizing a Likert scale from 1 to 4, with 1 being “not at all” and 4 being “very much so,” respondents were asked to give a numerical response representing how they felt when they think of their business based on the following measures: a. happy; b. proud; c. I can do this for a long time; d. I like what I do; e. frustrated; f. worried; and, g. overwhelmed. For this paper the categories

a to d are used to construct an *optimism score*; while, categories e to g are used as a *pessimism score*.

Youth Entrepreneurial Optimism. Table 3 provides summary statistics for the individual optimism measures. Means for these measures ranged between 3.63 and 3.88 with the median being 4 for all individual measures. Respondents in the two communities were equally happy, proud and liked what they did but the youth entrepreneurs in Linden were less optimistic that they can carry on their businesses for a long while ($p = .0017$). Researchers found no statistically significant difference when data for the individual measures were tested by gender and age-group.

Table 3. Summary Statistics for Optimism Measures

Optimism measure	N	Mean	Variance	Std. dev.	Median
Feel - Happy	177	3.74	0.28	0.53	4
Feel - Proud	177	3.72	0.32	0.56	4
Feel - I can do this for a long time	175	3.63	0.59	0.77	4
Feel - I like what I do.	178	3.88	0.17	0.41	4

The Optimism score. To construct an overall optimism score, researchers used data only from respondents who had provided scores for all the relevant categories (a. happy; b. proud; c. I can do this for a long time; d. I like what I do) resulting in 174 completed responses. When aggregated across all relevant questions, the optimism score had a possible range from 4 to 16. Table 4 and Figure 2 report on the optimism scores of respondents.

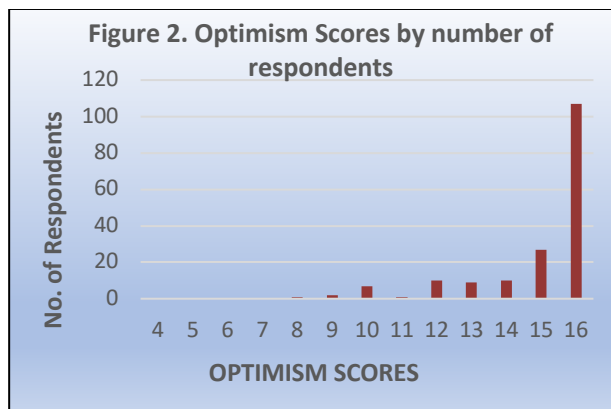


Table 4. Frequency for Optimism Scores n = 174		
Optimism Scores	Freq.	% of Total
8	1	0.57
9	2	1.15
10	7	4.02
11	1	0.57
12	10	5.7
13	9	5.2
14	10	5.7
15	27	15.5
16	107	61.5

No respondent had an optimism score totaling less than 8. Scores ranged on the high end from 8 to 16 with 144 of the 174 respondents (82.7%) recording scores of 14, 15 and 16. One hundred and seven respondents or 61.5% recorded the highest possible optimism score of 16. Most respondents therefore placed very high on the optimism scale. Further, researchers found no statistically significant difference when the aggregated data was tested by area, gender or age-group, suggesting these factors played no significant role in the youth entrepreneurs' overall optimism. These results confirm our Hypothesis 1 that youth entrepreneurs are likely to display a high level of optimism.

Youth Entrepreneurial Pessimism. Table 5 provides summary statistics for the individual pessimism measures. Given that scores for the individual measures ranged from 1 to 4, the means and the medians for all the pessimism measures were low. The mean scores were frustrated 2.1, worried 2.17, and overwhelmed 2.28. Medians were 2 for all individual measures. However, the data presented relatively high standard deviations for all measures so further investigation was warranted to ascertain any differences among key groups of respondents. Analysis did not reveal statistically significant differences in two of the pessimism measures – “frustrated” and “worried” when tested by community, gender or age group. However, the “overwhelmed” measure showed significant differences ($p < 0.1$ level) in responses by gender and area. For further analysis, the data was broken into four groups using gender by area. T-tests revealed statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) between the responses given to this measure by female entrepreneurs in Linden compared to their female counterparts in Rose Hall/ Port Maurant and their male counterparts in both communities. The means of the “overwhelmed” measure were 2.72 for Linden female; 2.07 for Linden male; 2.11 for Rose Hall/Port Maurant female and 2.19 for Rose Hall/Port Maurant male.

Table 5. Summary Statistics for Pessimism Measures

Column	n	Mean	Variance	Std. dev.	Median
Feel - frustrated	173	2.12	0.82	0.91	2
Feel - worried	174	2.17	0.96	0.98	2
Feel - overwhelmed	172	2.28	1.04	1.02	2

The Pessimism score. To construct an overall pessimism score, researchers used data only from respondents who had provided scores for all the relevant measures (a. frustrated; b. worried; c. overwhelmed) resulting in 169 completed responses. When aggregated across all relevant categories, the pessimism score had a possible range from 3 to 12. Table 6 and Figure 3 report on the pessimism scores of respondents.

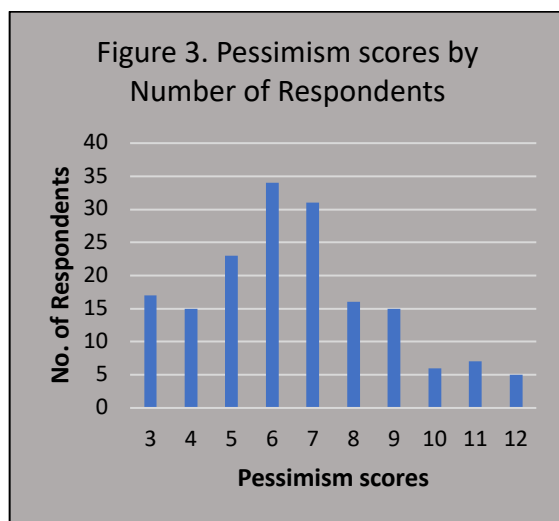
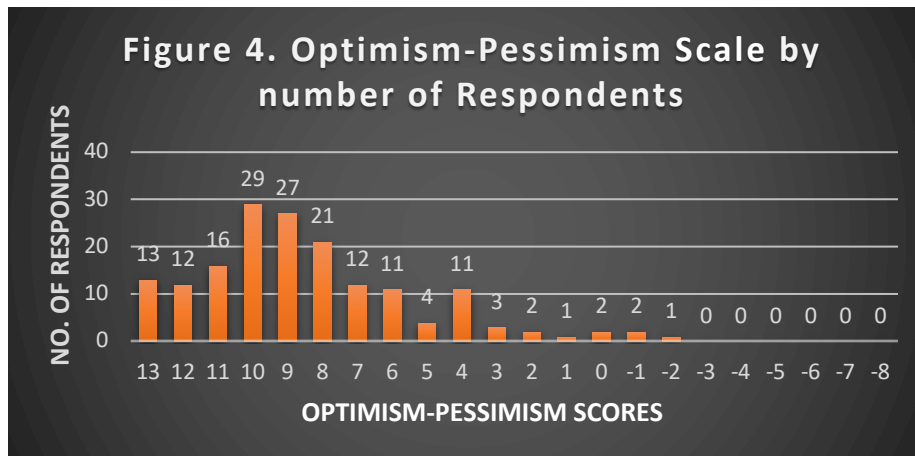


Table 6. Frequency for Pessimism Score n=169		
Pessimism Score	Frequency	% of Total
3	17	10.1
4	15	8.9
5	23	13.6
6	34	20.1
7	31	18.3
8	16	9.5
9	15	8.9
10	6	3.6
11	7	4.1
12	5	3

Respondents had aggregate pessimism scores across the entire range from 3 to 12. The mean of the aggregate pessimism score was 6.55 with a median and mode scores of 6. Seventy point four

percent of the respondents had scores between 5 and 9. There was no statistically significant differences between the male and female scores or the scores by community. Based on these measures and data realized from the survey, pessimism and not only optimism can be acknowledged as characteristic of youth entrepreneurs' functioning. Correlation tests revealed a statistically significant negative correlation between respondents' optimism scores and pessimism scores ($r = -0.215$; $p < 0.0001$; $n=164$).

The Optimism-Pessimism Score. Combined Optimism-Pessimism scores were developed based on the results for all 7 categories (a. happy; b. proud; c. I can do this for a long time; d. I like what I do; e. frustrated; f. worried; and, g. overwhelmed). The variable *optimism-pessimism score* was constructed by subtracting total pessimism scores from total optimism scores for each respondent, resulting in a possible range of scores from 13 to -8. Results pointed to an actual range of scores from 13 on the optimistic or high end to -2 on the low or pessimistic end of the scale (See Figure 4).



Data suggest that when the optimism and pessimism scores are linked together in analysis as a common scale, the youth entrepreneurs from the survey recorded relatively high on the optimistic end. Ninety-five percent (95%) of respondents scored in the upper fifty percentile and 70.6% of respondents recorded scores in the upper 27 percentile of the overall optimism-pessimism scale. The Optimism-Pessimism scores were tested (using t-tests) against demographic factors such as gender, age group, and educational background along with area of residence. Researchers found no statistically significant influence of these on the optimism-pessimism scores of respondents.

Perception of Challenges facing Youth Entrepreneurs

As indicated in the EORP Model, perceptions of challenges were included as an integral component of the axis of realism for entrepreneurs. To understand the level and types of challenges facing youth entrepreneurs, respondents were posed with a list of 29 probable challenges for which they had to state whether they strongly disagree, disagree, agree or strongly agree that it was a challenge facing them as a youth entrepreneur. Scores were assigned as follow: 1- strongly disagree that it is a challenge, 2 – disagree, 3 – agree and 4 – strongly agree. Respondents were availed both scores and their meanings to assist in their choices. Mean scores and related statistics were calculated based on the respondents' answer to each probable challenge. The lower the mean

score, the less the perception of it as a challenge to youth entrepreneurs from the survey. Table 7 reports on the challenges and mean scores calculated across all respondents. Data revealed that out of the 29 probable challenges, respondents generally did not perceive 21 of these as being serious challenges (mean < 2.5).

Table 7. Summary Statistics - Challenges Faced by Entrepreneurs

Challenge	N	Mean	Variance	Std. dev.	Std. err.	Median
Support from community	177	2.01	0.84	0.92	0.07	2
Necessary skills and knowledge	176	2.11	0.99	0.99	0.07	2
Getting loans	173	2.23	1.12	1.06	0.08	2
Family members to help	175	1.89	0.83	0.91	0.07	2
Crime or fear of crime	176	2.65	1.13	1.06	0.08	3
Not enough opportunity in market	176	2.58	0.95	0.98	0.07	3
Uncertainty about future	175	2.65	0.93	0.97	0.07	3
Support from government	174	2.67	1.30	1.14	0.09	3
Finding a business partner	173	1.97	0.95	0.98	0.07	2
A weak economic environment	175	3.15	0.85	0.92	0.07	3
Getting funding information	178	2.33	0.90	0.95	0.07	2
Getting money to invest	176	2.50	1.11	1.05	0.08	3
Lack of friends to help	176	1.95	0.85	0.92	0.07	2
Lack of collateral to obtain loan	175	2.30	1.19	1.09	0.08	2
Lack of business experience	178	1.80	0.77	0.88	0.07	2
Fear of risk	177	2.41	0.90	0.95	0.07	3
No people encouraging me	178	1.85	0.72	0.85	0.06	2
Limited management and entrepreneurship knowledge	177	2.17	0.83	0.91	0.07	2
High cost of running business	177	2.59	0.98	0.99	0.07	3
Making enough profit	174	2.49	0.85	0.92	0.07	2.5
Having good understanding of acct.	176	1.98	0.77	0.88	0.07	2
Finding good labor	173	1.98	0.74	0.86	0.07	2
Finding materials/ stocks for business	177	1.98	0.78	0.88	0.07	2
Having good ideas to grow business	178	1.83	0.57	0.76	0.06	2
Having right contacts to grow business	178	2.17	0.89	0.94	0.07	2
Not the right time to expand	175	2.19	0.85	0.92	0.07	2
Too young for this responsibility	178	1.43	0.39	0.63	0.05	1
Business involves too much work	177	2.06	0.91	0.95	0.07	2
Lack of information	173	2.16	0.99	0.99	0.08	2

Source: (List of challenges adapted from: Fatoki, & Chindoga, 2011)

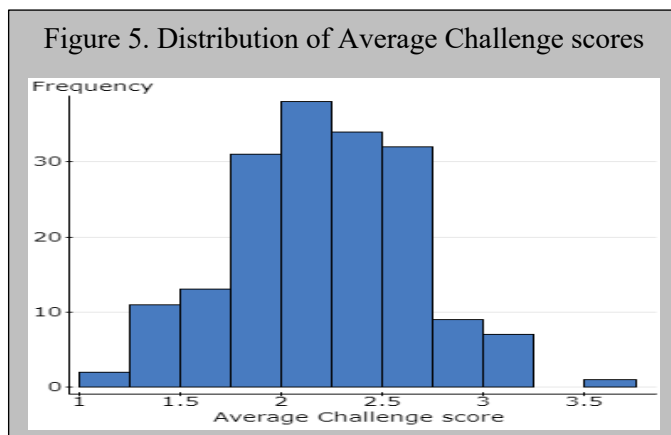
Greater than 50% of respondents in both communities respectively agreed or strongly agreed that the following were challenges they faced: A weak economic environment – 76.6%; Uncertainty about the future (59.4%); the high cost of running their businesses (54.7%); and, support from

government (58%). In addition, youth entrepreneurs identified challenges that were specific to their respective areas. In Linden, greater than 50% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed on these additional challenges: lack of funding information (60.6%); difficulty getting loans (50.7%); lack of collateral to get loans (52.6%); and, money to invest (56%). For youth entrepreneurs in the Rose Hall/Port Mourant area the additional higher-ranked challenges were crime or fear of crime (69%); not making enough profit (51.4%); fear of risk (54%); and, not enough opportunity in the market (61%). Male and female respondents generally agreed on the main challenges within their respective communities. However, in Linden 57.3% of females agreed or strongly agreed that getting loans was a challenge compared to only 38% of males in that area.

Entrepreneurial Confidence in the face of challenges. Respondents seemed confident in their own abilities to run their businesses and about the support from family/friends and the community. Greater than 70% of entrepreneurs surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed that the following were challenges for them - finding a business partner, lack of business experience, no family or friends to assist them, not having good ideas to grow the business, not having a good understanding of accounting, finding good labor, too young for the responsibility and lack of community support.

The Average Challenge Score. An average challenge score was generated for each respondent, based on their answers across all challenges. Average challenge scores ranged between 1 and 4 for each respondent. Low scores indicated that overall, the respondent did not perceive a high level of challenges while high scores indicated perceptions of a higher level of challenges over the 29 categories covered. Due to the unique numerical values obtained for each respondent, the average scores were binned and range results are reported in Table 8 and Figure 5.

	Freq.	% of Total
1 to 1.5	13	7.3
1.5 to 2	44	24.7
2 to 2.5	72	40.4
2.5 to 3	41	23.0
3 to 3.5	7	3.9
3.5 to 4	1	0.6



With 2.5 as the midpoint of the scale, 72.4% of respondents perceived a lower level of challenges compared to 27.6% who perceived a higher overall level of challenges. The average challenge scores derived were controlled for area, gender, age group, educational background and marital status, but, no statistically significant differences were observed within these demographics.

Connecting Optimism, Pessimism and Challenges

The EORP Model suggests that there is a correlation between perceived challenges and optimism; and, between perceived challenges and pessimism. Three correlations were determined with

Pearson's correlation results as follows: average challenge score and optimism score ($r = -0.27$; $p = 0.0004$; $n = 174$); average challenge score and pessimism score ($r = 0.28$; $p = 0.0002$; $n = 169$); average challenge score and optimism-pessimism score ($r = -0.35$; $p < 0.0001$; $n = 167$). The correlations were all statistically significant and were positive or negative as expected, confirming study hypotheses 2, 3 and 4.

- The lower the level of challenges youth entrepreneurs perceive the higher their level of optimism ($r = -0.27$; $p = 0.0004$).
- The higher the level of challenges youth entrepreneurs perceive the higher their level of pessimism ($r = 0.28$; $p = 0.0002$).
- The higher the level of challenges youth entrepreneurs perceive the lower their level on an optimism-pessimism scale. ($r = -0.35$; $p < 0.0001$)

While there were low degrees of correlation when the optimism score and pessimism score were tested individually against the average challenge scores, there was a more robust degree of correlation (-0.35) when the combined optimism-pessimism score was correlated with the average challenge score. This more robust correlation may suggest that just as optimism has been found to characterize the dispositions of entrepreneurs, pessimism may also play a part. In the face of entrepreneurial challenges, entrepreneurial optimism, then, is moderated by some measure of entrepreneurial pessimism among youth entrepreneurs in this survey. Similarly, optimism and pessimism may together influence how entrepreneurial challenges are perceived.

Business and Personal Outcomes

Along with challenges, entrepreneurs' business and personal outcomes are important indices of the axis of realism for entrepreneurs. Researchers utilized the statement, "I do not make enough profit" as a proxy for "business success." Respondents provided answers ranging from 1 to 4 on a Likert scale with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 4 being "strongly agree." Results showed that in general respondents who did not perceive themselves as making enough profit" scored lower on the optimism-pessimism scale than those who did ($r = -0.33$; $p < 0.0001$; $n = 164$). This correlation indicates that the perception of success in business, as measured by profit realization, may be a significant factor in the overall optimism-pessimism score of respondents.

Further, answers to two survey questions provide insights into the thinking of youth entrepreneurs about the business and personal outcomes from their entrepreneurial ventures. These were open-ended questions but significant commonalities were found among the answers given by respondents. When asked: "what are some of the successes of your business?" 175 of the 178 respondents provided answers. In all there were 198 responses for coding as some respondents provided more than one answer. Significant success indicators for youth entrepreneurs in this survey were: the expansion, growth and sustainability of their business ventures; and, that being in business allowed them to provide financially for self and family. Among the popular responses were: "meeting personal/family needs" (36%); "business growth/expansion" (26.9%); acquiring personal assets (18.3%); business diversification (6.3%); and, having savings/financial security (5.1%). Respondents also gauged their success by customer and community satisfaction, profitability, and financial independence among other factors.

When asked about the positives of being in business, 172 respondents provided answers. Respondents seemingly found “being their own boss”, “making their own money” and the “ability to interact and network with others” as significant positives emanating from being entrepreneurs. Popular responses were “being my own boss (44.2%); making my own money (17.4%); meeting and interacting with people/networking (14%) and satisfying customers (8.1%). Among the other positives of being in business identified by the youth entrepreneurs, to a lesser extent, included being independent, occupied and responsible, helping community, meeting and satisfying personal and family needs, flexible working hours, being a role model and inspiring others, sharing and gaining knowledge, gaining respect and building self-esteem. A few respondents just indicated that they felt good about being in business and that they liked what they did.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The prevailing entrepreneurship literature is preoccupied with entrepreneurial optimism. This paper addressed the neglected dimensions of entrepreneurial pessimism and realism. We argued that in addition to optimism, though often overlooked, “pessimism” and “realism,” may be coexisting considerations in the entrepreneurs’ mindset and that these constructs may be as integral to explanations of the disposition of entrepreneurs. Optimism and pessimism are treated as a duality. An *Entrepreneur Optimism - Realism - Pessimism (EORP) Model* was developed, which incorporated optimism, realism and pessimism within a common conceptual framework and did not treat these as isolated in the mindset of entrepreneurs. We introduced the construct *axis of realism* - a complex of challenges and outcomes from entrepreneurial investment and activities shorn of the entrepreneurs’ aspirations and expectancies. This construct was incorporated within the EORP model and made allowance for entrepreneurs in their functioning to commit to either the optimism or the pessimism side while being mindful of the challenges and outcomes they experience - axis of realism. The axis of realism is the nexus of the model and underlines its dynamic component making allowance for the entrepreneur to respond optimistically or pessimistically when confronted with entrepreneurial challenges and outcomes. As the yield factor of the model, the *axis of realism* conceivably makes allowance for entrepreneurs to be an optimist about some aspects of their business and at the same time be a pessimist about other aspects. In this age of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the utility of the EORP Model is amplified as entrepreneurs are constrained to factor into their mindsets and dispositions the realities of adverse economic, legal and public health milieux that frontally negate accustomed individual strivings in the business world.

We tested the EORP Model by utilizing data from a survey of youth entrepreneurs in the urban areas of Linden and Rose Hall/Port Mourant, in the developing country of Guyana. A significance of this study is that youth entrepreneurship has not been a focal concern of prevailing research on optimism and entrepreneurship. This neglect is notwithstanding the fact that youth entrepreneurs worldwide face even greater obstacles and challenges in the start-up, growth and expansion of their businesses than other entrepreneurs.

Data were utilized to investigate the levels of optimism and pessimism of youth entrepreneurs and to determine whether these levels correlated with the perceived challenges and business/personal outcomes of respondents from the survey. We generated separate optimism scores and pessimism scores and then combined these for each respondent by subtracting the pessimism scores from the

optimism scores to create a combined optimism-pessimism scale. Consistent with the expansive research literature on optimism and entrepreneurship, we found that youth entrepreneurs in Guyana scored very high on optimism measures. With a possible optimism score ranging from 4 to 16, respondents' scores ranged on the high end from 8 to 16 with 82.7% of respondents recording the three highest scores of 14, 15 and 16. These data confirmed our Hypothesis 1 "Youth entrepreneurs are likely to display a high level of optimism."

Similarly, the data revealed that the youth entrepreneurs also evidenced a disposition towards pessimism. Scores were recorded over the entire range of possible pessimism scores from 3 to 12 with a mean of 6.55 and median and modal scores of 6, almost in a bell curve formation. Seventy-point-four percent (70.4%) of the respondents had scores between 5 and 9. These data suggest that the prevalence of optimism among the youth entrepreneurs does not negate the co-existing presence of pessimism. The entrepreneurs in this study recognized that in pursuit of their enterprises, in addition to being mainly optimistic, they were also pessimistic, in that there were issues to worry about, to be frustrated over and that their businesses, or some aspect thereof, can be overwhelming at times. These findings provide justification for our typification of optimism-pessimism as a duality.

The optimism-pessimism scale represented in this article was articulated through the construction of a variable "optimism-pessimism score" in order to bring together the individual optimism and pessimism scores for each respondent. The data revealed that even when tempered by pessimism, the youth entrepreneurs recorded relatively high towards the optimism end of the scale. Ninety-five percent (95%) of respondents scored in the upper half (optimism side) of the overall optimism-pessimism scale.

The remaining three hypotheses were tested using the Pearson's Correlation test - Hypothesis 2. The lower the level of challenges youth entrepreneurs perceive the higher their level of optimism; Hypothesis 3. The higher the level of challenges youth entrepreneurs perceive the higher their level of pessimism; and, Hypothesis 4. The higher the level of challenges youth entrepreneurs perceive the lower their level on the optimism-pessimism scale. These hypotheses could not be rejected, as correlations were all statistically significant and were positive or negative as expected. We found, however, a more robust correlation between the average challenge score and the combined optimism-pessimism score. This more robust correlation may suggest that in the welter of their functioning entrepreneurs may evidence both optimistic and pessimistic dispositions. In the face of entrepreneurial challenges, entrepreneurial optimism, then, is moderated by some measure of entrepreneurial pessimism among youth entrepreneurs in the survey. Similarly, optimism and pessimism may together influence how entrepreneurial challenges are perceived. These findings affirm the functional utility of the combined optimism-pessimism measure, which can provide a useful lens for understanding the relationships of optimism and pessimism to the perceived challenges of entrepreneurs. Further, they point to a deficiency in the entrepreneurial literature that privileges entrepreneurial optimism to the neglect of entrepreneurial pessimism.

Along with challenges, entrepreneurs' business and personal outcomes are important indices of the *axis of realism* in this paper. When the respondents' perceptions of the adequacy of their profit was used as a proxy for "success," results revealed that youth entrepreneurs who perceived themselves as not "making enough profit" scored lower on the optimism-pessimism scale than

those who perceived themselves as “making enough profit.” This correlation indicates that the perception of success in business, as measured by profit realization, may be a significant influence on the overall optimism-pessimism score of respondents. This finding is consistent with that of Liang and Dunn (2011).

The findings from the survey were largely consistent with findings from entrepreneurship research literature on intrinsic and extrinsic outcomes (Kuratko et al., 1997; Pinfold, 2001; Liang & Dunn, 2011). The youths in the survey similarly identified many beyond-profit-seeking outcomes from their entrepreneurial ventures. Significant success indicators for youth entrepreneurs in this survey were: the expansion, growth and sustainability of their business ventures; and, that being in business allowed them to provide financially for self and family. Many respondents reported that “being their own boss”, “making their own money” and the “ability to interact and network with others” were positives emanating from being entrepreneurs.

Shortcomings of this study include: not explaining why entrepreneurs choose to act with optimism or pessimism or any combination of these in the conduct of their businesses, only that they may do so; and, not accounting for the processes involved in the translation of optimism and pessimism from the entrepreneur’s mindset to phases of their actions. Opportunities abound for studying entrepreneurial optimism, realism and pessimism as an integral whole and by so doing enriching the entrepreneurship literature and advancing our understanding of entrepreneurial behavior.

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PUBLIC RELATIONS SELF-REFLECTION: WHAT “DO” WE CALL OURSELVES? WHAT “SHOULD” WE CALL OURSELVES?

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a reminder that it is good to engage in systematic self-reflection and establish what public relations people call themselves. It provides a brief highlight of many ongoing discussions about how public relations can be professionalized, be credible and earn legitimacy. It provides a descriptive analysis of how five professional organizations (or recognized mouthpieces for the fields of public relations, marketing and advertising that they represent) regularly talk about public relations people and others who engage in related strategic professional initiatives. It does so recognizing that public relations, marketing and advertising people often compete for the same jobs and positions of organizational influence. Finally, it highlights future directions of study to bring an answer to the question of “what should we call ourselves?” once it establishes how public relations, marketing and advertising talk about themselves and their people. While both marketing and advertising are regularly mentioned in the public relations professional publications included in this analysis, public relations is almost totally absent in the analyzed marketing or advertising professional publications. Practical implications of findings are discussed, as well as suggestions for further research to pave a way forward to answering the question of what public relations people should be called.

Keywords: public relations, professionalization, legitimacy, credibility, business

INTRODUCTION

Self-reflection is a good thing. It can bring certainty that the path taken is the right one. It can also highlight missteps and point to a better direction. Self-reflection and direction are at the heart of this research effort. We address the question of, “how do public relations people refer to themselves?” as a precursor to “what should public relations people call themselves?” What we call ourselves is important; after all clients often contract with us to help them rebrand, rename, reimage, and position their organizations. Or, they depend on us for crisis negotiation through strategic positioning, careful labeling and vetted naming. Organizational decision makers often need public relations people to set long-term strategy with organizational sustainability as the goal. Words matter. So do labels and lenses for communication. If we are to rebrand, rename, reimage, and position others, our own image, name and labels, too, are important.

All good self-reflection starts with answers to questions of definition. In this case, when we refer to “public relations people” we mean anyone who engages in public relations strategies, activities and discussions as a career path, both academic and non-academic. Second in our self-reflection

is the question of fact. For our purposes, this directs us to look for the kinds of names, labels and terms used consciously and subconsciously to refer to public relations people. As such, we want to know whether our professional counterparts in non-public relations careers, with whom we often compete for positions and influence, refer to themselves and us in similar or different ways; the narrative about public relations, what it is called, and how it is labeled among those in similar fields shapes future perceptions and labels to what public relations people do.

Apparent occurrences or contrasts that might hold significance for our field should be noted and a foundation should be established for future systematic explorations of whether we “should” or “should not” take a preferred path as we talk about ourselves. Important to this entire undertaking are the questions of “why” and “why should we care?” The “why” has been addressed often in professionalization, credibility and legitimacy discussions about the field. They are important. When public relations and its experts are taken seriously by decision makers, they bring value to organizational success. Long identified as “dominant coalitions,” decision makers and the position public relations people should have with those groups has long been discussed in the field. A review of the dominant coalition discussions is provided by Bruce Berger (2005), Shannon Bowen (2015) and Christopher Wilson (2016).

It’s good to engage in systematic self-reflection and establish what public relations people call themselves. In fact, self-reflection was the focus of a recent *PRWeek* (2020) report, “The evolving PR and marketing partnership: Benefits of self-reflection.” The goal of the report was to have “PR pros take a true look at themselves... the [PR and marketing] disciplines must work together and appreciate the fact that each can benefit from the others’ strengths to not only do their jobs better, but also to best serve their brands” (p. 2). However, the report focuses primarily on day-to-day job functions that establish the need to bridge the divide that exists between PR and marketing. While this knowledge is valuable, we argue that before public relations efforts can be truly appreciated, we need to take a step back and systematically explore the underlying narrative and labels used to describe public relations people. Perhaps those labels are powerful in positioning public relations people for influence, perhaps not.

This paper provides a brief highlight of many ongoing discussions about how public relations can be taken more seriously and its value clearly recognized. It provides a descriptive analysis of how five professional organizations (or recognized mouthpieces for the global fields they represent) regularly talk about public relations people and those who engage in related strategic professional initiatives. And, finally, it highlights future directions of study to bring an answer to the question of “what should we call ourselves?” To begin, a brief review of the public relations professionalization, credibility and legitimacy literature is in order.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Professionalization

A first step in answering “what should we call ourselves?” is to look at how public relations and its people are professionalized. We frame this discussion from Pieczka’s (2008) definition of professionalization as, “the way in which occupations become recognized as professions, usually explained by a range of factors related to the improvement of services offered and status enjoyed”

(p. 1). We focus closely on the idea of “status enjoyed” because public relations people still fight for a seat at the table, meaning they are often left out of executive conversations when strategic business decisions are made. They are not part of the dominant coalition nor do they have much influence on the dominant coalition. Therefore, it is not enough for public relations to be academically recognized as a profession; if public relations people do not achieve a “status enjoyed” in the minds of executive decision-makers and, in fact, do not become part of the executive decision-making group, they are indeed still not professionalized.

Public relations professionalization is a long-discussed topic of conversation among public relations people. Pieczka and L’Etang (2001) addressed “public relations and the question of professionalization” (p. 223) in a *Handbook of Public Relations* entry, arguing that “given the strong interest in professionalism [as a strategy to secure more perceived value] on the part of educators, researchers, and practitioners, some critical reflection is needed to understand how this concept has been used” (p. 223). While Yang and Taylor (2013) argued years later that public relations, as a field, has been professionalized through professional associations, codes of ethics, accrediting bodies, and the positive contributions it makes to society, public relations people still suffer from a negative image (Callison, 2004; Hutton, 1999; Jo, 2003; Miller, 1999).

Breit and Demetrious (2010) discussed public relations and professionalization as an ethical mismatch, defining professionalization as “a process involving cooperation around work tasks...; unique knowledge and expertise; as well as a set of rules, conventions and structures designed to preserve and enhance professional control” (p. 20). They concluded that key characteristics of professionalization itself leads to a normative culture, and a normative culture “is at odds with ethical communication,” which for them is the ultimate pursuit of all public relations. White and Park (2010) looked elsewhere and explored the negative portrayal of public relations among and by media representatives. They wanted to know if that portrayal negatively impacted the “public perception” of public relations at large. Interestingly, they found that there was no direct correlation; the public at large did not perceive public relations in the negative manner portrayed by the media under scrutiny. What White and Park did find as a concern was that even among persons who practice public relations, their understanding of the field limited it to “publicity, media relations, and an attempt to advance an organization’s own agenda” (p. 323). They concluded “that the strategic functions [of public relations] that benefit society can be made more visible in order to enhance the credibility of the profession” (p. 323).

Bowen (2003) conducted research with university students and found that “the stereotype of public relations as ‘hacks, flacks, and spin doctors’ [portrayed in today’s media] seems to be perpetuated on the campuses of the very institutions that fund the [public relations] program” (p. 211). Further, a study of the U.S. general public reported that, although participants described public relations people as outgoing, smart and friendly, negative characteristics such as liar, biased and spin doctor were also commonly used (Callison, Merle, & Seltzer, 2014). In a concurring study, recent research revealed by *PRWeek* concluded that two in 10 executives did not know what “PR” stands for, and 90 percent of study participants believed that public relations people deceive the public (Hickman, 2019).

Addressing negative perceptions of public relations. In an attempt to combat these “entrenched attitudes and perceptions of public relations” and “create a better understanding and appreciation

for what PR practitioners do” (Elsasser, 2009, para. 2), Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) launched The Business Case for Public Relations in 2009. According to the campaign website, the goal of The Business Case is to “drive industry recognition and growth by helping professionals in the field educate key audiences about public relations’ roles and outcomes, demonstrate its strategic value and enhance its reputation” (The Business Case for Public Relations, 2019, para. 2).

Since the campaign launch, PRSA has developed a variety of resources—including public relations case studies that demonstrate tangible business outcomes and reflections from industry leaders making the business case for public relations—to achieve this goal. Yet, despite positive strides made to professionalize the PR field (there is still much work to be done here), we argue that public relations people still do not enjoy a “professionalized” status. To further explore this argument we move on to a discussion of the credibility of public relations people.

Credibility

Previous research, as well as our brief arguments and review, demonstrate that public relations people, more often than not, do not hold a professionalized status in the minds of others. This is problematic because it limits the extent to which others view public relations people as credible, despite the value they provide to organizations and our society. We argue that the questions about the credibility of public relations persons extends to the field itself as the two cannot be separated.

Concerns for the credibility of public relations go way back. Aronoff (1975) addressed the credibility of public relations for journalists, Childers (1989) looked at the credibility of public relations at the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Anecdotal, Devin (2007) provided ideas for addressing a public relations credibility crisis. Gillen (2008) wrote for the *PR Strategist* claiming that public relations amateurs threaten the credibility of the profession. White and Park (2010) took up the call and argued for emphasizing the strategic function [though they do not tell us how or where] of public relations in order to enhance the profession’s credibility.

Names and labels as cues for evaluating credibility. How, then, do we determine if a public relations person is credible? We turn to credibility literature to develop an understanding of the characteristics that constitute a credible person. McCroskey and Young (1981) confirmed five dimensions of source credibility, or characteristics evaluated by others to determine if one is credible; the five are sociability, competence, extroversion, composure, and character. Other scholars identified perceived trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness as critical dimensions used to evaluate one’s credibility (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990). Titles, labels, names and cues are all keys to credibility.

The discussion of how titles and descriptions serve as cues that shape others’ perceived credibility of occupations (Osipow, 1962) is not new. Robust valuation discussions of titles continue. History chapters in public relations texts illustrate the profession’s evolution beginning with 1900s press agents and publicists. Cancel, Cameron, Sallot and Mitrook (1997) highlight the evolution and, even, contention among discussions of public relations.

Webster's New World dictionary (Guralink, 1984) defines advocate as "one who pleads another's cause or (pleads) in support of something" (p. 10). A review of practitioner descriptions of the function of public relations shows that advocacy has been an integral part of public relations ever since its dawning (Sallot, 1993). Bernays (1928), often called the father of modern public relations, defined *practitioners* as "special pleaders who seek to create public acceptance for a particular idea or commodity" (p. 47). Smith (1972) argued the function of a public relations practitioner is to advocate, much like an attorney representing one side of an issue. Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1985) maintained that public relations must "ethically and effectively plead the cause of a client or organization in the forum of public debate" (pp. 450-451). Barney and Black (1994) argued that professional advocacy is a socially acceptable and socially necessary role of public relations. Similarly, J. Grunig (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1990) wrote, "Many, if not most, practitioners consider themselves to be advocates for or defenders of their organizations and cite the advocacy system in law as an analogy" (p. 32).

Despite the attestations to the existence of advocacy in public relations, some practitioners appear uncomfortable with the notion of advocacy because it is often associated with negative images of manipulation and persuasion. For example, L. Grunig (1992b) defined advocacy as an "unsolved problem" in public relations and asks, "How far in giving advice to clients can a consultant in public relations go without weakening his or her independence?" (p. 72). In contrast, Bivins (1987) argued that the function of advocacy in public relations "can remain a professional role obligated to client interests, professional interests, and personal ethics. What is required is an ordering of priorities" (p. 84).

The function of public relations as an accommodator or builder of trust with external publics is also evident in public relations literature. Cutlip et al. (1985) defined public relations as helping establish and maintain mutually dependent relationships between an organization and the publics with which it interacts. Similarly, J. Grunig, L. Grunig, and Ehling (1992) said that organizations and their respective public relations practitioners should build relationships and manage an organization's interdependence. (pp. 35-36)

It is clear that what public relations people do, should do, and should be known for doing is a lengthy discussion. Turney (2009) attempted to summarize the changing names of the public relations field itself. He claimed that "public relations" became the preferred title in the 1920s, but as the field grew and became more dynamic, other terms including communications, marketing communications, public information, and corporate communications gained popularity in the 2000s. He also provided an interesting anecdotal discussion (2013) of what public relations people call themselves as they perform public relations work. He put it this way, "I'm fascinated by the unusual and wide-ranging terminology some public relations people use to describe their work and the quirky titles they sometimes give themselves" (para. 1).

While we do not provide a comprehensive history or exhaustive list of titles for public relations people, nor for the professionalization or credibility of the field, we do argue that what we call ourselves matters because titles are indicators of professionalism, credibility, and perceived value. They are clearly linked to legitimacy and status.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy is inextricably linked to perceived value, power or dominance. Sallot (2002) pointed to a long-standing contradiction in establishing assumed public relations legitimacy in the larger organization or business world. In understanding what public relations people do, it's clear that "public relations often attempts to serve two masters: the interests of the client or sponsor that the practitioner is representing and the public interest" (p. 163). Therein lies the contradiction or tension that exists for public relations and its people. And Sallot argued, this is a contradiction that leaves the legitimacy or legitimation of the field in question. Additionally, Wæraas (2009) pointed to Max Weber's concepts of legitimacy and legitimation as at the core of the public relations profession. "Acquiring and preserving support from the general public" (p. 17) is what we do, so "public relations is all about obtaining and preserving legitimacy" (p. 21). But, one might argue, at what cost to the assumed legitimacy or value of the industry itself (especially if we must also obtain and preserve legitimacy with whomever we represent)?

Merkelsen (2011) provided a complementary discussion of legitimacy and reminded us that the relationship between business and society is characterized by the challenge of legitimacy. Public relations, he argued, is by its very nature at the heart of that legitimacy challenge. He highlighted "issues concerning the profession's own legitimacy" as a double-edged sword and provided an attempt to "clarify the various aspects of legitimacy in public relations in order to establish a better understanding of the limits of professionalization" (p. 125). He argued that "not only is legitimacy, as a fundamental challenge in the relationship between business and society, the very object of the public relations profession, the public relations profession is itself subject to challenges of legitimacy in its relations with clients as well as with the public" (p. 125).

Discussions of the professionalization of public relations, the credibility of the field and its people, as well as questions of legitimacy linked to public relations roles and perceived status are worth continuing. So, too, is clearly articulating what we call ourselves. There is no clear call for what we should call ourselves, but there is conversation about what we should stop calling ourselves.

Stop calling ourselves "PR practitioners"

A *PR Daily* article bluntly stated in its headline, "Stop calling us 'PR practitioners.' You never hear 'marketing practitioner' or 'advertising practitioner,' so why do people working in PR use this moniker?" (Headrick, 2013). Headrick argued that though the term "practitioner" is loosely linked to someone's attempt to "add credibility to the profession", but instead, overcompensates and separates us from our professional colleagues. As a VP of marketing and communications, he argued that we should "stop using silly words [like practitioner] in some lame attempt to validate our existence" (para. 8). He argued for the use of PR pro or PR professional. Additionally, Turney (2013) ended his muse about the many labels public relation people have used to refer to themselves and leaves us with this question, "If you currently work in public relations, the question you should be asking yourself is: Do I want to be known as a public relations practitioner, or would I rather have a more colorful and fun-filled job title?" (para. 15).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The varied narratives about public relations titles led us to ask six research questions.

RQ1: How do we (public relations people) refer to ourselves?

RQ2: How do those in closely related fields refer to themselves?

RQ3: How do those in closely related fields refer to us?

RQ4: How do we refer to those in closely related fields?

RQ5: Are there differences between how we refer to ourselves and how related fields refer to us?

RQ6: Are there differences between how we refer to related fields and how related fields refer to themselves?

METHOD

To answer our research questions, we engaged in a systematic, descriptive analysis of professional and academic publications representing public relations and the related fields of marketing and advertising. We sought publications from organizations that exist to establish professional and educational standards for public relations, marketing and advertising. We viewed them as global mouthpieces. The five publication sets included in this study were:

(1) PRSA is the leading professional association that advocates for the public relations profession and as such, PRSA's monthly *Strategies and Tactics* for year 2019 were selected. Content in this publication is reflective of the PR profession in its entirety; it educates public relations professionals on latest industry news and best practices, and "provides feature-length commentary on the strategic importance of public relations" (Strategies & Tactics, para. 2).

(2) The Commission on PR Education (CPRE) is an authoritative voice for public relations education; it influences public relations program certification, Certification in Education for Public Relations. CPRE's *Fast Forward: Foundations + Future State. Educators + Practitioners* (2017) report on undergraduate education was included as representative of public relations. CEPR has been earned by universities in more than six countries, with a total of 40 undergraduate certifications and four graduate certifications.

(3) The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) is one of two major accrediting bodies that oversee of business education standardization, including marketing programs; its bi-monthly *BizEd* magazine 2019 publications were included.

(4) A similar accrediting body is the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP). It's quarterly *Impact* 2019 magazines were also included. Finally, an accrediting council for advertising programs was not identified. Both AACSB and ACBSP accredit schools of business worldwide.

(5) The Association for National Advertiser's (ANA) Advertising Educational Foundation (AEF) serves advertising and marketing professionals and academic communities. The AEF *Bridging the Talent Disconnect* (2017) report was the final piece included. The AEF invites global participation.

In total, 23 publications spanning public relations, marketing and advertising were included for analysis.

Procedure

All 23 publications were downloaded from their host sites as searchable PDFs. The Adobe Acrobat search function was used to highlight and count each search term, combining singular and plural forms, highlighted in the search as “exact matches.” A list of terms and their accompanying modifiers were recorded for each publication. For instance, if the term practitioner was found, yet it was modified by the term “PR” or “marketing” or “advertising,” the modifier was noted as well. In addition, interesting contextualization of the terms, as those comments related to this study’s purpose, were also recorded.

An original list of search terms was compiled by the researchers (who have more than 40 years of public relations experience between them) from readings of the literature review provided here, past readings and conversations, as well as a cursory reading of the texts selected for this analysis. Assuming a grounded approach, both researchers anticipated adding one or two additional search terms to the original list as the analysis progressed. The final list of terms searched for and counted (singular and plural forms) in all included terms for analysis were: practitioner(s), professional(s), leader(s), executive(s), manager(s), pro(s), counselor(s), consultant(s), strategist(s), and analyst(s). In addition, PRSA *Strategies & Tactics* and the CPRE *Fast: Forward* report were searched for the terms business, marketing and advertising, respectively. The AACSB *BizEd*, ACBSP *Impact*, and AEF *Bridging the Talent Disconnect* publications were searched for public relation(s), and PR(s). While not the original focus of the “what do we call ourselves” question, these search terms were added as the researchers took note that what we call ourselves as a “field” compared to what related fields “call us,” if anything at all. This part of our research was particularly interesting as we sought to answer RQ5 and RQ6.

RESULTS

The results of our analysis are reported in Tables 1-4. At large, they provide insights in response to each of our research questions. The results in Tables 1 and 2 are reported beginning with the term practitioner, then by frequency of search term appearance. The results in Table 3 are reported in a public relations, PR, communication(s) sequence. The results in Table 4 are reported in a business, marketing, advertising, communication(s) sequence.

How Do We Refer to Ourselves?

Research question one was, “How do we refer to ourselves?” Because of Headrick’s (2013) overt call in *PRWeek* to stop using the practitioner term, and Turney’s (2009, 2013) question about the desirability of being called something “more” than a practitioner, the answer to Research Question one started with a search for “practitioner(s).” We wanted to know if practitioner(s) was prevalently used in the public relations publications as they named “us” as public relations people. The results of our analysis featured in Table 1 clearly show that the term practitioner(s) is used to refer to public relations people, and used a lot. We also often or sometimes refer to ourselves as

professional(s), leader(s), manager(s), pro(s), counselor(s), and consultant(s). We rarely refer to ourselves as executive(s), strategist(s) or analyst(s).

Table 1. Labels and descriptions of people in public relations—in public relations publications

	Count	Modifications
<u>PRSA Strategies & Tactics</u> <u>all 2019 issues</u>		
Practitioner(s)	85	public relations practitioner; solo practitioner; independent practitioner; practitioner and educator
Professional(s)	399	communications professional; public relations professional
Leader(s)	307	as more than practitioner or manager, in reference to those in leadership roles
Executive(s)	181	mostly in reference to key decision makers; in titles of authors; not in reference of PR people
Manager(s)	135	PR managers; communications manager; marketing communications; hiring manager
Pro(s)	47	PR pro, public relations pro, pro
Counselor(s)	49	counselors academy; PR counselor and practitioner
Consultant(s)	45	communications consultant; PR consultant
Strategist(s)	14	communications strategist; digital strategist; business strategist
Analyst(s)	2	research analyst; customer marketing analyst
<u>Commission on PR</u> <u>Education 2017 Fast</u> <u>Forward report</u>		
Practitioner(s)	530	public relations practitioner; practitioner and educator
Professional(s)	180	industry professionals; public relations professionals; professional development
Leader(s)	85	industry leaders; academic leaders(hip); leadership
Executive(s)	15	executive-suite; executive director; key decision makers
Manager(s)	4	hiring managers
Pro(s)	20	PR pro, public relations pro, pro
Counselor(s)	4	senior counselors; independent counselors
Consultant(s)	1	title of contributor
Strategist(s)	3	corporate strategist in contributor title
Analyst(s)	0	

PRSA *Strategies & Tactics* and CPRE's *Fast Forward* publications used the term practitioner(s) 85 and 530 times, respectively, for a total of 615 uses. Of special note is the prevalent modification of it with public relations or PR. Additionally, but much less prevalent modifications of the term were solo and independent. A closer read of the publications indicated that practitioner was sometimes used to point to public relations people who do not teach it, e.g. practitioners compared to educators, or practitioners compared to scholars. PRSA *Strategies & Tactics* and CPRE's *Fast Forward* publications used the term professional(s) 399 and 180 times, respectively for a total of 579 uses. Professional(s) was most notably modified with communications and public relations. It was also used to generally refer to any type of employee with whom one might work.

PRSA *Strategies & Tactics* and CPRE's *Fast Forward* publications used the term leader(s) 307 and 85 times, respectively, for a total of 392 uses. Leader(s) was most notably used when referring to the development of any general employee in leadership capabilities, and as a distant second in referring to public relations people as leaders in their respective organizations. Leader(s) was sometimes discussed as something more than a practitioner or manager. PRSA *Strategies & Tactics* and CPRE's *Fast Forward* publications used the term executive(s) 181 and 15 times, respectively, for a total of 196 uses. Executive(s) was used almost exclusively to refer to key organizational decision makers or policy setters, all of whom public relations people needed to “win over” or “earn respect from” before public relations could add value to an organization's efforts. An omission in the results was naming public relations people as executive(s) themselves, save one mention of a senior communications executive. There was no call for public relations people to occupy executive positions. PRSA *Strategies & Tactics* and CPRE's *Fast Forward* publications used the term manager(s) 135 and 4 times, respectively, for a total of 139 uses. The manager(s) term was largely modified by the words PR/public relations, communications, and marketing.

It was very rarely modified by the word hiring. PRSA *Strategies & Tactics* and CPRE's *Fast Forward* publications used the term pro(s) 47 and 20 times, respectively, for a total of 67 uses. The term pro(s) was always used to refer to a public relations person or persons. PRSA *Strategies & Tactics* and CPRE's *Fast Forward* publications used the term counselor(s) 49 and 4 times, respectively, for a total of 53 uses. The terms were used all but two times to refer to someone who was a member of PRSA's Counselors Academy. It was used rarely to refer to a public relations counselor and practitioner. PRSA *Strategies & Tactics* and CPRE's *Fast Forward* publications used the term consultant(s) 45 and 1 times, respectively for a total of 46 uses. Consultant(s) was almost always modified by communications or public relations or PR. PRSA *Strategies & Tactics* and CPRE's *Fast Forward* publications used the term strategist(s) 14 and 3 times, respectively, for a total of 17 uses. Modifying terms used were communications, digital, and corporate. PRSA *Strategies & Tactics* and CPRE's *Fast Forward* publications used the term analyst(s) 2 and 0 time(s), respectively, for a total of 2 uses. Modifying terms did not refer to public relations people, but instead to a research analyst and customer marketing analyst.

How do those in Closely Related Fields Refer to Themselves?

Research question two was, “How do those in closely related fields refer to themselves?” The answer to this research question was undertaken through a search of the AACSB *BizEd*, ACBSP *Impact* and AEF *Bridging the Talent Disconnect* publications for the same set of terms as used in the PRSA *Strategies & Tactics* and CPRE's *Fast Forward* publications. The terms searched were: practitioner(s), professional(s), leader(s), executive(s), manager(s), pro(s), counselor(s), consultant(s), strategist(s), and analyst(s). As featured in Table 2, we found that our industry colleagues only refer to themselves as practitioners when distinguishing themselves from academics or scholars. They largely referred to themselves as professional(s), leader(s), executive(s), and manager(s). They rarely referred to themselves as consultant(s), strategist(s), and analyst(s). They did not refer to themselves as pro(s).

Table 2. Labels and descriptions of people engaging in related fields in business, marketing and advertising—in business, marketing and advertising publications

	Count	Modifications
<u>AACSB BizEd 2019 issues</u>		
Practitioner(s)	48	scholars and practitioners; general use
Professional(s)	85	HR professionals; management professionals; accounting professionals
Leader(s)	204	business leaders; thought leaders; leadership; general use
Executive(s)	71	corporate executive; executive directors; executive MBA
Manager(s)	59	middle managers; financial managers; general use
Pro(s)	0	
Counselor(s)	0	
Consultant(s)	9	general use
Strategist(s)	5	business strategist
Analyst(s)	18	data analyst; financial analyst
<u>ACBSP Impact 2019 issues</u>		
Practitioner(s)	2	practitioner-based presentations
Professional(s)	22	general use; business education professionals
Leader(s)	118	entrepreneurial leaders; thought leaders(hip); industry leaders; general use
Executive(s)	14	executive leaders; executive directors; general use
Manager(s)	6	general use
Pro(s)	0	
Counselor(s)	0	
Consultant(s)	2	academic consultant
Strategist(s)	0	
Analyst(s)	3	financial analyst; marketing analyst; risk analyst
<u>AEF Bridging the Talent Disconnect 2017 report</u>		
Practitioner(s)	1	“connect practitioners to professors”
Professional(s)	7	industry professionals; general use
Leader(s)	12	advertising leaders; general use
Executive(s)	19	advertising executives; C-suite executives; HR executives; marketing executives
Manager(s)	8	line managers; digital analytics managers; general use
Pro(s)	0	
Counselor(s)	4	career counselors
Consultant(s)	0	
Strategist(s)	0	
Analyst(s)	0	

AACSB BizEd, ACBSP Impact and AEF Bridging the Talent Disconnect publications used the term practitioner(s) 48, 2 and 1 time(s), respectively, for a total of 49 uses. The practitioner(s) term

was almost always used to differentiate people out in the field from those known as academics or scholars. Practitioner(s) was not used to refer to public relations people, nor modified by public relations or PR. AACSB *BizEd*, ACBSP *Impact* and AEF *Bridging the Talent Disconnect* publications used the term professional(s) 85, 22 and 7 times, respectively, for a total of 114 uses. Professional(s) was used generally; it was sometimes modified by HR, management, accounting, business education, and industry. Professional(s) was not used to refer to public relations people, nor modified by public relations or PR. AACSB *BizEd*, ACBSP *Impact* and AEF *Bridging the Talent Disconnect* publications used the term leader(s) 204, 118 and 12 times, respectively, for a total of 334 uses.

Leader(s) was used generally, as well as modified by business, thought, entrepreneurial, industry, and advertising. Leader(s) was not used to refer to public relations people, nor modified by public relations or PR. AACSB *BizEd*, ACBSP *Impact* and AEF *Bridging the Talent Disconnect* publications used the term executive(s) 71, 14 and 19 times, respectively, for a total of 104 uses. It was used to generally refer to higher order business people. It was also modified by corporate, advertising, C-suite, HR, and marketing. It also modified the terms directors and MBA. Executive(s) was not used to refer to public relations people, nor modified by public relations or PR. AACSB *BizEd*, ACBSP *Impact* and AEF *Bridging the Talent Disconnect* publications used the term manager(s) 59, 6 and 8 times, respectively, for a total of 73 uses. It was used to generally refer to a wide variety of business people. It was also modified by middle, financial, line, and digital analytics. Manager(s) was not used to refer to public relations people, nor modified by public relations or PR. AACSB *BizEd*, ACBSP *Impact* and AEF *Bridging the Talent Disconnect* publications used the term pro(s) 0 times.

AACSB *BizEd*, ACBSP *Impact* and AEF *Bridging the Talent Disconnect* publications used the term counselor(s) 0, 0 and 4 times, respectively, for a total of 4 uses. It was used exclusively when modified by career. Counselor(s) was not used to refer to public relations people, nor modified by public relations or PR. AACSB *BizEd*, ACBSP *Impact* and AEF *Bridging the Talent Disconnect* publications used the term consultant(s) 9, 2 and 0 times, respectively, for a total of 11 uses. It was used generally, as well as modified by academic. Consultant(s) was not used to refer to public relations people, nor modified by public relations or PR. AACSB *BizEd*, ACBSP *Impact* and AEF *Bridging the Talent Disconnect* publications used the term strategist(s) 5, 0 and 0 times, respectively, for a total of 5 uses. Strategist was used generally, as well as modified by business. Strategist(s) was not used to refer to public relations people, nor modified by public relations or PR. AACSB *BizEd*, ACBSP *Impact* and AEF *Bridging the Talent Disconnect* publications used the term analyst(s) 18, 3 and 0 times, respectively, for a total of 21 uses. Analyst(s) was modified by “data,” “financial,” “marketing,” and “risk.” Analyst(s) was not used to refer to public relations people, nor modified by “public relations” or “PR.”

How Do Those in Closely Related Fields Refer to Us?

Research question three asked how those in closely related fields refer to us. A starting point was determining the degree to which AACSB *BizEd*, ACBSP *Impact* and AEF *Bridging the Talent Disconnect* publications “named” public relations or PR. We searched the following terms: public relations, PR and communication(s). What we found and presented in Table 3, is that public relations itself, much less its people, is rarely mentioned.

Table 3. Labels and descriptions of PR and communication(s)—in business, marketing and advertising publications

	Count	Modifications
<u>AACSB BizEd 2019 issues</u>		
Public relations	2	public relations firm Edelman; public affairs
PR	0	
Communication(s)	49	general public communications; marketing communication
<u>ACBSP Impact 2019 issues</u>		
Public relations	0	
PR	0	
Communication(s)	16	general use; titles of people (director of marketing and communications)
<u>AEF Bridging the Talent Disconnect 2017 report</u>		
Public relations	0	
PR	1	reference to advertising and PR university program
Communication(s)	10	Publicis Communications; professor of integrated marketing communications

AACSB *BizEd*, ACBSP *Impact* and AEF *Bridging the Talent Disconnect* publications used the term public relations 2, 0 and 0 times, respectively, for a total of 2 times. One was contextualized as “public relations firm Edelman” when discussing trust in business and its leaders. The other inferred public relations by naming “public affairs.” AACSB *BizEd*, ACBSP *Impact* and AEF *Bridging the Talent Disconnect* publications used the term PR 0, 0 and 1 time, respectively, for a total of 1 use. It was used in a credential for a contributing author who was an educator in an advertising + public relations program. AACSB *BizEd*, ACBSP *Impact* and AEF *Bridging the Talent Disconnect* publications used the term communication(s) 49, 16 and 10 times, respectively, for a total of 74 uses. Communication(s) was used to discuss general notions of dyadic and business school communications among faculty and students. It was modified by marketing, included in a reference to an individual who was a professor of integrated marketing communications and embedded in titles of contributing persons. Best practices for communication(s) was a regular focus in *BizEd* for SoBA schools. One reference discussed public communications responsibility as business school dean responsibility, defining it as “engaging with the press, blogging, or using social media.”

How Do We Refer to Those in Closely Related Fields?

Research question four was, How do we refer to those in closely related fields? A starting point in answer to this research question is determining the degree to which PRSA *Strategies & Tactics* and CPRE’s *Fast Forward* publications “named” marketing and advertising. We searched the following terms: business, marketing, advertising, and communication(s) and presented the

interesting results in Table 4. Business was named as something public relations took part in as a matter of course. Marketing was prominently named, many times in association with marketing communication. Advertising was named less prevalently. Communications was widely named and referred almost exclusively to public relations as a mutually interchangeable term.

Table 4. Labels and descriptions of business, marketing, advertising and public relations fields—in PR publications

	Count	Modifications
<u>PRSA Strategies & Tactics</u> <u>2019 issues</u>		
Business	399	business objectives; business strategy; business impact; general use
Marketing	225	influencer marketing; digital marketing; PR and marketing must work together
Advertising	47	native content; advertising coordinator
Communication(s)	925	in lieu of public relations; marketing communications as PR
<u>Commission on PR Education 2017 Fast Forward report</u>		
Business	94	business acumen; business strategy; business communication; business planning
Marketing	14	to separate from PR
Advertising	20	advertising and PR as together in one program
Communication(s)	312	in lieu of public relations; marketing communications as PR

PRSA *Strategies & Tactics* and CPRE's *Fast Forward* publications used the term business 399 and 94 times, respectively, for a total of 493 uses. Business was used in a general sense, and as a modifier of objectives, strategy, impact, acumen, communication, and planning. It was not modified by public relations or PR. PRSA *Strategies & Tactics* and CPRE's *Fast Forward* publications used the term marketing 225 and 14 times, respectively, for a total of 239 uses. Marketing was referred to as something separate from public relations. It was often referred to as a field that must work together with public relations and/or a field with much in common with public relations. The term was also modified by influencer and digital.

PRSA *Strategies & Tactics* and CPRE's *Fast Forward* publications used the term advertising 47 and 20 times, respectively, for a total of 67 uses. Advertising was referred to as part of contributors' credentials, was modified by coordinator, and was referred to as a source of native content. It was also once referred to as part of a combined university program between public relations and advertising. PRSA *Strategies & Tactics* and CPRE's *Fast Forward* publications used the term communication(s) 925 and 312 times, respectively, for a total of 1237 uses. Communication(s) was often used in lieu of public relations to refer to what public relations people do, and to the

field in which they work. It was also modified by marketing as an interchangeable term with public relations.

Are There Differences Between How We Refer to Ourselves and How Related Fields Refer to Us?

Research question five asked if there are differences between how we refer to ourselves and how related fields refer to us. Ten interesting observations were recorded: (1) Public relations calls itself practitioner(s) at a much higher rate (615:51) than does marketing and advertising. Public relations clearly names its people as practitioner(s) in general and as distinct from scholars/academics. Marketing and advertising only refer to its practitioner(s) to distinguish from scholars/academics. (2) Public relations names its own people as professionals; it also names marketing and advertising people as professionals. Marketing and advertising name their people as professional(s), but do not name public relations people as professional(s). (3) Public relations speaks variously of leaders. Marketing and advertising speak variously and often of leaders. (4) Public relations names executive(s) as something its people are not. Marketing and advertising name executive(s) as something their people are. (5) Public relations clearly names its people as manager(s). Marketing and advertising clearly name its people as manager(s). (6) Public relations clearly names its people pro(s). Marketing and advertising do not name their people pro(s). (7) Public relations does not name its people as counselor(s) except through its people's affiliations with PRSA's Counselor Academy. Marketing and advertising do not name their people counselor(s). (8) Public relations generally refers to its people as consultants. Marketing and advertising refer to their people as consultants to a much smaller degree. (9) Public relations does not refer to its people as strategists. Marketing and advertising rarely refer to their people as strategists. (10) Public relations does not refer to its people as analysts. Marketing and advertising sometimes refer to their people as analysts, particularly in reference to digital, business and risk.

Are There Differences Between How We Refer to Related Fields and How Related Fields Refer to Themselves?

Research question six asked about differences between how public relations refers to related fields and how related fields refer to themselves. The results were clear. In general, public relations does not exist for marketing and advertising as represented in AACSB *BizEd*, ACBSP *Impact* and AEF *Bridging the Talent Disconnect Fast Forward* publications (3 mentions in total). Neither does PR. PRSA *Strategies & Tactics* and CPRE's *Fast Forward* publications clearly name marketing (239), advertising (67) and business (493). Public relations refers often to communication(s) (1,237), generally as interchangeable with itself, while marketing and advertising refer to it significantly less (74) and restricts it largely to non-public relations discussions.

DISCUSSION

Names, labels and titles matter. Our research sought to illuminate how the public relations field refers to its own people, as well as how those we work closely with in marketing and advertising refer to themselves. We also examined how we refer to each other. We did this because public relations, marketing and advertising people are in related fields. They often compete for jobs and for organizational influence. The results indicate that there appears to be quite the disconnect in

self-descriptions. The publication mouthpieces analyzed for public relations relied heavily on the term practitioner to refer to its people. Interestingly, the marketing and advertising mouthpieces did not name public relations as a field. The public relations publications often referred to marketing and marketing communications as fields. In addition, while the practitioner term was used infrequently in the marketing and advertising publications to distinguish academic from non-academic professionals, the marketing and advertising publications referred to their people most often as leaders. The public relations pieces referred to public relations people as leaders at a much less frequent rate, using professional as a second most frequent term. In the publications analyzed, the term executive was used almost exclusively to refer to non-public relations people.

Public relations people keep talking about the need to be taken seriously by businesses, business leaders, and policy makers or dominant coalitions. It seems, however, that how we talk about ourselves in the very publications we author meant to advance the field and professionalize public relations do little to advance it or its people. In short, we call ourselves practitioners to the exclusion of all other terms. Our marketing and advertising colleagues do not do that. We do not recognize ourselves as executives. Our marketing and advertising colleagues do. We talk about being professionals before being leaders. Finally, as a profession, public relations is missing from the marketing and advertising narratives.

If we continue to rely on Pieczka's (2008) definition of professionalization as something that occurs when occupations are *recognized* by others as professions, this research study shows us that public relations is not recognized. We are not surprised. It may be that to be *recognized*, we should reevaluate what we call ourselves. We need to ask, "What should we call ourselves?" and supply an answer based on systematic self-reflection and robust data-driven dialogue. It seems that we also need to find a way to write public relations into marketing and advertising narratives. In addition, given that our marketing counterparts out earn most public relations professors (CUPA and AAUP both report the differences), and that public relations people often report to a marketing director or VP of marketing in non-teaching settings, we can look closely at how they present themselves for new ideas about how to present ourselves. We can even go so far as to ask ourselves, clearly, why marketing people rarely report to public relations directors or public relations VPs. We can, in turn, make the same observations and ask the same questions about other public relations people and other business leaders.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

The results of this study call for additional research. First, similar descriptive analyses should be undertaken with additional publications, proceedings, transcripts, and reports provided by other representative sources. Second, a gap analysis addressing how public relations people are represented compared to how public relations people want to be represented needs undertaken. Third, a perception study assessing concepts such as the professionalization, credibility, legitimacy, value, prestige, and desirability of labels such as practitioner, professional, leader, executive, manager, pro, counselor, consultant, strategist, and analyst should be implemented. A fourth option for future research is a series of experiments assessing subjects' perceptions of public relations people, and their professional counterparts, when variables such as practitioner, professional, leader, executive, manager, pro, counselor, consultant, strategist, and analyst are manipulated.

CONCLUSION

This study relied on PRSA and CEPR publications as the voice of public relations people. It relied on AACSB, ACBSP and AEF publications as the voice of marketing and advertising people. We conducted this analysis, using these publications, as a starting point for what public relations people call themselves most often. We also documented what public relations people's professional colleagues most often call themselves. The results were clear. The term practitioner is highly favored by public relations people. It is not favored by marketing and advertising people, or by others represented by AACSB, ACBSP or AEF. These people favored professional, leader, executive and manager to a much greater degree. The "why" question remains to be explored. The impact on the field also remains to be explored, pointing us to the "why should we care" question. The practitioner term may be helping or harming public relations people and the industry reach a point of professionalization, credibility and legitimacy. It may be working against it. It may be helping public relations people be part of and influence the dominant coalition, or it may work against that. Additional research can help us answer these questions.

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FUTURE RESEARCH IN IMPROVING GROUP PERFORMANCE: AWARENESS OF NATIONAL CULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

We have presented two streams of research at several IABD conferences: one stream described the relationship between technology and group performance; a second explored cultural differences and impact on interpersonal relations. We gathered data from two focus groups and surveys of American and Chinese university students, testing whether Millennials across two different cultures would use technology in similar fashion to complete classroom assignments. We also collected the perspectives and interpretations regarding cultures of China, the United States and Western Europe from a group of leaders of privately owned businesses in China. Data suggest that several intervening variables need to be considered and that culture has a direct impact on students' use of and preference for technology. Generalized trust has a direct impact on the choice of technology. In addition, national culture directly affects generalized trust. Our original perception included the expectation that group processes were essential in resulting in higher group performance. Results indicate, for example, interpersonal trust, a more specific concept than generalized trust, has a major impact on the performance of any group, and peer learning is both a mediating variable and a desirable outcome for faculty and students. So, this level of interpersonal trust is impacted by the type/level of technology and it also mediates the relationship between technology and group performance. We present this extended version of our research model and discuss the implications it suggests for further research, including asking questions to help us learn more about the impact of COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter, and the unprecedented situation in which we find ourselves today.

Keywords: National culture, Generalized trust, Communication types, Intragroup processes, Impact of COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter

INTRODUCTION

For the past few years, two parallel streams of research have modified our initial research model into a much more complex and more realistic view of how to increase student performance in college coursework. One stream involves the role of technology in students' experiences while completing course team assignments. The second stream of interest concerns the impact of culture/diversity on affecting group performance and interactions. Team projects are assigned more frequently, and teamwork is considered a highly desirable outcome. Our initial research question was based upon an independent variable of level/type of technology and dependent variable of performance, namely: "How do students use face-to-face (FTF) and computer-mediated communication (CMC) throughout the process of completing group projects as course assignments?" (Choi, Zeff, & Higby, 2017) (See Figure 1, below.) Results from two focus groups

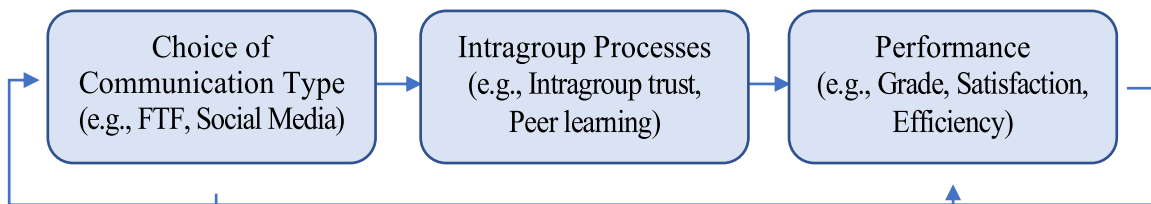
led to the development of a questionnaire, to which we gathered responses from a Midwestern American university (Choi, Zeff, & Higby, 2018).

Figure 1. Initial Research Model



Focus group results and survey data collected from samples of American and Chinese university students provide information that informs several major variables helpful in explaining how group performance can be improved during classes using team projects as course assignments. We found several factors that modify and expand our research model, adding sophistication and complexity, and better describing the relationship between communication type and group performance. We now highlight particular intervening variables within this extended model, including intragroup trust and peer learning, and recognize the need to collect specific data regarding these (and other) constructs. See Figure 2, below.

Figure 2. Extended Research Model (Horizontal Elements)

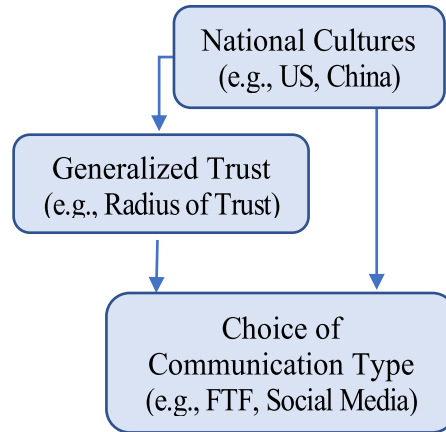


The second stream of interest came into play when a Global Leadership Conference involving Chinese business leaders in the automobile industry brought the importance of culture into focus for us (Zeff, & Higby, 2017). These business leaders were from private companies in China who were very sensitive to cultural differences between leaders from different countries and, as we found in this conference, between Chinese leaders in the private and public sectors. We also learned that culture has an impact on the concept of generalized trust (Delhey, Newton, & Welzel, 2011; Lewis, 2006; Zeff, & Higby, 2017). Our research model was becoming more complicated since the trust factor also modified the relationship between technology and performance. This stream of research played a major role in the enlargement and development of our research model, especially after data revealed differences between respondents from the US and China. The role of culture was identified as being central in affecting the impact on students' preferences for and uses of level/type of technology (Choi, Zeff, & Higby, 2019; see also, Šerić, 2020). See Figure 3, below.

These Chinese business people were very clear that national culture provides a contextual framework for all of the elements found in our representation of our first stream of research (Zeff & Higby, 2017), as depicted in Figure 2, above. There are three sources of internal cultural clashes within China that have been identified both in the literature and by these Chinese business leaders. These clashes are consistent with the variable denominators of Tung, Worm, and Fang (2008), and include: the clashing cultures in China between younger and older generations, particularly

between Millennials/Gen Xers and Baby Boomers (see, for example, Vieregge & Quick, 2011); the clashing cultures between Chinese state-owned enterprises and the privatized companies (represented by the participants in the Leadership Conference) (see, e.g., Lardy, 2014); and, the clashing cultures between geographic/economically developed areas within China itself (see, for example, Kwon, 2012).

Figure 3. Cultural Impact (Vertical Elements)



We were also fortunate at this time to have a visiting scholar from China at our University to provide insight into the educational process in China and to translate our questionnaire into Chinese for data gathering at a Chinese university. Did students in China use technology in the completion of group projects the same way as students in the U.S.? After better understanding the role of culture in this relationship between type of interaction and performance in group projects, we began to enhance our research model. It is this enhanced model that we present for better understanding of this relationship and as a research model for future testing.

The situations we have all experienced in responding to COVID-19 places a spotlight on this and many similar areas of investigation as we move into a new “normal,” whatever that turns out to be. Figure 2 focuses on the impact of type of communication on performance, particularly how technology might affect individual and group effectiveness. For example, many universities are already gathering data on the impact and effectiveness of online coursework that replaced offline education for the last two months of the academic year just ended. This is a straightforward example of comparing FTF and virtual interaction as they impact student effectiveness in course completion. In our Midwestern university, preliminary research findings suggest that 34% of faculty and 28% of students agree or strongly agree with the statement “I believe that online teaching/learning/communication can be as effective as traditional teaching,” while 24% of faculty and 37% of students disagree or strongly disagree (Zhong & Slowik, 2020). Note that this statement does not ask for how effective respondents think online education was, versus offline education for the first half of the semester. Instead, it asks how effective online education “can” be, as a possibility or ideal. So, there is no direct correspondence with our survey and this result cannot be compared to our results. We will discuss this in relation to data coming out of other university findings later in this paper to gain a more complete picture of where future research might be more illuminating for this whole topic area. These results seem to be optimistic and appear to be in contradiction with findings from our studies that strongly indicate how FTF

communication is both preferred and viewed as more effective by all of our respondents, including undergraduate students, graduate students, males, females, US students and Chinese students. Learning the impact of different communication types on our students and on our faculty is essential in helping us become better instructors and helping our students get more out of their educational and interpersonal interactions. The differences noted here seem to indicate the importance of gathering more information in future research for better decision-making in these areas.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

To help define our first stream of research, we summarize three studies previously published in Quarterly Review of Business Disciplines. The focus for the first study was how students use both face-to-face (FTF) and computer-mediated communication (CMC) to complete group projects for class. Specifically, our research question was: How do students use FTF and CMC throughout the process of completing group projects as course assignments? We conducted two focus group interviews to answer this question. They had nine and seven participants, respectively, and all of the interview participants (n=16) were undergraduate students at a mid-sized private, mainly commuter university in an urban center of the Midwest United States. Each focus group interview was conducted in a one-hour FTF meeting. We applied a qualitative research methodology and analyzed our data using QSR International's (2012) NVivo qualitative data analysis software (Version 11).

Based on our experiences and literature review, we created a patterned interview form comprised of three basic questions: what role does technology play in how you interact with members of your group; what are your experiences with FTF and CMC meetings (what impact did each play in developing trust and creating satisfaction, and what types of interactions, project or non-project related, did you have); and, how would you describe a really good group, a really good experience, and then compare that to a not so good group to help us understand the differences. We expanded upon each question based on participants' responses.

We found that students: are more satisfied with FTF interactions; believe that they perform better in FTF situations; prefer FTF meetings; use technology for efficient and task-oriented activities; and, generally use more FTF at the beginning and end of a group project with an increased usage of CMC in the middle, after trust is developed.

Using results from this exploratory study, a 66-item questionnaire was developed (Choi et al., 2018) to gather more explicit information and begin to determine what American student experiences suggest regarding their use and impact on group project performance. Our research question was: do students' experiences with and preferences for increased/enhanced technology in the completion of group assignments support and encourage an increased emphasis on technology-based interaction by faculty? This survey, used by permission, was translated and pre-tested by a Chinese scholar so a comparative sample could be collected from students at a university in China. After data collection, the survey was back translated by an independent interpreter to ensure the quality and accuracy of the results. This Chinese scholar was both very open and helpful in her contributions and discussions about Chinese students. However, she chose not to be included as a contributing author of this study.

U.S. student data were collected during the 2016-17 academic year at an urban Midwestern United States university. All 82 students were taking courses in a college of business administration. Demographic information indicates 80.5% (66) of these students were born between 1990 and 2000, with the remaining 16 students being born between 1980 and 1989. Furthermore, 58.5% (48) are female and 60.9% (50) are graduate students. All but one student (98.8%) has access to and uses a smartphone, while every respondent indicates he/she has access to and uses a computer.

Our Chinese sample comprised students attending a state-run university in a large, industrial city in southeastern China who filled out the same questionnaire in the summer, 2017. Usable surveys include 145 mainly undergraduate responses (7.6% [11] were graduate student responses). Three students (2.1%) were born between 1980 and 1989 while 97.9% (142) of all students in this sample were born between 1990 and 2000. Females comprise 65.5% (95) of the sample. Responses indicate 96.6% (140) have and use smartphones and 49.0% (71) have access to and use computers.

Comparing results from these two samples indicate more effective project performance for both samples occur with FTF interaction than any form of technology-based communication. Both samples also agree that FTF is the most preferred form of interaction and virtual meetings are the least preferred. FTF interactions lead to higher performance than do virtual interactions, and outcome, grades, satisfaction, experience and efficiency are all higher. FTF communication is also more effective than social media in dividing up project work and encouraging the exchange of ideas.

U.S. students experience an even more positive view of FTF communication, while Chinese students rely more heavily on social media. The major role of social media for Chinese respondents is to gather additional personal information to expand the radius of trust. Since this expanded radius increases the comfort level, it allows for enhanced group and individual performance. The role of trust is the same in both American and Chinese cultures, although the Chinese need greater personal interaction to gain the requisite level of trust for high performance.

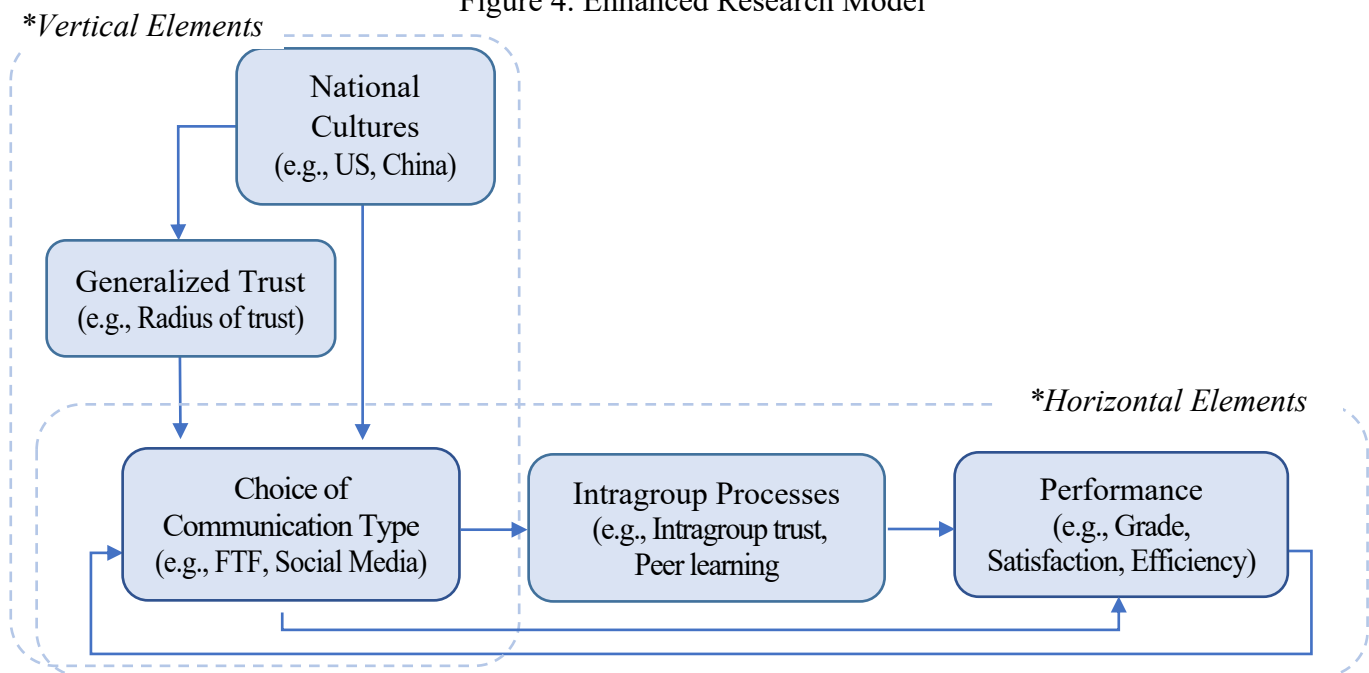
Our second stream of research began to flow as a result of a Global Leadership Conference, in Detroit in October 2015 highlighting cultural differences between the United States and China. Twenty owners and top-level executives of privately held companies in the automotive industry in China were travelling to several of their major customers in the Middle East, Western Europe and the United States to learn more about cultural differences. They provided frank discussions and responded to an open-ended questionnaire regarding cultural impact and characteristics in China at both state-owned and private institutions. The attendees recognized a need to improve, enhance and speed up the process of innovation within their own companies and the Chinese economy as a whole. They understood the important role played by culture within both Chinese companies and, increasingly, with companies throughout the global economic community with whom they did business. In China, the culture within which the private company leaders operated is very consistent with the national culture of the United States, as defined by the Hofstede paradigm (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). The culture within which leaders of state-owned companies operate is very consistent with the traditional Chinese national culture (Hofstede et al., 2010). And these automobile executives attribute the dramatic differences in results of both types of organizations directly to this one variable. Private companies in China have a critical edge over their state-owned counterparts; private companies earn higher returns – 14% on average versus 4% earned by state-owned companies (see, e.g., Liu & Sui as cited in Hout & Michael, 2014).

Participants in this seminar were leaders of private businesses existing within the context of Chinese state-owned businesses and were very much aware that at present the major innovations came from outside China, mainly from Europe and the United States. Their goal was to determine “best practices” from these areas and import them into China today, including culture and its impact on economic success, while learning about these other cultures to be better prepared to hasten the innovation process tomorrow. These business leaders identified culture as a primary element in determining company and country success. This emphasis, along with information derived from student survey results, provided the support and input into additional modifications for our expansion and full development of our research model.

MODEL DEVELOPMENT

Our enhanced research model, built initially on previous research and accounting for all the modifications made resulting from multiple sets of data collected (including two focus groups, questionnaire data from American students and the comparable data from Chinese students) and data collected from Chinese business leaders, is presented below in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Enhanced Research Model



We were able to include the first stream of interest, the impact of choice of technology on group performance, as an independent-dependent relationship. This is seen in the bottom part of our model as a set of horizontal elements. Our initial emphasis was on trying to understand this relationship, and data collected from the two focus groups added some intervening variables by filling out the Intragroup Processes section of this relationship.

FTF interactions provide more complete communication since both verbal and non-verbal cues are part of the social exchange process (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976). Digital communication can limit direct personal observations that allow members to perform effective cognitive trust assessment (Robert, Denis, & Hung, 2009). Awareness of who is responsible for specific outcomes

(Cui, Lockee, & Meng, 2013) and issues of accountability (Driskell, Radtke, & Salas, 2003; Reio & Crim, 2006) further reduce overall performance, while increasing frustration and dissatisfaction, and lowering participation. It has been found when social context cues are missing, increased depersonalization, lower cohesiveness, and less social conformity often result (Lu, Fan, & Zhou, 2016; Szeto & Cheng, 2013). Much of the literature concludes that FTF interaction at the beginning of a group project enhances the level of trust. Hambley, O'Neill, and Kline (2007), Horwitz and Horwitz (2007) and Lantz (2001), for example, advise project teams to have at least an initial FTF meeting before following up with virtual team interactions. Kennedy, Vozdolska, and McComb (2010) found in their behavioral simulation study that mixed-media teams (i.e., first as FTF and second as digital communication) had improved participative decision making over only digital communication teams. Both high and low media richness levels are effective when matched with appropriate tasks. For example, media with lower richness are effective when used with more routine tasks and richer media are better matched with nonroutine, complex and ambiguous tasks (Denstadli, Julsrud, & Hjorthol, 2012).

The second stream, the inclusion of culture and generalized trust into our area of investigation, really creates a new independent/dependent relationship into this model: vertical elements are added on top of Choice of Communication Type where National Culture becomes a new independent variable, Generalized Trust becomes a new intervening variable, and Choice of Communication Type, the independent variable in our original research model, becomes a new dependent variable. Our extended model is more complex. However, we believe this complexity is necessary in providing a more realistic view of the relationships among these variables. These two streams of research, and their research models, work well together in better describing our initial concerns regarding the use and impact of technology within classroom group projects, especially in comparative analyses. Our descriptions and explanations are more complete, accurate and realistic as a result. We now describe some more details about each of these variables as they appear in our model.

Performance

According to the input-process-output (IPO) model (McGrath, 1964) which has served as a valuable guide for researchers over the years, inputs describe antecedent factors that enable and constrain members' interactions. Outputs are results and by-products of team activity that are valued by one or more constituencies (Mathieu, Heffner, Goodwin, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 2000). Broadly speaking, these may include performance (e.g., quality and quantity) and members' affective reactions (e.g., satisfaction, commitment and viability). Performance is the most widely studied criterion variable because teams exist to perform tasks (Argote & McGrath, 1993; Bommer, Johnson, Rich, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 1995). Also, it is necessary in a review of team outcomes to include members' affective reactions, such as team viability which is often considered in terms of the extent to which individuals wish to remain as members of the team (Mathieu, Maynard, Rapp, & Gilson, 2008).

Initially, our view of performance when we first started this research stream suggested the only outcome of concern to students, and perhaps faculty as well, was the grade received for a group project. The first focus group, a group of highly motivated senior honor students, surprised us by indicating that satisfaction with their group members was very important, so important that they

would decide whether to work again with a particular student based on their satisfaction level rather than what grade they received on a group project (Choi et al., 2017). This focus group also surprised us when they stressed that FTF interactions were much more efficient at the beginning of projects than were any form of technological interactions. We were particularly surprised when graduate students responded on the questionnaire, students we believed were especially pressed for time, that FTF meetings were more efficient and, as a result, more preferable than either virtual or social media interaction (Choi et al., 2018). We could reconcile these differences from our initial expectations only when we considered the complexity of the tasks to be performed in the group with the research findings by Denstadli et al. (2012). “Performance,” therefore, was really comprised of at least three elements: grade; satisfaction; and, efficiency.

Intragroup processes

Team processes have played a central role in most team effectiveness models (Gist, Locke, & Taylor, 1987; Guzzo, & Shea, 1992; Hackman, 1983). Processes are important because they describe how team inputs are transformed into outputs. Various processes combine to drive team performance, which intervenes between the role of communication types and the ultimate impact on task accomplishment. Our model includes the major intervening variables that became apparent in our data collection during our three previous studies. The two most obvious from our data are intragroup trust and peer learning, and these are discussed below.

We focused on group projects since faculty increasingly use them in coursework for several reasons: group situations occur more frequently in on-job environments; they provide many opportunities for allowing students to practice interacting with more diverse people to be better prepared for life beyond the university setting; to offer opportunities to gain feedback from others on how well they perform and interact with other people; students learn how to deal with difficult people and situations before they first encounter them on the job; and, peer learning is an effective and desirable method for enhancing student satisfaction and the educational process (Keppell, Suddaby, & Hard, 2011; Coates, Kelly, & Naylor, 2017). These insights provide several additions to our views of intragroup processes and enrich the information included in and sought by our research model. Small group activities and assignments are used to break down the size of the class and more closely replicate a work environment many students already face, and others will soon be entering. Group experiences provide opportunities for students to practice interpersonal and leadership skills, both of which transfer directly to the job (Lavy, 2017). They also increase participation and student involvement, which have direct relationships to the learning process (Frykedal, & Chiriac, 2018). Moreover, group projects allow students to try out new ideas on and to gain feedback from peers to improve contributions to project outcomes. In addition, students often experience accountability and group issues such as social loafing (Synnott, 2016). Students often return after they graduate and indicate how they face these same social loafing frustrations on the job, and they talk about how they feel better prepared to deal with them after facing these circumstances in group projects during their studies in college.

Intragroup trust. Scholars usually distinguish between two forms of trust in others (Freitag & Traunmüller 2009; Glanville & Paxton 2007; Sztompka, 1999; Welch, Rivera, Conway, Yonkoski, Lupton, & Giancola, 2005): one involves a narrow circle of familiar others and is called particular or specific trust; the other concerns a wider circle of less familiar others and is called general or

diffuse trust. In short, intragroup trust is particularized trust, which corresponds to trust between team members, while generalized trust refers to trust in other members of society (Carl, & Billari, 2014). In a newly formed team, which involves initial interaction with new members, generalized trust is more important than particular trust (Crisp & Jarvenpaa, 2013; Delhey et al., 2011; Hakonen, & Lipponen, 2009).

This level of trust is a specialized application of the concept of “Generalized Trust” (see Figure 4, above). Trust is a well-researched team process that leads to superior team performance (Crowe, Collins, Larue, Green, Hough, & Juvina, 2017). It is defined as “the willingness of a party [trustor] to be vulnerable to the actions of another party [trustee] based on the expectation that they will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control the other party.” (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995, p.712). In order for team performance to be improved, team members must be able to trust other members. For team members to trust in the team, they must feel that (a) the team is competent enough to accomplish their task (i.e., team confidence), and (b) that the team will not harm the individual or his or her interests (i.e., safety). Team confidence is defined as “a shared belief in a group’s collective capability to organize and execute courses of action required to produce given levels of goal attainments.” (Kozlowski, & Ilgen, 2006, p. 90).

Building trust within a team is recognized as a key ingredient for team success (e.g., Davis, Schoorman, Mayer, & Tan, 2000; De Jong & Elfring, 2010). Trust facilitates specific risk-taking behaviors such as reducing defensive control, open discussion of conflicts and mistakes, mutual feedback, and sharing of confidential information, which in turn should lead to more efficient coordination of team members' resources (e.g., time, effort, knowledge, etc.) (Breuer, Huffmeier, & Hertel, 2016). Robert et al. (2009) found that low levels of initial trust are predicted in virtual teams when team members have little past history and use CMC exclusively, which can limit direct personal observations that allow members to perform effective cognitive trust assessment. Even though swift trust, a presumptive form of trust, seems to exist in virtual teams (Jarvenpaa, Knoll, & Leidner, 1998; Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1998), past studies found that swift trust appears to be fragile and often wildly inaccurate (Crisp & Jarvenpaa, 2013; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998; Meyerson, Weick, & Kramer, 1996). This represents a critical paradox for virtual group work (Wilson, Straus, & McEvily, 2006). Breuer et al., (2016) concluded in their meta-analysis that when virtual interaction is more frequent, team trust is more important for effectiveness. Consistent with this, empirical studies have found that interaction in computer-mediated groups is more task-oriented and less personal than interaction in FTF groups (Richardson, Maeda, Lv, & Caskurlu, 2017; Weidlich & Bastiaens, 2017). Computer-mediated teams were also found to struggle with their intra-team processes (Brahm & Kunze, 2012; Indiramma & Anandakumar, 2009; Staples & Zhao, 2006). FTF is very rich since it enables not only the spoken language and other verbal cues but also body language (Lantz, 2001). This gives the communicating parties a better basis for understanding each other compared to purely CMC (Lantz, 2001).

Our previous research results strongly reflected on the importance of intragroup trust, having a huge impact on the effect of communication style on performance. Not only does this trust improve overall performance, it also has a positive impact on other intragroup processes (Choi et al., 2018).

Peer learning. Members of a group learn new information from a variety of sources. External sources include literature reviews, textbooks and professors. One of the more effective sources is internal, that is, information coming from other group members (Mustafa, 2017). This is essentially the definition of peer learning. Children learn this source from an early age, and parents know full well that their own children often listen more carefully to their peers than themselves. Faculty members also know that peer learning is among the most effective sources for their students. That is why faculty consider peer learning as a desirable outcome and often structure their classes to include opportunities for students to interact to take advantage of this. These opportunities provide a major reason for the increase in group projects in classes, and this is true not just of business school classes (Mustafa, 2017). For example, many studies on peer learning take place within the health care community—medical and nursing schools carry on many research projects dealing with the advantages of peer learning (Göranzon, Lidskog, Freire, & Jansson, 2019, August; Tai, Canny, Haines, & Molloy, 2016).

Peer learning in higher education has been established as an effective learning strategy, assisting students to gain confidence in their own ability and taking control of their own learning (Keppell et al., 2011). Peer learning, when students learn with and from each other, is based on the principle that students learn in a more profound way by explaining their ideas to others and by participating in activities in which they can learn from their peers (McKenna, & French, 2011; Coates et al., 2017). Peer learning has been shown to enhance student learning and levels of self-efficacy (Brannagan, Dellinger, Thomas, Mitchell, Lewis-Trabeaux, & Dupre, 2013). Universities are very interested in students learning how to learn, i.e., to continue their educational process beyond the university experience. One way of learning how to extend their educational process is through communities of interest, an extension of peer learning. It, therefore, is a critical intragroup process with considerable interest as an important intervening variable between type of communication and the desired outcome of performance.

Communication types

Our focus groups found that traditional group interaction occurs in face-to-face meetings and involves two basic types of activities, namely, on-task (or the more formal activities occurring within a group) and off-task (or informal and more social types of activities) (Choi et al., 2018). We initially believed that students considered all communication choices as falling into two basic categories: FTF and CMC. Our first study involving focus group students indicated they considered the CMC category as being of two separate types, namely, the more formal and task-oriented forms and the more informal and off-task types. All three of our studies concluded that FTF interactions were more effective than CMC communication in large measure because they were able to accomplish both of these goals while any CMC interaction typically fulfilled only one of these two tasks. Our focus group students intuitively understood this difference when they broke down CMC communication into those methods that satisfied each of these two purposes of human interaction. As a result, we now consider three communication types that are used by students to interact within group settings. FTF exchanges are direct interactions with group members and form the basis on which in-class or in-person meetings provide direct communication exchanges. Virtual meetings provide more formal technology-based interactions with other group members and are used as a surrogate for FTF communication. Examples of virtual meetings include technologies like Zoom, Skype, texting, Google Docs, Microsoft Teams, and Blackboard. They seem to

accomplish the task-related aspects of FTF communication although they may not be as effective in fulfilling the more social, off-task goals for people within group situations. The students found CMC meetings to be more efficient since virtual meetings were more task-oriented; they had less off-task interaction; questions were more directly answered; and, no additional travel time was required (Choi et al., 2017; Denstadli et al., 2012). Empirical studies have found that interaction in computer-mediated groups is more task-oriented and less personal than interaction in FTF groups (Richardson et al., 2017; Weidlich & Bastiaens, 2017). Social media contacts, on the other hand, tend to be more informal and focus on fulfilling the off-task goals for groups (Crook, 2008, May 1; Selwyn, 2012). These communication interactions include, for example, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat.

A shock to all education, economic, social and global systems occurred with the COVID-19 pandemic. From their homes, people are generally saying: “Thank goodness for technology”, as it allows for people to interact with family and friends in ways that could not happen while being isolated at home. Technology, when compared to isolation, has been absolutely fabulous. For example, classes at all levels of education were translated into online versions when people were required to stay at home and not congregate in class-sized groups. Students and faculty alike were generally able to complete this semester. People clearly long for human interaction, and stock in Zoom and its rivals absolutely skyrocketed. Some basic questions arise: Are these interactions comparable to FTF communication? Do they satisfy interaction needs to the same or similar extent? Would people prefer Zoom to meeting in person? These are questions that will be asked and studied. Many universities are asking these questions right now to help determine the extent to which campuses may be opened in the coming months, assuming an appropriate level of health and safety can be achieved.

Most of the student evaluations and faculty feedback we have seen and are aware of indicate that people are generally fairly happy with the outcomes of this most unusual semester. Students did not lose a whole semester, they received credit for courses for which they have already paid, and they graduated on time. Another question might be how effective this recent educational experience was compared to previous educational coursework or FTF interactions with friends and family members. Did students learn as much as they might have while attending regular classes? Are people as satisfied as they would have been meeting friends and family in person? We believe there is one major mitigating circumstance in this situation, namely, faculty members did not have a full summer in which to change a course from offline to online, and that could make a huge difference. Most faculty members only had a weekend to transform their courses. Questions of experience here, however, must not compare technology-based interactions with the alternative of no classes. Rather, these questions must compare CMC with FTF communication options. Moreover, we must not forget that human interactions fulfill two basic needs. Satisfying only one of those needs dramatically limits the role of human interaction and shortchanges the fulfillment of human needs.

National culture and generalized trust

Neither of the two focus groups suggested to us that national culture would play any role in our initial study, nor should it become part of our model. Only after collecting data from Chinese students would we become sensitive to the part that national culture plays in how people perceive

technology and how it might be used by students in dealing with group members. Including the importance of national culture in affecting the choice and use of technology-based communication adds a significant layer to our model and, while adding complexity, moves it toward greater realism. We believe, therefore, that future research should include a cultural dimension.

National cultures, while describing general characteristics of a population, directly affect not only the choice of communication interaction needed, they also have an impact on the intervening variables described in this paper. Culture is used as the basis for examining business relationships between the West and the East (recently, especially China). And both Chinese and American cultures agree that trust is important in the development of these relationships (De Cremer, 2015, February 11). Trust is also important in influencing group processes and group performance (Alge, Wiethoff, & Klein, 2003; Mayer et al., 1995; Morris, Marshall, & Rainer, 2002). In particular, trust is regarded as an essential ingredient for cooperation (Putnam, 2001). People in individualist cultures are more cooperative with group members than those from collectivist cultures when groups are formed for the first time (Triandis, 1989). This occurs since the radius of trust in individualist cultures is much wider and group members are typically included within one's in-group (Delhey et al., 2011). Collectivist cultures influence people to have a very narrow radius of trust so very few group members will be part of their inner group. Chinese students, for example, need to use social media to increase their level of trust with group members for better group relations (Choi, Zeff, & Higby, 2019). People identify with established attitudes in collectivist societies, which then become part of their inner group circle (Smith, & Bond, 1993). On the contrary, members of individualist cultures, such as the U.S., have a wider radius of trust and, as a result, do not need to gain a further level of in-group trust. Which intragroup processes are used in any particular group situation is dramatically influenced by national culture and this variable is critical in understanding how people work in groups and their resultant performance levels.

Impact on intervening variables. In our conference with Chinese business leaders (Zeff, & Higby, 2017), we were impressed with their continual comments on how leadership style was very different between business leaders in the private sector of their economy and those who worked in State owned businesses. Not only did these two groups have to consider different criteria for decision-making, they were constantly considering different constituencies. These comments make it clear to us that leadership styles and decision-making processes are very important in determining group, company and even industry performance. In addition to leadership styles and decision-making as intervening variables, these Chinese automobile company executives were careful to indicate differences they noticed in how these two groups of executives communicated within their respective organizations and how they chose to rely on particular people to further communication efforts. They recognized, for example, how much information they shared with their subordinates and how they sought out suggestions and ideas from many people throughout the company. They also indicted their concerns for direct involvement of company personnel to ensure maximum participation rather than managers in State owned companies who had virtually no concern for sharing information with subordinates. They strongly believed that involvement of subordinates was essential to better management and higher performance. And unlike their counterparts in State owned companies, they had a direct individual benefit of participation in profit sharing and personal wealth increases. Growth and performance differences between the two types of company ownership (private and State owned) strongly supports the perspective of these executives (Zeff & Higby, 2017). Leadership style involves how group members are included

and what communication approaches are used within the group. Our conference participants from China were very clear, however, that communication approaches within groups were so important that they must be considered a major and separate concept in determining group performance. Besides the communication types used to interact with the group as a whole, (our original independent variable) individual interactions within the group with specific group members also influence group performance. And these business leaders were well aware of these relationships. Additional research needs to study these and, we suspect, many other intervening variables to more accurately reflect how groups function and perform at even higher levels.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF MODEL

There are two major sets of implications of our Enhanced Research Model of Figure 4 above. Both implications are focused on the outcome of this model, namely, performance, on an individual and on a team level. The horizontal elements of the model provide important information to students and to faculty on how communication types impact various intragroup processes and the resultant outcome of both individual and team performance. This impact might inform faculty on relationships between these elements they may choose to impart to their students before groups are formed and team projects are assigned. Moreover, this provides important knowledge for students to learn for purposes of their entire career and performance on the job.

The second major set of implications deals with the vertical elements of Figure 4. In our globalized world, both economically and educationally, awareness of cultural differences is often what differentiates economic performance in the workplace. It is also a major goal for many educational institutions and systems. Sensitivity to diverse cultures, backgrounds and ideas is crucial to individual and team performance, both on school projects and on the job. This requirement of sensitivity has been highlighted in our daily lives through the renewed movement of Black Lives Matter, a further application of the need to be aware of and respond to diversity of our neighbors and team members in school, on the job and in our lives.

We are all living in a new world, with a pandemic overriding everything we do. All classes are now either fully online or have online components, and technology has become, for most of us, a major (only) way with which we interact with others. Part of this research will no doubt be applied to these experiences. Many people have already begun comparing their recent “online” experiences with previous FTF experiences. Surely, as we compare our “visits” with parents and grandparents, with ceremonies and rituals (e.g., a funeral of a very good friend in a faraway state in this country), there will be considerable differences. Are these differences of another level or another type?

One result of our previous research indicates that FTF communication is much more highly preferred than we initially expected. This is true for all samples in our previous studies. We were particularly surprised when graduate students have the same high preference level for FTF interaction while being on campus less frequently than undergraduate students (Choi et al., 2018). Likewise, we expected Chinese students to be much more interested in communicating via technological means than turned out to be the case. We expected there to be a higher acceptance of and preference for online, CMC, interaction. One reviewer suggested that may be a result of a predisposition of our students, who selected an on-ground delivery style as the main method of

class interaction, rather than more emphasis on online delivery approaches. This critique may not be applied to the Chinese student sample, however.

The impact of COVID-19 includes a huge dose of technology while people have been isolated in their homes for long periods of time. Not just hours on end, but days and weeks alone have forced people to find new ways to interact. If human beings are social animals, how do we find opportunities to meet with others when we are stuck inside our houses, wearing masks and staying at least six feet apart when we finally do cross the threshold by going through the door? Zoom and all of its counterparts have become more basic elements of our vocabulary. Most people would agree that technology has played a larger and a more critical role in our lives today than it did before the pandemic, even for those technologically attached people. Most educational systems, from pre-school through university graduate schools, have used some form of online education to fill the chasm created by “stay safe, stay home” directives from state and local government leaders. The impact and effectiveness of these experiences will become the focus for decision-making and educational planning for many years to come. We may need to make many decisions about the educational delivery systems for the upcoming school year, and the available technology, the types of communication interactions we have available, will play a key role. We have some very early research results that begin to inform our actions.

We start by looking at the state of online education before the coronavirus pandemic. A recent study of the highest-ranking person in the university responsible for online education, and conducted by Quality Matters and Eduventures -- a nonprofit group focused on ensuring quality in online education and a research and advisory group -- was completed in spring 2019 (Lederman, 2020, March 25). This survey found 60% of these online administrators indicated faculty had some training required before teaching an online course. However, only 30% indicated that students had any training or orientation. This suggests that it was an absolutely remarkable feat to transform all educational course delivery systems into online courses within a matter of days when education was physically shut down during COVID-19.

When considering results of online courses, two considerations need to be taken into account. First, there was an extremely short amount of time faculty had to translate their coursework into online formats. Rebecca Barrett-Fox gave the following advice to struggling faculty trying to cope with providing instruction to students in a blog with the title: “Please do a bad job putting your courses online.” She writes:

I’m absolutely serious.

For my colleagues who are now being instructed to put some or all of the remainder of their semester online, now is a time to do a poor job of it. You are NOT building an online class. You are NOT teaching students who can be expected to be ready to learn online. And, most importantly, your class is NOT the highest priority of their OR your life right now. Release yourself from high expectations right now, because that’s the best way to help your students learn. (Barrett-Fox, 2020, March 12, para. 1-2.)

Second, students responded to questions of their experiences with online education after schools closed down mainly by being grateful that technology allowed the semester to be completed and

many could still graduate, not by being critical of the quality of the education relative to what they were used to. According to a survey of over 3,000 students nationwide, Top Hat found that students very much appreciated the response to COVID-19's closure of universities by switching to all online coursework (70% thought their university did a good or excellent job in responding to the crisis), and the efforts of their instructional staff (66% of their professors did a good or excellent job in transforming the courses) (Kelly, 2020, May 1). This same survey found, however, that students found the quality of instruction to be well below what they received before the closure of school, with 68% of the students indicating that the emergency online instruction was worse than what they received before the crisis (Kelly, 2020, May 1). Moreover, 85% of the respondents missed the FTF interaction with faculty and 86% missed the interaction with other students (Kelly, 2020, May 1). Of concern to university presidents and those responsible for financial decisions, 26% of students were uncertain whether they would return to their school for the fall semester. Moreover, 25% of students indicated they had a worse opinion of their institution during this crisis (Kelly, 2020, May 1). The role of FTF interaction may or may not change as a result of a likely changed role of online learning in university settings in the near future. The need for research in this area appears to be even stronger to help faculty in their new attempts to upgrade and enhance their online presentations of course material.

Future research directions

Our enhanced research model provides many questions that beg for additional study. For example, peer learning has become an additional intervening variable and should be included in future attempts to better understand the relationship between the type of communication approach used and completion of group projects in classroom situations. It is also becoming more important in faculty's views of course outcomes, and therefore needs to be directly included in any research design for this topic. This also suggests that more research needs to study additional intragroup processes. As we gathered more data, we became sensitive to and aware of other factors that affected group performance based on what types of communication approaches are used by groups. Peer learning is only one of many potential processes that help groups enhance their performance. Literature reviews will help build a foundation for determining particular processes that will have an impact on team performance.

Critical questions coming out of our common and dramatic experiences recently, of course, deal with the impact of COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter. The world has changed, and interactions between people may be dramatically different as a result. Will people get used to CMC as a new norm? Will students ever return to a physical campus? Will students still have such a high preference for FTF? Will some cultures change their preferences while other cultures maintain their previous preferences? Will, in other words, the outcome of the horizontal section of our model produce a feedback loop to the vertical part of this model? Will age or circumstance modify these preferences? Will these experiences modify national cultural characteristics? Does national culture become much less stable over time now that these dramatic events have occurred? We hope that people will ask their own questions, although we are confident that these experiences will promote the opportunity and exercise of questioning by researchers throughout the academy and beyond.

When we sat down to go through the exercise of asking some of these questions, we also realized that these questions set up the possibility of creating a number of scenarios and trying to establish

hypotheses that might inform future research areas. We will take one of these scenarios to use as an example of how future research questions might be developed, using this newer version of our research model.

We would like to study the impact of one's experience within group situations on future perceptions of group processes and performance. For example, suppose an individual has an experience within a group situation. How might this experience affect this person's interaction with group members the next time he/she works within a group setting? Does this impact depend on the success of the group's performance? If the individual has a very positive experience, satisfaction levels are very high as a result, does the person have a higher intragroup trust level? Might this result be different if the individual comes from a national culture of high collectivism as opposed to a national culture of high individualism? Would level of collectivism change the impact of this experience? Let's walk through this scenario to see the different types/levels of impact that could be created.

We started to discuss how students' experiences might impact their future perceptions of intragroup trust and whether culture-based radius of trust might be modified as a result. Suppose, for example, we have eight different students that we will "track." Two students are from the United States, coming from a national culture with an extremely high level of individualism (Hofstede et al., 2010). These students began a particular semester with an exceptionally wide radius of trust (Delhey et al., 2011) and, as a result, intragroup trust is high. Student One has a very satisfying experience with the group project while the Student Two is dissatisfied with the group members. Students Three and Four come from Spain and likewise have a national culture resulting in higher individualism rather than collectivism and the corresponding level of radius of trust, although not nearly as strong as that formed in the US (Hofstede et al., 2010). Again, Student Three has a very good experience while Student Four ends up being dissatisfied.

There are four additional students that we "track" through this scenario: Students Five and Six come from China and start with an extremely narrow radius of trust based on a highly collectivist culture (Delhey et al., 2011; Hofstede et al., 2010). Student Five has an excellent experience while Student Six has a poor experience. Students Seven and Eight come from India, and while their national culture is more collectivist rather than individualist, their generalized trust is not nearly as limited as those students from China (Delhey et al., 2011; Hofstede et al., 2010). Student Seven has a positive experience while Student Eight has a negative group experience.

What is likely to happen to their views of generalized and intragroup trust? How much, if any, does their national culture get modified as a result of this experience? What would our hypotheses be as we collect data on these situations?

Hofstede suggests that culture is a very stable construct and will not be modified in the short term. (Almutairi, Yen, & Heller, 2018; Flory, Essers, & Touburg, 2016). We expect, as a result of our interactions with students during these studies, that there will be some situations in which cultural influences will be modified in the short term. In particular, if the cultural impact on a particular dimension is in the extreme, it will not likely be modified as a result of some experience. On the other end of this continuum, if a national culture has a much more moderate impact on one of the six dimensions of national culture, a specific experience may have a fairly large impact and modify

how much a national culture influences a choice of communication style or intragroup process. In our scenario, Chinese and Indian cultures are both more collectivist than individualist. As a result, Students Five through Eight all start with a narrower general trust level, as their belief in a more close-knit group is stronger and their radius of trust is more closely defined. Students Five and Six come from China, with an extreme level of national culture toward the collectivist end of the individualist-collectivist dimension. We expect for both Students Five and Six to maintain their expectations of intragroup trust given their beliefs that radius of trust is very narrow, regardless of whether they have a satisfying or unsatisfying experience in this group. The two students coming from India, however, have a less extreme view of the collectivist end of this dimension. We expect, therefore, that Student Seven with a positive experience in a group situation will modify his/her perspective regarding in-group trust and enter the next group experience with a more positive view of the other group members. Student Eight, who has a more negative experience, will also likely modify future expectations of trust level with other group members and have an even narrower level of radius of trust than the Indian culture initially suggests.

We come to the same conclusions when we consider the students from America and Spain. The United States has an extreme position along the individualist-collectivist dimension. We do not expect, therefore, for any experience, good or bad, to have an impact on views of ingroup trust. Spain has a very low level of individualism, although still on the individualist side of this dimension. The two students from Spain, therefore, will likely be influenced as a result of their experience during a group project. The Spanish student who has a positive experience likely will continue to maintain or even enhance their initial view of what to expect with intragroup trust. The Spanish student who has a negative experience during a group project will face a situation that was not expected. This student is likely to more strongly modify expectations of group members since national culture may not be strong enough to overcome the experience he/she has just had.

We summarize all experiences of these eight students by the following hypothesis: culture-based generalized trust (radius of trust) will more likely be modified with experience when the cultural influence along a particular dimension is not extreme. It will be enhanced when the experience is in the same direction of the initial expectations and changed when one's experience contradicts the expectation of the culture. It will be maintained regardless of one's experience (positive or negative) when the cultural impact is in the extreme (as is true in the case of the United States and China). Our overall null hypothesis might be stated as follows: no culture-based generalized trust is modified by experience. Our specific testable hypotheses would be:

H₁: When Hofstede's individualism/collectivism is moderate, for example, Spain and India, culture-based generalized trust will more likely be modified with experience.

H₂: When Hofstede's individualism/collectivism is extreme, for example, China and US, culture-based generalized trust will less likely be modified with experience.

As we look back at our research model, we find ourselves asking questions like: Do the vertical elements of the model more directly impact one or more of the horizontal elements? And, is there a feedback loop from the "Performance" element back to the vertical elements? Our hypothetical scenarios, for example, suggest possible modifications in national culture/generalized trust as a result of one's experiences. How strong might this feedback loop be and under what conditions

would we expect these modifications to take place? We seem to have our hands full with our future research stream, and we look forward to working toward collecting some answers to these questions.

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