Journal of Public Interest Communications

Volume 3, Issue 2 December 2019 ISSN (online): 2573-4342

Journal homepage: http://journals.fcla.edu/jpic/

JPIC is an open-access, online journal published through the Public Knowledge Project and is supported by the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications.

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DOI:10.32473/jpic.v3.i2

JPIC Editorial Board

The editorial staff extends its appreciation to Dr. Kelly Chernin for her assistance with this issue.

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Editor's Essay

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In an era of uncertainty, fake news, and declining trust of government institutions and media, a renewed confidence in experts, including CEOs willing to speak out on important social issues, is emerging. According to the 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer trust in news and government is still low. Globally only 64% of respondents had trust in traditional media. Perhaps even more worrisome is that 73% of respondents feared false information or fake news being used as a weapon. Similarly, only 49% of the mass population believe they and their families will be better off in the next five years.

What is interesting is these same respondents embrace the idea that organizations, particularly businesses, can be agents of change. The majority of respondents (75%) trust the organizations for which they work, and 73% of respondents believe a corporation can earn profits while also work to make the economic and social conditions of the community in which it operates better. In addition, about 76% of respondents want CEOs to take the lead when policy change is needed. As this shift is occurring, organizations' leaders are increasingly held responsible for more than just products, services, and profits; now "they stand up for our [communication professionals'] values on behalf of all stakeholders—including employees, customers, partners, community and the planet" (duBrowa, 2018, para. 7).

What I find most encouraging in the report is the embrace of change. News engagement rose by 22 points meaning people are taking the time and effort to be informed about issues. In addition, respondents state their employers have a greater purpose than making profits, and through shared action the respondents themselves see how they are driving societal change. Of course, along with this shift also come varying emotions – anger, relief, anguish, disappointment, fear, and perhaps even hope. These emotions will also have to be given attention to be understood and harnessed to drive positive change. Organizational leaders prepared to embrace

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these shifts in expectations and responsibilities as well as having the willingness to face the emotion, both good and bad, of constituents have the opportunity to position their organizations as trusted groundbreakers, and it seems some are heeding this call. The articles within this issue are testament to this shift in responsibility and societal expectations for organizations, as well as the intense emotions that surround this change.

Austin, Miller Gaither and Gaither's article examines attitudes toward the role of corporations in social advocacy and as agents for social change. The findings from their nationally representative survey of U.S. citizens suggest that overall respondents believe corporations should engage in social issues. This piece was presented at the International Communication Association preconference, "Bridging Borders: Public Interest Communications in the Global Context," hosted by *JPIC* in Washington, D.C., May 2019.

Also presented at the preconference was the work of Teruggi Page. Teruggi Page's piece focuses on the La Peña Cultural Center and how the leaders of this organization have been change agents amplifying marginalized voices since 1975. Her work looks at engagement strategies used to affect social and cultural change through public interest communications.

The kidnapping of 300 Nigerian schoolgirls and how narrative storytelling was used to create commonality and engage audiences is the topic of Addie's article. This piece examines how despite the U.S. media typically report less on missing women of color and also report more on negative news from Africa, the story of the kidnapped schoolgirls found resonance among U.S. readers.

Finally, Maben, Benedict, Holley, and Goen identified themes that emerge around the #ILookLikeAProfessor hashtag popularized in August 2015. Through qualitative content analysis the authors contend that this example of activism has allowed for conversations about diversity, appearance, identification, and self.

I hope after reading the contents of this issue, you, too, find examples of shifting roles, responsibilities, and social expectations being championed by organizations practicing public interest communications and presenting messages of hope.

duBrowa, C. (2018, March 18). The new CCO: Chief Conscience Officer. *PR Week*. Retrieved from https://www.prweek.com/article/1459851/new-cco-chief-conscience-officer

Edelman. (2019). Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report. Retrieved from https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2019-02/2019_Edelman_Trust_Barometer_Global_Report.pdf

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ISSN (online): 2573-4342
Journal homepage: http://journals.fcla.edu/jpic/

Corporate Social Advocacy as Public Interest Communications: Exploring Perceptions of Corporate Involvement in Controversial Social-Political Issues

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Article Information

Received: May 7, 2019

Accepted: October 16, 2019

Published online: December 20, 2019

Keywords

Public interest communications
Corporate social advocacy
Activism
Motives
Commitment

Abstract

Through a nationally representative U.S. survey of 1,214 participants, this study examined attitudes toward the role of corporations in public interest communications and response to a series of recent high-profile corporate social advocacy cases. Findings provide preliminary evidence for what types of public interests are most appropriate for organizations to address, based on perceived motivations, commitment to advocacy, and dimension of corporations as actors for social change. Results from this study suggest demographic differences by political viewpoints, age, income, education, and gender. However, an overall level of agreement across all respondents indicates that corporations should engage in addressing important social issues, which is particularly noteworthy given that the U.S. population skews conservative.

Introduction

Included in the discussion of public interest communications are nonprofit and government organizations. However, businesses have also been imagined "as one of the great institutions capable of the greatest social change," particularly in social concerns where government and nonprofits fall short (Fyke, Feldner, & May, 2016, p. 218). As corporations are increasingly taking public stands on social issues, such as Gillette's recent advertising campaign on toxic masculinity (Iqbal, 2019) and Nike's controversial support for Colin Kaepernick, the question of

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DOI:10.32473/jpic.v3.i2.p3

what corporations' role in public interest communications should be remains up for debate (Gaither, Austin, & Schulz, 2018).

Examples of corporate social responsibility (CSR), such as the Novartis Pharmaceuticals Healthy Families initiative in India, highlight the potential for businesses to advance the human condition. The initiative delivered health education to approximately 24 million people and provided health diagnosis and treatment to 2.5 million (Novartis, 2016). This initiative also returned profits in less than three years (Novartis, 2014). As companies see returns on their investments from CSR, Dutta (2019) counters that CSR programs deployed to serve the public interest may ultimately serve the status quo. According to Dutta (2019, p. 53), "Development and public good are often paradoxically co-opted within efforts of community relations and CSR to strategically achieve goals of privatized organizational effectiveness."

Corporate social advocacy (CSA), meanwhile, moves beyond CSR in that it represents corporate engagement in controversial social or political issues that often lack direct relevance to the company (Dodd & Supa, 2014). Additionally, unlike CSR, which involves corporate-sponsored initiatives that simultaneously address a social or environmental concern while benefiting an organization's image (e.g., de Bakker & den Hond, 2008), corporations engage in CSA recognizing it may not be received well by all stakeholders. Gaither, Austin, and Collins (2018) found that DICK's Sporting Goods' CSA on gun control following the Parkland, FL, school shooting was undertaken despite the potential for polarized reactions and potentially negative sales impacts. Although companies are increasingly expending resources and engaging in risk by taking public stances on issues that transcend the interests of the organization (Dodd, 2018), CSA as a form of public interest communications remains largely unexplored.

Just as CSR campaigns frequently generate skepticism from stakeholders and activist organizations regarding corporate motivations, recent CSA also has been criticized as woke washing, or attempts by companies to appear socially conscious to make profits. Nevertheless, CSA may be viewed quite differently from CSR given its apparent potential to alienate some stakeholders by supporting others. Through a U.S. national survey, this study explores perceptions of well-known CSA cases and perceived motivations and expectations for corporate engagement in public interest communications, a topic yet to be fully explored in scholarly research. Specifically, this research examines perceived motivations for CSA (e.g., Ellen, Webb, & Mohr, 2006), dimensions of corporations as actors for social change (Gaither, Austin, & Schulz, 2018), and what types of societal/political issues are most appropriate for organizations to address. These responses are compared with political affiliation, education, age, and concern for social involvement, shedding light on the shifting societal expectations for the role of business in advancing the public interest.

Literature review

Field of Public Interest Communications

Despite a rich legacy of research, mostly in the political realm, public interest research in communication has received limited attention. Seminal works by Dewey (1927), Habermas (1984), and Lippmann (1927) traverse the 20th century and illustrate the ongoing struggle to define the public and actualize the public interest. Lippmann casts a discerning shadow on the public interest, positing much of the public in a democracy are too far removed from the very issues that affect them, either from lack of access or knowledge (Fott, 1998). Dewey likewise viewed the public as inchoate and unorganized but capable of effectively functioning with certain limits that could only be defined through shared experience (Mayhew, 1997). For both Dewey and Lippmann, a central concern was the formation of community in the realm of competing interests. Habermas viewed the loose formation of such communities as public spheres and antecedents to public opinion (1984).

A rich vein of research in public relations has emerged to challenge fractured notions of symbolic communication as a defining feature of the public interest (Carah, 2019), often by examining who speaks in and for the public interest, and those voices that are limited by power structures (L'Etang, 2004). This shift toward postmodern and critical treatments has dislocated relative power away from normative notions of a public interest (Dutta, 2019; Heath & Waymer, 2019; Pal & Dutta, 2011). Dutta suggests public relations and community relations are often self-driven, privately-led initiatives that co-opt the public sphere for private gain and erase the voices of the subaltern (2019). A stream of research has examined public relations and public interest through case studies (Gaither & Curtin, 2019; Kaneva & Popescu, 2014; Somerville & Davidson, 2019), often in non-western contexts focusing on the role of government rather than organizations in the public interest. There is general agreement among these research streams that organizations are driven by avarice rather than any altruistic commitment to the public interest.

According to Munshi and Kurian (2005, p. 518), "It is possible for public relations to begin to be ethical and socially responsible only if it acknowledges the diversity of publics that corporations may have… and break down the hierarchy of publics and take into account the resistance of marginalized publics." Semantic disagreements are pressing issues in public interest communications. Johnston and Pieczka (2019, p. 21) argue public relations scholarship has reached an "impasse" toward any conclusive or overarching notion of what constitutes "the public" or "a public," let alone any constructive way to conceptualize power, access, debate, and agency in the public interest. To other scholars such as Somerville and Davidson (2019), failure to account for heterogeneity of publics is a chief concern for public relations.

This study supports the symbolic expression function of communication (Carah, 2019; Somerville & Davidson, 2019) by examining the perceived motivations for organizations to enter the combustible space of sensitive sociopolitical issues through CSA. Consequently, it does not

support a monolithic notion of public, while it does provide insights into the symbolic value of CSA initiatives to corporations and the often disempowered publics that collectively participate in how the public interest is defined, negotiated, and contested. As skepticism of organizational motives as anything other than self-serving abound in the literature, L'Etang (2013) argues there is little evidence organizations are finding meaningful ways to balance organizational obligations of service in the public interest to the necessity of business solvency driven by organizational publics including shareholders. And although motivations for CSR have been studied extensively in literature, organizational motives for the emerging trend of CSA is an area of research ripe for investigation. In turn, there is need for scholarship that foregrounds the public interest vis-a-vis the currency of culture, ethics, values, dialogue, and diversity of publics (Bang, 2019; Mundy, 2019; Munshi & Kurian, 2005; Taylor, Kent, & Xiong, 2019).

Corporations' role in public interest communications

Corporate social responsibility

A main way that businesses work to better the lives of stakeholders such as employees, customers, and the communities in which they operate, is CSR. CSR emphasizes the relationship between business and society (Snider, Hill, & Martin, 2003) and involves organizational operations that connect back to greater societal economic, ethical, legal, or philanthropic concerns (Kim & Reber, 2008).

CSR is defined as "business practices that address an organization's various economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities as they pertain to a wide range of stakeholders" (Lee, 2017, p. 211). CSR initiatives provide a form of public good by fulfilling social responsibilities businesses have to the communities in which they operate, either through mitigating negative business impacts or by providing benefits to a community. These benefits may include donating money to local charities, giving employees paid volunteer days, and providing services to underserved populations, to name just a few (Gaither, Austin, & Schulz, 2018). CSR initiatives also are designed to portray a company as responsive to the needs and concerns of society (Ellen et al., 2006), thereby giving the business a boost in reputation.

Corporate social advocacy

In recent years, corporate advocacy regarding social issues has been discussed in academic literature as a subset of CSR. The last several years in particular have seen a rise in corporate activism in response to government actions and policies (Foorhar, 2017), as businesses have taken a definitive action or stance in response to politically charged issues. After U.S. President Trump issued the 2017 travel ban, for example, many companies released statements against the travel ban and called out unfair immigration policies (Reisinger, 2017).

These CSA statements veer from traditional CSR into a new category of corporate action. CSA, or a company's public activism on controversial issues (Dodd & Supa, 2014), extends beyond what has traditionally been considered CSR. Although CSR efforts may support an issue with which most people agree (e.g., fighting pollution), CSA involves corporate support of or opposition to policies, political perspectives, or issues (Clemensen, 2017). In other words, CSA represents a unique business-society relationship that moves beyond corporate citizenship and CSR—strategies that usually involve philanthropic efforts in *support* of a cause—into a public stance on a controversial issue or public comments on the ways the company is working to further address that issue (Clemensen, 2017; Dodd & Supa, 2014).

CSA goes against conventional business wisdom that advises companies to remain neutral on controversial issues for fear of alienating customers or potential customers (Korschun, Aggarwal, Rafieian, & Swain, 2016). And although it is true that some consumers are likely to react negatively toward business stances on political issues, new research also suggests that consumers respect and patronize companies that take stances on issues that align with their stated corporate values (e.g., Dodd & Supa, 2014; Gaither, Austin, & Collins, 2018; Korschun et al., 2016).

Certainly the idea of a company participating in political dialogue through corporate citizenship is not new and has been discussed previously in the context of CSR (Matten & Crane, 2005). However, the recent political climate of the United States has made it more common for corporations to weigh in publicly on important political issues (Clemensen, 2017; Dodd, 2018; Korschun et al., 2016). Additionally, the increase in popularity of social media has made it easier than ever for current issues to receive extensive media coverage while also allowing activists and corporations to release public statements on current events and express their views to their publics (Schulz, 2017). By engaging with stakeholders about political issues, however, companies open themselves up to a host of potential criticisms about motivations and legitimacy (Etter, 2013).

As this trend increases, examining publics' views of corporations in relation to social advocacy may shed light on factors important for consideration. Therefore, the first research question is posed:

RQ1: How do individuals perceive the primary role of business in society with regard to social issues?

Further, to explore conditions and factors that may affect this perceived role in society, the following two sub-questions are posed:

R1a: Under what conditions are a corporation's actions on controversial social issues more appropriate?

R1b: What individual factors affect perception of businesses' role in social issues?

Dimensions of corporations as actors for social change

As described above, a valid query in dealing with corporations as actors for social change is whether or not corporations may be well suited to do so. There are many different models for how businesses might invest in the public interest and communicate this investment. Fyke et al. (2016) described three categorizations of business-society relationships: CSR, conscious capitalism, and social entrepreneurship. In this conceptualization, CSR helps to legitimize business practices, is integrated into an already existing business model, and still has profits at the center of its functioning. Both conscious capitalism and social entrepreneurship focus more on the social good rather than profits or the existing business model. Conscious capitalism focuses primarily on stakeholders as the core of the business model and driving change that benefits stakeholders. Social entrepreneurship instead has a core goal of sustainable social and economic change. Organizations in this category are founded upon their social values, as opposed to these social values later being fit into an existing business model (Fyke et al., 2016).

When examining factors that affect moving beyond CSR to create larger scale social change, Gaither, Austin, and Schulz (2018) suggested the importance of: 1) linking to a generalizable interest and 2) genuine engagement (Edwards, 2016) through dialogue (Taylor & Kent, 2014). Research suggests that CSR higher in economic and ethical focus, as opposed to a focus on products, yields higher engagement on social media (Uzunoğlu, Türkel, & Yaman Akyar, 2017). However, this engagement should be perceived as genuine to promote change. Linking to generalizable interest can prove to be more challenging for companies taking on advocacy or activism roles, as the causes being advocated for are sometimes controversial or polarizing. Organizations driven by stakeholders (conscious capitalism) or by social values (social entrepreneurship) may have more capacity for creating social change, due in large part to their tendency to focus on conferring benefits instead of removing harms (Gaither, Austin, & Schulz, 2018).

To further explore this framework within the context of CSA specifically, a second research question is posed to examine the different conceptualizations of business-society relationships and ethical motivations of conferring harms versus adding benefits:

RQ2: How do CSA initiatives differ in terms of the corporations' dimensions as actors for social change?

Perceived motivations and expectations

As consumers have become increasingly aware of businesses' CSR campaigns, many are becoming skeptical of these types of business activities and their underlying motivations (Forehand & Grier, 2003). This skepticism may be particularly heightened for CSA whereby companies address controversial and often polarizing issues. These initiatives may be seen as insincere or with ulterior motives, such as the term woke washing mentioned above implies (Spry, Vredenburg, Kemper, & Kapitan, 2018). Companies that are perceived as jumping on the

bandwagon of social activism to paint their business as socially aware may be met with backlash. Skepticism can result in decreased product purchases (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006) and lowered stock values for companies.

Kotler and Sarkar (2017) distinguish between marketing-driven, corporate-driven, and values-driven initiatives. The values-driven category is what they term brand activism, which includes six subsets: social, political, business, legal, economic, and environmental activism. In the marketing-driven category are: cause promotion, cause-related marketing, and corporate social marketing. In the corporate-driven category are: corporate philanthropy, workforce volunteering, and socially responsible business practices. Prior research suggests that corporate-driven CSR may be more positively received because of perceived commitment to the social issue (Austin & Gaither, 2016). However, this category of values-driven initiatives provides a new category for further exploration.

Ellen et al. (2006) proposed that motives for CSR initiatives are nuanced and proposed measuring attributed motives along a continuum of self- and other-centered motives. These are: strategic and egoistic (both considered self-centered motives), and values- and stakeholder-driven (both considered other-centered motives). Participants have responded most positively toward values-driven (an other-centered motive) and strategic (a self-centered motive), and negatively toward stakeholder-driven and egoistic motives. These specific motives, however, have not been explored explicitly in a CSA-specific setting. Therefore, based on Ellen et al.'s conceptualization, our third research question is as follows:

RQ3: What do individuals perceive as the primary motivators of CSA initiatives?

Method

To explore these three research questions, this study used a nationally representative U.S.-based survey of 1,214 participants to evaluate attitudes toward the role of corporations in social issues, as well as participants' attitudes toward a series of well-known recent CSA cases.

Participants

Data collection was funded by a grant from a large southeastern university. A national research firm conducted the survey using panel participants who received a small incentive for participation through a survey rewards panel. Of the 1,204 participants, 44.9% were male and 54.2% female (<1% other). The majority of participants were White (57.2%), with 22.5% Hispanic/Latino, 12.2% Black/African American, 3.5% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.7% Native American, and 2.1% indicating Other.

The mean age of respondents was 41 with age ranges represented as follows: 18-25 (16.5%), 26-35 (25.8%), 36-45 (24.2%), 46-55 (10.4%), 56-65 (12.2%), 66-75 (7.7%), and 76-85+ (2.3%). On a five-point political ideology scale, 34.1% of the sample considered themselves conservative

(1 or 2); 37.5% considered themselves to have moderate viewpoints (3); and 26.8% considered themselves liberal (4 or 5). The mean score on the political viewpoint scale, where 1 = very conservative and 5 = very liberal, was 2.88 (*SD* = 1.20). This breakdown closely mirrors the U.S. political ideology breakdown from recent national polling.[1]

The sample represented a range of education levels typical of those in the United States—approximately 4.1% had less than a high school education, 23.1% had completed high school, 18.4% had some college, 13.1% had an associate's degree, 24.0% had a bachelor's degree, 13.3% had a master's degree, and 3.2% had a doctorate. The majority of the sample worked full-time (47.8%) or part-time (13.0%). The remainder of the sample was retired (16.1%), unemployed (16.2%), or students (6.1%).

Procedure

After clicking a screener question regarding commitment to reading the questions fully and an agree-to-participate button to indicate consent, participants were asked about their perceptions regarding the role of corporations in society. Questions evaluated respondents' perceptions of the company's motivations and their views on the roles of corporations as actors for social change. Participants then were asked a series of questions to gauge their demographics and concern about a variety of social issues. Following these questions, participants were asked to read short cases of actual instances of CSA in randomized order, including CSA by Nike, DICK's Sporting Goods, and Gillette. All cases featured a high-profile CSA initiative from within the past year, and participants were given information about the cases to help control for familiarity. Following is a description of each of the three cases.

Case 1: Nike and Kaepernick

In Fall of 2018, Nike ran a campaign prominently featuring Colin Kaepernick, an NFL player who became the leader of the Take a Knee movement by kneeling during the pre-game playing of the national anthem to protest police brutality and social inequality. Nike's ad campaign featured the text, "Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything," with an image of Kaepernick's face.

Case 2: DICK's Sporting Goods and gun control

In Spring of 2018, DICK's Sporting Goods announced that—in response to the February 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL—it would stop selling guns to customers under 21 and pull assault rifles and high-capacity magazines from all its stores. The

[1] Saad, L. (2019, January 8). U.S. still leans conservative, but liberals keep recent gains. *Gallup*. Retrieved from: https://news.gallup.com/poll/245813/leans-conservative-liberals-keep-recent-gains.aspx

company has since been lobbying for gun control reform and announced this spring that it would stop selling firearms altogether at roughly 17% of its stores.

Case 3: Gillette's toxic masculinity ad

Early this year, the razor company Gillette launched a campaign titled, The Best a Man Can Be, promoting, as the campaign says, "positive, attainable, inclusive and healthy versions of what it means to be a man" (Gillette, 2019, para. 4). The news has called this an ad against the culture of toxic masculinity. The primary ad for the campaign references bullying, the #metoo movement, and men holding other men accountable. As part of this campaign, Gillette is sponsoring grants for programs to make meaningful and impactful change on making a positive difference in the lives of young men. Gillette is also donating money for programs at the Boys and Girls Club of America.

Survey measures

Participants responded to a series of questions assessing their views on corporate involvement in social issues, dimensions of corporations as actors for social change, and perceived motivations for CSA. All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale with "1" representing "Strongly Disagree" and "7" representing "Strongly Agree."

Views on corporate social involvement

Participants were asked a series of questions to gauge their views on the involvement of corporations in social issues (Gaither, Austin & Schulz, 2018). Participants were asked how strongly they agreed with the following statements: that corporations should "work to better society," "advocate for social issues," "only advocate for issues related to their business or products," "advocate on political issues that align with their stakeholder values, regardless of the fit with their products or services," "advocate on political issues that align with their corporate values," and "advocate for social issues, even when there is not a clear social consensus."

Dimensions of corporations as actors for social change

In response to three short CSA cases featuring Nike, DICK's Sporting Goods, and Gillette, participants were asked a series of questions regarding different dimensions of corporations involved in social change based on work by Gaither, Austin, and Schulz (2018). First, participants were asked if they perceived the purpose of the action to be to "change people's views on the issue" or to "create change in society on the issue." To examine distinctions between conscious capitalism, social entrepreneurship, and CSR (Fyke et al., 2016), participants were asked if the company was "committed to social change," "committed to creating a more just society," or "more concerned with social change than profits."

Perceived motivations for CSA

To examine underlying motivations for the CSA (Gaither, Austin, & Schulz, 2018), participants were asked if the company, through this action, was trying to "benefit society" or "reduce a societal harm or concern." Additionally, to explore perceived ethical motivations, the following scales were included in the survey (Ellen et al., 2006).

Values-driven

The values-driven scale included three items asking participants their perceptions of: a) whether the company has a long-term interest in society; b) feels morally obligated to help the public; c) is trying to give something back to the community; and d) wants to help consumers who care about this issue. These scales were created for each CSA scenario (Nike, DICK's, and Gillette). The scales yielded mean scores of 4.84/7.00 for Nike (*SD* = 1.65, α = .95), 5.20 for DICK's (*SD* = 1.54, α = .95), and 4.97 for Gillette (*SD* = 1.48, α = .95).

Stakeholder-driven

The stakeholder-driven scale also included four items asking participants' level of agreement with statements that the company: a) feels their customers expect them to be involved in social issue campaigns; b) feels society in general expects them to be involved in social issue campaigns; c) feels their stockholders expect them to be involved in social issue campaigns; and d) feels their employees expect them to be involved in social issue campaigns. The scale yielded a mean score of 4.70/7.00 for Nike (*SD* = 1.58, α = .93), 4.84 for DICK's (*SD* = 1.50, α = .93), and 4.76 for Gillette (*SD*=1.48, α = .93).

Strategic-driven

The strategic-driven scale included three items asking participants' level of agreement with statements that the company: a) will gain more customers by supporting this social issue; b) will keep more of their customers by supporting this social issue; and c) hopes to increase profits by supporting this social issue. The scale yielded a mean score of 4.84/7.00 for Nike (*SD* =1.48, α = .80), 4.73 for DICK's (*SD* =1.48, α = .81), and 4.87 for Gillette (*SD*=1.42, α = .83).

Egoistic-driven

Lastly, the egoistic-driven scale included two items asking participants their perceptions of: a) whether the company wants to be involved in this social issue to get publicity; and b) whether the company is taking advantage of the social issue to help its own business. Following the suggestions made by Eisinga, Grotenhuis, and Pelzer (2013) for two-item measure reliability, Spearman-Brown coefficients were obtained (ρ = .88). The scale yielded a mean score of 5.00/7.00 for Nike (*SD* = 1.62, ρ = .88), 4.55 for DICK's (*SD* = 1.74, ρ = .89), and 4.79 for Gillette (*SD* = 1.62, ρ = .89). See Table 1 for scale means.

Table 1. Perceived motivations for CSA

Corporations' Perceived Motivations	**Mean/SD**	**One-sample *t*-test**
Nike		
[was trying to] benefit society	4.77/1.86	$t(1203) = 88.84$, $p = .00$
reduce a societal harm or concern	4.73/1.84	$t(1203) = 89.05$, $p = .00$
Egoistic-driven	4.99/1.62	$t(1203) = 21.15$, $p = .00$
Strategic-driven	4.84/1.48	$t(1203) = 19.70$, $p = .00$
Values-driven	4.84/1.64	$t(1203) = 17.69$, $p = .00$
Stakeholder-driven	4.70/1.58	$t(1203) = 15.49$, $p = .00$
DICK's Sporting Goods		
[was trying to] benefit society	5.27/1.74	$t(1203) = 25.44$, $p = .00$
reduce a societal harm or concern	5.30/1.70	$t(1203) = 26.62$, $p = .00$
Values-driven	5.20/1.54	$t(1203) = 27.16$, $p = .00$
Stakeholder-driven	4.84/1.50	$t(1203) = 19.34$, $p = .00$
Strategic-driven	4.73/1.48	$t(1203) = 17.02$, $p = .00$
Egoistic	4.55/1.74	$t(1203) = 10.94$, $p = .00$
Gillette		
[was trying to] benefit society	5.03/1.68	$t(1203) = 21.29$, $p = .00$
reduce a societal harm or concern	5.00/1.65	$t(1203) = 21.01$, $p = .00$
Values-driven	4.97/1.48	$t(1203) = 22.68$, $p = .00$
Strategic-driven	4.87/1.42	$t(1203) = 21.26$, $p = .00$
Egoistic-driven	4.79/1.62	$t(1203) = 16.89$, $p = .00$
Stakeholder-driven	4.76/1.48	$t(1203) = 17.75$, $p = .00$

Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean responses, were used to examine overall attitudes toward the role of corporations in society and perceptions of specific CSA cases. Correlation, *t*-tests, and regression analyses then were conducted on specific demographic factors to evaluate their role in views toward CSA.

Results

In regard to the role of corporations in society (RQ1a), one-sample *t*-tests were used to examine perceptions of corporate involvement in social issues and whether sample means were significantly different from a neutral response (4). For each question, the *t*-tests were significant. Respondents felt most strongly that corporations should work to better society (M = 5.33, SD = 1.57), with questions regarding whether businesses should advocate for social issues receiving somewhat less support (M = 4.89, SD = 1.72). The means also were lower on whether corporations should advocate on political issues that align with their corporate values (M = 4.69, SD = 1.72); that corporations should advocate for social issues, even when there is not a clear consensus (M = 4.57, SD = 1.70); and that corporations should only advocate for issues related to their business or products (M = 4.50, SD = 1.78). The question that received the least support was whether corporations should advocate on political issues that align with their stakeholder values, regardless of the fit with their products or services (M = 4.38, SD = 1.78). (See Table 2.)

Table 2. Perceptions of the role of corporations in society

I believe corporations should…	**Mean/SD**	**One-sample *t*-test**
work to better society	5.33/1.57	$t(1203) = 117.58$, $p = .00$
advocate for social issues	4.89/1.72	$t(1203) = 18.03$, $p = .00$
advocate on political issues that align with their corporate values	4.69/1.72	$t(1203) = 13.93$, $p = .00$
advocate for social issues, even when there is not a clear social consensus	4.57/1.70	$t(1203) = 11.63$, $p = .00$
only advocate for issues related to their business or products	4.50/1.78	$t(1203) = 9.79$, $p = .00$
advocate on political issues that align with their stakeholder values, regardless of the fit with their products or services	4.38/1.78	$t(1203) = 7.46$, $p = .00$

As shown below in Table 3, there were differences in regard to these perceptions by political viewpoints, with liberal respondents demonstrating more agreement than conservatives that corporations should work to better society and advocate for social issues.

Table 3. Perceptions of the role of corporations by political viewpoints

I believe corporations should…							
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
work to better society							
Very conservative	7.5% (15)	2.5% (5)	4.0% (8)	8.0% (16)	13.6% (27)	27.1% (54)	37.2% (74)
Conservative	6.0% (13)	3.7% (8)	7.4% (16)	20.% (43)	26.5% (57)	20.0% (43)	16.3% (35)
Moderate	4.0% (18)	2.9% (13)	5.5% (25)	17.6% (80)	28.8% (131)	19.6% (89)	21.8% (99)
Liberal	1.0% (2)	0.5% (1)	1.5% (3)	9.8% (20)	22.5% (46)	34.3% (70)	30.4% (62)
Very liberal	3.1% (4)	0.8% (1)	0.8% (1)	8.4% (11)	11.5% (15)	24.4%(32)	51.1% (67)
advocate for social issues							
Very conservative	6.5% (13)	7.0% (14)	5.5% (11)	12.1% (24)	15.1% (30)	27.6% (55)	26.1% (52)
Conservative	12.1% (26)	6.5% (14)	12.6% (27)	19.1% (41)	19.1% (41)	21.4% (46)	9.3% (20)
Moderate	5.3% (24)	6.8% (31)	7.0% (32)	25.3% (115)	20.7% (94)	20.2% (92)	14.7% (67)
Liberal	3.9% (8)	2.9% (6)	4.4% (9)	16.2% (33)	20.6% (42)	29.4%(60)	22.5% (46)
Very liberal	2.3% (3)	0.8% (1)	3.1% (4)	12.2% (16)	14.5% (19)	29.8% (39)	37.4% (49)

To examine this relationship further (RQ1b), bivariate linear regression analyses were conducted. The regression analysis indicated that liberal viewpoints significantly predict perceptions that corporations should work to better society [$F(1,1202) = 24.72$, $p < 0.00$), $R_2 = 0.02$]; should advocate for social issues [$F(1,1202) = 24.32$, $p < 0.00$), $R_2 = 0.02$]; and should advocate for social issues, even when there is not a clear social consensus [$F(1,1202) = 10.72$, $p < 0.01$), $R_2 = 0.01$]. Conservatives, meanwhile, were significantly more likely to believe that corporations should only advocate for issues related to their business or products [$F(1,1202) = 6.07$, $p < 0.01$), $R_2 = .05$]. There were no significant differences by political viewpoints in perceptions of whether corporations should advocate on political issues that align with their stakeholder values, regardless of the fit with their products or services; whether corporations should advocate on political issues that align with their corporate values; or whether corporations

should advocate on social issues, even when there is not a clear social consensus. Significant findings are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The role of political viewpoints on perceptions of the role of corporations in society

I believe corporations should…	**Coefficient**	**Std. Error**	***t*-statistic**	**Significance**
work to better society	.19	.04	4.97	.00
advocate for social issues	.20	.04	4.93	.00
should advocate for social issues, even when there is not a clear social consensus	.13	.04	3.28	.00
only advocate for issues related to their business or products	-.11	.04	-2.46	.01

Also in answer to RQ1b, higher levels of both income and education were significantly likely to predict support for CSA across every item (see Table 5). Higher levels of income and education were associated with perceptions that corporations should work to better society; should advocate for social issues; should advocate only for issues related to their business or products; should advocate on political issues that align with their stakeholder values, regardless of fit with their products or services; should advocate on political issues that align with their corporate values; and should advocate for social issues, even when there is not a clear social consensus.

Table 5. The role of income and education on perceptions of the role of corporations in society

	Income				**Education**			
I believe corporations should…	***β***	***SE***	***t***	***p* value**	***β***	***SE***	***t***	***p* value**
work to better society	.20	.04	4.89	.00	.12	.03	4.13	.00
	[$F(1,1158) = 23.86$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .02$]				[$F(1,1202) = 17.02$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .01$]			
advocate for social issues	.13	.04	3.01	.00	.10	.03	3.02	.00
	[$F(1,1158) = 9.04$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .01$]				[$F(1,1202)=9.11$, $p < .01$, $R^2=.01$]			
only advocate for issues related to	.20	.05	4.29	.00	.13	.03	4.17	.00
	[$F(1,1158) = 18.38$, $p<.01$, $R^2 = .02$]				[$F(1,1202) = 17.40$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .01$]			

their business or products								
advocate on political issues that align with their stakeholder values, regardless of the fit with their products or services	.24	.05	5.16	.00	.14	.03	4.52	.00
	[$F(1,1158) = 26.64$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .02$]				[$F(1,1202) = 20.40$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .02$]			
advocate on political issues that align with their corporate values	.21	.04	4.74	.00	.14	.03	4.46	.00
	[$F(1,1158) = 22.47$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .02$]				[$F(1,1202) = 19.89$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .02$]			
should advocate for social issues, even when there is not a clear social consensus	.25	.04	5.87	.00	.13	.03	4.18	.00
	[$F(1,1158) = 34.45$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .03$]				[$F(1,1202) = 17.50$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .01$]			

Interestingly, age was not significantly correlated with most attitudes toward CSA, with two exceptions (see Table 6). Younger respondents were more likely to respond that businesses should advocate on political issues that align with their stakeholder values, regardless of the fit with their products or services [$F(1,1202) = 9.77$, $p < 0.01$), $R^2 = .01$], and that corporations should advocate for social issues, even when there is not a clear social consensus [$F(1,1202) = 16.85$, $p < 0.01$), $R^2 = .01$] than older respondents. Correlations for these demographic variables are shown in Table 7.

Table 6. Relationship of age with perceptions of the role of corporations in society

I believe corporations should…	***β***	***SE***	***t***	***p* value**
advocate on political issues that align with their stakeholder values, regardless of the fit with their products or services	-.01	.00	-3.13	.00
should advocate for social issues, even when there is not a clear social consensus	-.01	.00	-4.11	.00

Table 7. Correlations between demographic factors and attitudes toward CSA

I believe corporations should…	Age	Political Viewpoints	Income	Education
work to better society	.05	.14**	.14**	.12*
advocate for social issues	-.05	.14**	.09*	.09**
only advocate for issues related to their business or products	-.03	-.07*	.13**	.12**
advocate on political issues that align with their stakeholder values, regardless of the fit with their products or services	-.09**	.03	.15**	.13**
advocate on political issues that align with their corporate values	-.04	.01	.14**	.13**
advocate for social issues, even when there is not a clear social consensus	-.12**	.09**	.17**	.12**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Males and females also responded significantly differently to perceptions of CSA. Results from *t*-tests revealed that women were less likely to agree that businesses should only advocate for issues related to their business or products (M = 5.28, SD = 1.6, compared to men: M = 5.39, SD = 1.53; $t(1202) = -4.14$, $p < .01$); should advocate on political issues that align with their stakeholder values, regardless of the fit with their products or services (M = 4.26, SD = 1.8, compared to men: M = 4.53, SD = 1.8; $t(1202) = -2.61$, $p < .01$), should advocate on political issues that align with their corporate values (M = 4.51, SD = 1.72, compared to men: M = 4.91, SD = 1.69; $t(1202) = -4.12$, $p < .01$), and should advocate for social issues, even when there is not a clear social consensus (M = 4.39, SD = 1.68, compared to men: M = 4.78, SD=1.7; $t(1202) = -3.94$, $p < .01$).

With regard to concern for social issues, participants as a whole expressed above average concern for all issues investigated. In order of importance, participants expressed concern for: 1) racial equality (M = 5.45, SD = 1.61), 2) social issues in general (M = 5.33, SD = 1.64), 3) environmentally responsible business practices (M = 5.31, SD = 1.58), 4) gender equality and sexual harassment (M = 5.30, SD = 1.69) *and* police brutality (M = 5.30, SD = 1.70), 5) gun control and reform (M = 5.27, SD = 1.76), 6) climate change (M = 5.26, SD = 1.76), and 7) immigrants' rights (M = 5.03, SD = 1.79).

Results of multiple linear regression indicated that there was a collective significant effect between the political affiliation, age, income, education, and general concern for social issues on the belief that corporations should: work to better society ($F(5, 1154) = 133.68$, $p < .001$, R^2 = .32), advocate for social issues ($F(5, 1154) = 97.53$, $p < .001$, R^2 = .30), only advocate for issues

related to its business or products ($F(5, 1154) = 18.53$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .07$), advocate for issues that align with stakeholder values regardless of fit ($F(5, 1154) = 37.99$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .14$), advocate for issues that align with corporate values ($F(5, 1154) = 49.93$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .18$), and advocate for social issues even without a clear social consensus ($F(5, 1154) = 64.26$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .22$). The individual predictors indicated that concern for social issues ($t = 24.07$, $p < .001$) and income ($t = 2.65$, $p < .01$) were significant predictors for working to better society. Individual predictors for advocating for social issues were concern for social issues ($t = 20.73$, $p < .001$) and age ($t = -2.84$, $p < .01$). For advocating for issues that aligned with stakeholder values regardless of fit, individual predictors were concern for social issues ($t = 7.68$, $p < .001$), political views ($t = -3.87$ $p < .001$), and education ($t = 2.19$, $p < .05$).

Corporations as social actors

In regard to perceptions of specific CSA initiatives relative to dimensions of corporations as social actors (RQ2), 64.4% of respondents at least somewhat agreed with the statement that Nike was trying to change people's views on the issue, with 44.1% agreeing or strongly agreeing. Only 17.89% at least somewhat disagreed with the statement. Meanwhile, 66.68% of respondents at least somewhat agreed that Nike was trying to create change in society on the issue, with 46.68% agreeing or strongly agreeing with that statement. Only 15.28% expressed some disagreement with this statement.

For DICK's Sporting Goods, these percentages were similar; 64.36% of respondents at least somewhat agreed that DICK's was trying to change people's views on the issue, with 45% agreeing or strongly agreeing. Even more noteworthy, though, 71.6% of respondents at least somewhat agreed that DICK's was trying to create change in society on this issue, with 50.75% agreeing or strongly agreeing. For Gillette, 63.12% of respondents at least somewhat agreed that Gillette was trying to change people's views on the issue, with 42.69% agreeing or strongly agreeing. Additionally, 65.11% of respondents at least somewhat agreed that Gillette was trying to create change in society on this issue, with 44.93% agreeing or strongly agreeing.

For both Nike and Gillette, the responses were comparable in regard to perceptions of whether the corporations were trying to change people's views on the issue or to create change in society (with <3% difference). For DICK's Sporting Goods, however, the difference between these responses was higher, with more people agreeing that DICK's was trying to create change in society than to change people's views on the issue (7.24% difference).

Additionally, one-sample *t*-tests were used to examine whether these perceptions were significantly different from a neutral response to these statements (4). For each question, the *t*-test was significant. For each initiative, respondents felt corporations were trying to both change people's views on the issue and to create change in society on the issue. Interestingly, across each case, means were higher for perceptions that the company was trying to create change in society on the issue than to change people's views on the issue. (See Table 8.)

Table 8. Corporations as social actors: Frequencies and one-sample *t*-tests

The purpose of [the company's] actions was to…	Strongly disagree/ Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree/ Agree	Mean/ SD	One-sample *t*-test
Nike							
Change people's views on the issue	12.04% (145)	5.85% (71)	17.52% (211)	20.3% (246)	44.10% (531)	4.93/ 1.74	$t(1203) = 98.32$, $p < .001$
Create change in society on this issue	10.79% (130)	4.49% (54)	17.86% (215)	20.00% (243)	46.68% (562)	5.03/ 1.67	$t(1203) = 104.44$, $p < .001$
DICK's Sporting Goods							
Change people's views on the issue	9.97% (120)	6.56% (79)	19.10% (230)	19.35% (233)	45.01% (542)	5.00/ 1.70	$t(1203) = 20.52$, $p < .001$
Create change in society on this issue	8.14% (98)	4.65% (56)	15.61% (188)	20.85% (251)	50.75% (611)	5.23/ 1.61	$t(1203) = 26.44$, $p < .001$
Gillette							
Change people's views on the issue	9.63% (116)	4.32% (52)	22.92% (276)	20.43% (246)	42.69% (514)	4.99/ 1.65	$t(1203) = 20.74$, $p < .001$
Create change in society on this issue	8.63% (104)	4.81% (58)	21.43% (258)	20.18% (243)	44.93% (541)	5.03/ 1.60	$t(1203) = 22.44$, $p < .001$

Perceptions of company's commitment to social change

To evaluate perceptions of the company's commitment to social change, a scale was created consisting of three items: [Company is] committed to social change, creating a more just society, and more concerned with social change than profits. For the Nike CSA, the mean of the scale was 14.47 (SD = 5.04, α = .91); for the DICK's Sporting Goods CSA, the mean of the scale was 15.45 (SD=4.71, α =.93); and for the Gillette CSA, the mean of the scale was 14.74 (SD=4.60, α =.92).

As shown in Table 9, the means on these items varied slightly, with DICK's Sporting Goods receiving the highest mean score. Most noticeable across initiatives was the level of agreement regarding the company's commitment to social change and creating a more just society. On these measures, 65.36% and 63.71% (respectively) at least somewhat agreed with these statements for Nike; 71.67% and 69.77% at least somewhat agreed for DICK's; and 63.95% and 62.88% at least somewhat agreed for Gillette. Interestingly, for both Nike and Gillette, these percentages were lower on perceptions that the company was more concerned with social change than profits (55.48% at least somewhat agreed for Nike and 56.9% at least somewhat agreed for Gillette). This percentage was noticeably higher for DICK's Sporting Goods, where 66.78% at least somewhat agreed that the company was more concerned with social change than profits.

One-sample *t*-tests were again used to examine whether these perceptions were significantly different from a neutral response to these statements (4). For each question, the *t*-test was significant. For each initiative, respondents felt the company was committed to social change, to creating a just society, and was more concerned with social change than profits. (See Table 9.)

Table 9. Commitment to change: Frequencies and one-sample *t*-tests

[The company] is…	Strongly disagree/ Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree/ Agree	Mean/ SD	One-sample t-test
Nike							
Committed to social change	11.88% (143)	5.81% (70)	16.94% (204)	20.43% (246)	44.93% (541)	4.97/ 1.78	$t(1203) = 96.92$, $p < .00$
Committed to creating a more just society	12.87% (155)	6.4% (77)	17.03% (205)	19.19% (231)	44.52% (536)	4.88/ 1.77	$t(1203) = 95.88$, $p < .00$
More concerned with social change than profits	16.78% (202)	7.9% (95)	19.85% (239)	16.11% (194)	39.37% (474)	4.62/ 1.93	$t(1203) = 83.01$, $p < .00$
DICK's Sporting Goods							
Committed to social change	8.80% (106)	3.73% (45)	15.78% (190)	20.01% (241)	51.66% (622)	5.23/ 1.64	$t(1203) = 20.01$, $p < .00$
Committed to creating a more just society	9.39% (113)	4.4% (53)	16.45% (198)	20.1% (242)	49.67% (598)	5.14/ 1.64	$t(1203) = 24.12$, $p < .00$
More concerned with social change than profits	11.20% (135)	6.15% (74)	15.86% (191)	17.11% (206)	49.67% (598)	5.08/ 1.78	$t(1203) = 21.11$, $p < .00$

Gillette							
Committed to social change	9.72% (117)	5.73% (69)	20.6% (248)	20.93% (252)	43.02% (518)	4.98/ 1.66	$t(1203) = 20.52$, $p < .00$
Committed to creating a more just society	8.80% (106)	5.07% (61)	23.26% (280)	19.52% (235)	43.36% (522)	4.98/ 1.59	$t(1203) = 21.32$, $p < .00$
More concerned with social change than profits	11.30% (136)	7.56% (92)	24.17% (291)	18.11% (218)	38.79% (467)	4.78/ 1.71	$t(1203) = 15.96$, $p < .00$

Attributions of company motives

To examine perceptions of corporation motivations for the CSA (RQ3), one sample *t*-tests were conducted on both statements regarding perceptions of the actions as attempts to benefit society and reduce a societal harm or concern, as well as the scales created regarding perceived ethical motivations (as values-driven, stakeholder-driven, strategic-driven, or egoistic). For each analysis, the test value was the mid-point of the question or scale (4), which indicated a neutral response regarding perceptions of the company's motives.

Respondents were significantly likely to view each of the three CSA initiatives as being attempts to both *benefit* society and *reduce* a societal harm or concern. For both Nike and Gillette, the initiatives were slightly more likely to be viewed as efforts to benefit society than to reduce a societal harm or concern; DICK's Sporting Goods' CSA was viewed slightly higher as an attempt to reduce a societal harm or concern. These differences, however, were quite small.

Additionally, all CSA initiatives were likely to be viewed as being driven by all four dimensions of ethical motivations. These findings along with scale means are shown in Table 1 in order of highest means for each scale for each CSA initiative. Most noteworthy, the highest perceptions of CSA being driven by values was DICK's Sporting Goods; this initiative was also likely to be viewed as being driven by stakeholders. For this initiative, egoistic motivations (i.e., driven by publicity and profits) received the lowest response (although still significant). Gillette's initiative was also most likely to be seen as values-driven. Nike's CSA, on the other hand, was seen as most egoistic and driven least by stakeholders.

Discussion

CSA and public interest communications

Most importantly, this study suggests overall public support for corporate efforts to better society, which includes advocating for social issues (i.e., CSA). In a U.S. national survey, these statements—that corporations should work to better society and should advocate for social issues—received the highest level of agreement among all questions regarding general attitudes toward public interest communications. Although there were differences by political viewpoints, age, income, education, and gender, it is important to note that these differences do not negate what seems to be an overall level of agreement across respondents that corporations should engage on important social issues. This is particularly noteworthy to consider as the survey sample, as with current U.S. public opinion polling, skews conservative.

In an era of globalization, pluralization, and the erosion of traditional institutions, Dodd (2018) argues corporations have "emerged as protector and promoter of the political agendas of the public on a large scale" (p. 227). As trust in democratic institutions continues to decline (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2017), "the power of nation-states and traditional institutions is eroding, leaving private actors (i.e., corporations) and civil society actors (e.g., NGOs and activists) to pick up the slack" (Dodd, 2018, p. 231). This research sheds light on shifting societal expectations that seemingly support the role of business in advancing the public interest and the potential for an increased role in public discourse.

It also suggests that activism is a shared dialectic between organizations and individuals, not binaries that work in opposition to each other (Ciszek, 2019; L'Etang, 2016). Relative power cannot be ignored; although organizations might have more resources and sophisticated communications, individuals and activist groups are increasingly both participating in dialogue within and for the public interest as they expect organizations to likewise formulate their own positions. Such perspectives illustrate the dynamic and amorphous nature of publics, who engage in ongoing struggle with organizations for legitimacy, influence, and agency. Ciszek (2019) noted public relations theory has historically othered and marginalized activism, and this research suggests continuation of this approach nullifies the possibility of theory development to capture the rise of organizational activism though CSA.

Despite the general support for CSA, however, it is important to consider the demographic differences identified in this study. Liberal and younger respondents were more likely to support corporate involvement in social issues even when there was not a clear social consensus on an issue, whereas conservatives and older respondents were likely to support the idea that businesses should only advocate for issues related to their business products and services. Higher levels of income, education, and overall concern for social issues also played a role in perceptions of corporate engagement with social issues.

Although CSA seems to be generally accepted across a wide range of demographics, the most noteworthy differences seemed to be in regard to how the initiative should be implemented

and whether or not the initiative should relate to the company's products, services, or expressed values. For example, whereas older conservatives may be more likely to believe CSA must be aligned with corporate products and services, younger and more liberal stakeholders may support CSA on a range of pressing social issues. Businesses considering undertaking CSA initiatives should consider these findings relative to key stakeholders when determining whether or not to weigh in on politically charged issues.

Social change: Generalizable interest and genuine engagement

To move closer toward social change, linking to a generalizable interest and genuinely engaging with the issue and relevant stakeholders are both important (Gaither, Austin, & Schulz, 2018). Most of the cases of activism represented here, however, were somewhat controversial in mainstream society. Interestingly, although this study matched the U.S. population in terms of political affiliation and leaned toward the conservative side, participants reported moderate support for many divisive social issues. The issue of gun control, although not seen as the most important issue, still received moderate support across the groups as a whole. While all three cases presented often politically divided issues, DICK's Sporting Goods had a unique advantage: although gun control reform is seen as a controversial issue, the importance of reducing gun violence may be more universal compared to issues addressing specific racial or gender groups, as in Nike's and Gillette's CSA case.

It is important to consider, however, that although CSR initiatives may benefit most when the interests are clearly generalizable, CSA and activism by nature are likely to involve polarizing issues and may work to address the social good for marginalized groups. In other words, corporations may find it increasingly challenging to link to issues with a generalizable interest, especially as the U.S. population becomes further divided politically.

And although linking to a generalizable interest may be problematic for CSA initiatives, genuine engagement with stakeholders appears to be not only possible but imperative in the greater equation for public response to CSA. For example, DICK's CSA not only supported gun control and reform publicly, the company also acted on these values through political lobbying and changes to store gun sale policies. Perhaps as a result of this genuine engagement with the issue and key stakeholders, DICK's CSA was perceived to be more values- and stakeholder-motivated than the other CSA cases. This possibility is particularly important to consider as values-based companies that fail to take action—even if the social issue is a controversial one—have been shown to elicit more scrutiny than companies that act (Korschun et al., 2016).

Comparing cases of CSA: Perceived motivations and commitment

The three cases explored here: DICK's Sporting Goods, Gillette, and Nike, all received mostly favorable responses. Although respondents acknowledged a range of motivations for the CSA, those by DICK's Sporting Goods appeared more directed toward removing harms (e.g., stopping sales of DICK's products) than conferring benefits, as was the case for both Nike and Gillette.

Also noteworthy, both DICK's Sporting Goods and Gillette were seen to be driven mostly by values, a motivation that may generate more favorable attitudes toward the CSA initiative and the sponsoring company. Interestingly, Nike's CSA was perceived to be more ego-driven than strategic-, values-, or stakeholder-driven, although all values ranked relatively highly. For Gillette, the CSA was perceived to be mostly values-driven and then strategic-driven. The CSA by DICK's Sporting Goods, meanwhile, was perceived as the most driven by values among each of the three cases, with stakeholders being the second strongest motivator, and the least driven by egoistic motives. DICK's Sporting Goods also received the highest mean scores on items related to the company being committed to social change, creating a more just society, and being more concerned with social change than profits.

Possible reasons for this perception of DICK's may lie in the specifics of DICK's CSA efforts. Of the three initiatives examined, DICK's was the example that moved the most into significant action and activism on a social issue by changing store policies and working to drive policy change through lobbying. DICK's expressed a commitment to the issue by announcing it would discontinue the sale of products that may have been seen as contributing to gun violence, an action that may have helped to stress that DICK's was putting its values and stakeholders over profits. Gillette's and Nike's CSA cases, in contrast, did not involve stopping sales of any business products or altering business operations in any way. DICK's CSA messaging also focused heavily on DICK's values as an organization when announcing the CSA (Gaither, Austin, & Collins, 2018).

The findings on commitment support this, in that, overall, DICK's was seen to have the highest commitment to CSA compared to Gillette and Nike, which had the lowest perceived commitment. CSR commitment has been shown to be important in attribution of motives. CSR programs with longer commitments have been perceived as more genuine in their concern for society and communities (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010; Webb & Mohr, 1998). Commitment has been operationalized in terms of the amount of effort and resources over time to reach a goal (DeShon & Landis, 1997; Yoon et al., 2006), as well as the consistency of those efforts (Ellen et al., 2006). Less is known, however, about commitment when it comes to CSA and activism. This research provides emerging support for the importance of commitment and moving beyond words into action that affects business operations and products when it comes to the perceived motivations for CSA.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

Future research is recommended to explore differences in gender. Male participants reported more significant support for social initiatives than female participants when it came to initiatives that might be controversial in some way (e.g., initiatives where there is no clear social consensus, that align with stakeholder regardless of fit with products or services, etc.). Although these findings suggest preliminary differences in gender, no clear rationale for this difference is evident. Future research could further explore these demographic differences in a more systematic way.

Emerging research here suggests that activism with sustained commitment to change by the corporation may be met with less skepticism than advocacy promoting a social issue. As companies continue this trend of high-profile social advocacy programs, efforts may be met with increasing skepticism. Future research is recommended to further examine differences between activism and advocacy and perhaps define and test a continuum of CSA efforts, varying in commitment and intensity.

Conclusion

The postmodern and critical turn toward public relations has focused on power and its many forms. Although that research has necessarily problematized public relations and its influence on the public interest, this research illustrates the power dimensionality of the corporate sector in shaping dialogue within the public interest. How that dialogue is perceived—whether genuine or met with skepticism—underscores the need for corporations to engender trust with key publics. How social responsibility is framed is a key concern for organizations in the process of building trust through communication (Heath & Waymer, 2019; Sillince & Mueller, 2007). According to Dutta (2019), the framing of organizational participation in the public sphere drowns out public participation and "secures the hegemony of private control over public interests" (p. 52). This research suggests, however, that how organizations are framing their participation in sociopolitical issues through CSA has some value to publics.

Although respondents acknowledged a range of motivations for the CSA, there was overall support for corporate involvement in social issues and CSA generally, a finding that underscores the supposition that CSA represents more than a passing fad in corporate communication. Still, organizations engaging in CSA face an uphill climb against cynicism: "While [communications] campaigns have demonstrably helped rake in billions of pounds for big corporates, there is no evidence any have significantly changed the world for the better… Whether you think it's 'woke-washing,' or companies raising and mainstreaming important issues, this is a phenomenon that is not only here to stay, but will keep on growing" (Jones, 2019, para. 19). For scholars, unresolved tensions remain to account for the fluidity of cultural norms and values, power imbalances, and what issues receive most relative weight in the public interest. Also, scholarly inquiry is needed to deconstruct the marginalized publics who are ignored or othered by organizations, even when some publics laud CSA.

This research does not suggest a one-size-fits all approach treatment of publics will work. From age to political affiliation to gender, there are enough differences to indicate perceptions of CSA, its efficacy, effectiveness and role in PR are as varied as definitions of the public interest. This research suggests building trust symbolically weaves a thread between corporate values and action toward an issue. The publics in this study ostensibly support organizations taking positions and engaging in social issues, which unlocks the "straitjacket of neutrality and impartiality" in much public interest communications theory (Campbell & Marshall, 2002, p. 11; as cited in Johnston & Pieczka, 2019). As such, theory should expand to address the gaps

between corporate advocacy and activism with a concurrent emphasis toward values-driven action with a concomitant view of the consequences of organizational stasis toward public issues. CSA is a ripe scholarly area for pushing the boundaries of public relations by more fully examining organizational power not only to target publics, but at the behest of publics increasingly expecting organizational stances toward the myriad competing issues in the public interest.

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Journal of Public Interest Communications

ISSN (online): 2573-4342
Journal homepage: http://journals.fcla.edu/jpic/

Bridging Borders in the Public Interest: La Peña Cultural Center's Advocacy for Intercultural Understanding and Social Justice

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Article Information

Received: June 6, 2019

Accepted: October 20, 2019

Published online: December 20, 2019

Keywords

Cultural center
Community-based organization
Social justice
Engagement strategies
Public impact

Abstract

To illustrate the interdisciplinary breadth of public interest communications (PIC), this case study explores the societal importance, engagement strategies, and public impact of La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley, CA, an internationally known nonprofit organization founded in 1975. It responds to Downes' (2017) advice on what, when, and how to approach PIC investigation and his call for "research readily informed by those 'in the field,'" (p. 34), or those engaged in actual social/cultural changes resulting from PIC consciousness. Drawing from past scholarship on practices in community-based social justice organizations and public interest communications, interviews with La Peña's leaders, the author's own experiences as one of its founders, and source materials from its documentarian, this study encapsulates La Peña's 44-year history of serving as a change agent through amplifying marginal voices.

Introduction

To advance understanding of the interdisciplinary breadth of public interest communications (PIC), this cultural history case study explores the societal importance, engagement strategies, and public impact of La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley, CA (*peña* translated from Spanish means "rock"—a word commonly used to designate a gathering spot). The author was one of its founders and remained deeply involved in its development through its early years. Now an internationally known nonprofit organization, La Peña was formed in 1974 and became operational the following year in response to the 1973 military coup in Chile that persecuted

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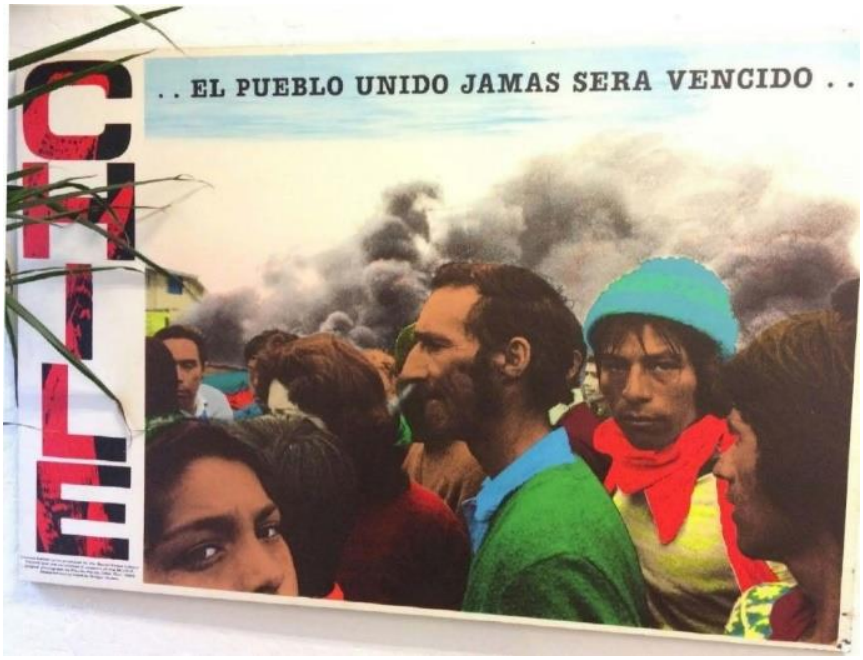
DOI:10.32473/jpic.v3.i2.p32

thousands of peasants, intellectuals, artists, and politicians and sent a wave of refugees into the world.

Founded on the premise that cultural activism can help achieve social justice, from the beginning the cultural center has celebrated and respected cultural differences, embodying a vision that art and culture would build community among diverse populations and help nurture social activism for positive change. La Peña's 44-year history demonstrates that a cultural center can act as an agent of multi-dimensional strategic communications in the public interest. It has hosted musical, theatrical, and dance performances, film screenings, benefits for political prisoners, testimonial panels, roots classes in indigenous music, and photo exhibits. It has offered Latin American foods and the symbolic Chilean empanada in its restaurant and displayed inspirational artwork and protest posters. One poster hung in its entry way for years (Figure 1) shows "CHILE" printed vertically on the left in red and black, with "EL PUEBLO UNIDO JAMAS SERA VENCIDO" (the people united will never be defeated) placed at the top of a photograph taken during the coup. This poster not only reminded the Chilean exiles of their unfinished revolution at home but also called for empathy from their American counterparts passing through the hallway (Yip, n.d.). The symbolic images, sounds, tastes, and visual dynamism in its physical space, and the social justice-focused experiences provided through diverse cultural events, community partnerships, and education programs, align with the principles and practices of PIC.

Figure 1. Poster displayed in La Peña, translating to "the people united will never be defeated." [1]



[1] Commissioned by the South Coast Labour Council and Migrant Workers Committee, Wollongong NSW Australia, 1986. Designed and printed by Gregor Cullen.

In the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Public Interest Communications,* Downes (2017) presented considerations for building positive social change through PIC. Drawing from a review of the literature in the PIC field, he proposed 10 considerations for scholars contributing to the field's body of knowledge and pedagogy. Relevant to this study is his recommendation for "research readily informed by those 'in the field'" (p. 34). He called for respecting those who do PIC, whom he described as:

> those who influence, who generate, who carry out, or who are responsible for, the *actual social/cultural changes* resulting from PIC consciousness. Among these individuals are activists, lobbyists, fundraisers, volunteers, nonprofit CEOs, and others whose daily work is doing/generating PIC outcomes. These PIC practitioners—these field workers—range from the radical to the mundane, from the progressive to the conservative, and from the formally educated to those who learned their crafts on the street, on the ground, or in the community. That is, these field workers are those who do not operate within the walls of academia, but whose work is to *make/do/lead* direct social change. (pp. 34-35)

Downes concluded that PIC scholarship is enhanced "when the living, moving, evolving social/cultural organism outside the walls of academia" (p. 35) informs decisions as to what, when, and how to approach PIC investigation. Thus, this study on La Peña draws from contemporary interviews with principal practitioners of PIC and testimonials from those who benefitted from their work.

Methodological approaches

As case study inquiry is all-encompassing and relies on multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2017), this study explores the cultural history of La Peña Cultural Center, combining the methods of semi-structured interview and rhetorical analysis of testimonial texts. It also relies on autoethnographic recollections based on the author's personal experience as co-founder of the center. It begins by reviewing literature on the social and political forces and conditions that gave rise to La Peña, with some content obtained through personal communication. It then addresses cultural spaces and their role in facilitating social justice, followed by a review of literature on communication in the public interest. Next, the case situation is presented, drawing from interviews with two of the center's long-term leaders and analysis of transcripts of interviews with La Peña participants. The leader interviews were conducted by email and telephone. A pre-established set of questions based on the purpose of the research was asked of both interviewees, with follow-up questions allowing the author to delve deeper into some of the topics and issues and to clarify answers. Both respondents had access to each other's responses, allowing them to embellish or explain details.

A type of rhetorical analysis called fantasy theme analysis (FTA) was applied. FTA is the method of Bormann's symbolic convergence theory that assumes reality is created symbolically (Cragan & Shields, 1995; Foss, 2009). FTA was used to find recurring themes in transcripts of

interviews with the center's publics—customers, volunteers, and workers—many of them members of the Chilean exile community. The transcripts were part of the research undertaken for a documentary film on La Peña. The interviews were conducted by the filmmaker over a 10-year period and were provided to this study's author in 2019 when the film was in post-production stage. As the documentary genre is thought to be strongly connected to reality, use of the transcripts helps to strengthen the accuracy of this study. FTA guided the author to seek recurring themes among diverse rhetors within the transcripts, detect which themes dominated, and identify rhetorical visions—thus discerning the participants' most meaningful collective experiences.

The first-person interviews and interview transcripts allow this cultural history study to center on "the domain of the lived" (Hall, 1989, p. 26), bringing into focus how people actively engage with, experience, and interact with elements of culture within the historical process" (Brennen, 2013, p. 94). The author shared the final case study with the center's two leaders and the filmmaker, allowing them to provide further details or clarifications, if needed.

Historical background

La Peña Cultural Center was started by a diverse group of people residing in the San Francisco Bay Area, as a response to the military coup in Chile that violently overthrew the democratically elected socialist government of Dr. Salvador Allende on September 11, 1973. The founders were both non-Hispanic U.S. citizens and Hispanics who had emigrated from South America. La Peña was explicitly created as a form of resistance. Its incorporation one year later, September 11, 1974, was meant as a statement of this intent (E. Leenson, personal communication, April 10, 2019). The following June, La Peña opened its doors to the public under the leadership of a collective comprised of the founders. Like many start-up arts organizations, it is located in a low rent area in South Berkeley surrounded by massage parlors, liquor stores, and drug dealers—and across the street from one of the early Black Panther Party headquarters (P. Chin, personal communication, April 25, 2019). Yet the founders transformed their chosen place, a failed French restaurant, into a triumphant space for cultural activism.

The U.S. movement in solidarity with Chile began developing in 1970 with the beginning of Allende's Unidad Popular government and its strides toward eradicating poverty through a peaceful road to socialism. International solidarity galvanized after the coup when General Augusto Pinochet imposed a dictatorship and imprisoned, tortured, disappeared, and murdered thousands of Allende supporters along with many others including non-political people (Kornbluh, 2003). Governments of neighboring South American countries, European countries, as well as Canada, rose in opposition to the dictatorship and in support of the victims, opening their embassies to shelter and protect those threatened. The U.S. embassy did not. More than 500,000 Chileans voluntarily left or were forced to flee the country (Dona-Reveco & Levinson, 2012).

The U.S. government had actively supported the destabilization of the Allende government through cutting off aid, and the CIA had provided millions of dollars to its opponents in the military (Falcoff, 1987). By doing so, the United States helped to tear down the oldest democracy in South America. It then continued to back the military regime, increased aid to the country, and initially refused to support the resettlement of refugees. However, American universities, non-governmental organizations, religious groups, and certain members of Congress complemented each other to consolidate a broad, public condemnation of U.S. policy and create a well-rounded solidarity movement, which ultimately brought Chilean refugees to the United States. Senator Edward Kennedy in particular, was a positive force behind the eventual establishment of the 1975 parole program for Chileans, which allowed approximately 1,000 refugees into the United States, bringing along fresh energy for the solidarity movement (Falcoff, 1987).

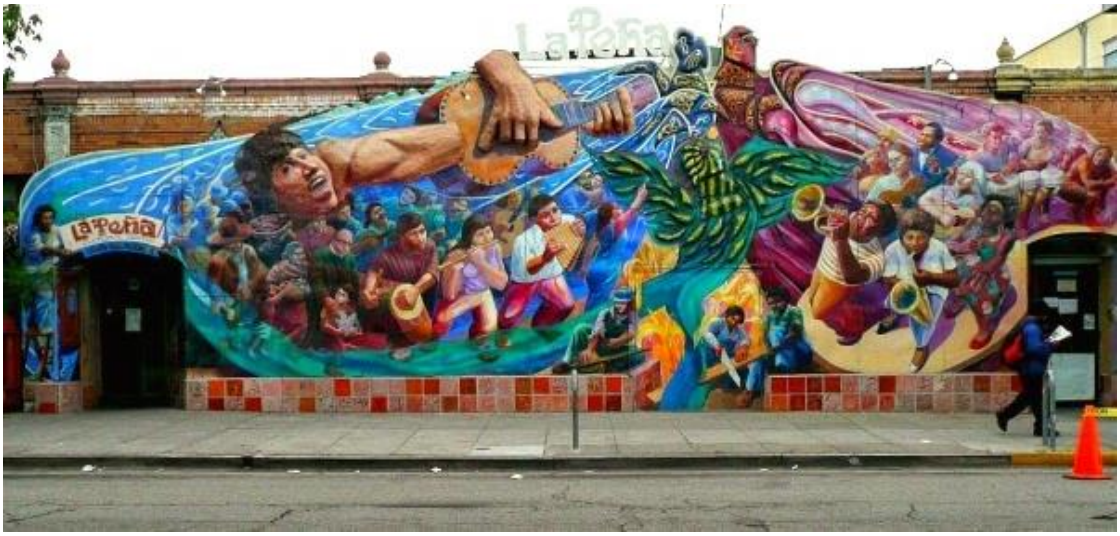
La Peña was one manifestation of that opposition and solidarity. Notably, the same year La Peña opened, outrage over U.S. involvement in Chile pushed Congress to conduct the first hearings ever held on U.S. covert action (U.S. Senate, 1975) and to incorporate concern for human rights into the elaboration of U.S. foreign policy. In its early years, La Peña was a focal point for Chileans who had been living in the United States prior to the coup and who were opposed to the military rule and its persecution of artists and intellectuals. The first Chileans who left after the coup to work at La Peña were not exiles per se, but two sisters who had dual citizenships and, therefore, were able to be in the United States prior to the existence of an official exile program (E. Leenson, personal communication, April 10, 2019). As more Chilean refugees arrived in the United States, their experiences integrating into their host country were difficult due to the challenge of communicating Chile's situation. Yet as they spoke out against the dictatorship, they helped to increase awareness of the repression and their willingness to actively oppose the regime. Officially approved political exiles began arriving in the United States soon after the parole program began, many greatly distressed. Wright and Oñate (2007) stated:

> Many exiles were subjected to…human rights violations, including arbitrary arrest and torture…and suffered the death or disappearance of loved ones. The traumas of defeat, sudden and often violent uprooting, shattered lives, truncated careers, and separated families gave exile a distinct psychological dimension. (p. 32)

One hundred exiles and their families relocated to the San Francisco Bay Area. La Peña offered a welcoming and comforting community, as the exiles found a home-like experience there, evoking "their memories and the cultural experiences of having created gathering places for communal art" (Yip, n.d., p. 2). The first official exiles became affiliated with La Peña around 1977 (E. Leenson, personal communication, April 10, 2019). It was a magnet to some as it echoed the sounds and sympathies of La Peña de los Parra, a popular gathering place in Santiago, Chile. The owners of La Peña de los Parra, musicians Isabel and Angel Parra, were children of Chile's acclaimed musician and composer, Violetta Parra, known as the Mother of Latin American folk. It had celebrated "la nueva cancion Chilena" (the new Chilean song)—a

movement pioneered by Violetta that incorporated political lyrics with traditional Andean instruments to advocate social change. It also hosted handicraft and fine art exhibits, dances, theater performances, and a kitchen serving hot empanadas (Rodriguez, 1984). In 1978, Berkeley's La Peña commissioned a massive mural on its front exterior wall to celebrate significant personalities, including Violetta Parra. Called Cancion de la Unidad/Song of Unity (Figure 2), it depicted "poets, musicians, workers and leaders on a multitude of voices raised in songs of struggle, of movement, of social change" (La Peña, 2012, para 1).

Figure 2. The Song of Unity mural on La Peña's front exterior celebrates cultural heroes.[2]



For many Chileans exiled around the world, the *peña* became a complex symbol of memory and healing. They created informal *peñas* to hold on to and experience their remembered country. Wright and Oñate (2007) described a revered ritual, which involved:

> making and selling *empanadas*, the traditional meat-and-onion pies, to raise money and consciousness. Allende had elevated the humble empanada to symbolic status when he called for a revolution *a la chilena* with "empanadas and red wine." Expatriates made it the universal symbol of Chilean exile and the struggle against Pinochet. (p. 39)

Cultural spaces, affect, and social justice

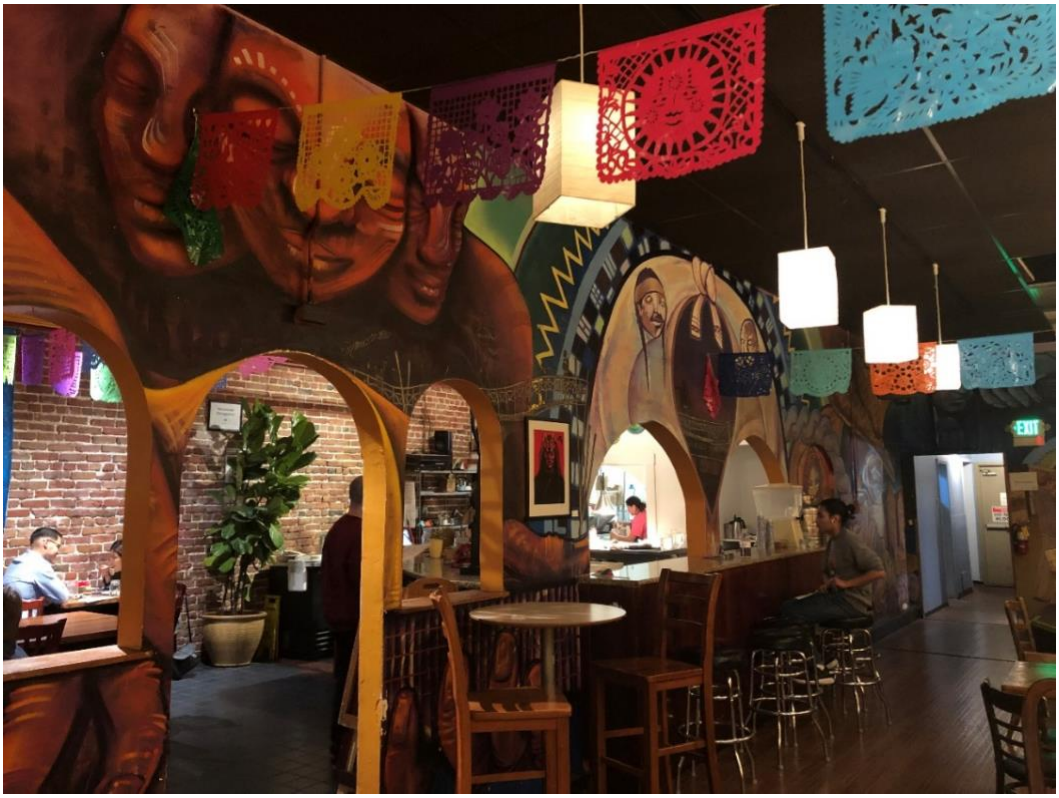
Scholars have researched how cultural spaces nurture a shared consciousness and create networks of participants in, and advocates for, multiculturalism and social justice. Keevers and Sykes (2016) investigated how the interweaving of food and music brought forth a "sense of belonging, participation, recognition and respect between diverse people, thereby enacting social justice" (p. 1643). Higgins (2007) identified shared community experiences as encounters with

[2] Meaghan Kachadoorian, uploaded to Creative Commons, July 23, 2015.

hospitality. Specifically, he described the community music project PCSB, a samba band, and how it nurtured and socialized the widely diverse participants, young and old musicians, to take pride in their identities as well as immerse themselves in other cultures. Heuman (2015) found recognition and faithfulness in an ethic of speaking with those of diverse backgrounds, requiring some cultural humility to privilege the realities of others' lives.

La Peña's physical and social transformation of an abandoned space in a derelict neighborhood—shadowed by the University of California's flagship Berkeley campus—can be understood through cultural theorist Michel de Certeau's (2011) concept of strategies. He uses the metaphor of a map to envision a government-controlled and unified whole contrasted with the tactics of the walkers at street level, moving in uncontrolled ways, making maneuvers through determined paths, performing an everyday process of exploring the territory of others, and performing a creative resistance to imposed power structures. La Peña gave voice to members and visitors to its community, cutting across mapped borders to cultivate a dynamic thick space (Figure 3).

Figure 3. La Peña's interior spaces reflect Hispanic heritage with archways and murals.[3]



In his study of place-making in the city of Vancouver, Duff (2010) observed the felt and affective dimensions of place. He explains Casey's (2001) terminology of thick places; they are

[3] Janis Teruggi Page, taken March 4, 2019

created through a coming together of "affect, habit, and practice, presenting opportunities for personal enrichment and a deepening of affective experience" (p. 881). Duff's study proposed identifying thick places through observing how people negotiate and transform place—impacting orientations of self and belonging. This study builds not only on Downes' call to listen to the voices of PIC workers and to examine their social change processes but also furthers Duff's work in identifying how affective experiences can be transformative in strengthening community and identity.

Public interest communications

PIC is broadly interdisciplinary, for example sharing commonalities with legal services to the disadvantaged, cultural anthropology's focus on discursive discovery, and even urban planning for community engagement and capacity building (Johnston, 2017). Fessman (2017) linked the roots of PIC back to an anti-slavery campaign in 1787 and offered a contemporary definition of PIC as planned strategic communication campaigns to achieve social change. He differentiates PIC from public relations (PR), arguing PIC's primary focus is social good in the public interest with the objective of positive behavior change. He concludes PIC should be seen as a new construct providing opportunities for innovative research. Downes (2017) argues that PIC should encompass the work of activists, fundraisers, volunteers, and nonprofit leadership.

Strategic communication, too, is an expansive area. One way to look at strategic communication is as constitutive communication (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2015) that concerns what happens in the process and how meaning is shaped and co-created—sometimes in face-to face channels. It is communication that brings about actual change that may occur over long periods of time. This view aligns with the participatory action approach of public interest anthropology research where communities are viewed as subjects of their own experience, providing insider knowledge (Johnston, 2017).

Seyranian (2017) proposed a linkage between social identity framing and PIC. Specifically, social identity insights can help to explain the social influence processes underlying social change. Group leaders, for example, are influential in setting norms in a group and constructing its social identity through framing. The language of this framing is inclusive and also can manifest symbolically in banners, posters, colors, and songs. La Peña's founding collective led the construction of social identity with its publics. One of the most salient features of PIC, wrote Fessman (2017), is the presence of "specific trigger events that have a significant impact on the issue and allow meaningful, positive behavioral change to occur" (p. 26). Whereas the exodus of Chileans after the 1973 military coup became an issue, the trigger event was the founding of La Peña with a strategy to engage the public and cultivate social justice.

This study is not about a strategic communications campaign with a defined beginning and end. Rather, it is about a public interest initiative that flourished and reverberated from a physical space strategically envisioned and constructed by activists to nurture social justice. In the mid-1970s, to initially advance its mission, it used communication strategies and tools such as media

relations, events, brochures, fliers and posters. With communication technology advancements, a website and social media outreach were added. Almost from the beginning, the diverse people, partnerships, and events bringing the space to life co-created a community that cultivated social change. Ciszek (2017) wrote that activism depends on relationship building among those who share a common goal, as well as on building alliances with organizations that have similar objectives (see Reber & Kim, 2006). Through viewing La Peña's purpose and accomplishments through a lens of social justice advocacy and activism, this study connects the strategic mission of a cultural center with PIC.

Case situation

Cultural expressions and events played a significant role in the United States. Chile's solidarity movement and La Peña provide a case study in cultural activism. Interviews with two significant leaders of La Peña offer insight into the cultural center's history, operations, and impact. One leader, Paul Chin, had a 33-year history with the center beginning in 1977. He served in many capacities: grant writer, volunteer coordinator, special events coordinator, programmer, publicist, and as president of the board of directors for six years until 2019. Chin represented La Peña on several California Arts Council arts panels, several National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) panels, and served on the board of California Presenters. As of this writing, he continues to have a working relationship with the refugees who stayed and worked at La Peña—some as board members and others active in helping maintain the building (P. Chin, personal communication, April 25, 2019).

Eric Leenson co-founded La Peña in 1974 and served on the Board until the early 2000s. He then came back as interim co-executive director during a period of crisis in 2014. After his experience of spearheading and shaping La Peña, a social enterprise, he co-founded Progressive Asset Management, Inc., a pioneering socially responsible investment firm. He served as a strategic advisor to Forum Empresa, a hemispheric organization of socially responsible businesses and is a member of the international board of Instituto Ethos, Brazil. He also leads CANAL—Caribbean North American Laboratory for Social Economy (E. Leenson, personal communication, April 20, 2019).

A third source, documentary film maker Marilyn Mulford, provided transcripts of her interviews with Chilean exiles about the significance of La Peña to their refugee experience. She also shared transcripts of reminiscences of early workers and customers. Mulford conducted the interviews over the past 10 years, 2008-2018, for her documentary film expected to be released in 2020. The time span allowed her to capture voices of those now deceased as well as voices of their children and grandchildren (M. Mulford, personal communication, April 15, 2019).
Both Chin and Leenson brought to La Peña their experiences of living in Chile prior to the military coup and witnessing the developing socialist society under the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende. The following summarizes responses by Chin and Leenson to specific questions, illustrated with excerpts from Mulford's transcripts.

The refugee experience

When Chin was hired at La Peña in 1979 via the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), a federal job-creation program focusing on public service employment, Chilean political exiles were already working there. Some were members of the Chilean resistance, and some were poorly educated; a few were unable to read or write Spanish. Thus, various refugees had a very difficult time relating to U.S. culture as well as adjusting to the irony of being in exile in a country that overthrew their government. At one point there were 12 to 15 exiles or spouses working at La Peña. This work provided them with income and very importantly created the sense of Chilean culture that permeated the center and made it attractive to many. This atmosphere served as a type of glue in creating a community that would thrive over three generations. It also provided a safety net in protecting the clarity of mission and ideological continuity of La Peña (P. Chin, personal communication, April 25, 2019). The following testimonials and direct quotes were gathered from personal communication with documentary filmmaker Marilyn Mulford and a review of transcripts of her recorded interviews.

My "imagined country"

La Peña became a welcoming family for Chileans without a country, making them immediately feel at home (M. Mulford, personal communication, April 18, 2019). When encountering it for the first time, exile Quique C. marveled at the exterior mural, the music, the foods—all symbols of Chile. Arriving at La Peña soon after his release from three years of imprisonment, he declared it "my imagined country." Another Chilean exile, Fernando T., revealed, "I imagined La Peña in California, but never like this," citing the symbols, the mural, the mission, the music—all capturing the essence of *peñas* in Latin America. He developed a deep identification with the center after joining the management collective and learning new skills through working collaboratively with others: "I am a product of La Peña."

Exiles escaping repression in other Latin American and Central American countries also found their way to La Peña to discover the extended family they had left behind. Monica L., an exile from Argentina, expressed, "When you change countries you don't have your mom's home or any relatives' homes…but I have La Peña." She said that sometimes it seemed the whole of Latin America came to La Peña, intermingling with Native Americans, Chicanos, people from across the United States, and Berkeley residents—no longer in isolation, but all interested in what each other had to say and their experiences, and ready to help each other.

The diversity of its staff members and volunteers reflected their support for Chilean solidarity as well as a broader affinity with La Peña's mission to build an inclusive community. One early staff member, Mesi R., a Puerto Rican, has profound memories about the music. Guitarists would often play and sing after meetings or closing time. He talked reverently about the new Chilean song, a revolutionary movement blending folkloric music with lyrics of social

justice: "I never ever in my life will forget the music, the deep music, the meaning of sounds of the Chilean music…that is something that will be there forever."

Eventually, some of the exiled Chileans returned to Chile—several to participate in the underground movement to overthrow the dictatorship. A few of these returnees died in armed confrontations. Those who stayed in the Bay Area created lives for themselves by going through school and getting degrees. Others were able to get into craft unions and ended up with well-paid union jobs. However, these settled refugees continued to come to La Peña because of cultural ties. One exile, a regular at La Peña for more than three decades, praised it as a source of comfort and fellowship.

"This is what happened to me"

The tortured, the imprisoned, and the terrorized harbor private stories. Chilean exile Hector S. shared how the center facilitated remembrance and healing on the 30th anniversary of the coup (M. Mulford, personal communication, April 18, 2019):

> In 2003 (September 11), everybody just walked into La Peña. We didn't put out an email alert; we didn't organize anything; we didn't call anybody. It was something that was really natural. Everybody was bringing things like pictures and candles…We walked into the cultural room, the big room, and we made a huge circle. And this was the first time that Chileans who came to Berkeley, who were connected to La Peña, were telling their personal stories about what happened in Chile. There were a lot of people who were saying, "This happened to me, this happened to me." (Mulford transcript)

He said they were sharing stories in a way they had never done before; it was a very emotional and important moment for the Chilean exiles. La Peña had become a natural gathering place to mark significant dates, for example in 1998 when Pinochet was arrested. On that day, exiles and others headed to La Peña to discuss and celebrate that finally he would be brought to justice for all his crimes. Chileans also gathered there for Chilean Independence Day, and on New Year's Day they were drawn to an annual one-pot mixed seafood curanto hosted by one of the founders and first chef, Chilean Hugo Brenni. The curanto is a traditional dish from the Chiloé rchipelago.

"Bridging multiple worlds"

At times it seemed that everyone who came to the United States from Latin and Central America went through La Peña (M. Mulford, personal communication, April 18, 2019). The center's reputation for welcoming anyone who had escaped or experienced repression drew international visitors, volunteers, and performers. One current board member, Paloma S., daughter of a Chilean exile, praised the center's strong influence on diversity: "I always use the term 'bridging multiple worlds'…by bringing diverse programs…I don't think there is any place like it in the U.S."

The Puerto Rican staff member, Mesi R., shared his bartending experiences and how Latinos learned about other Latino cultures:

> Sometimes I counted 13, 15 nationalities—Algerian, Peruvian, Chilean, Chicano, Puerto Rican—so, with all of those nationalities, the discussions started an education process. I learned a lot about the fight in Algeria for example. I learned a lot about Kenya. I learned about Egypt. People learned about Puerto Rico. They didn't know where Puerto Rico was! It was there we learned a lot.

Chilean exile Feña T. explained how dialogue helped the center's community members learn to challenge stereotypes: "It was an experience that opened our eyes, and in a way forced us to embrace other experiences, other struggles, women's struggles." Long-time worker and Chilean exile Hector S. noted the breadth of artists from all over the world who shared their stories and cultures: Guatemala, el Salvador, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Cuba, to name just a few. He said, "I think that La Peña is a miracle—to be alive…after 40 plus-years…there is something fundamentally good here." Many would point to its persistent hospitality and inclusivity through music, performance, art, and food.

"Second Gen"

In 2019, another generation of young activists is running the center (M. Mulford, personal communication, April 18, 2019). In 2012, a Second Gen group was launched by an important and dynamic group of young people. The group's mission was to express the needs of their generation regarding how La Peña should function in contemporary times. This group was comprised of the children of founders and exiles associated with the organization. It embraced continuity and admiration for the center's values. La Peña may not have survived without the existence of that group. Current co-director Natalia is a daughter of Chilean refugees from Texas. Fellow co-director Bianca, of Puerto Rican and Mexican heritage, got involved through her membership in Second Gen. Both are in their early 30s.

The children of former Chilean prisoners, activists, and exiles have struggled to negotiate their parents' history, along with their own La Peña upbringing, with their identities and contemporary lives—especially with people outside of the community. Growing up with stories of imprisonment, concentration camps, and a politicized life may have traumatized the sons and daughters of the exiles. Thus, as La Peña did for their parents, it offers their children a place of belonging, as Laura S. described: "Not having to explain when you talk to someone because they know; they were there. I love La Peña for that." They also praised the multigenerational aspect of the center and call it a second home with an extended family. Those who have become artists attribute their success to the collaborations possible at La Peña.

Even some third-generation children have been raised to feel at home in La Peña, as they have accompanied their parents to work, meetings, and performances. More so, these grandchildren of the exiles have become world citizens through their exposure to and integration into its international community.

The following three sections draw substantially from personal communication with Eric Leenson, co-founder and former executive director, and Paul Chin, former chair, board of directors.

Funding

Much of the early years were supported by progressive grassroots-oriented people who made small donations (P. Chin personal communication, April 22, 2019). As the organization grew into the 1980s and 1990s, more recognition was paid to it. The country began the discourse of the changing demographics within the growing Latino population. The NEA recognized the value of multi-cultural programming. The California Arts Council began providing technical support in grant writing. In the 1980s the Council awarded La Peña grants to pay instructors (many members of the musical ensemble Grupo Raiz) to teach Andean music and Nueva Cancion Chilena (new Chilean song). The music classes later expanded to Afro-Cuban and Mexican and Afro-Venezuelan.

Major private foundations started funding the center in the 1990s. Into the 2000s, foundations such as Duke, Ford, Rockefeller, S.F. Foundation, Hewlett, and James Irvine were significant donors to La Peña. These donor grants permitted the center to expand into national productions as well as allowed it to book prominent artists. However, foundations change priorities and likewise can change course. The NEA and the California Arts Council budgets were drastically cut in the early 2000s. The 2008 financial crash also brought a cut from private foundations, and in 2012 the center faced the end of major grants. The loss of $250,000 in grant funding over a three-year span precipitated a financial crisis. Eventually, the staff collective dissolved itself and was unable to come up with a sustainable plan to maintain its staff. A community crisis ensued, and the bulk of the staff was rehired. After reorganizing, an executive director was hired. In 2019, two co-directors and a deputy director were in place with part-timers running the organization.

After 44 years, the center is still financially challenged, with approximately 60 percent of its budget contributed and 40 percent earned. The physical space needs substantial repairs and upgrades, and the center struggles to keep staff in a geographic area where the cost of living is very high. Financial constraints have caused the center to lose some of its political orientation, as funders typically avoid politics and better-healed patrons seem more engaged in cultural aspects. Understandably, the center must now charge more to survive, and this too culls out struggling political organizations. Yet La Peña still merits some large grants. For example, in 2016, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation awarded La Peña, in partnership with Dance Monks, a performance studio for social change, a $60,000 grant to implement interdisciplinary arts that hear, represent, and honor the needs of the Mexican immigrant community in the East Bay area (Doris Duke, 2016). During an artist-in-residence appointment funded by Duke, Chicano Caleb Duarte figuratively transformed the building into a refugee embassy, adding large exterior panels with murals evoking both Central American and Syrian refugees. One image, inspired by a

riveting news photo, featured the lifeless body of a young Syrian boy washed up on a beach in Turkey.

A revolutionary place called "home"

La Peña has always been a safe space for all oppressed people—and a special place, jointly and uniquely, for many community groups. Berkeley's mayor in the 1970s, Gus Newport, called it "Berkeley's Great Hall of the Peoples" (E. Leenson, personal communication, April 10, 2019). Secondary to its outreach to the Latin American community has been a strong welcoming of international and U.S. groups. From the beginning, the early La Peña collective built strategic alliances with international solidarity groups such as other Latin American groups, the Iranian Students Association, and the Anti-Marcos Coalition. Likewise, it built local ties to the American Indian Movement, Comexas (an East Oakland community group), and the 3rd World News Bureau at KPFA, a Pacifica listener-sponsored radio station that would occasionally live-broadcast from the center and gave it a radio show. The center also was an early adopter of hip hop. Messages of violence prompted internal discussions on its cultural relevancy, leading to a refocusing on hip-hop artists whose mission was aligned with La Peña's—using the art form to further the cause of racial and social justice.

Its most lasting impact has been on the cultural life of the San Francisco Bay Area, where a generation of artist activists has built a culture of resistance and activism through the arts. La Peña's educational classes have mentored and taught music and dance for over the past 36 years, first in the music of Chile and then other Latin American traditions. The music group, Grupo Raíz, came together at La Peña at the beginning of 1980. The group extended the work of two of its members who had been singing Latin American music at *peñas* and solidarity events in northern California for over a year. Grupo Raiz's partnership with La Peña music classes allowed the group to expand awareness of the music and culture of the Latin American people. It also permitted them to give support, through their music, to the resistance movement in Chile and to liberation movements in Latin America and throughout the world (Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, n.d.).

Today, the center's Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Peruvian music programs have brought up a generation of young performers who are proud of their cultural heritage and some of whom have moved on to become music and dance teachers themselves. Several students have become stars, performing at SFJAZZ, a prominent music venue in San Francisco. However, although social justice has enveloped La Peña's work throughout its 44-year history, in 2019 its cultural ties—along with its younger staff—are stronger forces than its political ties.

An indelible cultural mark

La Peña has left an indelible mark on the culture of the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond (P. Chin and E. Leenson, personal communication, April 25, 2019). During its long struggle to bring alternative voices to its stage—in music, dance, and spoken word—its work has been admired locally and from afar. In the 2000s, the center was recognized as an outstanding presenter by the national Association of Performing Arts Presenters in New York City. La Peña has brought the idea of other cultures and other languages to the national level through its arts advocacy work: it was a founding member of the National Network of Cultural Centers of Color and also a founder of Latino Arts Network of California.

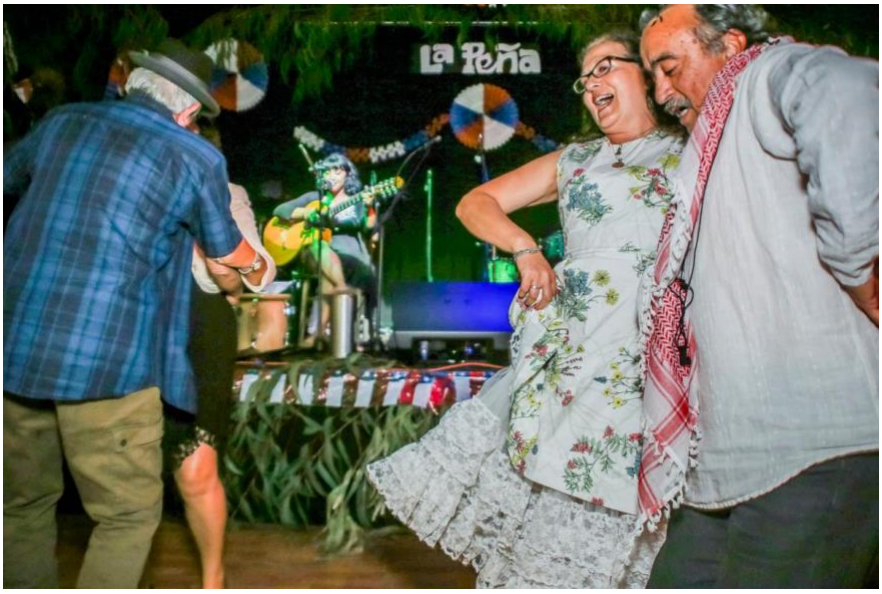
La Peña's stage has been a proving ground for up and coming artists. Local artists such as Marc Bamuthi Joseph (now vice president and artistic director of social impact at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.) and poet Paul Flores credit La Peña as a place that took a chance with their art. Ariel Luckey received two commissions from La Peña enabling him to create and to present *Amnesia*, an interdisciplinary play that reveals America's forgotten immigrant roots and investigates the role of race at the border. Luckey also was funded by La Peña to create *Freeland*, a hip-hop solo performance about finding one's roots. Lakin Valdez, son of Luis Valdez, founder and longtime artistic director of Teatro Campesino, received a La Peña commission to write, develop, and present *Victor in Shadow*, a play about the life of Victor Jara, the beloved Chilean folksinger tortured and executed by the military junta in 1973.

The center was the first U.S. presenter of Afro-Peruvian singer Susana Baca and also presented, on two occasions, the Argentine singers Mercedes Sosa and Atahualpa Yupanqui, the latter considered the most important Argentine folk musician of the 20th century. In the mid-80s, La Peña brought the famed Chilean folkloric groups, Inti-Illimani and Quilapayun, to the United States for a national tour. The significance of these artists cannot be lost. Both folkloric groups were widely popular in Chile pre-coup as pioneers of the new Chilean song. After the coup, Quilapayun was forced to base in France for 15 years while the Chilean military dictatorship destroyed its record label, banned the new song movement, and "plunged the country into what was called the *apagón cultural*, cultural blackout" (Torres, 2013, para. 3). Inti-Illimani's song *Venceremos* (We shall win!) had become the anthem of Allende's government. Touring in Europe when the coup occurred, the group took refuge in Rome for many years.

La Peña's stage (Figure 4) also has been graced by internationally noted singers, writers, activists, and poets such as Lila Downs (Mexican singer-songwriter), Isabel and Angel Parra (Chilean musicians), Jimmy Santiago Baca (Apache-Chicano writer), Junot Diaz (Dominican writer), Cesar Chavez (who held his 50th birthday party at La Peña), Dolores Huerta (labor and civil rights activists who co-founded the National Farm Workers Association), Eduardo Galeano (Uruguayan journalist), June Jordan (Caribbean-American poet), Ariel Dorfman (Chilean novelist and playwright), Ernesto Cardenal (Nicaraguan priest, poet, and minister of culture), Alice Walker (African-American author), Angela Davis (African-American activist and academic), Juan Gelman (Argentine poet), Pete Seeger (American folksinger and activist), Sweet

Honey in the Rock (all-woman, African-American a cappella ensemble), Holly Near (American singer and activist), Los Papines (Cuban rumba band), Flaco Jimenez (acclaimed Norteño, Tex Mex and Tejano music accordionist), Steve Jordan (American drummer), Lydia Mendoza (guitarist and singer of Tejano and conjunto traditional Mexican-American music; NEA National Heritage Fellow), Margaret Randall (American poet and oral historian), Oscar Hijuelos (American novelist of Cuban descent), and Cuban filmmaker Pastor Vega presenting his film *Portrait of Teresa*, and many more.

Figure 4. La Peña's stage has hosted acclaimed musicians, inspiring dance, and celebration.[4]



Discussion and conclusion

The lived experience of La Peña can be understood through the bricolage of music, politics, arts, and foods that play important roles in allowing diverse people to work collaboratively and respectfully together—with music a part of its larger social narrative. The center is a living example of PIC's most valued objective of serving social good for positive behavior change (Fessman, 2017). For La Peña, social justice is not discretionary but a front-line priority as the purpose of the organization. In response to the brutal dictatorship that forced political exiles to the United States, it served as a triggering event—described by Fessman as one of PIC's most salient features—to facilitate the co-creation of positive behavior change.

This study suggests that cultural spaces such as La Peña can serve as change agents by amplifying marginal voices. It draws from the knowledge of PIC field workers who

[4] La Peña Cultural Center, date unknown

make/do/lead direct social change, as suggested by Downes (2017). Its leaders, Paul Chin and Eric Leenson, were influential in establishing the center and constructing its social identity to facilitate social change—a linkage to PIC (Seyranian, 2017). It offers direct testimony from political exiles and workers about empowering experiences attributed to the center. Indeed, La Peña presents a stark rebuttal to this historic moment of global backlash against immigration.

La Peña's incubation of new artists representing marginalized perspectives and its funding of exiled musicians also support this mission, as the center facilitated the artists' broader reach and influence. One of its rhetorical functions was to welcome and amplify the banned new Chilean song. The center also sought and showcased the authentic stories of poets, playwrights, and songwriters, presenting perspectives from the margins to sensitize and educate members of the La Peña community. Through relationship building and alliances with public interest foundations, advocacy groups, and media outlets, it strengthened its objectives.

To consider La Peña's work as PIC asks us to not only cross boundaries of disciplines, but also to recognize and appreciate the communicative power of not only dialogue but of performance, space, and community. Drawing from de Certeau (2011), Duff (2010), and Casey (2001), this study goes beyond physical space to consider the emotional and ideological maps imposed on cultures and communities and to acknowledge the deeply affective experience at La Peña that creates a thick, safe, intimate space for strengthening community and identity.

Aligned with the studies of Keevers and Sykes (2016), Higgins (2007), and Heuman (2015), the center has created a sense of belonging, encouraged participation, and recognized and respected diverse peoples—essentially serving the public interest through performing social justice. It has demonstrated an ethic of care, outlined in its mission and values, that has shown hospitality to all and encouraged respect for other cultures. The center also has taken responsibility to assess its outcomes and strategize to respond to changing needs and expectations of its publics. For example, La Peña evaluates its progress, social impact, and goals through strategic planning sessions, focus group research, audience polling, and conversations with volunteers and partners. It regularly revisits its mission at annual board/staff retreats. For funding consideration, it participates in the California Cultural Data Project that collects information on numbers served and demographics such as ethnic groups and ages.

Much of its programming connects with its values. However, with the second wave of a second-generation leadership, more programming focuses on culture without the political/social justice considerations of the past or the ideologies of its founders. "Over the years there has been always been tension between political/cultural goals and the cold hard reality that much of our work is not economically sustainable," said Chin. He added, however, that much of La Peña's work remains guided by its mission, "create peace and social justice through cultural arts, education and community action,' its vision of "a world where cultural differences are celebrated and respected and every being has access to life-affirming, creative expression," and its values, such that "La Peña salutes all of the ancestors whose shoulders we stand upon, and we celebrate the sacrifices made by all of those who have sustained the organization since its humble beginnings in 1975" (P. Chin, personal communication, April 25, 2019).

Chin also notes that, to best preserve the center's history while continuing to evolve, employees and volunteers are expected to uphold several key values. For example, in terms of social justice, Chin said La Peña upholds the notion that *"*no one is free when others are oppressed." According to Chin, "We stand in solidarity with all oppressed beings, and we work to actualize universal human rights for all." Another of these core values is radical inclusion:

> We believe that a diversity of perspectives creates the most innovative and resilient community. We actively seek to build bridges between communities representing many races, genders, sexual orientations, abilities, and ages.

Respect is another important value perpetuated by the center. Chin notes, "We honor the different stories, experiences and gifts of every being. We treat every being with the respect we seek for ourselves." Finally, La Peña values regeneration:

> We seek to give as much as we take and to live in balance with the natural ecosystem. We seek to maintain harmony with all our relations and work to ensure the sustainability of this center, socially, environmentally, and financially. (P. Chin, personal communication, April 25, 2019)

Employees and volunteers at La Peña are expected to work cooperatively and collectively to "respect La Peña, its resources, and its staff as if they were your own home and family," "keep the facility operating and thriving," and "actively create space for conversations in Spanish and other languages besides English" (P. Chin, personal communication, April 25, 2019).

La Peña has been able to thrive for more than four decades guided by its mission, vision, and values focused on the public interest. It has affected widely disparate publics who expanded their political and social consciousness and built communities for positive change. Chin recalled a trip to Italy in 1985. While walking near the Coliseum in Rome a Salvadoran woman approached him—drawn by his La Peña t-shirt due to her memorable experience back in Berkeley at a La Peña solidarity event for El Salvador. Leenson concluded:

> It is difficult to evaluate the impact of La Peña over these years. Thousands, if not tens of thousands, of people attribute some part of their formation and outlook to experiences lived, even briefly, at 3105 Shattuck. Many of us have been struck by how, so many years later and in so many places around the world, memories of La Peña are so deeply reminisced. (personal communication, April 10, 2019)

Limitations and suggestions for future research

Through its focus on the refugee and Latin American experience, this study did not cover La Peña's strong outreach and welcome to the African-American community, the women's community, the LGBTQ community, and others. Inclusive relationships exist with many publics beyond Latinos, relationships extremely relevant to the study of PIC. This study suggests other questions that need attention, for example, how to address the demonization and predicaments of immigrants and migrants—in the United States and globally—or the situations they are fleeing?

In South America, the lingering effects of past brutal regimes continue to impact publics and policies. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires have gathered weekly since 1977 to demand the whereabouts of their disappeared children and their grandchildren abducted by the military during Argentina's dirty war from 1976 to 1983. Brazil, Guatemala, and Mexico are among other countries where dissidents have been disappeared due to governmental impunity. In some Latin American countries, drug trafficking has been responsible for a high number of disappearances. The flow of migrants from Central and South America into the United States has fueled brutal conditions in both human trafficking and detention at the United States border. Addressing how communication in the public interest is serving social justice issues such as these is a critical area of future inquiry.

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Appendix

Exploratory interview questions

1. What years were you involved in La Peña and at what capacities?
2. The filmmaker mentioned she is incorporating the earlier refugee experience into her documentary—"refugees" meaning Chileans who left after the coup. What can you tell me about the refugee experience at La Peña?
3. La Peña has no doubt received some sizable foundation grants throughout the years. Any especially notable—reflecting La Peña's significance or allowing La Peña to excel in a certain way? What resulted?
4. What significant partnerships has La Peña formed to help carry out its mission of promoting social justice, arts participation and intercultural understanding?
5. Of all its work, what significant impacts has La Peña had?
6. Drawing from your considerations of these questions, is there anything else you can share about how La Peña has fulfilled its mission?

Journal of Public Interest Communications
ISSN (online): 2573-4342
Journal homepage: http://journals.fcla.edu/jpic/

African Story Time: An Examination of Narrative Storytelling in U.S. News Coverage of Nigeria's Missing Girls as Public Interest Communications

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Article Information

Received: October 20, 2018

Accepted: November 12, 2019

Published online: December 20, 2019

Keywords

Nigeria
Newspaper
Narrative characters
Storytelling

Abstract

News reports about nearly 300 kidnapped Nigerian schoolgirls spread globally in April 2014. Ongoing updates on the tragic incident permeated social media through digital advocacy efforts. Though research on U.S. news coverage generally indicate underreporting regarding missing women of color and negative reporting on African current events, news of Nigeria's missing schoolgirls managed to make waves in U.S. media and elicit longstanding compassion and interest among readers. This study explores the use of narrative storytelling by U.S. news outlets as a way to create commonality, engage audiences in public interest communications and encourage the story's resonance among U.S. readerships.

Introduction

In April 2014, nearly 300 schoolgirls were kidnapped from a secondary school in Chibok, Nigeria. The kidnapping was believed to have been perpetrated by Boko Haram, an Islamic extremist sect based in Northeastern Nigeria (Nossiter, 2014a). The abduction instigated a global reaction of concern about their treatment and recovery. It also became a prominent subject in U.S. news media, which is not characteristic of international current events. International news coverage is a valuable resource in shaping public opinion and communicating U.S. interests (Golan, 2007). However, Zhang & Meadows (2012) claim domestic coverage of international current events has been on the decline since the 1980s. Of the news reporting on global stories, Larson's (1984) study cites a general lack of balance within international coverage and Golan's

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DOI:10.32473/jpic.v3.i2.p53

(2007) findings indicate news networks tend to focus on only a few countries. This lopsided approach to international coverage has a negative impact on U.S. public opinions of international affairs and unequally covered countries (Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). According to Stevenson and Gaddy's (1984) findings, developing countries receive more coverage of negative or bad news (as cited in Wu, 1998). With respect to African countries, some describe the continental region as a space that receives narrow coverage or is largely ignored in international news stories (Golan, 2008; Paik, 2009), giving the impression that African countries hold little value in the U.S. news cycle. In addition to being accused of omitting African countries from the news agenda, Western media is also frequently criticized for primarily portraying African countries in connection with crisis and corruption or excluding them altogether (Adegoju, 2016; Bunce, 2015; Monson, 2017).

On the contrary, in Scott's (2015) comprehensive review of U.S. and U.K. produced media, he claims existing research on the representation of Africa tends to affirm Afro-pessimistic assumptions, but much of it has yet to be substantiated empirically. He contends that the myth of damaging representation continues to be proliferated by those who stand to benefit by its preservation, including researchers, non-governmental organizations, and corporations.

However, Adegbola, Skarda-Mitchell and Gearhart (2018) believe these purported misrepresentations to be a problematic reality. In their content analysis of U.S. television news coverage of Nigeria, they examined programming produced during two 5-year periods: 2005–2009 and 2010–2014. Although their results indicate a significant reduction in negative valence and marginal increase in positive valence, news stories on crime, war, and conflict remained a predominant focus among the most reported issues.

Despite the fact that coverage of African current events is not normally prioritized in U.S. news media (Ankomah, 2008), proximity being a primary reason, the story of Nigeria's missing Chibok girls would likely qualify as an exception to that standard. The real-life saga of their capture and release may have appealed to the dramatic attachment to which audiences respond (Kunelius, 2009). The promising potential of young girls being snatched into an underworld of clandestine forests and trekked through a volatile and unknown region is devastating for most to consider. That is what makes this modern tale unique.

The story clearly struck a chord in the national news agenda, likely because of the bizarre details and journalistic use of narrative. This storytelling technique is often employed by journalists to offer an explicit interpretation of news and help "make sense of a contingent world through narrative immersion in the lives of real people" (Baym, 2017, p.16).

The purpose of this study is threefold: 1) examine how U.S. news coverage of Chibok's kidnapped schoolgirls represents an anomaly with respect to how current events are typically covered, 2) use literature to contextualize sociocultural reasons why this story may have resonated with U.S. audiences, 3) and lastly support that literature using subthemes that were derived from news stories qualitatively coded with the victim-villain-hero character archetype as the guiding frame. Overall, this research posits that U.S. news outlets used a narrative technique to build issue salience through journalistic advocacy, which I argue is a form of public interest

communications (PIC). Though a bit unorthodox, this article is organized in the following manner: First is a framework section that details the concepts and theories informing this study. Next a brief literature review is provided that situates narrative elements linked to the unique nature of the story. The methods section details the qualitative content analysis process. It will be followed by a long form, blended results-discussion section that explains the subthemes in concert with victim-villain-hero literature to situate the current event as a rarity. The study then will close with a conclusion.

Conceptual framework

This research is conceptually underscored by public interest communications, narrative policy framework (Jones, McBeth, & Shanahan, 2014), and narrative storytelling.

Public interest communications

PIC is an emerging, interdisciplinary field that integrates journalism, public, relations, and marketing. The burgeoning field is defined as the "development and implementation of science based, planned strategic communication campaigns with the main goal of achieving significant and sustained positive behavioral change on a public interest issue that transcends the particular interests of any single organization" (Fessman, 2016, p. 16).

PIC normally has at least one of two campaign goals in mind:1) influencing changes in behavior at the individual level that are either linked to some sort of social ill and or improved social condition and/or 2) driving change through policy using public social change campaigns. Successful campaign efforts often require work in one or multiple spheres of influence: media, policy, communities of influence, the market, activism, and social marketing (Christiano, 2017).

In terms of the relationship between journalism and PIC, Fessmann (2016) indicates similarities between both disciplines because practitioners of each group function in advocacy-based roles with both creating information output on issues relating to public welfare. One does so as a representative spokesperson of specific causes relating to social good and the other through reporting on certain issues that are key to the public's well-being. In spite of this connection, Fessman (2016) goes on to state that although there is resemblance between the role of PIC and journalism, the two are separated by the latter field's intention of striving for objectivity.

Fessmann (2017) characterizes journalism's role in promoting social advocacy as one in decline. He posits that the rise in PIC is connected to that downward slump. However, if the primary goal of PIC is to stimulate long-term changes in behavior on an issue of public interest (Fessmann, 2016), then the infusion of narrative in journalistic practice may be an effective plan of action toward that end. I argue that by using a storytelling approach in coverage, Chibok's missing girls maintained sustained interest in U.S. news media. The story sparked response from communities of influence and activism circles on social media and later conjured action by

policymakers and government leadership. News coverage triggered action in several spheres of influence, which is an essential component of successful campaigns, as mentioned above. For this reason, advocacy journalism should still be seen as a viable form of PIC. Keeping audiences informed is a social good. And in combination with narrative elements, published news can function as a practical way to encourage logical and rational thinking about a subject matter through the transmission of social knowledge (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

Narrative policy framework

Journalism is not the only field that employs narrative as a communication technique. A similar strategy has proved useful in the policy process. A growing body of research inquiries that analyze the process have used the narrative policy framework (NPF) (Jones et al., 2014) as a methodological tool. NPF has been previously applied to policy narrative analysis on a number of topics including e-cigarette regulation (O'Leary, Borland, Stockwell, & MacDonald, 2017), U.S. campaign finance reform (Gray & Jones, 2016), recycling policy (McBeth, Lybecker, & Husmann, 2014), and wildfire policy in Colorado (Crow et al., 2017).

The framework blends Entman's (1993) framing theory, Agenda-setting theory (McCombs, 2005; McCombs & Shaw, 1972), and narrative communication as a policy advocacy strategy (Crow & Lawlor, 2016). "NPF posits that policy actors use stories (narratives) to influence the policymaking process. Policy actors do so by reducing complex policy problems into stories with settings, characters, plots, and morals that help people make sense of these problems" (Gupta, Ripberger, & Wehde, 2018, p. 120). Blair & McCormack (2016) define policy actors as political figures who have the ability to use narratives to influence policy debates on a specific issue. "Narratives can be represented in the news media as policy actors seek to communicate to the general public or decision-makers" (Blair & McCormack, 2016, p. 1). Analysis can take place across three levels (micro, meso and macro) and common narrative components in NPF include: character (hero, victim, villain), setting (space and time), plot (organized action) and the moral of the story (policy solution). Strategy and beliefs or values are embedded in the policy narrative content (Shanahan, Jones, & McBeth, 2018). In the context of this research, the NPF is applied in the sense that the published narratives perform as a mechanism to understanding the real lived experiences of Nigeria's Chibok girls, while audiences rationalize and interpret their relational meaning. This process was further catalyzed because many of the published stories on this topic were supported by the careful casting and construction of three essential storytelling character archetypes: the victim, the villain, and the hero (Hawkins, 2001).

Narrative storytelling

The use of storytelling is an age-old ritual used to transmit histories, values, beliefs, cultures, and ideas about the social world (Edosomwan & Peterson, 2016). Many African ethnic groups and global cultures have longstanding oral traditions. Historically, present-day countries such as

Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Gambia had, and in some cases still have, people designated to a griot cast; these griots/griottes (the female equivalent), or professional storytellers, committed their lives to cementing the public's memory of past events and ancestral deeds. Through praise song retellings, they preserved knowledge of genealogical ties and even advised royal families on political decisions (Lott, 2002).

With time, modern published news becomes the way in which society remembers events of the past. Before time and memory revise an issue's freshness in the public consciousness, the medium can give the issue primacy by highlighting the topic because of its perceived relevance to society's wellbeing (Peters & Tandoc, 2012). This research posits that U.S. news organizations and journalists engaged in PIC by using narrative storytelling elements to amplify interest and resonance among the audiences, encouraging empathy and activity in other spheres of influence.

Literature review: Situating the peculiarity of Chibok coverage through victim construction

U.S. news audiences are often drawn to the melodramatic tension that is a byproduct of news agencies that use victimhood as a thematic device (Zhou, Cooley, & Y, 2011). This storytelling strategy is connected to the same classic literary plot twists and cast of characters present in traditional folktales. Abduction is a common conflict motif used to frame victimhood. And "damsels in distress often radiate an archetypal innocence that beckons heroic salvation" (Zhou et al., 2011). Socially the need to protect children, notably girls, is a pillar of Western morality that is culturally embedded and reflective of the hierarchy of innocence described in Moeller's (2002) text on children in international news. Kidnapping stories involving underaged adolescents easily gain traction because the purity and goodness associated with children serves as the perfect challenger to metaphorical ills and helps "dramatize the righteousness of a cause like terrorism" (Moeller, 2002, p. 39).

Consumers of U.S. news media are likely all too familiar with the names Natalee Holloway and Elizabeth Smart. These young girls were victims of abduction and for some their stories are ingrained in America's national consciousness. This is mostly because their stories appeared pervasively within news coverage. A Proquest News and Newspaper query of their names as keyword search terms resulted in over 4,000 published stories from U.S. outlets on both Smart's abduction, captivity, and release and Holloway's untimely disappearance and assumed demise (as of October 2019). These individual abductions received nearly 70 percent more coverage in U.S. media than hundreds of missing girls.

Ordinarily, about 750,000 missing persons are reported annually in the United States (Kepple, Epstein, & Grisham, 2014). Roughly 50 percent of those reported missing are white females. And though blacks only make up 14 percent of the national population, they represent more than 30 percent of those cases. In fact, blacks in the United States are statistically overrepresented among the missing (Kepple et al., 2014) and often underreported in news media

(Min & Feaster, 2010). Black missing persons (and generally missing men) normally gain less attention or media coverage. When coverage of their missing status is featured in news programming, the coverage is sparse and of a more minimized intensity in comparison to their white, female counterparts (Sommers, 2016). In their 2010 study on nationally televised news coverage of missing children, Min and Feaster (2010) cite racial bias and well-documented favorability toward whites as a reason for African American underrepresentation in televised news coverage. Other scholars who have observed this phenomenon have coined the phrase "Missing White Woman Syndrome" or MWWS to describe it (Liebler, 2010; Moss, 2019; Sommers, 2016; Stillman, 2007). Because there are limited theoretical contributions and little empirical data to explain the perceived disparity in coverage, MWWS has been used to rationalize the disproportionate dominance of young white women in U.S. news coverage of abductions (Sommers, 2016). Regarding the racial implications of MWWS, Bonilla-Silva (2012) describes the inequity in coverage as an inconspicuous norm that reflects white supremacy.

Previous studies on abduction suggest gender may also be a primary influence on how the missing are covered in news. Stillman (2007) argues that news stories that focus on missing women rely on the damsel in distress trope. This metaphor illustrates women and girls as helpless and in need of saving by men. And although women are normally underrepresented in news coverage (Lens-Rios, Rodgers, Thorson, & Yoon, 2005), when women are included, "they are frequently framed as victims who are passive and dependent" or fragile in nature (Min & Feaster, 2010, p. 209). This could be a reason why Nigeria's missing Chibok girls had great resonance in U.S. news media. Both gender and age represent unique attributes regarding the Chibok kidnapping. In news, children are generally framed as being more vulnerable than adults (Min & Feaster, 2010). Media obsession with the youthfulness and sexuality of young girls (Hartley, 1998) also plays a role in mass media systems subconsciously eroticizing girlhood (Min & Feaster, 2010). The objectification of young girls has origins in the 1955 novel, Lolita. After the novel's debut, the name Lolita became culturally synonymous with seductive characterization. The book's title and plot also gave rise to: Lolita Syndrome and Lolita Complex, "the first denoting the secret longings of middle-aged men for young girls, the second denoting a pathologic desire for underage girls" (Murphy-Keith, 2013, p. 87). Many of the relevant headlines and stories on the subject matter explicitly describe them as girls, schoolgirls, and kidnap victims. This premise also might explain the limited coverage on a group of boys who were also victimized by Boko Haram. In February 2014, several months before the Chibok girls were kidnapped, the extremist group raided a boarding school and murdered 40-59 students aged 11-18. Rothman (2014) describes the gruesome details around their torment: "Some of the students were gunned down as they attempted to flee. Others had their throats slit. In some buildings, Boko Haram militants locked the doors and set the building alight. The occupants were burned alive" (para. 7).

Months after the Chibok girls were kidnapped, Boko Haram kidnapped over 300 boys from a town called Damasak. They were held hostage in a school, driven away from their parents and have yet to be recovered (Hinshaw & Parkinson, 2016). Two years after peak coverage on

Chibok's missing girls, reports surfaced from the Wall Street Journal about the group's involvement in abducting 10,000 boys over the last several years (Hinshaw & Parkinson, 2016). The boys were recruited, trained, starved, drugged, tortured, and sent out to fight. In the previous examples, the double standard of gender alludes to the idea that young boys are not in need of saving and, therefore, their killings and abductions are not as newsworthy. Not even their vulnerable status as children created opportunity for an exception.

Methods

Data source

A Proquest news and newspaper database search using the words "Nigeria" and "Kidnapped girls" yielded iterations of Chibok coverage and kidnapping updates in more than 2,000 stories among several U.S. daily newspapers, including *The New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. Though an issue of strong debate, *The New York Times* has a long history and reputation of being considered a paper of record (Zelizer, Park, & Gudelunas, 2002). Because of the outlet's numerous awards and reputation as a paper of high quality (Kim & Chung, 2017), reporting in this newspaper drives the national and international news narrative (Van Belle, 2010); thus, analysis will focus on news stories published in *The New York Times*.

Stories about the Nigerian kidnapping first emerged in *The New York Times* on April 16, 2014 (Nossiter, 2014a) and the coverage continued even after semi-successful rescue efforts. As of October 2019, the last story on the girls to appear in the publication was April 15, 2019 (Searcey, 2019), five years after the abduction. After conducting the Proquest query mentioned above using search dates that spanned from April 16, 2014, to April 16, 2019, the result included 120 articles. Of those articles, 10 were excluded because they were completely unrelated to the topic, an additional four short briefs were removed, and tangential story types that used the Chibok kidnapping as more of a footnote to highlight more broad issues (i.e., investing in global education for girls and fanatical terrorism) also were removed. The final analysis included 92 stories.

Approach to data analysis

This study employs directed qualitative content analysis to identify subthemes that emerge from the news coverage (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Generally, a directed approach to qualitative content analysis requires the researcher to select a conceptual or theoretical framework to inform data analyses. This helps broaden said framework by applying constructs or concepts through the systemic application of an analytic strategy. Therefore, to evaluate how narrative elements are reflected in the designated news coverage, the researcher used the villain-victim-hero narrative

components commonly used in NPF as a coding frame to assess stories for evidence of narrative storytelling strategy.

Results and discussion

Analysis focused on characteristics linked to three previously selected narrative character components (victim, villain, and hero) generated the following subthemes: the victim (the perfect casualty, familial angst); the villain (the triad of terror as a global evil); and the hero (American Superpower, Hashtag Hero, Black Girl Martyr).

The perfect casualty: Primed for victimhood

International development policy has influenced U.S. attitudes toward girls in foreign countries. Over the last 40 years, practitioners and institutions in the development world have positioned "advocacy efforts that seek to enhance the well-being of girls" (Khoja-Moolji, 2017, para. 2). Policy narratives around the value of investing in girls' education were a major focal point in some of the New York Times coverage since educating girls is seen as a practical solution to expansive issues such as poverty and terrorism (Khoja-Moolji, 2015b).

In 2012, the United Nations began observing International Day of the Girl Child to raise awareness of gender inequities young girls face worldwide, including child marriage, but most notably access to education (Bailey, 2016). Professionals in the development sector believe educating girls is the solution to eradicating global poverty (Paddison, 2017). No matter the socioeconomic background, education can serve as a way to escape poverty and lead to self-made opportunities (Mugabe, Brug & Catling, 2016). In a 2014 report from the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, girls' education in over 30 foreign countries was described as being under siege and constantly threatened by violence and oppression (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2014). Because scholarship and learning are viewed as valuable, educational institutions are held in high regard as sacred institutions (Meyer, 1977). The fact that the Chibok girls were kidnapped from a school is symbolic of the vulnerability girls face globally in the quest for education. It also connotes the uncivil qualities ascribed to an organization (Boko Haram) that would ignore the hallowed nature of safe spaces. The idea of education as a path toward social mobility is directly connected to the metaphorical bootstrap ideal, which alludes to people's ability to improve their own lives. This ideology is a hallmark of U.S. culture (Growe & Montgomery, 2003). But in the context of Boko Haram, education is emblematic of Western imperialism. And in of spite being based in an economically depressed area of Nigeria (Agbiboa, 2013), one of the group's primary interests is challenging Western cultural invasion (Onapajo & Uzodike, 2012). The term Boko Haram is a roughly translated Hausa phrase meaning "Western education is forbidden/a sin."

Familial angst

Though it is natural to focus on the girls, the less obvious victims in this story are the girls' family members. There are stories that describe a pain that persists from uncertainty (Searcey & Akinwotu, 2018). Through it all, the parents rejoiced over long-awaited reunions (Associated Press, 2017), or they consoled themselves while waiting for lists, photos, or any indication that their daughters were dead or alive (Searcey, 2017a). Those who did have the fortune of their children being returned were again jolted by their daughters being snatched into government custody for weeks of debriefing and counseling (Searcey, 2018). The five-year timeline encapsulates the deep ups and downs: their teary-eyed dismay over taunting threats by Boko Haram videos, moments of renewed faith (Sawab & Searcey, 2017) in the Nigerian government, and emotional atrophy (Nossiter, 2014b). This anguish is further complicated by an interjection of numerous first world heroes they assume will swoop in and save the day. The parental despair is summed in a devastating quote: "Honestly, I am so desperate, if the Americans were to colonize, I say so be it," one family member said. "Our people are dying like flies" (as cited in Nossiter, 2014b, para. 29).

The Triad of Terror as a global evil: Villain construction

In the context of this complex and ongoing epic, Boko Haram, Islam, and terrorism function as a villainous trifecta. Published articles describe all three in ways that insinuate barbaric and savage notions. Authors used words such as Islamic Extremists and militant insurgents to portray them. There are also quite a few references to the forbidden wildness of the Sambisa forest, where the group set up camp. In fact, a description in *The Wall Street Journal* (Parkinson & Hinshaw, 2017) of Boko Haram's leader and this story's symbolic antagonist nearly reads like a work of fiction:

> Abubakar Shekau, a bearded and bellowing cleric, burned with anger and wrath, propagating an apocalyptic vision...Shekau redirected Boko Haram into the countryside, shedding its reclusiveness in favor of a full-blown insurgency. His army commandeered tanks and antiaircraft guns from the military and exacted revenge on communities that resisted them. (para. 36)

Stories about videos from Shekau mention him vowing to sell the girls into slavery and or marry off girls as young as 12 to members of Boko Haram (Searcey, 2017b). Language of this kind perpetuates a mythologized status of evil synonymous with a villain.

For U.S. audiences, the War on Terrorism became etched into national memory after the September 2001 attacks at the U.S. World Trade Center. These attacks symbolize a watershed moment in U.S. history and mark a drastic shift in U.S. attitudes and policy narratives regarding global terrorism; these changes signal an increased sensitivity to acts of terror (Cho et al., 2003). The attacks exposed the emergence of Al Qaeda and a collaborative network of terrorism across many countries including Sudan, Afghanistan, the Philippines, and Yemen. As a result of this disclosure, policy makers embraced diverse perspectives in coverage of international news to

satisfy a more obvious public need (Wanta et al., 2004). Groups and individuals responsible for terroristic acts exist as a threat to the United States' theoretical ideal of freedom and democracy (Tilly, 2004). For some, Al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden are synonymous with Islamic extremism and coordinated efforts of senseless violence. Bin Laden and the organization were accused of stockpiling weapons of mass destruction and organizing mass scale casualties (Baker, Cooper, & Mazzetti, 2011). Similarly, Boko Haram and the Chibok kidnapping represent the same phantom threat of terrorism exacted upon the United States. Both groups are described as being fueled by anti-Western ideals, and they exist in direct opposition to U.S. conceptions of freedom and global security. Boko Haram's involvement in the Chibok kidnapping likely resonated with U.S. creators and consumers of news because the story appeals to America's aggressive goal of squelching evil terrorism worldwide (Benjamin, 2017) and making sure the bad guy is brought to justice (Zhou et al., 2011).

Hero construction

An interesting element of this storytelling character type is that there is no obvious, singular hero ideal. The hero is varied and represented by different groups that constantly shift. Some stories attribute their successful release to the Nigerian government in collaboration with enigmatic Swiss operatives. Nigerian lawyer and activist Zannah Mustapha was instrumental in negotiating their release (Adegoke & Idowu, 2017), along with independent blogger Ahmad Salkida (Parkinson & Hinshaw, 2017). In addition to those figures, news stories characterized a few other heroes including the United States, other global powers, and the girls themselves.

American Superpower

Much of the language in reporting on the Chibok girls codified symbols of U.S. identity. Headlines and blurbs were peppered with descriptive words such as liberated or freed from Boko Haram. These words have meaning that is commonly associated with the United States. The national identity is linked to its assumed role as an international do-gooder and key player in helping to resolve social ills on a global scale (Gay, 2014). Koh (2003) describes the United States as a model superpower with "exceptional global leadership and activism…willing to commit real resources and make real sacrifices to build, sustain, and drive…the promotion of human rights" (p.1487). As a core country in a vastly globalized world, the United States is in some ways expected to demonstrate leadership through global governance. The country's economic wealth and power obligate it to protect vulnerable populations of other countries and intervene when necessary (Gay, 2014). This obligation necessitates having a significant role in the matters of peripheral and semi-peripheral countries of the Global South. Sometimes the United States fulfills this duty through humanitarian efforts and international development, an idea that evolved from the formation of the Peace Corps (Petersen, 2011). Additionally, the U.S. media's commitment to reporting on Nigeria's missing girls also functions as a form of public diplomacy by communicating reputational cues and America's ideological conceptions of

freedom and justice. These items are essential to the foundation of the national narrative. In one story, U.S. President Obama even essentializes the need for U.S. newsmakers to remain vigilant in amplifying this story:

> by keeping memories alive, by telling stories, by hearing those stories, we can do our part to save lives. I think drop by drop by drop that we can erode and wear down these forces that are so destructive, that we can tell a different story. (para. 5)

This charge was taken on by journalists and U.S. based film creatives too. Though a fictionalized heroic account, the hugely successful film *Black Panther* opens with a secret mission to rescue a group of women from several gun toting men, wandering Nigeria's Sambisa forest. But this charge did not just stop at stories. The U.S. government sent "a rapid-response team of roughly 40 officials…to the U.S. embassy…including CIA analysts, two of the FBI's top hostage negotiators and a therapist to treat the girls upon their return" (Parkinson & Hinshaw, 2017, para. 84). Officials swooped in with drone technology that helped gather and share information about Boko Haram's movements with the Nigerian government. Actions by the United States set the precedent, encouraging others in the global community, including the United Kingdom, Canada, and China, to become engaged in rescue efforts (Parkinson & Hinshaw, 2017).

In addition to offering resources for girls' return, the United States was also valuable in their resettlement. Shortly after their escape, dozens were awarded funding to attend the American University of Nigeria Academy, an exclusive college in northeast Nigeria (Abimboye, 2014). An African-American millionaire volunteered to sponsor school fees for about 20 of the girls (Nsehe, 2016). Two groups of girls were even sent to Christian boarding schools in rural areas, including Virginia's Mountain Mission and Canyonville Christian Academy, a school run by former White House adviser Doug Wead (Parkinson & Hinshaw, 2017).

Though perceived as well-intentioned, some scholars suggest these acts are simply political strategies for the purpose of bargaining for power and control (Alesina & Dollar, 2000). Others have even implied that coverage of this kind signifies imperialistic notions by highlighting the incompetence of African leadership in managing their own national affairs (Scott, 2009). However, this allegation is not completely unfounded. Even after negotiations, many of the girls still remain missing and Nigeria's president at the time, Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan, was highly criticized for his role in managing the issue. Native Nigerians have been fault-finding in their assessment of the government's slow rescue response to the Chibok kidnapping and other acts of terrorism that have occurred since (Gopep & Searcy, 2018). And eventually heroic actions by the United States were met with resistance: "Soon, the Nigerians stopped returning American phone calls. 'We had to tell them: Obama is not our president! You're not in Washington now,' said one official" (as cited in Parkinson & Hinshaw, 2017, para. 135).

Inefficiencies in Nigeria's government could have helped lay the groundwork for this saga's exposition, while also being the cause of Boko Haram's unruliness. The group's origins are linked to economic distress. Overdependence on oil created a decline in some of the traditional agricultural sectors in the northern region, disrupting and neglecting the local economy. With a lack of jobs and economic stimulation, crime and lawlessness increased (Thomson, 2012). To

cope with growing hardship, community leaders instituted Sharia law, set up Islamic learning centers, and began spreading a fundamentalist version of Islam (Blanchard, 2016). Bound by religion and in opposition of a secular government that destabilized their economy, Boko Haram flourished and this is due in part to poor national governance.

In the previous passage, U.S. intentions operate in a way that confuses the clarity of a hero role by insinuating a surreptitious anti-hero role. All the same, coverage of Nigeria's Chibok girls reinforces the strength of American power by communicating and framing U.S. identity as a powerful, yet empathetic hero.

Hashtag heroes

News of Nigeria's missing girls gained great national and international attention after a message from U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama went viral. Obama tweeted a photo of herself holding a sign that read #BringBackOurGirls. More than just the first black family in the White House, the Obamas pioneered a fresh way of communicating with the public, as the first sitting president and first lady to hold social media accounts. Although Obama did not create the original hashtag, the viral tweet became viewed as a critical diplomatic gesture, a novel act of digital activism, and a strong expression of unified solidarity. The tweet was also seen as a social call to action that further mobilized digital advocates and amplified the story's value in U.S. news media. Obama's use of language from the hashtag connotes an intimate connection to the missing girls that would likely elicit a sense of compassion. This sentiment was reinforced in a Mother's Day speech, where Obama said she and President Obama saw their own daughters in the missing girls (Loken, 2014). In reaction to Obama's actions, the U.S. public became deeply interested in Nigeria's missing girls as a newsworthy humanitarian issue globally and in U.S. media, setting the stage for strong digital advocacy.

Loken (2014) posits that Obama's reference to Nigeria's kidnapped schoolgirls as our daughters too is an example of the United States engaging in imperial dynamics. Being claimed by a political figure that represents the highest office in the country helped legitimize their status as victims of terror, making them even more worthy of attention and protection because of U.S. influence (Loken, 2014).

In addition to endorsement from a high-profile figure, the story's salience was largely driven by everyday people engaging in hashtag activism. This was very influential in raising the issue's profile and meant to pressure action from the Nigerian and U.S government (Khoja-Moolji, 2015a). Various digital communities rallied behind the viral hashtag, #BringBackOurGirls, progressing the discussion on Twitter (Olson, 2016).

Active civic engagement is indicative of U.S. identity (Huddy & Khatib, 2007). This brand of digital mobilization has been lauded for encouraging more civic unity (Dahlgren, 2009). As a social platform, Twitter is a product of U.S. ingenuity and innovation (Carlson, 2011) that is intrinsically embedded within the United States' projected image of democracy. Using Twitter, U.S. citizens, motivated by the character qualities embedded in news-produced narratives, expressed heroic empathy through hashtag activism. This is an example of audiences directing

news flow (Nelles, 1997), which further reflects a national democratic image. This activism also implies the power of people in the United States to initiate change. Tweets and retweets about the abduction were instrumental in Nigeria's missing girls maintaining prominence in U.S. news.

Black Girl Martyr

In continuing with the build of a climactic narrative, "the vulnerable and innocent protagonist's survival" occurs in spite of hardship, villainy, and threat of corruption (Hovdestad, Hubka, & Tonmyr, 2009; Zhou et al., 2011, p. 8). As details emerged about the horrors they endured, the public survivors from the group shift into hero status. Some articles described harrowing escape stories. Other outlets depicted the girls as unyielding in their fight to record their own torment in hidden journals, a detail that references another well-known survivor narrative icon—Anne Frank. One news article discussed their desperation for food (Parkinson & Hinshaw, 2017):

> As they moved from camp to camp, food became scarce. The Chibok girls chewed tree bark as they waited for meals that never came. They used plastic bags to lift sips of water from muddy puddles, sometimes going thirsty for up to four days. (Naomi) Adamu had a long-running kidney condition, which brought physical agony. "We were left to eat grass," she said. (para. 156)

Another threat to their survival was in their decision to rebuff forced religious conversion by members of Boko Haram. As a primarily Christian area in a region dominated by Islam, Chibok exists as a place of refuge and a target. When propositioned about converting, a number of the girls resisted even at the peril of rape, violence, forced marriage, deprivation, and sexual bondage (Parkinson & Hinshaw, 2017). Through these examples there is some sense of agency in the bravery they exhibit and a steadfast unwillingness to compromise. This display of courage is in line with Inner Strength, one of eight levels ascribed to a flawed hero experience that denotes the character's transformation (Ohler, 2008).

Ironically the resilience that was once championed in stories made some social pariahs. As the years went on and some girls trickled back into communities with children fathered by terrorists, community members suspected they were merely traitorous decoys, sent to finish the job (Searcey, 2017b). In fact, some of innocence portrayed is completely flipped; the young girls and women who at one point came of age in torture were believed to be proteges of evil, still loyal to their captors. Published stories of young girls being forced to reenter their communities as suicide bombers (Searcey, 2016, 2017b) complicated the veteran status they initially experienced.

Conclusion

In a country such as the United States, where nearly 250,000 missing black people are severely underreported annually, it is with great surprise that abduction in a culturally and geographically distant country took precedence in U.S. news coverage. The absurdly large number of abductees,

the strange cast of characters, and gripping details likely made the narratives easily adapted for U.S. readership.

As a dominant sphere of public influence, the media play a significant role "in affecting perceptions of the importance of an issue [and] creating master narratives" (Christiano, 2017, p. 8). This is evidenced by European historical literatures that have weaponized the storytelling tradition against African cultures. An example is Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, which constructed and proliferated the fictional appeal of Africa as the dark continent (Bassil, 2011; Miller et al., 2013).

Narrative storytelling is a powerful tool that can be broadly applied to human learning by educating children and adults (Edosomwan & Peterson, 2016). Regarding Nigeria's missing girls, journalists and news organizations were able to employ this technique to spur interest in this tragic real-life tale. Their work helped reduce the moral distance between sufferers and consumers of that suffering, encouraging a dismissal of the bystander approach and restoring ownership of other suffering through unified public outrage (Zhou et al., 2011). Continuing to tell the story has been a useful call to action that has kept this story present in the public conscience.

The challenge with this technique is that journalists who engage in it deal with the dilemma of potentially compromising objectivity, an underlying ethic in the field (Harbers & Broersma, 2014). Also, narratives can present the reduced version of a complex story. In some ways, journalistic news narratives transformed 276 young girls into a unidimensional, and at times oversimplified, understanding of what it means to be a kidnap victim and survivor or a pawn to be traded for territorial power. An advantage to this method is that it can make culturally distant struggles easier to understand and remember, but potentially at the risk of exploiting the characters involved, further institutionalizing distorted truths in the public's social memory.

If PIC truly "is a special form of communications whose unique role is taking on the world's demons and inequities" (Christiano, 2017, p. 6) as a public social good, then certainly Western news outlets used published accounts to slay a global metaphorical dragon that refuses to die—terrorism. However, it can never be known how this incident would have turned out had the news coverage not occurred and the social media blitz not taken place. Still, there is no doubt journalists who creatively reported on these stories tapped into something that transcends.

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Journal of Public Interest Communications
ISSN (online): 2573-4342
Journal homepage: http://journals.fcla.edu/jpic/

More than Tweed Jackets and Beards: An Analysis of the Hashtag Campaign #ILookLikeAProfessor

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Article Information

Received: April 12, 2019

Accepted: September 20, 2019

Published online: December 20, 2019

Keywords

#ILookLikeAProfessor
Twitter
Social networks
Hashtag activism
Self-presentation

Abstract

The focus of this study was to identify themes that emerged on the publicly-posted #ILookLikeAProfessor hashtag Twitter campaign during August 2015. This qualitative content analysis explored tweets (n=1,855) from www.twitter.com/#ILookLikeAProfessor. Through qualitative open and inductive coding methods, four major themes were derived from the Twitter campaign among participants: 1) discussing diversity, 2) addressing appearance, 3) identifying self, and 4) using visual support. Researchers offer ideas for future study about this campaign and hashtag activism.

Introduction

A simple Google image search for the word professor provides a glaring look at professional stereotypes. Some members of the professoriate underrepresented in the Google search took to Twitter. The hashtag campaign, #ILookLikeAProfessor, challenged the stereotypical image of a professor as a middle-aged White man with a beard, glasses, and tweed jacket. Contributors were encouraged to post a picture of themselves or discuss their personal experience in academia to draw public attention to the diversity that exists within the university ranks of professorship. Inspired by #ILookLikeAnEngineer, three associate professors kicked off the #ILookLikeAProfessor campaign on Twitter in 2015. The founders felt "frustrated by the microaggressions [they] experience as 'nontraditional' faculty" (Pritchard, Koh, & Moravec,

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DOI: 10.32473/jpic.v3.i2.p74

2015, para. 2). In addition, the founders of the campaign are all women, young-looking, and professors in science and technology studies, literature and digital humanities, and history.

Although the #ILookLikeAProfessor campaign has a strong response from women, the founders say it is inclusive of all genders, race, age, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and ability. "The professoriate has changed over the past half century. The Civil Rights Movement, feminism, gay rights, the Americans With Disabilities Act, and more transformed many aspects of society, including the academy. It is time for our assumptions about faculty to catch up" (Pritchard et al., 2015, p. 2). A digital campaign such as this is a way to build equity into altering a societal stereotype.

Women and underrepresented groups leveraging digital communication for equity campaigns is a vital topic for study so we can see how and why groups use digital communication and ultimately how effective these efforts can be for a cause. To lay the groundwork, the purpose of this study is to analyze the themes present in the August 2015 tweets of the #ILookLikeAProfessor campaign, which provides a forum for professors to challenge typecasts, discuss experiences, and expand the understanding and perception of today's professor. The background for this study draws from literature about Twitter and activism online.

Literature review

The demographics that make up the professoriate are slowly changing, yet the stereotypes are not. Data gathered in a 2008 study by the National Center for Education Statistics shows persons of color made up less than 20% of faculty and White women accounted for about 25% of the full-time professor rank. Five years later, increases had been made but White males still made up 58% of all full-time faculty (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). While U.S. colleges and universities have slightly increased faculty diversity over the past 20 years, most gains have not been for tenured positions (Finkelstein, Conley, & Schuster, 2016). The report found that underrepresented minority groups grew from nine percent in 1993 to 13% in 2013 but still only held 10% of tenured jobs. Women held only 38% of tenured positions even though the report showed women held almost half of all faculty positions (Finkelstein et al., 2016). Given the results of those studies, it is not too surprising that a simple Google search for professor brings up images showcasing mainly a middle-aged White man.

Twitter as a place for social movement

Twitter's flexibility for allowing both mediated communication and dialogue among users (Clavio & Kian, 2010; Frederick, Lim, Clavio, Pedersen, & Burch, 2014) has made it a popular communication medium for advocacy and environmental groups, activists, politicians, athletes, and academicians. In addition, much of Twitter's appeal stems from users' ability to contribute to their presented image (Weathers et al., 2014). This ability to control is constructed through the users' visual image choices as well as selected messages conveyed via direct access to their

audiences (Lebel & Danylchuk, 2012). Direct access to followers has allowed Twitter users to circumvent traditional communication channels. For example, Twitter allows users and followers access that is not filtered through gateways such as administrations or censors, allowing users to portray themselves and communicate information in a more intimate way than traditional networks and media (Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, & Greenwell, 2010). The retweet function allows for multi-way communication to the masses, and hashtags (search terms) make the message searchable and collectible. Twitter and social media allow activists from all over to participate despite physical location. Twitter can even take the message to people who cannot be physically present.

Twitter's use of hashtags is a way to locate group conversations and tag them with keywords for easy searching. This search feature helps users locate content and follow particular topics (Drell, 2014, p. 43). Easily accessed in Twitter's search bar, hashtags have enabled groups to connect with broader audiences, and hashtag campaigns have power in the social media world (Barton, 2014). Hashtags provide backchannels for discussing issues and can be used to "negotiate the experience and effects of participating in diversity initiatives" (Risam, 2018, para. 32).

Groups underrepresented in traditional forms of media have turned to Twitter to promote themselves and their messages. For example, vastly ignored in comparison to men by traditional media, women athletes have turned to Twitter as a platform to promote both themselves and their sports (Watkins & Lewis, 2016). Academics have turned to Twitter over web pages and other forms of customary academic communication for timely exchanges of research as well as professional networking (Kieslinger, 2015).

Twitter allows groups to spread their messages beyond their typical audiences. Activists, political and otherwise, use Twitter to spread their message to social media users (Burns & Eltham, 2009; Christensen, 2011; Harlow & Johnson, 2011; Poell & Darmoni, 2012). For example, Twitter gives activists a broader audience (Croeser & Highfield, 2014) and has provided the means for social activists to increase the number of supporters to their cause. The Arab Spring, #BlackLivesMatter, #OccupyWallStreet, and #MeToo are recent examples of Twitter activism. For instance, the #OccupyWallStreet hashtag allowed activists to organize the physical occupation of Wall Street as well as venues in other cities in the United States and around the world (Adbusters, 2011; Croeser & Highfield, 2014). As another example, #BlackLivesMatter moved from a little-known slogan to a "global phenomenon engaged by much broader publics" (Freelon, McIlwain, & Clark, 2016, p. 34).

A current wave of feminism focuses on equality for all persons—the formation of an equitable society, especially those who are defined as marginalized (Munro, 2013). It is in this fourth wave that collaboration and mobilization of feminism grew from the use of social media. The first notable use of social media as feminist collaborative communication was the hashtag "ILookLikeAnEngineer." Founded by engineer Isis Wenger, the campaign gave women employed in a male-dominated field the ability to express themselves not only as engineers, but

also as people. With more than 39,000 posts, the campaign gave rise to other movements within social media, such as #MeToo.

#MeToo and #TimesUp became household terms in 2017 after prominent people's sexual assaults and harassments made the news. Bennett (2017) called the hashtags "vehicles for women to share their stories" (para. 4). However, Twitter is not a panacea for activism. Some have questioned whether digital spaces are actually considered safe spaces to disclose such stories. The platform can be used for hatred, sexism, racism, and perpetuating stereotypes. For example, Amnesty International's Troll Patrol study (2018) called Twitter a toxic place for women. The study found the platform to be worse for women of color. Similarly, "Twitter's Famous Racist Problem" is the title *The Atlantic* chose for its article about how the platform had been experiencing campaigns of abuse and harassment (Meyer, 2016).

Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller (2018) determined that despite the hostile nature of Twitter, digital spaces are "relatively safer and easier space to engage in feminist discussions than in participants' offline contexts" (p. 243). As an example, in 2014, actress Emma Watson launched the #HeForShe campaign designed to explain why it is advantageous for men to advocate for women's rights also (Stache, 2015). In addition, he hashtags #YesToAllWomen (Herman, 2014) shared women's everyday experiences with sexism, and #AskHerMore encouraged reporters to pose more thought-provoking questions of actresses on the red carpets during Hollywood's award season (Alter, 2015).

Another point to make is that social movements do not exist in a bubble, and while they leverage social media, they also use legacy media coverage and other outlets (Edrington & Lee, 2018). Critics argue that activism online is simply slacktivism and does not translate to real world change. Kristofferson, White, and Peloza (2014) found that public token support, such as a social media page like or wearing a particular color of ribbon, does not lead to increased support. Others have found that online activism can translate to more than just armchair activism, and that it leads to offline action (see Cheong & Lee, 2010; Harlow, 2012). Unfortunately, although social platforms, such as Twitter, provide space for activism, they also provide platforms for harassment and counter-movements.

Self-image and self-presentation

Twitter is an especially useful tool for communicating self-image to a wide audience. Self-presentation is the process of controlling how others perceive oneself through by conveying selected traits that will produce desired outcomes (Goffman, 1959; Leary, Tchividjian, & Kraxberger, 1994; Lebel & Danylchuk, 2014). People convey information about themselves to present their desired self, and this information can be sent intentionally and unintentionally (Goffman, 1959). Hogan (2010) argued that social media presentation is a modern form of self-presentation and that social media performances are still judged by the same criteria as real-life/real-time performances. Like athletes, professors are individuals representing their teams or universities. Weller (2012) noted that faculty are encouraged to blog (academic blogging) and

use other forms of social media, to present an online identity, as part of their institution's identity as defined through their online faculty profiles/identities.

Self-presentation on Twitter can be seen as self-disclosure (as with many of the context tweets of this campaign, as well as the photos). Aultman, Williams-Johnson, and Schutz (2009) found that faculty self-disclose to humanize themselves, so students see they have real lives. When faculty self-disclosed, students did see them as more human than the narrow views they had of their teachers from classroom interaction and were more likely to interact with their teachers on a deeper level. Similarly, Metzger, Finley, Ulbrich, and McAuley (2010) found that students were more engaged in the classroom when they interacted with faculty through online relationships.

Research question

The current study examines a campaign that on the surface is challenging how the Google algorithm for an image search works and produces white and male options for pictures of professors. At its core, however, the campaign is asking bigger questions—what do professors look like on our college campuses and what can be done to raise awareness about the disconnect between perception and reality. #ILookLikeAProfessor was started to expand perceptions of what a typical professor looks like (Pritchard et al., 2015). How professors are perceived can have a direct impact on their treatment, their career path, and the respect they are accorded at their university. Research studies support the conclusion that factors such as instructor personality traits, age, gender, race, attire, and attractiveness influence student evaluations (Baslow & Silberg, 1987; Bennett, 1982; Best & Addison, 2000; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2007; Radmacher & Martin, 2001). Based on the literature, this study aims to address the following research question:

R1. What themes emerged on the publicly posted #ILookLikeAProfessor hashtag tweets during August 2015?

Methodology

Through the public #ILookLikeAProfessor hashtag Twitter campaign, researchers examined how the professoriate utilized the Twitter hashtag to share personal descriptions of professors. For this study, the unit of analysis was the individual tweet. The campaign tweets (n=1,855) from August 2015 on publicly shared Twitter accounts were analyzed using qualitative content analysis for all the #ILookLikeAProfessor hashtags. August was the first month of the campaign. It was selected because it reflected the most tweets and garnered the most attention. After securing Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, four researchers independently used open inductive coding (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) methods to mine for emergent themes. The four coders were all White women ranging in age from their 30s to their 50s, with terminal degrees in higher education. All would

self-disclose as feminists and acknowledge biases of their own plights as women who are professors. In general, the researchers were coding for how people chose to participate in the campaign. Were they sharing pictures or descriptions? What did the words or images convey? Were they sharing professional or personal information, or both? Through discussion and consensus among the four authors, themes were developed (Creswell, 1998).

Using independent reviews, researchers initially identified more than 25 themes. These were collapsed through negotiation into eight original themes. Further discussion resulted in agreeing that three major themes emerged. After a second review of the data (through a saved search file on Tweetdeck), with a focus on the visual aspects, a fourth theme of visual support was added. In the second review, one researcher reviewed the entire dataset and another reviewed 10% of the data. A second round of debate and consensus also was used to analyze findings of the visual component. Partial tweets are included in the paper for illustration but were sometimes truncated or masked to prevent from sharing identifying information.

Findings

When merging the independently-reviewed thematic methodology, four main themes eventually surfaced: (1) Discussing diversity, (2) Addressing appearance, (3) Identifying self, and (4) Using visual support, with accompanying subthemes (see Table 1).

Table 1
Themes Discovered in the #ILookLikeAProfessor Hashtag Campaign

Theme	Subtheme	Corresponding Tweets*
Discussing diversity	Naming Aggressions and Microaggressions	So sick of being called by my first name by students
	Sexism	#ILookLikeAProfessor but get “Miss/Mrs” while men get the default “Dr/Prof”
	Debunking stereotypes	The professoriate isn't just made up of “old, white men dressed in tweed”
	Misconceptions	Are you with the custodial staff? “I just love how clean they keep my office!”
	Campaign support	Check out #ilooklikeaprofessor for “real talk about stereotypes & microaggressions in academia”
Addressing appearance		“I do not feel my <clothing descriptor> are at odds with my intellect”

		"I've never had a prof wearing a <clothing descriptor> before"
Identifying self		"who is a <appearance, sexuality, ethnicity descriptor> femme sexologist affirming Queer & Black students & justice"
	Credentials	"I am a <ethnicity descriptor> ESL student, 1st Gen, and Tenured Associate Professor"
	Interests	"Eating goat stew & fufu in <location descriptor> Gotta love cross-cultural research!"
Using visual support	Empowerment/Credentials	<picture of a young woman standing in front of a statue so the statue's wings look like her own, pictures of professors in regalia or posing with their graduating students>
	Interests	<pictures with families, friends, outdoors, traveling, attending events>
	Individualism/Personality	<pictures with tattoos, streaks of color in hair, piercings, or avatar representations>

*Some tweets have been paraphrased to mask identifying information as per IRB approval

Discussing diversity

Posters who participated praised the campaign as a much-needed and long overdue platform for diversity. Several tweets advocated for inclusivity in academia: "Yes, we come in all <appearance, ethnicity descriptors>, sizes, etc." Another poster noted this campaign was "[o]ne of the many, many reasons we need a diverse and inclusive faculty." Someone else said this could help everyone feel a part of the academic system: the profession is "more diverse than stereotypes suggest, but not everyone feels welcome."

The calls for support were strong, with posters urging others to expand the reach of the hashtag. This campaign encouragement was deemed a subtheme of discussing diversity. One post called for a showing of "how diverse the professoriate is!" Another observed that the campaign was growing. "The #ILookLikeAProfessor is going nuts; so happy so many of us are speaking up!" Tweets discussed different genders, races, sexualities, and disabilities.

In the prominent subtheme finding, aggressions and microaggressions, posters clearly expressed numerous frustrations with sexism in the system and society in general. "Exactly! This is why those norms need to go away. They're classist, racist, homophobic, and transphobic!"

Another contributor pointed out the hegemonic bias in academia by noting how the hashtag was teaching him/her how many women are mistaken for students "AKA we're immature/not authoritative." A third said #ILookLikeaProfessor is about "micro aggressions, disrespect, belittlement" that takes valuable energy to address.

The sexist patterns of middle-aged White men being treated as the automatic authority and receiving the honorific titles often denied to women were numerous in the tweets. For example, one tweet said, "So sick of being called by my first name by students" who then use a formal title with male professors. Also, "Just got my 1st email of term from a student addressing me by 1st name. Do men profs get that?" Another was, "As a white man, I've walked into a classroom in jeans and a t-shirt and I've never been mistaken for a student."

Tweets and retweets to the hashtag campaign include examples of gender bias, such as the assumption that male teaching assistants were professors, and women were mistaken for students, being addressed with titles such as Ms. rather than Dr., and one particularly disturbing example of an Asian professor who was classified as "Chinese food delivery drivers" (as cited in Pritchard et al., 2015, para. 6).

Another subtheme was from posters calling on this campaign to debunk stereotypes. Tweets pointed out that Google searches for professors revealed steady images of old, White men to represent the professoriate. "What I learnt Googling images of professors: age, whiteness, beardedness, XY chromosomes & bad suit + the full package." Another poster called upon Google to notice this issue: "[O]k so all the image searches in #ILookLikeAProfessor - at what point do we ask @google why their algorithm picks only men?"

Professors who did not fit the stereotypical image were often mistaken for someone else. These misconceptions ranged from being called a student, janitor, secretary, or even a food delivery person. "Depending on hair, beard and mustache I'm either a student, custodian or just generic outsider." A different tweet asked: "#ilooklikeaprofessor so why do I get mistaken for a secretary?" The frustrations expressed by posters under this theme covered a wide range of topics from sexism to mistaken identities to stereotypical title disrespect.

Addressing appearance

Beyond the posters' demographic identifiers, a theme materialized where participants described their varied appearance choices and how those affected their visible professor status. Posters tweeted about their clothes, their shoes, their makeup, and even the streaks of color in their hair. "I rock <color descriptor> hair, Chucks, and bright lipstick to class and #ilooklikeaprofessor." One future-professor tweeted that he'll be wearing t-shirts in his classroom: "I'm not quite one yet (I'm ABD), but soon <field of study descriptor> professors will wear metal T-shirts." One woman discussed her memory of feeling out of place at a faculty event due to what she wore. "I remember attending my first <event> in a red dress and being looked at like a scarlet whore had invaded the inner sanctum." Surprisingly, there were even a few tweets about their shoe choices: "#ILookLikeAProfessor and also like someone who enjoys funky shoes."

Other participants discussed how changing their appearance to look more studious gave them mainstream acceptance and even boosted their student acceptance rates: "I started wearing glasses last yr; students called me "prof" instead of "miss" and I saw my evals jump." Tweeted another: "After I put my hair up in a bun & put on glasses, it helps. Dye my hair dark? Even better."

Identifying self

Not to be mistaken with appearance, the theme of self-identity encompasses how the posters verbally presented themselves. Some discussed other ways they saw themselves besides just as a professor. "#ILookLikeAProfessor & a bruja; a feminist, <ethnicity descriptor>, media making historian of slavery obsessed with kinship," posted one. Another post commented: "#ILookLikeAProfessor & scholar, therapist, daughter, sister, friend, colleague, sexologist, parent, runner, activist, <ethnicity descriptor>."

Many felt the need to bring up their credentials, sharing how many years they had taught, what degrees they held, their aspirations in the field. "I am young & female. I have a Ph.D. in <field of study> & have been a professor for 5 years." Another participant noted: "When I say I'm a professor people regularly ask if/when I will get a Ph.D. Um, I have one. It's required for my job."

Others shared what they teach in the classroom. "Asst prof of <field of study>. Have taught women's studies, theory and histories of rhet." Several posters discussed hobbies that go beyond their profession. "#ILookLikeAProfessor & also like someone who likes the outdoors. Here I am (right) w family climbing <location descriptor>." The self-identity theme included a diversity of interests and experiences.

Using visual support

Since the campaign is titled #ILookLikeAProfessor, the visual images accompanying tweets also were examined. There were two distinct images presented by participants. The first was the profile picture (pro-pics) attached to their Twitter account. During analysis, it was determined that these depictions tended to be fairly professional, or at least business casual for the most part. Not everyone followed that, as some of the pro-pics featured avatars or cartoons or even a shirtless picture in the case of one man. However, the majority of profile pictures were modest headshots that would be appropriate to place on the faculty website as well.

The posted pictures by participants were much less formal. Many were selfies, taken in the office or in another setting. Several showed the posters partaking in a variety of activities, including hiking, traveling, reading, posing with friends or family, eating, or drinking. The poses were casual, fun, and filled with smiles. The subthemes among the posted pictures were determined to be empowerment and credentials, interests, and individualism and personality.

The empowerment subtheme included posted pictures that showcased professors in strength-supporting poses, such as one where a woman is posed outside in front of a large statue so that

the wings of the life-sized statue look like they are emerging from her own shoulders. Other empowerment images showed professors teaching in front of a class or accepting awards. There were also pictures that were clearly meant for empowerment but also fit under the category of bolstering their credentials. These showcased professors dressed in regalia or posing with graduating students.

The posted pictures had a variety of images that depicted the professors' interests, the second subtheme. Several were outside, in different countries or on mountains or bike paths. Many showed parents holding their children. Others had group shots where they were having fun with friends or playing with their pets. Some pictures showed themselves playing guitar, reading books, or getting married. The photos painted a story of what the professors like to do in their free time.

The final theme included individualism and personality. Along with showing the professors' interests, these posted pictures also were meant to demonstrate who they are as people and how that is not separate from their positions. There were pictures of streaks of vivid color in hair, tattoos, piercings, bright lipstick, fun clothing choices, eclectic shoe choices, and poses where the person is making the rock horn signs or even the middle finger. The pictures they posted allowed viewers to catch a glimpse of who they are in their lives.

Discussion

Research has shown that at the societal level, the idea of a dominant pattern of masculinity is open to challenge (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). However, as of 2013, women still hold less than 38% of tenured positions, they are more likely to be in low-ranking, non-tenure track positions, and they get promoted less often than men (IPEDS, 2013). Knowledge of that inequity is part of what inspired the social media campaign of #ILookLikeAProfessor (Pritchard et al., 2015), as feminist hashtag campaigns can become vehicles that unite people as activists and supporters to amplify calls for gender equality and bring about changes to the masculine hegemony. In fact, Hrabowski and Maton (2009) analyze how the culture of a university can be transformed by understanding its values, assumptions, and beliefs, and said transformation comes from the perception of the campus environment by faculty and students who feel supported and respected by their university community.

The #ILookLikeaProfessor campaign fulfills the feminist theory objective of turning an eye on society through women's perspectives, instead of the masculine viewpoint purported by the Google image search. In this analysis, the tweets from the first month of the Twitter hashtag campaign #ILookLikeaProfessor provided a space to discuss diversity and allowed posters to publicly name microaggressions they have felt in academia. Tweets also described how appearance impacts, or has perceived impact, within the academy, and the posters shared facets of their identities to construct images of professors that go beyond beards, elbow patches, and aging White men.

Of the many noted frustrations, the feed shed light on sexism, such as not being addressed with a proper title, and debunked gender stereotypes and gendered misconceptions. Campaign participants, mainly women and underrepresented individuals, shared stories of their own disenfranchisement in the professoriate. This shared space is consistent with Bennett's (2017) claim that such campaign hashtags can be "vehicles for women to share their stories" (para. 4). Some experienced sexism, ageism, and racism directly. Others reminisced how their experiences were different years ago but had changed for the better as they aged (or the established accepted them). A disturbing trend discovered from the posting was when professors who did not fit the stereotypical image of a professor were often mistaken for someone else, such as students or support staff. However, there also emerged signs of solidarity or a feeling of shared experiences by the posters.

A more hopeful theme that emerged was being an advocate for inclusivity in academia. Exhibiting a newer wave of feminism, ideals shift to inclusiveness and community (Henderson & Stern, 2014). Participants asked others to share the campaign to spread its reach. In just the first month of the #ILookLikeAProfessor hashtag movement, 1,855 tweets were generated on the topic. The campaign garnered the attention of trade publications such as *Inside Higher Ed*, moving it from social media to more traditional, legacy media. Numerous blog posts and articles also were written about the campaign, urging more people to get involved to bring greater attention to the problems experienced by women and faculty of color, with an ultimate goal of paving the way for mainstream acceptance into the field for the next generation where a diverse professoriate is the sanctioned norm (Holden, 2016; Marini, 2015; Moravec, 2015; Nappi, 2015; Ortega, 2015; Ruiz, 2015; Rutherford, 2015).

The theme of appearance covered how posters shared participants' experiences of being advised to look the part of a professor and fit in with the traditional perceptions of professorship, and how they challenged these images. Makeup styles, hairstyles, shoes, T-shirts, tights, and tattoos were mentioned by campaign participants to counter the predominant image purported by Google and society. Although some posters did admit to having a tweed blazer, most seemed proud of wearing outfits that fit their personalities. Past research has indicated that persons in professional dress receive the most positive student evaluation ratings (Harris et al.,1983). For example, Lavin, Carr, and Davies (2010) found:

> Both male and female students had a higher opinion of the male model instructor when he was depicted in professional attire versus casual or business casual attire. However… dress was viewed as somewhat of a negative indication of the instructor's willingness to answer questions and listen to student opinions. (p. 60)

Campaign contributors mentioned both student reactions to dress, as well as those from colleagues on campus and at conferences. Professors who dressed more casually noted their appearance led to being mistaken for students or being a member of another profession. Women, in particular, brought up their struggles with expectations associated with what they choose to wear, such as makeup, heels, skirts, or even the color pink. However, male posters also said they received unsolicited advice on their wardrobes, even being told they need a jacket with elbow

patches. Those from the establishment may have been trying to help a colleague who did not know the unwritten dress code of the professoriate or were simply passing the same guidance they once received when they suggested academics, especially new or younger members, dress the part. Other posters admitted to changes they underwent to fit the mold, such as growing a beard or wearing glasses or darkening their hair color, in order to appear more professorial. Those who shared these experiences said the positive outcomes from conforming resulted in higher student evaluations and less mistaken identity. On the other side of the spectrum, other contributors in this category proclaimed pride in their chosen appearance and noted they had no intentions of altering their styles, even if there was an adverse reaction from students and co-workers, in the belief that acceptance begins with education being supplied from this hashtag campaign.

In the self-identity theme, posters shared their fields of studies, courses taught, research interest, years in the professoriate, outside interests, and family notes, in an effort to develop a fuller description of a professor. Like Hambrick et al. (2010) found with athletes on Twitter, the #ILookLikeAProfessor tweets moved the term professor beyond a single definition. As noted in the study, athletes on Twitter become more than "two-dimensional individuals who have lives beyond the stadium" and results suggested that "Twitter may provide fans with unique insight into the personal lives of athletes and address topics not found to the same extent in mainstream-media sources" (Hambrick et al., 2010, p. 464). By sharing their years in the academy and rank, participants may have given hope to those newer to the profession.

The visual support provided by photos and graphics included in the tweets provided a mix of front stage and backstage personas (Goffman, 1959). Some professors opted for regalia or headshot images while others chose to disclose more about their non-academic lives, such as images of them at home, with their children or on adventures.

Twitter demographics and listening

Are aging White professors on Twitter? Twitter as a medium is more predominant among those younger, non-White, and located in urban areas (Duggan, 2015), so it is a likely place for a rallying cry from those outside of Google's norm for the typical professor. Some of Google's images come from movies and pop culture, such as Professor Henry Jones Jr. from *Indiana Jones*. The campaign was a direct response to the masculine hegemony displayed on a computer screen with multiple Google searches. Many participants who conducted their research with random Google searches for different types of professors posted the image search results that demonstrated a distinct lack of diversity and creativity. Even in a specialty with more women (as one composition professor pointed out), the images retrieved from Google were still mostly male. All lamented the lack of diversity displayed from the Google algorithms, and many said their searches highlighted the necessity for this crusade and their hope that this would change future search engine yields.

Academic leaders at all levels should use these types of open forums for listening opportunities. Listening to conversations such as these online can teach leaders about shared

experiences within the academy. While tweeters may not have been from their campuses, the pervasiveness of shared experiences of sexism, ageism, and racism must be addressed at all levels of the academy. With the use of this hashtag, people can unite behind the goal of gender equality. A hashtag-based call to action, when executed correctly, can potentially result in social changes and almost certainly results in increased conversation about a particular topic. In 2018, after only a two-day Twitter firestorm about RateMyProfessor.com's hotness rating, the company announced it would abandon the chili pepper metric (Flaherty, 2018).

When higher education maintains practices that systemize men's dominance over women or maintains the White race as the norm, the #ILookLikeAProfessor movement allows professionals to point out the explicit and subtle biases they face as a scholar. Studies have shown these types of bias can even influence the way students evaluate professors, affecting the main assessment tool utilized by administrators to measure their effectiveness (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2007).

One limitation of this study is the timeframe. In an effort to limit the number of tweets for analysis, only the first month of the campaign was coded. The hashtag is still being used but has lost steam since the initial push (TAGS Searchable, n.d.). In 2019, a handful of tweets have used #ILookLikeAProfessor each month. While the authors believe even small texts provide enough context for analysis, interviews with participants might elucidate motivations for participation and any benefits or backlash to the movement for individuals or campuses.

Future research and conclusions

Through an analysis of the public Twitter conversation #ILookLikeAProfessor, researchers outlined how participants tweeted their verbal and visual contributions to the online campaign. Further researcher could determine if and how the hashtag campaign moved beyond a simple call for diversity on Google's image bank of professors. Trend studies could track changes in the visual offerings for searches. The effect and impact of the campaign and its reach needs to be measured. While Twitter is a handy tool for spreading a message and crowdsourcing with participants, the longer-term impact of social media activism is ripe for study. For example, a future study could examine whether Google showcases a broader representation when searching for the term professor.

How campaign goals are set or evolve is another area for investigation. The tweet ending the RateMyProfessor.com chili pepper rating system used an @ mention to RateMyProfessor's Twitter account and the #TimesUp hashtag. The ask was well defined—remove the chili pepper—and directed to one specific company. When the tweet went viral, the company addressed the situation and acquiesced and then received positive feedback for its responsiveness. #ILookLikeAProfessor lacked that kind of actionable objective or specific ask. It simply asked for professors to showcase how the professoriate really looks. Google officials may have heard the call, but there was no official response. Therefore, a future study could compare other campaigns involving organizational response with those that rely only on grassroots action.

Individual benefits from participating in campaigns such as #ILookLikeAnEngineer and #ILookLikeAProfessor also may offer some insight into individual effects. Future engineers or professors from underrepresented groups might find encouragement and motivation to persist. Research should trace how or if campaigns of this type translate to changes on campuses. Some research shows how social media campaigns can translate to real-world action (Cheong & Lee, 2010; Kang, 2012; Samuels, 2011). Continued research also should examine the efficacy of hashtag campaigns and whether they contribute to lasting social change.

One participant called for more intersectionality in the campaign "Would love to see more people of color using the #ILookLikeAProfessor. I know you all are out there! Let's get intersectional." These researchers found it difficult to code for participant age, race and ethnicity, based only on profile pictures and write-ups. This line of inquiry was abandoned, but future research could investigate the intersectionality of such a campaign.

Contending with the countless Google image searches that neglected to show women and people of color among the professoriate, the #ILookLikeAProfessor campaign has heightened the "solidarity emerging across so many dimensions of difference to recognize that many inequalities persist in the ivory tower and that we need to fight for each other, not just ourselves" (Ruiz, 2015, para. 10). With this public posting of solidarity, patrons of the #ILookLikeAProfessor hashtag have begun a much larger conversation of battling differing stereotypes, explicit and subtle biases, and cultural assumptions about race, age, gender, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation of a college professor. In a candid fashion, posters were able to openly express their viewpoints on self-image to a wide audience.

With this hashtag campaign, defying the stereotypical professor identity, the tweets depicted and coded for this study showed a much larger group effort to debunk the erroneous cliché of what a college professor should be in terms of ethnicity, race, gender, and wardrobe selection. Through this open, publicly-shared platform, posters were able to communicate and spread the campaign's message beyond one's typical audience. Twitter is a searchable and collectible medium where one can witness multi-way communication linkages among the masses.

This campaign is a legacy marker representing the professoriate's metamorphosis from out-of-date perceptions and allows faculty to pinpoint overt and subtle biases they face as scholars. As a hashtag campaign, #ILookLikeAProfessor was a short, but robust, conduit for discussion to raise awareness and garner supporters for gender equality and change to the academy. Although this project is exploratory, it adds to the discussion of feminist hashtag campaigns and suggests the next phase of measuring effectiveness. Twitter campaigns have been attributed as success factors in making change, but can a hashtag campaign move a Google algorithm to shift an age-old paradigm of the bearded white professor in a tweed jacket?

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