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Special thanks to our reviewers

To our reviewers for the December 2020 issue, your expertise and hard work have made our journal's success possible. Especially during these challenging times, we would like to take this opportunity to extend a special thanks to the reviewers who contributed to this issue:

Shelley Aylesworth-Spink, Pam Bourland-Davis, Luke Capizzo, Kelly Chernin, Myoung-Gi Chon, Kristin Demetrious, Jasper Fessmann, Corey Hickerson, Myleea Hill, Christie Kleinmann, Brooke McKeever, Matt Ragas, Amber Smallwood, Ashli Stokes, Natalie Tindall, Brenda Wrigley

Editor's Essay

Brigitta R. Brunner

Auburn University

Deepak Chopra (@DeepakChopra) tweeted:

> "All great changes are preceded by chaos. The disruption we see in the world is the prelude to emergence. Lets [*sic*] all commit to a more peaceful just sustainable healthier and happier world. We must become what we wish to see by transcending our limited tribal identities." (Chopra, 2018)

I believe the above quote from Deepak Chopra sums up 2020 quite well. Change can be scary. Change can bring chaos. Change can offer both bad and good. However, change is necessary for evolution.

Looking back on this year, we can all see how COVID-19 has changed our lives. Many businesses and schools were closed in the spring. Many businesses have, unfortunately, closed forever. People have lost their livelihoods and homes. Health systems and healthcare providers have been pushed to their breaking points. Our holiday season will look very different this year. And most sorrowfully, over 1.6 million lives worldwide have been cut short by this virus (Worldometer, 2020).

Some organizations have been able to adapt. Online shopping, contact-free grocery pickup/delivery, virtual school, and Zoom calls most easily come to mind. Some of us found new interests such as baking and art and long walks—things our busy lives didn't always allow us to do. Others found new appreciation for teachers and their abilities to work with and inspire children to learn. We also took time to remember and think about some new heroes—those on the front lines and those who work in healthcare. With the approvals for the vaccines developed by Pfizer and Moderna going forward and the start of the vaccines' distributions, perhaps we can

find ways to thrive in what's being called a new normal. Perhaps we can find ways to balance both the schedules we need to keep and the schedules we want to keep, thus allowing for more happiness, downtime, and the ability to cultivate our interests.

This summer the United States saw much unrest following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, MN. Floyd was being arrested for allegedly passing off a counterfeit $20 bill at a store (Hill et al., 2020). A police officer knelt on Floyd's neck for what is reported to have been more than 7 minutes leaving Floyd unable to breathe (Hill et al., 2020). As protestors took to the streets to demand justice and end police brutality, especially brutality toward African Americans, we heard more about other cases of police brutality such as the deaths of Breanna Taylor, Elijah McClain, and Rayshard Brooks. We also were reminded of the death of Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old boy killed by a police officer in Cleveland, OH, while he was carrying and playing with a toy gun outside a city recreation center (Justice, 2020). Sadly, there are too many other cases with similar outcomes to share in this forum.

From this social movement, many necessary, difficult, and uncomfortable conversations were had. Activists were born. People took to joining protests in support of the BLM movement. Others sent monetary support to causes and to HBCUs. Still others thought deeply about such concepts as privilege, what changes they could make in their own lives, and ways to make life in American more equitable.

Taylor's mother, Tamika Palmer, wrote a letter to President-elect Biden in mid-December 2020. The letter, which ran as a full-page ad in *The Washington Post*, asks Biden to remember his promises to hold police accountable for their actions and for policy changes once he is sworn into office (Heyward & Willingham, 2020). She said, "We need your actions to show that you are different than those who pay lip-service to our losses while doing nothing to show that our loved ones' lives mattered" (quoted in Heyward & Willingham, 2020, para.10). Although the outcomes of this social movement are still unknown, there is hope that important changes will be made in the near future.

Another important story this year was the 2020 election in the United States. The U.S. public is perhaps at its most divided at this point in time (Dimock & Wike, 2020). People are sharply divided on issues such as the economy, climate change, racial justice, international involvement, response to the COVID-19 crisis, and many other issues (Dimock & Wike, 2020). The United States is not alone in these divisions as some European nations are also dealing with polarized factions—most notably, Brexit. However, it seems the U.S. two-party system, social media, partisan media, and cultural differences have made these divisions even more significant (Dimock & Wike, 2020).

Nevertheless, there is hope for refocusing on core values. According to research conducted by the Pew Research Center in September 2020, 89% of Biden supporters and 86% of Trump supporters said their candidate should focus on the needs of all Americans, even if that meant disappointing some of the candidate's supporters (Dimock & Wilk, 2020). Although we are still more than a month away from President-elect Biden's inauguration, there is optimism and anticipation for shifts that will bring people back together. Biden, in his November 7, 2020,

acceptance speech, said, "I pledge to be a president who seeks not to divide, but unify, who doesn't see red states and blue states, only sees the United States" (as quoted in Phillips, 2020, para. 5). Therefore, we may be on the cusp of an important shift—one that will bring healing, growth, and opportunity.

Perhaps the one constant of 2020 has been knowing that despite chaos and change, public interest communications is an area of stability on which we can count for creating positive change that benefits society. Public interest communicators develop effective messaging to build relationships among organizations, policymakers, media, and constituents to achieve goals of social change. Public interest communicators use facts and science to provide truth and uphold ethics. Public interest communicators use storytelling to engage constituents and compel them to care about societal concerns. This issue's manuscripts exemplify these examples of public interest communicators at work and center on making change during times of crisis.

Melissa Adams and Melissa Johnson's manuscript, "Acculturation, pluralism and digital social advocacy in nonprofit strategic communication," examines how nonprofits doing soft advocacy work are struggling with issues such as immigration policy, the pandemic, social media conversations, and partisan media while working to effect change. "Impression management after image-threatening events: A case study of JUUL's online messaging," written by Nicholas Eng, speaks to the ethics of changing message strategies and impression management tactics when faced with negative publicity and potentially image-threatening events. Kaitlin Fitzgerald, Melanie Green, and Elaine Paravati's piece, "Restorative narratives: Using narrative trajectory for prosocial outcomes," investigates the use of restorative narratives in storytelling and its advantages for storytelling in times of change and crisis. Finally, we also offer our first book review in this issue. Jasper Fessmann's review of Caty Borum Chattoo's latest book, *Story Movements: How Documentaries Empower People and Inspire Social Change*, looks at the power of documentary films to tell stories of social change and the pursuit of truth.

Wishing all of you a happy, safe, and healthy holiday season and new year.

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Acculturation, Pluralism, and Digital Social Advocacy in Nonprofit Strategic Communications

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Introduction

Organizations that serve Latinx and Hispanic[1] populations in the United States are performing their work in a tense political environment due to the rhetoric of the Trump administration's

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[1] The authors recognize that terms "Latinx," "Hispanic," and "Latina/o" are not interchangeable to those who self-identify with one, and diverse groups representing many ethnicities, nationalities, and cultural backgrounds make up these groups. However, respondents used both terms to describe the populations their organizations serve. For this study, the single term Latinx is used to describe the populations served by the nonprofit organizations in the sample to streamline the reading experience and maintain clarity.

crisis at the border immigration stance. Because of changes in U.S. immigration policies under the Obama administration, by 2013 the United States was deporting more than nine times the number of undocumented immigrants than it did 20 years previously during the height of Latin American migration ("The Great Expulsion," 2014). The Trump administration has promised to increase the number of deportations and has begun construction of a restraining wall along the U.S.-Mexico border (Miroff & Blanco, 2020; Shear & Nixon, 2017). Immigration advocates and researchers have argued that increased deportation of long-term U.S. resident undocumented workers will only serve to destabilize immigrant populations, disrupt U.S. families, and undermine the industries relying on immigrant labor (Lazare, 2017; Shear & Nixon, 2017; Waxmann, 2017). Due to the aging U.S. population and the lowest birthrate in 32 years (Hamilton et al., 2019), immigration shortfalls also will jeopardize the ability to grow the U.S. economy with young workers and fund Social Security in the future, harming the nation's elderly (Reznick et al., 2007).

Although immigration decelerated further in the years following the 2008 recession, some Latinx nonprofits have reported the need to expand their missions and services due to local cuts in funding (Stepler, 2016; Waxmann, 2017). It is also important to note that 75% of immigrants are in the United States legally and 44% are considered naturalized citizens as of 2017 (Lopez et al., 2017). Additionally, according to the Urban Institute, the U.S. nonprofit sector is increasing largely due to charitable giving, which recovered after the recession (McKeever, 2015). The U.S. Internal Revenue Service reported an increase of 2.8 percent in nonprofit registrations from 2003 to 2013, and this sector contributed an estimated $905.9 billion to the U.S. economy in 2013 alone (McKeever, 2015). Despite the recovery in charitable giving and slowing immigration, nonprofits serving Latinx communities face new challenges arising from shifting demographics as well as changes to U.S. immigration policy—especially increased deportation and forced expulsion (Shear & Nixon, 2017; Waxmann, 2017).

Since these shifts in immigration policy, instances of negative stereotypes directed toward immigrants and organizations that serve them have been reported in news media and by researchers. The Trump administration has been described as promoting a "politics of fear" through their choice of language and negative descriptions of immigrants (Demata, 2017, p. 1), which often reinforce racial stereotypes of Latinx people in general (Heuman & González, 2018). In addition, subsequent news coverage linking undocumented immigrants with criminal activity has been shown to bias audiences toward Latinxs presented as suspects whose "menacing picture" Trump has used to depict individuals crossing the U.S.-Mexico border (Figueroa-Caballero et al., 2019, p. 46).

Since digital platforms are essential communication channels for resource-strapped nonprofits, are they strategically choosing visuals to both promote the interests of the groups they serve and rebut negative stereotypes used in the immigration political debate? This study seeks to explore this issue from a strategic communication standpoint. The project looks at the key role that websites play in communication efforts of nonprofit organizations serving Latinx communities in the United States. Results from interviews describe the use of advocacy, cultural

pluralism, and empowerment-themed messages and images, as well as the use of such messages as part of these organization's digital social advocacy efforts. Social media are also considered as these nonprofits formulate strategic communications based on the populations they are trying to reach, the messages they are sharing, and their organizational goals per best practices of public relations (Grunig et al., 2006).

Drawing from Hon's (2015) model of digital social advocacy and Kim's notions of acculturation as well the findings of a recent study examining acculturation, pluralism, and resistance visuals on U.S.-based nonprofit websites (Adams & Johnson, 2019), this research project explores how positive cultural prototypes depicting empowerment and advocacy messages are being used as activist counterpoints to perceived immigrant threats. The purpose of this study was to examine nonprofit communication by U.S. Latinx organizations in terms of digital social advocacy and consider how these resource-limited communicators might be leveraging digital media affordances to mobilize their publics and create social change similar to the way grassroots activists do.

Literature review

New media and immigration reform

Since the 2016 U.S. presidential election, migrants and immigration reform have been the focus of national debate as politicians have used terms such as "bad hombres," and migrants have been framed as criminals or animals as part of that discourse (Ogan et al., 2018, p. 358). Twitter has become the key news channel for the Trump administration as the President's influence and media coverage have shaped this negative framing of immigrants in general and particularly of those from Mexico as dangerous and a threat to American society (Figueroa-Caballero et al., 2019; Ogan et al., 2018; Pérez-Curiel & Limón-Naharro, 2019). These discursive tactics framing Mexican immigrants have helped to spread negative stereotypes through mainstream news media and online social media channels.

The political rhetoric has led to cognitive and behavioral effects. Such negative stereotypes of undocumented immigrants have been shown to impact audience perceptions and fuel instances of hate crimes, school bullying (including college), and influence prison sentencing (Ramírez-Plascensia, 2019; Schubert, 2017) as well as mainstream support for the building of a "great and beautiful" wall to supposedly quell the influx of these dangerous "crooks" (Demata, 2017, p. 274, 281) and criminals to the United States. The 2019 Walmart shooting in El Paso, TX, is another example, with *The Washington Post* reporting that the perpetrator wanted to halt an "Hispanic invasion" from Mexico (Rosenwald et al., 2019, para. 2).

This wave of anti-immigrant discourse spreading online as well as through traditional news media channels presents challenges to both individuals and to organizations serving and

representing immigrant populations in the United States, gesturing to the importance of this research.

Acculturation, pluralism, and intercultural identity

One consideration for nonprofit organizations serving these U.S. Latinx residents is acculturation. Acculturation is the process of adapting to a different culture (Berry, 1997). Unlike assimilation, which assumes rejection of one's old culture in favor of the new, acculturation is defined as adjusting to the adoptive culture while retaining elements of one's original culture (Berry, 1997). This psychological concept is used differently by sociologists, anthropologists, and others, who employ it to describe change at the group level. A plural society, according to Berry (1997), is a diverse one where people with a variety of cultural backgrounds reside. Although some cultural groups may completely assimilate to survive, others resist succumbing completely to host values and maintain some original values, thus continuing the host nation's diverse profile (Berry, 1997).

Communication scholars have documented the centrality of communication in the acculturation process (Croucher & Kramer, 2017; Kim, 2001). For example, Kim paired communication concepts with the notion of adaptation or acculturation. Part of Kim's (2001) comprehensive theory of immigrant adaptation differentiates between ethnic and mainstream communication channels in a host society, focusing on ethnic and mainstream interpersonal communication, plus ethnic and mainstream news media use. Research has suggested that over-reliance on ethnic communication channels impedes overall acculturation to the new society (Cheah et al., 2011; Kim & Kim, 2016). For example, acculturation levels of primarily mainstream news users are typically higher than those of immigrants who rely on ethnic news media and ethnic interpersonal communication (Kim, 2001). However, Kim's model did not specifically address how ethnic organizations use digital media, the concern of this study. Nevertheless, important elements of Kim's theory for this research were the variables in the host society that affect successful acculturation. These included the overall ethnic group's strength (size of the demographic), the host society's receptivity to immigrants, and the host society's conformity pressure (Kim, 2001). As noted earlier, U.S. host receptivity has worsened due to visible racist political rhetoric.

Much of the prior communication research about acculturation has dealt with Latinx print and traditional mass media (De La Cruz, 2017) or interpersonal communication among Latinx populations (McKay-Semmler & Kim, 2014), honing in on the perspectives of individuals. This study takes a different direction by focusing on Latinx organizations' communication. Considering this, a 2019 study of the visual communication of 141 nonprofit websites of organizations serving U.S. Latinx populations found that most websites used culturally symbolic images and photos of people engaged in acculturation activities such as education. They also depicted families or civic rights such as voting (Adams & Johnson, 2019). Fewer sites included in the study featured visuals portraying resistance to U.S. authority and regulation such as

protests or marching. Only two websites had visuals showing "immigrant threat" activities such as illegal border crossing (Adams & Johnson, 2019, p. 2). Therefore, these nonprofits seem to be making strategic decisions to use visual communication that depicts positive prototypes of their clients and members to connect with mainstream audiences and to dispel negative stereotypes proliferating online (Adams & Johnson, 2019). This literature led to the first two research questions:

RQ1: Are ethnic nonprofits that serve Latinx groups using depictions of acculturation, pluralism, and/or advocacy to strategically communicate their missions and services on their websites?

RQ2: What target audiences do ethnic organizations seek to engage with their website and social media channels?

The next section delves into the literature on counterstereotypes.

Counterstereotypes and positive stereotypes

Stereotypes are "collective abstractions of persons or groups asserting that members lack individuality and conform to a pattern or type" (Johnson, 1999, p. 417). Research has described the persistence of Latinx media stereotypes, from early images in films and newsreels (e.g., Berg, 2002; Johnson, 1999) to contemporary stereotypes in traditional media and digital media (Guo & Harlow, 2014; Sui & Paul, 2017). In social cognition research, stereotypes are considered the "default" process (Goclowska et al., 2012, p. 226) requiring the least mental effort.

Counterstereotypes are positive portrayals of members of cultural groups that divert from traditional oversimplified representations. Although recent work has been conducted on counterstereotypical African American images in blogs and on websites (Johnson & Pettiway, 2017; Quinlan et al., 2012), there are fewer studies about Latinx digital counterstereotypes.

Traditional news media effects studies have examined the impact of stereotypes and counterstereotypes on ethnic and White media consumers. Research has supported the negative individual and societal effects—cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral—of stereotypes such as adverse perceptions of other racial or ethnic groups (Dixon & Azocar, 2007) or negative repercussions on public policy (Fujioka, 2005). However, Mastro and Tukachinsky (2011) found that positive news media prototypes could improve White study participants' perceptions of Latinx groups. Ramasubramanian (2007) observed that counterstereotypes could reduce prejudice, as did Goldman (2012). In another study on cognitive effects, researchers determined that counterstereotypes could lead to more cognitive flexibility and creative thinking, with possible ramifications for intergroup communication (Goclowska et al., 2012). Regarding policies, Ramasubramanian (2011) found that exposure to counterstereotypes could aid support for affirmative action.

Although prevailing concerns have been about the effects of negative minority portrayals on White citizens, research has also addressed the impacts of these portrayals on the cultural groups themselves. Stereotype effects on those who identify as Latinx have been found to differ depending on level of identity (Erba, 2018) and whether the stereotypes were negative or positive (Tukachinsky et al., 2017). For example, positive images (counterstereotypes) of Latinx/as were associated with positive attitudes toward their cultural group among Latinx viewers, and negative images correlated with negative views of their ethnic group (Tukachinsky et al., 2017). Similarly, other studies found that consumption of ethnic news was more likely to result in positive self-esteem (Mora & Kang, 2016; Ramasubramanian, 2017). Based on this literature, the third research question addressed in this study was:

RQ3: Are ethnic nonprofits serving Latinx groups strategically choosing visuals to promote positive prototypes?

Digital social advocacy

In an article examining the grassroots activism of the Justice for Trayvon Martin campaign, Hon (2015) proposed a model of digital social advocacy for public relations to understand how decentralized groups with few or no resources might leverage the power of digital media networks to mobilize and gain mainstream awareness. Hon's (2015) model depicted the processes and factors that allow activists to spread messages on social media at an unprecedented higher speed and broader scale based on power law dynamics. She argued that the low transaction costs of digital activism, coupled with the affordances of networked digital technologies, or "supersizing effects," (Earl and Kimport, as cited in Hon, 2015, p. 300) of social media (such as increased speed and reach), can be very effective tools in the micromobilization of individuals and the activation of latent publics. Digital social advocacy takes into account the effects and affordances of digital media ecosystems (news, Internet, web, social, and mobile) as a set of variables contributing to activist campaigns. Hon (2015) noted that these supersizing effects or low transaction costs of digital participation do not determine behavior or campaign outcomes. However, they are crucial to understanding how resource-poor or small activist publics are using social media to share messages, gain supporters, and make their voices heard (Hon, 2015).

Hon applied her model of digital social advocacy to the Million Hoodies movement in a 2016 case study to provide evidence for its efficacy. Noting specific examples of supersizing effects (timeline graphic illustrating the speed and reach of the movement) and leveraged digital affordances (such as the ability to connect many-to-many and thus bypass macro-level media gatekeepers when organizing), Hon (2016b) argued that the framework of digital social advocacy explicates how decentralized social movements use social media platforms to unite individuals based on a common cause and grow widespread support. In addition, Hon's (2016a) case study illustrates that digital affordances of social media support easy division and sharing of labor

(such as volunteer outreach) and the ability to create and sustain a group sense of solidarity based on a shared common cause. Digital social advocacy (as a novel form of public relations) therefore expands the ability of individuals outside of formal organizations to come together and loose coalitions to support a common cause (Hon, 2015, 2016a, 2016b). The Million Hoodies case demonstrates that coalitions using the soft power of volunteer activists can create social change without physical resources by leveraging digital media (Hon, 2016b).

Since 2015, Hon's model of digital social advocacy has provided a framework for exploration for several studies, including a big data study investigating the practice of activist cluster tweeting during the Charlotte, NC, protests following the shooting of Keith Lamont Scott in September 2016 (Gallicano et al., 2017). Digital social advocacy also has been used as a framework to examine the communicative actions and functions of the official BLM Twitter account (Edrington & Lee, 2018) and proposed for application in public diplomacy contexts as a way to understand or predict activist behavior (Fitzpatrick, 2017). Most recently, the model helped form the foundation for a study of "Instant Activism" where the types of low-cost participatory behaviors that Hon described were manipulated to create support for "hoax" grassroots activism (Park & Rim, 2020, p. 1). Additionally, researchers have expanded the model's original conception of strategies and tactics to account for the back-and-forth messages exchanged between activists and their targets, recognizing that these interactions rhetorically shape messages (Stokes & Atkins-Sayre, 2018).

One factor to consider in any study of nonprofit communication is that the organizations typically lack the resources of corporate, government, educational, or faith-based organizations. Smaller, community-based nonprofits especially have less access to capital for their strategic communication efforts and quite often do not have dedicated full-time staff to support their campaigns and outreach efforts. Shortfalls in dedicated staff and other resources have been shown to negatively impact campaign efficacy (Kiwanuka-Tondo et al., 2009). Therefore, nonprofits lacking resources to promote their communication campaigns or support them with dedicated staff might look to how grassroots activists are tapping the low transaction costs and supersizing effects of digital platforms to effectively reach their various publics and mobilize support for organizational initiatives and advocacy efforts.

In addition, studies of activist media have noted that groups often do not fully use their websites to communicate their perspectives on issues and thus frame their arguments for audiences (Zoch et al., 2008) or leverage social media network influence to more politically activate U.S. Latinx and Hispanic audiences (Velasquez & Quenette, 2018). When grassroots activists do leverage social media fully through use of provocative memes or visuals (such as in the case of the Saturday Chores counterprotest[2]), they are able to achieve widespread recognition of their action and gain significant social and financial support (Adams, 2018). Therefore, there

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[2] The Saturday Chores counterprotest used photos of the members posed with signs bearing witty or absurd messages such as "Weird Hobby" or "Women's Rights Activist" juxtaposed with those of anti-abortion protestors' signs to gain attention on social media in 2014. Originally shared for friends and family consumption, due to the founding members public profiles, their messages (or memes) went viral resulting in the formation of a formal activist group and organized action in late 2014 and throughout 2015.

is an opportunity for nonprofits serving these audiences to use visuals in digital communication channels to promote positive ethnic prototypes and creatively advocate for social issues in the best interests of the groups they serve. Thus, the digital social advocacy literature is the foundation for the last research question:

RQ4: Are ethnic nonprofits serving Latinxs groups using their websites or social media to engage in digital social advocacy?

Method

Sampling

A sampling frame of Latinx-serving nonprofit organizations was developed from a list extracted from Guidestar.com—a database of nonprofit organizations. As much of the research about U.S. Latinx populations has been conducted in the Southwest where Latinx populations are sizeable and sometimes demographic majorities, researchers were interested in investigating communication in environments where ethnic group strength was not as robust. In North Carolina, Latinxs comprise 9.1% of the state's 10 million residents. In Wisconsin, they make up 6.6% of the state's 5.8 million residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). This compares to the U.S. population overall where Hispanics are 18.1%, the largest minority group. Guidestar.com searches conducted for the keywords "Hispanic," "Latino," and "Latinx" for each state were collected and sorted by NTEE code (National Tax-Exempt Entity), state, and revenues. Then, organizations fitting certain criteria were selected (501(c)3, 100K+ revenue, located in North Carolina or Wisconsin, and a service mission targeting U.S.-based Latinx populations). These choices were based on research reinforcing that organizational resources are key factors in successful communication implementation (Kiwanuka-Tondo et al., 2009). A total of 54 organizations fitting these criteria constituted the final sampling frame. Responding to the call from Downes (2017), our goal was to interview those who implemented the organizational communications programs including those aimed at social and cultural changes. Therefore, a variety of organizations were represented with service missions ranging from education and senior support services to those with missions focused on professional networking and immigrant rights.

Following IRB review and approval, individuals listed on the sampling frame organization websites serving as a communication professional, public relations official, or other role tied to the promotion of the organization using their online platforms (marketing director, for example) were contacted via email and direct phone call to participate in the study. If prospective participants did not respond to the initial emails within a week, direct phone calls were made to solicit participation. All 54 organizations fitting the study criteria were contacted during a two-

month period of June and July 2019 for participation in the study with 14 individuals from a total of 13 organizations completing in-depth interviews.

As this study is exploratory in nature (designed to confirm and identify the strategies and goals driving the digital communications and advocacy efforts of these particular organizations), generalizability was not the priority. Instead, this study offers insight into the strategic communication practices and challenges facing these ethnic nonprofits in the current social and political climate and provides evidence for the development of future formal research questions on the topics of digital social advocacy communication strategies.

Procedures

The two primary researchers and one research assistant conducted in-depth structured interviews for this study. Participants were interviewed in-person and via phone dependent upon the manner most convenient for them, and all interviews were digitally recorded for later transcription. Interviews ranged from 12 to 40 minutes and the average length was 23 minutes. This approach resulted in just over five hours total of audio interview data. Interviewers followed a 12-question interview protocol (see Appendix) inquiring about the strategy, content choices, and perceptions of each organization's website and social media content as well as digital social advocacy efforts.

The questions drew from the authors' previous study of Latinx nonprofit visual communication for the acculturation concept (Adams & Johnson, 2019). The strategic use prompts about information/management, public relations, and advocacy were based on literature describing the various uses in public relations for organizational websites and social media (Connolly-Ahern & Broadway, 2001; Curtis et al., 2010; Hon, 2015, 2016a, 2016b; Sommerfeldt et al., 2012). The interviews resulted in 93 pages of transcribed data for hand-coded analysis by the researchers.

After transcription, the interviews were initially analyzed following a codesheet developed by the researchers based on the theoretical constructs that formed the foundation for the study. A pretest of the codesheet was conducted following training on a randomly chosen number of cases from the sample. Research instrument validity was determined by constant comparison checks between cases during the initial data collection period and by performing member checks with study participants following interviews (via follow-up emails). Results satisfied the researchers that the instrument was valid for the concepts addressed in the study. Therefore, researchers proceeded to double-code the rest of the sample.

Following best practices of in-depth interview research as described by Bernard et al. (2017), coders performed several sessions of close reading of each transcript to develop a rich understanding of the motivations, intentions, and strategic decisions as reported by each subject and to understand the various organizational functions being performed via each media channel. As this study is qualitative and exploratory, transcripts were analyzed for content and only frequencies were captured by category. Each interview transcript was analyzed by both

researchers, and results of responses, quotes, and notes for contextual understanding were tabulated.

Reliability

The calculation of reliability is important to qualitative research, including in-depth interviews where researcher interpretations of meaning may vary based on personal worldview or readings (Bernard et al., 2017). However, as interviews are reflexive in nature, some researchers caution about using statistical methods to calculate reliability for studies with smaller samples where human interaction is a factor and simple agreement should suffice (Braun & Clark, 2006; Morse, 1997).

Considering this, after final coding, researchers calculated simple agreement of the main themes based on the double-coding of data. Due to the small number of cases studied (14), no statistical tests of agreement were conducted. Reliability was 100% agreement for all but one category (item three on the interview protocol, strategic use of website), which was 92.9%. As these reliability measures were above the generally accepted level of agreement for qualitative interview research, all coded results were included in the final analysis.

Results

Study results indicated that these nonprofit communicators were leveraging digital platforms to perform the managerial function of information management and also to promote positive cultural prototypes and to advocate for social change. Although the extent to which each organization practiced advocacy differs (often based on organizational mission and individual definitions of advocacy), all but one organization reported engaging in such activities as part of their day-to-day operations.

Strategic uses of websites and social media

Participants were asked about how they used their websites and social media channels to communicate with their various audiences. Responses to these questions were categorized as either "Information management," "Public Relations," or "Advocacy" as functions that the media performed for the organization. For the purposes of this study, "Information management" was defined as the dissemination of information by an organization for the purpose of one-way information sharing and "Public Relations" as the use of the website or social media to generate news coverage and build community with external publics (Lovejoy & Saxon, 2012; Su et al., 2017; Yeon et al., 2007). "Advocacy" was defined as the posting or sending of messages designed to mobilize constituents (Hon, 2015; Park & Rim, 2020; Reber & Kim, 2006; Sommerfeldt et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2001).

All but one of the interview subjects reported that their organizations used their websites for information management, and five noted that they also used their sites to support advocacy efforts as part of their missions. Only two organizations said that they used their website for public relations activities such as media relations (posting media releases for example). When asked about their use of social media versus their website, all the participants reported that they used social media for information management—sending quick messages to clients or members or to promote events. As social media are more immediate than updating a website, most participants reported using social media for all time-sensitive communication. One organization also noted that it employed social media for media relations, and five organizations used their social media channels for social advocacy efforts.

Acculturation, public relations and empowerment

Next, respondents were asked to describe the type of visuals they used to depict the work of the organization, why they chose them, how audiences perceived the organization based on the website, and to describe their site's primary audiences. Responses were categorized following Kim's (2001, 2006) notions of acculturation as well as digital social advocacy efforts as described in recent scholarship (Hon, 2015, 2016a, 2016b).

Addressing *RQ1*

Results showed that the nonprofit organizations strategically chose images depicting acculturation activities such as education (graduates with diplomas in hand or students in classrooms), work (such as a truck driver or people in professional settings), and leadership (awards or honors). This finding aligns with many of the service missions of the organizations; therefore, it is not surprising. However, it confirms that these organizations were aware of the social climate and used their websites strategically. Twelve of the 14 organizations reported using such images and content to both promote their services and show the organization's many contributions to the community as well as depict clients as valuable members of that community. Additionally, two organizations reported choosing images and content depicting advocacy (rallies, protest marches) as part of their mission. One organization also reported deliberate use of images to promote pluralism, and another noted that it also chose visuals to communicate its Ignatian social mission (a Catholic nonprofit).

Additionally, when asked about how they felt audiences perceived their organization as portrayed on their websites, 10 respondents said that visitors would first observe the work they do in the community and the services they offer (acculturation), while three respondents also noted that visitors would view their empowerment efforts (promoting diversity, supporting Latinx culture). Two organizations also said that website visitors also would see their advocacy efforts. One respondent (an arts organization staffer) explained further, arguing that visitors perceived their organization (by visiting their website) as "a space that celebrates the richness and diversity within the Latinx community."

Several respondents noted that they felt obligated to communicate diversity from their organizational perspective in different ways (and that it was part of their job to do so). As one respondent offered, "Even though we are Latino and a Latino organization, we have a lot of support from White and Black people. So, we like to show that we are not just Latinos, but also others are interested and support the Latino community." In summary, results show that these communicators strategically chose images and photos carefully to illustrate the diversity of their organizations and their stakeholders as well as to depict the benefit their organizations provided to their local communities.

Addressing *RQ2*

As reported previously, all study respondents said that they used each media channel differently—social media for immediate communication regarding events (fundraisers or rallies for example) versus using the website as more of a static homepage depicting basic organizational information.

Twelve interview respondents said that donors were the primary target audiences for their websites and they developed content accordingly. Volunteers and clients/service members were reported as the next largest audience, and employers and corporate partners also were noted as important website visitors.

However, several respondents took pains to point out that the website was largely for mainstream or "Anglo" audiences (donors, volunteers, and often, the news media), whereas their social media were the preferred channel for their clients or service recipients. Use of social media—especially private Facebook groups—to share information on mobilization, voting, or changes in legislation was reported as one way these organizations participated in digital social advocacy.

As one respondent explained, the practice of using private communication allowed them to protect themselves and their clients: "We know the political climate right now." [This] county "is one of the most conservative counties in Wisconsin." Therefore, these nonprofit communicators strategically used their organizational websites as the public face of their organizations and as the primary way they attracted prospective donors, while leveraging social media to engage their clients and members—often via private groups. This result speaks to both the professionalism of the communicators as strategists and to their need to keep some advocacy efforts and messages restricted to their clients and members—and out of view of the general public.

Positive prototypes and counterstereotypes

Addressing *RQ3*

Respondents were asked about the types of images employed to depict their target audiences, board members, or volunteers. Responses to the open-ended question were coded broadly as "Stock photos" and "Authentic representation" with any information offered on ethnicity,

diversity, or other identity factors noted. Any responses that did not fit these two categories were coded as "Other," and notes were made as to the intention and activities. However, responses documenting the preferences for types of activities depicted in these photos were coded per the acculturation codes ("Acculturation," "Pluralism," "Advocacy," and "Other") as the choice to promote certain activities over others was considered an indicator of positive prototypes consciously being used as a communication strategy. Categories were not mutually exclusive, and the use of stock photos was tabulated as well as photos taken by the organization specifically to represent their clients, volunteers, staff, and other stakeholders.

All 14 respondents noted that they relied heavily on photos taken from events, classes, rallies, and other organization-related sources to authentically represent their services and constituencies. Only one respondent noted the use of stock photos in addition to those they took at events, and these stock photos mostly were included as static web-design elements, not as depictions of specific activities.

All but two of the organizations reportedly chose acculturation or service-related activities as the focus of their website photos with five also noting that they purposefully selected photos of diverse groups and individuals (pluralism) to counter the negative stereotype of the bad Mexican and empower Latinx audiences. Three organizations also used photos from recent protest marches and rallies (advocacy) to depict those actions to audiences. The use of acculturation and pluralism photos were noted as "culture-binding" elements by one arts organization in particular. Using photos of art or musicians and artists also was reported as strategic both to promote events and also to support cultural connections and positive cultural prototypes.

Several of the organizations noted that providing factual information to clients (and often the general public) to counter misinformation or hateful anti-immigration rhetoric had become one of the key ways they used their website and social media channels. Photos depicting their work in the community and actual clients and volunteers was one way they did this. As one interviewee said, "We are giving the truth and they can relate to it with this picture." Others discussed changing stereotypes with accurate information as education. For example, one participant said, "Without broader understanding, that is going to continue to inhibit our ability to provide our services and programs."

When asked if there were specific activities they preferred to represent with photos on their website, one respondent explained that they chose images that portrayed their clients as part of the community and wished to educate mainstream audiences about them:

> That's a really good question and I would say no. But that may be a naive answer, [but] I think that it's important especially for mainstream media and community to know more and understand more about the needs and services in the Latino community in particular and the contributions that they make in the community. And there's a lot of, and I'll just say it. You know around immigration—there's a huge lack of knowledge

and understanding, and a majority of people are making decisions based on a lack of accurate information and any time we have the opportunity to help change that [we do].

Digital social advocacy

Addressing *RQ4*

Finally, respondents were asked about their use of their digital channels in social advocacy efforts on behalf of the organization and its members or clients. If the response was yes (that the organization did engage in digital social advocacy), subjects were asked to describe their goals for these efforts and how they used each media channel to achieve them. Although Hon's (2015) model was designed to explain grassroots social movement formation via social media, we used this model to explore how resource-poor nonprofit organizations serving marginalized people may adopt similar strategies and tactics in digital social advocacy work.

Results were evenly split on the question of website use for social advocacy efforts. Of the seven organizations that reportedly used their website for advocacy outreach, respondents also reported that social media were the primary way they enacted digital social advocacy. Social platforms allowed these organizations to send quick messages and calls to action to their constituents, whereas website updates require more resources. Additionally, private Facebook groups were being used to share information on immigration legal issues, deadlines, and updates to clients by two organizations. This enabled one organization whose mission did not focus on immigration to share DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) legislation updates to young professionals in their network without having the communication be subject to mainstream audience scrutiny.

Conversely, an interviewee from an organization focused on immigrant rights/immigration reform explained social advocacy this way: "What we're best at is putting a lot of people in the street—mobilization." For them, the website is the "easiest way for people to learn about what issues are affecting [the state's] residents." It "keeps people updated on where bills are at the moment." The main goal for this organization's digital social advocacy is to "inform people, to get them motivated and get them to show up, act, and donate."

When asked if they felt that their digital social advocacy work was part of their job (or personal social advocacy), all but one respondent answered affirmatively. In fact, many respondents spoke at length about how their nonprofit work either focused on direct advocacy for Latinx and Hispanic community members or how their roles had expanded to include advocacy efforts following changes in U.S. immigration policy and law that have negatively affected these communities. These changes also have reframed definitions of social advocacy for many. According to one respondent from a nonprofit professional organization:

> How I define advocacy? Our main mission is to support and advance Hispanics. We are in support of any collaborations or initiatives that we feel benefit the Hispanic

community specifically as it relates to increasing representation in leadership roles in our sector and in the community. That being said, as far as...immigration goes, you know we're a nonpartisan organization because we are a non-profit. However, I would say in the past couple of years we have had to take a stand one way or another especially when it relates to DACA students. We are an organization that supports DACA students. We don't require immigration status information for our scholarships. And we know that there are [DACA] students who are part of our organization. So, I would say we advocate in that way by connecting with them with resources.

Based on these findings, it is apparent that individual communicators creatively reframed the ways they performed their outreach and service work by considering ways to use their digital assets to better support their clients and members. Additionally, they often saw this direct advocacy work as part of their jobs and a holistic effort that benefitted the community (and therefore, society), aligning with current conceptions of public interest communications (Brunner, 2017).

To summarize, organizations clearly used the same supersizing and web-leveraged affordances to share information and mobilize their constituents as informal social movements do to organize (Hon, 2015). Small nonprofit teams and individual communications managers are using social media as their primary channel to "get the word out" when needed to mobilize rallies and organize support. However, unlike Hon's model, the cultural work done by these organizations generally supported a sustained connection beyond the social action or activity period. Rather than rely solely upon traditional public relations tactics to gain support, these nonprofits used their websites to present the organizational mission and story and often leveraged social media networks to mobilize when needed and to share information privately to vulnerable minorities.

Finally, these organizations reported challenges (lack of resources and funding) typical to nonprofits that impact efforts that they faced striving to reach their communication and business goals (Kiwanuka-Tondo et al., 2009). However, respondents reported that they also faced additional legalities due to deportations and the changes to DACA legislation as these factors directly impacted their clients and missions. The current political climate was noted as a challenge by several nonprofits, and two reported receiving hate mail because they serve Latinx constituencies. Certainly, turning to online social advocacy work such as using photos to dispel negative stereotypes or creating a private Facebook group allowed these nonprofits to bypass traditional media gatekeepers to spread their messages and grow support for their causes.

Discussion

This study was developed as the second stage of a visual content analysis (Adams & Johnson, 2019) to confirm the intentionality and strategic decision making behind the choice of visuals used by these ethnic nonprofits. Based on the results, this study confirms that these nonprofit communicators are intentionally seeking to promote positive cultural prototypes. Results also show that digital channels are becoming increasingly specialized by use by nonprofits (following corporate communication) in that websites are designed for mainstream consumption and present general information about and legitimize the organization and its services. Social media are the primary means for digital social advocacy efforts for these organizations due to increased speed and reach as well as the ability to send targeted private messages to specific publics.

Digital social advocacy was defined in several creative ways by study respondents. It was represented by most as a continuum where "soft" digital advocacy was practiced through strategically chosen photos intended to promote cultural connections, a feeling of community, or positive ethnic prototypes, and "hard" advocacy efforts were comprised of overt and direct communication (such as in calls for action to mobilize for protesting or defeating legislation). To respondents who addressed this, soft advocacy work also included acting as an informal bridge between their clients and resources to help them connect when needed (for example, connecting someone facing imminent deportation with a known immigration attorney). Others noted that just keeping their constituents informed about coming immigration legislation or specifically choosing images that depict diversity and community involvement were examples of soft advocacy efforts they could do daily that both supported their organizational needs and are also the right thing to do for their organizations and communities (Page, 2019). All but one of the organizations spoke about such soft advocacy efforts as a component of their mission and as part of their day-to-day role that did not present a conflict with their 501(c)3 status, which prohibits lobbying.

Several respondents also spoke to a need for an expanded advocacy role that goes beyond their job descriptions wherein they/their organizations act as conduits for immigration information (such as sharing a DACA legal workshop with young professionals on the job market) or as a source of information on immigration and immigrant rights. One respondent from an education-focused nonprofit said that digital social advocacy is part of her work of just "being there" as a resource for those seeking information about immigration and for connecting people to legal help as needed. These sentiments were echoed throughout the interviews. Similarly, another respondent recognized the importance of the website in communicating the organization's role in social change. This professional (from an arts organization) argued that the website communicates that "we have the power to move things and to make changes in the community."

An emergent theme that arose from the interview data aligns with the respondents' perceptions of digital social advocacy and the work done by the organization as a community member—authenticity. Above all, study respondents noted that it was crucial that the images and

content chosen for use on their digital channels illustrate their clients and the work they do as valuable and as part of the community. One way that respondents said they achieved this was through the use of authentic images and transparent communication. As one respondent noted: "We use pictures of the local people. That way they know us. We are giving the truth and they can relate with this picture." This finding also aligns with respondents who noted the need for their digital communication to present truthful facts to counter misinformation surrounding immigration and immigrants. Both findings support Kim's (2001, 2006) notions of alignment with the host society and inform ethical public interest communications.

Considering these findings, notions of digital social advocacy should be expanded beyond the call for direct action (use of social media for mobilization) to consider the role of soft advocacy done by nonprofits representing marginalized individuals in society. Examples are representing minority groups they serve as valued community members, connecting clients with legal resources, or providing education to mainstream media or schools.

Finally, as part of the data collection process and nature of the in-depth interviews, two study respondents noted that they or their organization had been the recipient of hate mail—U.S. Postal Service mail or via online channels (social or email). A few also linked this hate mail to the negative campaign rhetoric and discourse on immigration proliferated by the Trump administration (Figueroa-Caballero et al., 2019; Ogan et al., 2018; Pérez-Curiel & Limón-Naharro, 2019). Not only is this finding troubling, it points to the need for the soft advocacy work being done by these organizations per study results, and possibly, the use of direct tactics to promote positive ethnic prototypes in their respective media markets.

In summary, this study confirms the results of the previous examination of the use of visuals as strategic communication and counterstereotypes by U.S. nonprofits serving Latinx groups (Adams & Johnson, 2019) in that the choice of visuals is both strategic and increasingly intended to help counter hateful online discourse and depictions. In addition, it identifies several points of best practice for professional nonprofit communicators and organizations engaged in public interest communications, particularly as part of their service mission to U.S. minority groups.

Specifically, this study offers the following strategic observations from the findings. Images used on websites are important in soft advocacy work because they may provide counterstereotypes to be viewed by their targeted majority/Caucasian audience (including key publics such as donors, foundations, or corporate community partners). Images used on social media are also important because they provide positive prototypes and counterstereotypes for the Latinx publics the organization serves. Digital social advocacy appears to exist on a continuum for those engaged in the type of work done by nonprofits that serve minority publics (where overt lobbying is off limits and soft advocacy efforts are considered appropriate).

Implications

The use of private social media groups to share information on immigration and for mobilization points to a growing danger faced by these organizations and their clients. Two organizations' reports of hate mail preceded the Texas Walmart shooting directed at Latinx residents. These reports demonstrate the importance of public interest communications practice and research to combat stereotypes, prejudices, and hateful online discourse. Unfortunately, these nonprofits' soft advocacy work is increasingly important as the United States continues to struggle with immigration policy surrounding the global COVID-19 pandemic and social media conversations reflect continued use of stereotypes by partisan news and social media outlets. Nonprofit digital assets can help counter these stereotypes, but more overt communicative action on the part of these organizations—especially in the face of violence—may be necessary.

Also, following the widespread adoption of the Zoom video conferencing application during the pandemic, this research project could be extended to other U.S. metro locations with a diverse range of Latinx-focused nonprofit organizations. Considering this opportunity for in-depth interviews, researchers also might look deeper into the role that these nonprofits play in their communities—not just as service providers supporting adaptation to mainstream culture, but also perceptions of their value as community members and advocacy efforts by the mainstream donors and funders they target via their websites.

Future research on the topics addressed in this study should consider the creative use of social media for mobilization and information sharing as well as the use of soft advocacy to promote positive perceptions of members and constituencies. Additional qualitative research is needed to better define and investigate the notion of soft advocacy and understand how nonprofits may be using digital channels to work for social change while maintaining compliance with 501(c)3 status restrictions.

Last, further exploration into digital social advocacy might consider how these minority-serving organizations are helping to set the mainstream news media agenda on the topics of immigration and migrants' rights.

Limitations

This study was limited geographically to two mid-sized metropolitan areas of the United States. Although as described in the introduction, both areas represent a cross-section of nonprofits (considering organizational age, service focus, etc.). However, given more time and other resources, the project would have benefitted by extending data collection to more sites across the country.

Further, the study was limited in scope due to the private nature of some of the social media outreach and advocacy work being done by these nonprofit communicators—including volunteers. Several participants reported using private Facebook groups or applications such as WhatsApp to communicate mobilization messages to their members or clients. However,

researchers had no access to these communications and had to rely on interview respondent perceptions of their efficacy. To better understand these efforts, interviews with members of organizational publics would have contributed to the study's understanding of message reception efficacy as well as perceptions of nonprofit advocacy.

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Appendix

Interview protocol and codesheet

In addition to noting any emerging themes and yes/no answers to each question, PLEASE CODE BY QUESTION FOLLOWING THE THEMATIC SCHEME BELOW. Codes are not discrete—more than one can be used for each question.

1. Can you tell me (in general) about how you use your website? What functions does it serve for your organization and how you decide upon its images and the content? CODES:
   - Information management (news, events, sign ups, registration)
   - Public Relations/Publicity (press releases, etc.)
   - Advocacy (mobilization, calls to action, etc.)

2. Can you compare the function of the website versus your social media? How does your strategic approach differ between them? CODES:
   - Information management (news, events, sign ups, registration)
   - Public Relations/Publicity (press releases, etc.)
   - Advocacy (mobilization, calls to action, etc.)

3. (Category-Acculturation) Going back to your website, what types of visuals do you prefer to use to depict the work the organization does? Why?
   - Acculturation (services): education, work, leadership, citizenship, family
   - Pluralism: empowerment
   - Advocacy: protest, mobilization
   - Other (note):

4. (Category-Stereotypes/positive prototypes) What types of images or visuals do you use to depict your audiences, board members or volunteers? Why?
   - Stock photos
   - Authentic representation (actual volunteers, etc.)
   - Other (note):

5. (Category-Stereotypes/positive prototypes) Are there any **activities** that you prefer to depict over others? Why?
   - Acculturation (services): education, work, leadership, citizenship
   - Pluralism: empowerment
   - Advocacy: protest, mobilization
   - Other (note):

6. (Category-Acculturation) Staying on the subject of your website, how do you think people perceive your organization by viewing it?
   - Acculturation (services): education, work, leadership, citizenship
   - Pluralism: empowerment
   - Advocacy: protest, mobilization
   - Other (note):

7. (Category-Acculturation) Who do you think of as the primary target audiences when you are planning or adding content to your website?
   - Donors/funders
   - Volunteers
   - Clients/members/service recipients
   - Employers
   - Other (note):

8. (Category-Digital Advocacy) Does your organization engage in digital advocacy efforts in regard to the groups you serve? Can you describe how? (How do you/your organization define advocacy in general?)
   - Yes
   - No
   - Digital Media Ecosystem (note platforms & digital strategies used, etc.)

9. (Category-Digital Advocacy) Do you use your website to support advocacy efforts (such as immigrant rights, etc.)? Why or why not?
    - Yes
    - No

10. (Category-Digital Advocacy) What are the goals for your organization's digital advocacy efforts – thinking of both your website and your social media? (Example: to mobilize follower support for DACA recipients)

Note goals and any of the following factors and outcomes discussed in the response:
    - Antecedents: Social, Political, and Economic Context
    - Processes: Strategy and Tactics
    - Digital Media Ecosystem (platforms used, etc.)
    - Effects: Outputs (Volume & Reach) and Outcomes (Goals)

11. (Category-Digital Advocacy) Finally, do you consider this work as just "part of my job" or as social advocacy?
    a. Yes (Professionals as advocates)
    b. No

12. (Open-ended) Before we conclude the interview, is there anything else you'd like to add?

Impression Management After Image-Threatening Events: A Case Study of JUUL's Online Messaging

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Article Information	Abstract
	E-cigarette use is a public interest issue and has received increasing attention over the years. JUUL, the biggest brand of e-cigarettes, has been singled out in what the FDA calls a youth e-cigarette epidemic. This study uses impression management theory to examine how JUUL engaged in positive impression management online in response to these image-threatening events. Employing a thematic analysis, this study examines changes in JUUL's website between April 1, 2018, and October 9, 2019, and Twitter posts between April 28, 2018, and October 18, 2019. Results suggest that JUUL made both textual and visual changes in its messaging over time to engage in positive impression management, while using the impression management tactics of self-promotion, exemplification, and supplication. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Introduction

Electronic cigarettes or e-cigarettes were designed as a safer alternative to smoking cigarettes or other tobacco products (Cahn & Siegel, 2011). This sentiment has been echoed by governmental agencies such as Public Health England, which found that these products are comparatively healthier than regular tobacco cigarettes (McNeill et al., 2015). It is no wonder then that one of the most frequently cited reasons for e-cigarette use among adult smokers is to quit or cut down on smoking regular cigarettes (Patel et al., 2016; Pepper et al., 2014). Although e-cigarettes were designed for adult smokers who want to quit smoking, the product has found its way into the

lives of youth. Currently, e-cigarette use among adults stands at 3% (Arrazola et al., 2015). However, this percentage quadruples to 13% in high school students (King et al., 2015). E-cigarettes are the most commonly used tobacco product among high school students, overtaking regular cigarettes (CDC, 2015). This situation is worrying because, although some governmental organizations might be fervent advocates that e-cigarettes are safer than traditional cigarettes, the long-term effects of their use are largely unknown. Furthermore, there is a potential risk of a gateway effect where youth might transition to combustible cigarettes after using e-cigarettes (FDA, 2018a).

With these concerns, there has been increased attention on e-cigarette companies such as JUUL Labs (hereinafter referred to as JUUL). JUUL was first singled out by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for its role in youth uptake April 24, 2018, when the FDA announced that it has been "conducting a large-scale, undercover nationwide blitz to crack down on the sale of e-cigarettes—specifically JUUL products—to minors at both brick-and-mortar and online retailers" (FDA, 2018b, para. 8). On September 12, 2018, the FDA issued letters to five e-cigarette manufacturers including JUUL to provide a detailed plan, which includes specific timeframes, to address and mitigate use of e-cigarette products by minors in 60 days and threatened to remove e-cigarettes off the market if this plan was not submitted in a timely manner (Gottlieb, 2018). Then, when JUUL, the biggest player in the e-cigarette market, announced that Altria, one of the world's largest tobacco producers, invested $12.8 billion into the company for a 35% ownership (Burns, 2018), even more suspicions on JUUL's marketing intentions were raised. Most recently, on September 9, 2019, the FDA also accused JUUL of violating the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, citing evidence that JUUL had misleadingly marketed its products as a safer alternative to children in school (FDA, 2019). Due to the possible health consequences of e-cigarette use and the numerous marketing campaigns around the product, scholars have begun to look at e-cigarettes from the perspective of public interest communications (e.g., Kim et al., 2019). This is also part of the broader attention on health communications as an integral area for public interest communications (Demetrious, 2017; Downes, 2017).

E-cigarette use is a topic that can further extend research on public interest communications since it is a public health issue. In this paper, I investigate how JUUL's messaging has evolved over time to meet the needs of its stakeholders after the many image-threatening events that it faced. This then can help inform the messaging strategies of prosocial organizations that may have public interest at the heart of their operations but could potentially face such image-threatening events in the future. Furthermore, JUUL is an interesting case study because it is an organization that can be seen as both promoting prosocial (helping adult smokers quit traditional cigarettes) and non-prosocial (youth uptake of e-cigarettes) behaviors. This paper will use Impression Management Theory (IMT; Goffman, 1959; Leary & Kowalski, 1990) to qualitatively illustrate how the organization has engaged in positive impression management through its evolving visual and textual messaging on its website and social media accounts as a consequence of these image-threatening events since April 2018. It will also show that JUUL has

embedded the impression management tactics of self-promotion, exemplification, and supplication in its current messaging to maintain and construct a positive image.

Literature review

E-cigarettes and JUUL campaigns

Research on e-cigarette campaigns has been very limited. Most of the research conducted on tobacco control has been focused on traditional tobacco smoking cessation campaigns (e.g., Davis et al., 2009; Mudde & De Vries, 1999; Niederdeppe et al., 2008; Siegel & Biener, 2000). However, research on e-cigarette campaigns is far more uncommon. The few studies conducted in this subject area can be categorized into two groups, one that focuses on campaigns by manufacturers and the other on campaigns by policy makers. Scholars who study campaigns by manufacturers have analyzed general e-cigarette advertisements and their effects on people's attitudes to the product (Reinhold et al., 2017), specifically television advertising (Duke et al., 2014) and social media advertising of e-cigarettes (Chu et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2019). Those who have studied campaigns by policy makers tend to focus on feedback to their anti-vaping campaigns on social media (Allem et al., 2016; Harris et al., 2014; Zhan et al., 2018).

There have been even fewer studies on JUUL, with most research conducted on individuals' knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to JUUL and not so much on JUUL itself as a brand. The studies on JUUL are limited to a survey on youth and young adult recognition and knowledge of the product (Willett et al., 2019), conversations about JUUL on social media (Allem et al., 2018; Kavuluru et al., 2018), and JUUL use patterns and the reasons for consumer use (Leavens et al., 2019). Although public recognition and perceptions of JUUL are important to study, there is also a need to analyze JUUL from the organization's point of view to better understand its messaging strategies since this can inform governmental regulations.

From the brand's perspective, only two studies have been conducted to date. Laestadius and Wang (2018) studied the sale of JUUL products on eBay prior to the FDA's request to remove JUUL's listings in April 2018, while Huang and colleagues (2018) studied JUUL's retail sales, marketing, and promotion. Huang et al. (2018) found that JUUL does most of its marketing via social media, which provides a glimpse into JUUL's advertising strategy. However, with the FDA's request to work with JUUL to take steps to prevent sales to youth (Gottlieb, 2018) occurring after Huang et al. (2018) published their study, their analysis was unable to take into account the changes to JUUL's online marketing and messaging. Furthermore, after Altria Group, one of the world's largest producers and marketers of tobacco and cigarette products, acquired a 35% stake in JUUL, another letter was issued by Gottlieb (2018), former commissioner of the FDA, February 9 to schedule a joint meeting with Altria and the FDA. It is evident that since Laestadius and Wang (2018), as well as Huang et al. (2018), published their studies, there has been an unfolding of multiple events that could directly impact JUUL as an

organization. As such, this paper aims to analyze JUUL from the lens of its brand, in light of these new developments and to provide a qualitative approach to understanding the changes in JUUL's messaging in response to these events.

Impression management theory

Particularly relevant to this study is IMT (Goffman, 1959; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). IMT can be originally traced to Goffman's (1959) discussion of the importance of self-presentation in defining one's place in society, setting the tone of an interaction, and how one should perform in public and social interactions. Arguing that Goffman focused primarily on the role self-presentation plays in the construction of social reality, Leary and Kowalski (1990) centered their discussion on self-presentation to others by defining impression management as "the process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them" (p. 34). Leary and Kowalski (1990) conceptualized IMT into two processes: impression motivation and impression construction. Impression motivation consists of 1) goal-relevance of impressions, 2) value of desired goals, and 3) discrepancy between desired and current image, while impression construction is comprised of 1) self-concept, 2) desired and undesired identity images, 3) role constraints, 4) target values, and 5) current or potential social image.

JUUL is arguably highly motivated to engage in impression management because of the potential penalties that come with its current practices. According to IMT, the motivation to engage in impression management stems from the desire to maximize expected rewards and minimize expected punishments (Schlenker, 1980). With the FDA's unequivocal statement that noncompliance "could mean requiring these brands to remove some or all of their flavored products that may be contributing to the rise in youth use from the market," (FDA, 2018a, para. 10) the expected punishment is especially high for JUUL, which holds the largest market share. As such, more than ever, JUUL is motivated to maintain or build a positive impression so as to minimize the punishments that could come with governmental intervention.

Not only is JUUL motivated to engage in positive impression management, this paper also contends that this organization is highly strategic in its impression construction. According to Leary and Kowalski (1990), "People tend to convey impressions that are biased in the direction of their desired identities" (p. 40) and "try to ensure that their public image is consistent with (or at least is not inconsistent with) the role demands of a particular situation" (p. 41). With the FDA's allegations that JUUL is contributing to the rise in youth use of e-cigarettes, JUUL is in a position that requires the company to reconstruct its desired identity and to live up to the image it wants to portray—an organization that helps adults quit cigarette smoking. Additionally, IMT predicts that individuals construct their impression based on the target values of their audience by "select[ing] from a myriad of possible self-images that are most likely to meet with approval or other desired reactions" (Leary & Kowalski, 1990, p. 41) and that "the impressions people try to create are affected both by how they think they are currently regarded by others and by how they think others may perceive them in the future" (p. 41). Impression construction based on the

target's values and current or potential social image are inherently linked for an organization such as JUUL because its social image is shaped by the FDA, and it has to make sure it meets the approval of the FDA's values.

To strategically construct a positive impression, there are number of impression management tactics that an organization can take (Jones & Pittman, 1982). First, *ingratiation* refers to ways in which individuals seek to achieve likeability. Second, *intimidation* is where one seeks to appear dangerous or threatening. Similar, but conceptually distinct from ingratiation, the third tactic is *self-promotion*, which is to portray oneself as being competent. Fourth, *exemplification* is to portray oneself as being honest and respectable. Last, *supplication* is to present the self as weak and vulnerable to evoke pity.

Although mostly used to study interpersonal communication, IMT has recently been used to study how organizations attempt to construct a positive image after an image-threatening event. Some scholars have studied how organizations manage their public image using prosocial claims (McDonnell & King, 2013) or how they inform consumers of data breaches that will reduce the damage to organizational reputation (Jenkins et al., 2014). Other scholars also have studied how organizations use impression management tactics after a crisis (Allen & Caillouet, 1994; Marcus & Goodman, 1991). For example, Allen and Caillouet (1994) studied 799 statements of one organization in crisis to identify the impression management strategies it used. However, within the communication literature, limited research has been conducted using IMT as a theoretical framework to study an organization's impression management online after image-threatening events. As such, this paper poses the following research questions:

RQ1: How has JUUL's messaging changed on its website and social media accounts to engage in positive impression management since the FDA's investigation into its marketing and sales of e-cigarettes to youth?

RQ2: What impression management tactics are embedded in JUUL's current messaging on its website and social media accounts?

Method

This paper employs a thematic analysis to answer its research questions. This is "a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). It is a qualitative type of analysis that can produce insightful and trustworthy findings. The benefits of conducting a thematic analysis are that it "can highlight similarities *and* differences across the data set" and also "usefully summarize key features of a large body of data, and/or offer a 'thick description' of the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 97). Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) guide for conducting a thematic analysis, I 1) familiarized myself with the data,

2) generated initial codes, 3) searched for themes, 4) reviewed the themes, 5) defined and named the themes, and finally, 6) produced the final analysis.

Data collection

Data were collected using Internet archival service *Wayback Machine* between April 1, 2018, and October 31, 2019. JUUL's website was compared on seven dates that had available archival data on *Wayback Machine*: April 1, 2018, May 27, 2018, September 1, 2018, October 31, 2018, February 20, 2019, August 7, 2019, and October 9, 2019. April 1, 2018, was chosen as the start date of the analysis because it represents JUUL's messaging prior to any FDA media releases that have named JUUL in promoting youth e-cigarette usage. The subsequent dates were chosen because they were either one month before or after a FDA media release that mentioned JUUL. For the purpose of this study, the bulk of the analysis was conducted on JUUL's homepage over the seven dates. This is because most web users are unlikely to look beyond the first few pages of a website that they go to (Thompson, 2004) and can be considered the "most important page for every website because it is a company's face to the world of the internet" (Huang & Yang, 2011, p. 381). Changes to the website over time, including new tabs and sections that were linked from the main homepage, were analyzed. On social media, JUUL's Twitter account was compared on four relevant dates for which archival data were available: April 28, 2018, January 30, 2019, August 28, 2019, and October 18, 2019. Because JUUL's Facebook and Instagram accounts are no longer active as of November 13, 2018, with all posts deleted except for the announcement of page deactivation, they were removed from this analysis. Screenshots of the website and social media posts then were integrated into a Word document for analysis.

Data analysis

With the two research questions in mind, I took a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) using constant comparative coding to establish emergent themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I first reviewed all the screenshots and noted initial themes and observations based on the textual messaging. Additionally, since the texts on both JUUL's website and social media posts were often accompanied by visuals, I used an iconographic qualitative approach (Müller, 2011) to analyze the visual messages, taking into consideration the social, cultural, and political context of that time (Müller & Özcan, 2007). For example, there was an outbreak of lung injury associated with vaping between August and September of 2019 (CDC, 2020), which increased public and governmental scrutiny. Similarly, when the FDA publishes a press release referencing JUUL, how JUUL is perceived socially, culturally, and politically, would also be vastly different than the months prior. I took these events into consideration when analyzing the data collected in these months. I then used the themes that emerged from both the textual and visual messages to continue analyzing the data in following rounds of analysis with a focus on refining the initial

themes and noting new ones that related to previous themes. Once no new themes surfaced and the final themes were adequately explicated, I concluded the data analysis process.

Results

RQ1 asked how JUUL's messaging has changed to engage in positive impression management since the FDA's investigations. The four main changes were: 1) (de)emphasis on bulk sales, 2) nicotine warning, 3) age requirements, and 4) muted colors and images.

(De)emphasis on bulk sales

The first change was a shift in the emphasis of bulk product sales. JUUL's website on April 1, 2018, had a banner stating, "[f]ree shipping when you spend $34 or more," and a section that was dedicated to publicizing its "[a]utoship" scheme where users could sign up to have refill pods shipped to their doorstep at a discounted rate. However, the banner was later changed to "Learn about our youth prevention efforts," and the "Autoship" section was completely removed from the website by May 27, 2018. Interestingly, this "Autoship" section resurfaced again by August 28, 2019. On JUUL's Twitter page, a post for a promotion of its referral program (where referring someone to purchase a JUUL product gives a $15 discount to both parties) was present in the April 28, 2018, data set, but this post was removed by January 30, 2019. This reduced emphasis on sales quantity can be said to be JUUL's attempt to shape its current or potential social image. When the FDA publicly alleged that JUUL had a part to play in the youth uptake of e-cigarettes, it damaged JUUL's image as an organization, compelling it to counter or repair the damaged image (Goffman, 1955). The company then attempted to rebuild its existing social image—an organization that was merely concerned with the sales of their products regardless of who (and how old) its customers were. By removing their promotions of "free shipping" or "15% off every order" and focusing instead on their mission to "improve the lives of the world's one billion adult smokers"—a message prominently featured on its website since May 27, 2018— JUUL is not only repairing its existing social image, but also ensuring that that its stakeholders would perceive its potential social image to be one that is positive and prosocial in nature through the promotion of its products' benefits for adult smokers.

Nicotine warning

The second change was seen in the explicit messaging that JUUL products contain nicotine. Prior to September 1, 2018, its website had no messaging that JUUL contained nicotine except for a tiny disclaimer at the bottom of the page that states "WARNING" accompanied with "This product contains nicotine. Nicotine is an addictive chemical." Then, the same disclaimer was bolded and shifted to the top of the homepage, in a large, highly contrasted white font over a

black banner that web users would likely immediately notice. According to Leary and Kowalski (1990), IMT predicts that individuals will appeal to other's target values and "tailor their public images to the perceived values and preferences of significant others" (p. 41). In the case of JUUL, the significant other is the FDA as it has direct control over JUUL's sales. As previously mentioned, the FDA has in the past threatened to pull JUUL's products off the market. The FDA's concerns that youth are attracted to JUUL products, which "have high levels of nicotine and emissions that are hard to see," (FDA, 2018b, para. 5) are not unfounded. This argument is in line with research conducted by Alexander et al. (2019) who found in their qualitative research of 43 youth between the ages of 14 to 17 that "awareness of nicotine's negative health effects were high, even while they erroneously believe that e-cigarettes produce only harmless water vapor" (p. 96). Similarly, it has been found that 63% of JUUL users who are between the ages of 15-24 do not know that JUUL products always contain nicotine (Willett et al., 2019). As such, JUUL's decision to prominently highlight that its products contain nicotine appeals to the FDA's values, ensuring that any allegations that it is promoting e-cigarettes under the guise of nicotine-free flavors are seemingly unjustified. This decision is also a move to build a desired identity image as well as a positive potential social image. JUUL's intentions are clear in that it wants to build a desirable identity image, of being a company that is not trying to mislead youth into picking up nicotine products. Furthermore, JUUL also wants to ensure it projects a positive potential social image by being transparent that, although its products contain nicotine, they should only be used by adult smokers to reduce their nicotine intake.

Age requirements

The third change was JUUL's decision to increase the age requirement to subscribe to the organization's email list and to follow its Twitter account. On April 1, 2018, to sign up for JUUL's email newsletter, users needed to be at least 18 years old. However, from May 27, 2018, onward, users had to be at least 21 to sign up for the email list. Additionally, on Twitter, followers were not warned that they must be "21+ to follow" prior to April 28, 2018, but this was included in their profile by January 30, 2019. This change, of course, is a symbolic move in constructing a positive image in that there is an expectation for JUUL to take on the role of a gatekeeper of sorts, where youth are kept away from picking up e-cigarettes. The age verification and age requirement to receive information from JUUL are symbolic gestures because there is no way in which the company can enforce such a restriction. Users of any age can merely enter their email address and receive information about JUUL even if they are minors by choosing a date of birth that corresponds to the company's age requirements. The decision to increase the age requirement from 18 to 21 could possibly be because of the role constraint that JUUL faces as a prosocial company. As IMT posits, "People try to make their social images conform as closely as possible to prototypic characteristics of the role they are playing" (Leary & Kowalski, 1990, p. 41). Raising the age limit shows that the company is "committed to preventing underage use." While JUUL is unable to truly stop underage web users from perusing its website, this strategy is

still a part of its efforts to construct a positive impression based on people's expectations of the organization.

Muted colors and images

The fourth change can be seen in the shift in colors and images by JUUL to favor one that is more muted. In April 2018 (see Figure 1), the choice of colors on JUUL's website had more variety, using different shades of green, blue, white, and gold. The background of the website had an image of a JUUL product on a white table with a potted plant, and a green book, a minimalistic and pastel visual design that is in line with contemporary trends in millennial aesthetics that appeal to the young (Fischer, 2020; Thorlacius, 2007). However, by February 2019 (see Figure 2), the website became far more muted, with the background colors limited to only black and white, and the only images being of the product itself or the faces of users. Similarly, on Twitter, in April 2018, the header image was identical to the background image on JUUL's website in the same month. The social media posts then also had more images and colors that drew users to read the company's posts. In January 2019, the background header image changed to a black banner with a white elongated hexagon shape, and posts with images were largely removed, leaving only black and white abstracts of the company's media releases.

The move toward just black and white color schemes without visual imagery can be seen as a form of positive impression management, by appealing to the values of the FDA and maintaining its role as a prosocial company. JUUL explicitly stated on its website that it will "not feature images or situations intended for a youth audience." This change parallels the push for "plain packaging" of tobacco products, which has been found to be less attractive to tobacco users and increases the noticeability and effectiveness of health warnings (World Health Organization, 2016). JUUL's choice to change its color scheme and use of images to one that is more monochromatic mimics the plain packaging found on some tobacco products, which has the effect of reducing its website's appeal. This update maintains JUUL's image as an organization that markets its products to adults, which would in turn appeal to expectations of the FDA.

Figure 1
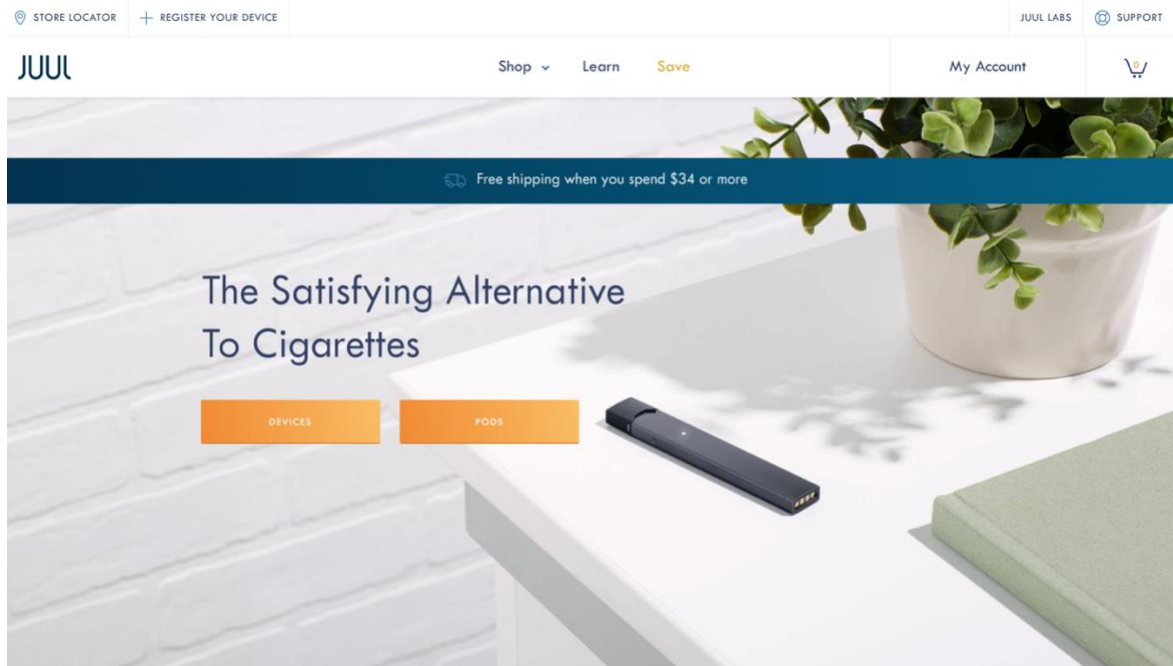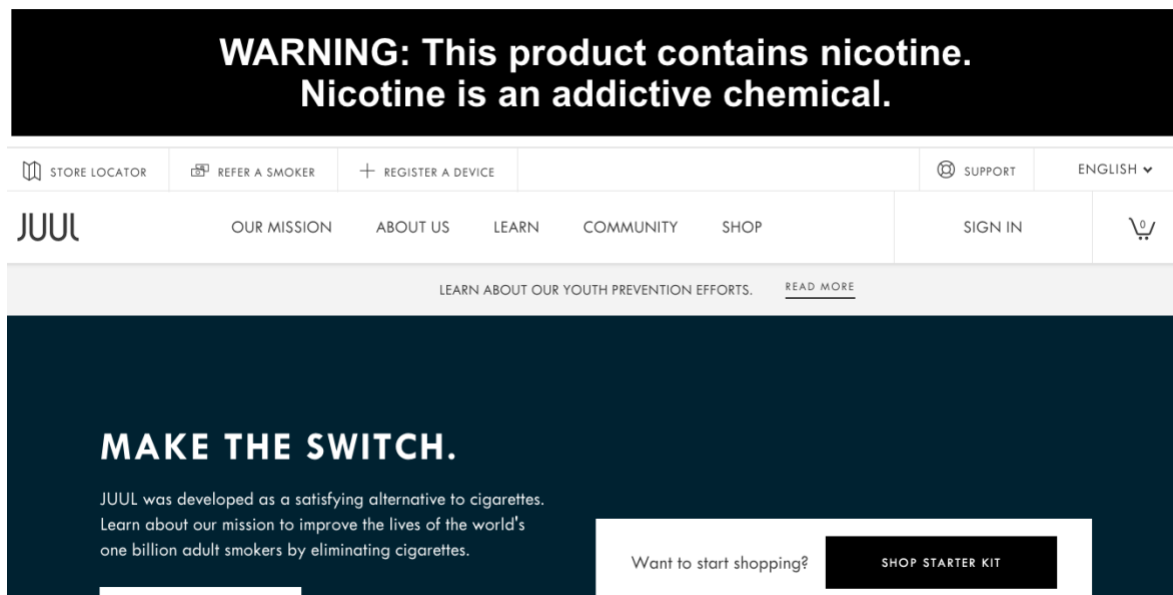
JUUL's Homepage on April 1, 2018

Figure 2

JUUL's Homepage on February 20, 2019

As JUUL's messaging evolved over time to engage in positive impression management, it is useful to explore some of the impression management tactics that are embedded in its messaging after the FDA's interventions (*RQ2*). JUUL's current messaging is limited to its media releases that are posted on Twitter as well as its website. Three tactics were identified: 1) self-promotion, 2) exemplification, and 3) supplication.

Self-promotion

JUUL engages in self-promotion by showcasing its success as an organization that helps adult smokers quit smoking. Self-promotion occurs when the messenger intentionally seeks the attribution of competence (Jones & Pittman, 1982). JUUL's mission is to help the world's one billion cigarette smokers quit the habit. For the organization to be seen as "competent," it will need to show how it is achieving its mission. JUUL does this by featuring testimonials of its customers switching to JUUL's products in a section called "The JUUL Community." In one testimonial, a customer states, "I'm constantly encouraging people to use this and not smoke cigarettes," exemplifying how the organization has achieved its goals. In this particular quote, it is clear that JUUL is trying to influence its stakeholders (whether they are the FDA, the general public, or its board of directors) that it is indeed competent in helping adult smokers quit their cigarette addiction. The use of headshots puts a face to the people whom JUUL is helping, which increases levels of trustworthiness and persuasiveness (Newman et al., 2012). Similarly, customer quotes serve not only to increase JUUL's credibility as an organization, but also to bolster its level of competence.

Exemplification

JUUL also uses messages that project integrity and moral worthiness by promoting how it is proactively ensuring that its products do not reach the hands of youth. Since the FDA's allegations, there was a deliberate attempt on JUUL's part to act in an exemplary manner. This change can be seen on the company's website where a tab under "About Us" brings users to a page titled "Our Responsibility." Not only is there a statement regarding regulation and public policy and JUUL's marketing and social media code, JUUL also provides educational resources for smokers. In this way, JUUL is making a statement of how serious it is in curbing youth uptake of its products. JUUL does so by reiterating that its marketing and social media outreach are not targeted at youth and that its products are for adult smokers who are already trying to quit smoking. These strategies help JUUL to portray itself as an organization that is proactively limiting its target audience to adults, has integrity, and is acting morally.

Supplication

JUUL's social media posts display elements of supplication where it positions itself as a victim. Although most of its previous social media posts have been deleted, JUUL retained a retweet from *Washington Examiner* titled, "The crusade against JUUL and other vaping products is childish, even for tobacco control" (Blair, 2018). By retweeting the article, JUUL shows support for the sentiments shared by Blair, and by extension the sentiment that it has been "demonized" in what is called a "crusade" against its organization (Blair, 2018, para. 10). The diction used in this article casts JUUL as a victim in the FDA's investigations. Leveraging this perception of victimization, JUUL engaged in supplication, using its vulnerabilities to solicit support (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Clearly the article is significant to JUUL because, despite it being retweeted April 9, 2018, this article is atypical from the rest of JUUL's social media feed.

Similarly, JUUL's media releases also share the same tone of victimization. In a media release posted on Twitter in December 2018, JUUL tweeted that it has "taken dramatic action to contribute to solve this problem." The problem in this case was the Surgeon General's (2018) advisory that publicly named JUUL as e-cigarettes that "have a high level of nicotine" and that parents, teachers, and health professionals should advise youth against using JUUL's products. Since JUUL was the only company that was named by the Surgeon General, JUUL's response sounds almost exasperated, in that it has "taken dramatic action" yet is still being singled out. Both these examples illustrate the company's desire to portray itself as a victim amidst the allegations.

Discussion

Since April 24, 2018, JUUL has been a target of governmental and public scrutiny due to allegations that its products are being marketed and sold to youth. Despite JUUL being the largest player in the e-cigarette industry, research on JUUL has been rather limited with even less research analyzing how JUUL communicated with its audiences after the numerous FDA investigations. To fill this gap, and to inform public interest communications, this paper shows that since the FDA's investigation into JUUL's marketing and sales of e-cigarettes to youth, much of JUUL's messaging on its website and social media accounts has evolved to engage in positive impression management. JUUL's shut down of its Facebook and Instagram pages is a gesture illustrating its desire to move away from the image of being *that company* that sells tobacco products to youth. Shifts in JUUL's messaging by reducing the emphasis on bulk purchases and referrals, including a nicotine warning, increasing the age requirements to receive information from the company, and using muted colors and images represent attempts at curating a positive impression of the organization in accordance with the FDA's numerous threats. Although it can be argued that changes such as the inclusion of a nicotine warning label on JUUL's website are part of its legal obligations to the FDA, rather than merely appealing to the

FDA's values, the size and placement may not be. The sheer size of the warning on JUUL's homepage can be said to be a conscientious attempt at appealing to the values of the FDA. Additionally, finding support that the impression management tactics of self-promotion, exemplification, and supplication are embedded in JUUL's current messaging provides evidence that IMT is an appropriate theory that can be used to analyze an organization's impression management online after image-threatening events.

Theoretical implications

IMT has infrequently been applied to an online, organizational communication setting or to such a unique product category such as JUUL. IMT was originally conceptualized to apply to interpersonal communication (Leary and Kowalski, 1990) and was later applied to organizations to understand how they construct a positive image after image-threatening events or crises (Allen & Caillouet, 1994; Jenkins et al., 2014; Marcus & Goodman, 1991; McDonnell & King, 2013). What is unique about this study is that JUUL is an organization that is paradoxical as it can be seen as both promoting prosocial and nonprosocial behaviors. Although JUUL presents itself as an organization that wants to help its users quit their addiction to traditional tobacco cigarettes, nicotine is still present in its products and is a substance that is still addictive. JUUL products are in no way healthy but have been argued to be healthier than traditional tobacco cigarettes by some governmental organizations (McNeill et al., 2015). At the same time, with allegations that JUUL was marketing its products to youth, whether the company is truly a prosocial organization is also questionable. The use of IMT in such an unprecedented product category extends IMT and its applicability to a variety of organizational types that are engaging in positive impression management.

Although there has been some headway in applying IMT to organizational communication, there has been scant research on digital platforms. This paper shows that impression management tactics also are embedded in online communication. Individuals who want to find out more about a company or its products tend to go to the organization's website or social media pages. This tendency reflects the importance of how an organization presents itself online to the public. As one of the first studies to analyze organizational impression management and construction online, this study contributes to the literature on IMT by suggesting other communication platforms for theory building especially in the context of public interest communications.

Practical implications

This case study also offers strategies for organizations that might face image-threatening events. First, there are many ways an organization can engage in positive impression management. For JUUL, reassuring the FDA that the company is trying to ensure that its products do not reach the hands of youth was shown in both explicit and implicit gestures. The plastering of the warning sign that JUUL's product contains nicotine represents a grand and explicit gesture, while the

move to muted colors in its online presence is far more subtle and implicit. So, this finding suggests organizations have a variety of choices that they can make online that can communicate, to varying effects, their dedication to engage in positive impression management. Second, this result provides organizations with examples of how impression management tactics are employed within an organization's online communication for preemptive measures. Knowledge of these examples would allow for prosocial companies to adopt some of these tactics in their campaign strategy if faced with similar image-threatening events.

The findings from this study also bring to both the public and government's attention how JUUL is actively changing its messaging strategy. It is impossible to, through this study, make a causal association that JUUL is in fact making these changes to positively influence its stakeholders. However, it is clear that these changes were not coincidental. Highlighting these changes can provide consumers with some contextual knowledge when making their own assessments of the ethics and authenticity of JUUL's efforts. Similarly, this study can help governmental organizations reassess the extent to which they are investigating and regulating JUUL's online presence and its potential impact on the public's attitude not just to JUUL's brand, but to the use of e-cigarettes overall.

Limitations and future research

This study is not without limitations. Due to the lack of available crawled data, this study was unable to access the social media data of JUUL on Instagram and Facebook. Instagram is primarily an image-sharing platform, which would presumably have different impression management tactics embedded as compared to Twitter. Similarly, Facebook differs from Twitter because it does not have a 280-character limit, which means messaging on this platform may vary. Future research should attempt to recover deleted posts by collaborating with the social media managers of JUUL to identify changes in the company's social media messaging over time across these two platforms.

This study primarily looked at JUUL's homepage, but since JUUL is selling a product, it might be useful to conduct an in-depth analysis of its website under the tab "SHOP," which has information on JUUL's product packages and the JUUL pods that consumers are able to purchase. It has been found that prior to making a purchase online, consumers tend to make their decisions based on both the website characteristics (such as the scope and functionality) as well as the product characteristics (Mallapragada et al., 2016). In other words, specific to making online purchases, consumers might look through an organization's website more precisely to look for cues when making their purchasing decisions. Therefore, future research should look at analyzing other aspects of the JUUL website that might provide additional insight into JUUL's impression management.

It also would be useful for future research to study how these changes in messaging and the use of impression management strategies and tactics by JUUL influence stakeholders' impression of the organization. Empirically testing how public perceptions change based on the

impression management used by an organization could show causal relationships between impression management and its effectiveness, which would add to the public interest communications literature on promoting positive behavioral change. Additionally, comparing JUUL and a related company (e.g., Altria or Blu) also can uncover whether these messaging changes are unique to JUUL or shared by other companies in the same product line.

Conclusion

The results of this study show that governmental investigations and regulations to taper JUUL's influence on new and existing e-cigarette users were met with changes in JUUL's messaging strategies to subvert the negative publicity it received. Although some of these strategies and tactics may be adapted by prosocial companies should they face image-threatening events, the findings also can spark further conversations about the ethics of such forms of public communication. As a qualitative case study of the largest e-cigarette brand, this study also elucidates an area of public interest communications that has very rarely been studied.

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Restorative Narratives: Using Narrative Trajectory for Prosocial Outcomes

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Article Information	Abstract
	Restorative narratives are stories that highlight how people recover from adversity. Researchers have proposed that this storytelling approach may provide a way to share negative news without emotionally overwhelming audiences. Instead, restorative narratives may decrease the need for emotion regulation processes and as a result, increase the willingness to help those in need. In Study 1, a restorative narrative elicited more positive emotions and an increased willingness to volunteer compared to a negative and control version of the same story. In Study 2, the restorative narrative again evoked more positive emotions and higher hypothetical donations to a relevant charity. Study 2 also varied the narrative ending and found that restorative narratives may need to end positively to maintain their effects.

Introduction

The media landscape in the United States is rife with negative news. News agencies frequently highlight stories of suffering, ranging from local-level disasters to larger socioeconomic issues. Repeated exposure to problem-focused news is not only emotionally challenging for viewers—there is also ample evidence that it can be psychologically harmful in the long term (see McNaughton-Cassill et al., 2009; Pfefferbaum et al., 2014; Silver et al., 2013). Moreover, the distress from watching negative news can potentially reduce viewers' likelihood to help those suffering. This effect, described as the *collapse of compassion*, occurs when the emotional cost

of perceiving many people in need is overwhelming, leading viewers to suppress their emotional responses (Cameron & Payne, 2011; Slovic, 2007). As a result, viewers prevent themselves from feeling empathy and subsequently become less willing to help (Small et al., 2007). At the same time, ignoring or avoiding negative media content can mean missing important information about current events.

Although media agencies cannot ignore the negative elements of news, the way these stories are presented or the types of stories that are shared could help to reduce adverse effects. Specifically, a *restorative narrative* is a particular approach to storytelling that emphasizes character strengths to highlight a meaningful progression of individuals who experience hardship. Rather than focusing exclusively on loss or suffering, restorative narratives shift the focus to the disaster victims' strength and progress.

News reporting could take a restorative approach or could use restorative narratives in addition to stories of tragedy. Restorative narratives may complement traditional journalism by providing a way to share negative information without overwhelming audiences with negative emotions. Instead, restorative narratives may reduce the desire to avoid negative media content, and thus decrease the need for emotion regulation processes. As a result, restorative narratives may potentially increase audiences' willingness to help (Fitzgerald et al., 2020). Because of their potential prosocial effects, restorative narratives thus may be a valuable approach for both journalists and public interest communicators more broadly.

The restorative narrative approach has gained recent attention from journalists (DeJarnette, 2016; Tenore, 2015) and some researchers (Dahmen, 2016, 2019; Fitzgerald et al., 2020). However, very few studies have examined the mechanisms and effects of restorative narratives experimentally (but see Fitzgerald et al., 2020). The current studies seek to provide experimental evidence for the effects of restorative narratives and expand the restorative narrative literature by testing one of its key components: the narrative ending. In particular, we ask whether a restorative narrative, because of its theoretical ties to positive affect and moral elevation, will lead to decreased negative emotions, increased willingness to help, and increased desire to continue engaging with the media content when compared to a wholly negative version of the same story. We also test whether the narrative ending plays an integral part in those effects.

Literature review

Defining restorative narratives

The term restorative narrative initially emerged from the nonprofit organization Images & Voices of Hope (ivoh), which recently merged with the Peace Studio organization. ivoh has identified certain characteristics that describe restorative narratives and differentiate them from other storytelling approaches. In particular, restorative narratives are strengths-based, show hard truths without giving false hope, pursue authenticity, and involve sustained inquiries that present

universal truths and human connection (Tenore, 2015). For the purposes of our research, we have distilled these characteristics into two key features that we can experimentally manipulate: restorative narratives are (a) strengths-based and (b) highlight a meaningful progression. We feel these features best encompass the aspects that may be necessary to evoke the positive and prosocial effects of restorative narratives. Thus, we propose the following working definition: *a restorative narrative is a story that provides an authentic sharing of negative experiences while highlighting the strength and meaningful progression of the individual(s)*. In this paper, we focus primarily on the meaningful progression feature.

Our working definition of restorative narratives differs from the full list of characteristics presented by ivoh: specifically, it does not focus on authenticity, sustained inquiry, or universal truths. These characteristics may be valuable for journalists to consider, but some of them are less suited for empirical study. For example, although authenticity is important, it would be difficult to manipulate experimentally. Rather, we chose stories that we thought embodied authenticity in all conditions. Similarly, although some restorative narratives are sustained inquiries, we propose that stories can provide a restorative trajectory even if they are a single journalistic report rather than a long-form story or a series. Lastly, we feel that the aspect of showing hard, universal truths and human connection is inherent within restorative narratives and need not be included as an operational component.

The strengths-based feature of restorative narrative relates to the focus on character strengths and/or virtues in the face of adversity (Tenore, 2015). Research on character strengths (see Park & Peterson, 2009) identifies a number of virtues such as courage (e.g., bravery, persistence) and transcendence (e.g., gratitude, hope). These virtues are linked to well-being and other positive psychological outcomes, such as recovery (Park & Peterson, 2006). Thus, the focus on character virtue as opposed to harm may foster more psychological well-being and prosociality in audiences (Fitzgerald et al., 2020).

A meaningful progression is an upward path from hardship toward an improved life or situation (Tenore, 2015). Meaningful progress may be understood as conceptually similar to the process of recovery. Progress, like recovery, is not necessarily a linear process: it may include setbacks and challenges faced by the individual. Nonetheless, a restorative narrative as a whole should maintain a positive trajectory in which viewers perceive that story individual(s) will end in a better place than where they began.

Little empirical research has explored this genre of storytelling (but see Dahmen, 2016; Fitzgerald et al., 2020). However, similar concepts have garnered recent attention. For example, solution-focused, or constructive journalism, is an emerging form of journalism that applies positive psychology techniques to produce stories that are both productive and engaging (e.g., McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2018). Although restorative narratives are similar to constructive or solutions journalism, they differ from such stories because they aim to provide hope to a devastating situation by demonstrating resilience, rather than necessarily providing a solution.

The restorative narrative concept emerged in journalism, but it can be used across a range of storytelling contexts, including strategic communication, public relations, and stories for

prosocial action (e.g., by nonprofits that wish to encourage volunteerism or donations to a cause). Restorative narratives can even include fictional stories. For example, the movie *The Pursuit of Happyness* tells the story of a man's journey from poverty to success. We suggest that the basic functions and outcomes of restorative narratives should be similar across different contexts, making these ideas broadly applicable to public interest communications.

Despite the promising effects of restorative narrative, few studies have directly tested them. In one recent study, Fitzgerald and colleagues (2020) examined the use of restorative narratives for promoting engagement and prosocial behavior in relation to a health campaign. Researchers compared a restorative and negative version of a story about a woman's illness diagnosis and treatment. Those in the restorative narrative condition reported more positive and less negative emotions overall, and more willingness to read or share the story with others than those in the negative story condition. Additionally, significant indirect effects emerged for narrative condition on willingness to help through emotional responses.

Although Fitzgerald and colleagues (2020) provided an initial examination of indirect effects of the emotion and moral elevation mechanisms on helping, restorative narrative research would benefit from a test of a full statistical model of restorative narrative effects on helping. Additionally, the meaningful progression feature—involving the role of the narrative ending—is an especially understudied area in the restorative narrative literature. Thus, we focus this paper around understanding this feature. Toward these goals, we next review the theoretical mechanisms and hypothesized effects of restorative narratives.

Building a restorative narrative model

Restorative narratives may counteract negative effects of news coverage in two ways: reducing the need to regulate emotion in the face of negative news and inducing a state of moral elevation.

Emotion regulation

Cameron and Payne (2011) found that collapse of compassion is contingent upon participants' expectation of being asked for help. For instance, when individuals expect helping to be costly, they actively avoid feeling prosocial emotions that would otherwise compel them to help (Shaw et al., 1994). Thus, if emotion regulation occurs under certain motivational conditions such as the expectation of being overwhelmed, then altering those conditions should change how people respond to negative news. We posit that restorative narratives alter the expectation of being overwhelmed by shifting the focus from loss to recovery, allowing viewers to experience more positive emotions and less negative emotions overall. As a result, viewers may become more willing to help those afflicted (e.g., donate or volunteer; Cameron & Payne, 2011; Slovic, 2007). Thus, we hypothesize that a restorative narrative will induce more positive emotions (H1a), less negative emotions (H1b), and an increased willingness to donate and volunteer (H2) compared to a negative story version that directly counters these features (e.g., focuses on continued suffering rather than recovery), and a control story version that is neutral toward the features. In particular,

the more positive the emotional responses to the story, the more willing audiences should be to help. Thus, we hypothesize an indirect effect of narrative condition on willingness to help through emotional response (H3).

In addition to reducing the need for emotion regulation, restorative narratives may further negate the effects of negative news by inducing a state of moral elevation.

Moral elevation

Moral elevation refers to a feeling of warmth and appreciation evoked by witnessing acts of moral goodness. Instances of moral beauty or exemplars of positive character strengths such as generosity or altruism can induce this feeling (Aquino et al., 2011; Dale et al., 2017; Haidt, 2003; Oliver et al., 2012). Elevation is associated with positive emotions (e.g., happiness), meaningful emotions (e.g., touched, moved), and prosocial motivations, such as helping (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Ellithorpe et al., 2015; Schnall et al., 2010). Because restorative narratives feature such character strengths, we hypothesize that a restorative narrative will induce more elevation than a negative and a control version of the same story (H4). Moreover, more elevation should increase the willingness to help. Thus, we hypothesize an indirect effect of narrative condition on willingness to help through elevation (H5).

Continued engagement

Because restorative narratives evoke a more positive affective state, reduce emotion regulation, and induce moral elevation, readers may be more willing to continue to engage with the stories. That is, they may be more willing to keep reading, to read more similar stories, and read more stories from the media source; they also may be more willing to share the story. The desire to continue engaging with the news rather than avoiding it can be important for both news media (by increasing readership) and for organizations involved in recovery (by helping to spread the word about their efforts). Thus, we also will examine whether the desire to read similar stories (*RQ1a*) and the desire to share the story with others (*RQ1b*) differs between a restorative narrative and negative and control versions of the same story.

Lastly, we will test a hypothesized path model of restorative narrative effects (see Figure 1). We propose that restorative narratives will increase both positive emotion (Path 1) and moral elevation (Path 3) and decrease negative emotion (Path 2). Additionally, because elevation is associated with positive affect, we propose that positive emotions and elevation will have a positive association (Path 4). Next, we propose that restorative narratives will have an indirect effect on the willingness to help through positive emotions (Path 5) and elevation (Path 7). Path 6 represents the effect of negative emotions on willingness to help; we propose that this path will be negative or non-significant.

Figure 1

Conceptual Path Model of Restorative Narrative Effects on Helping
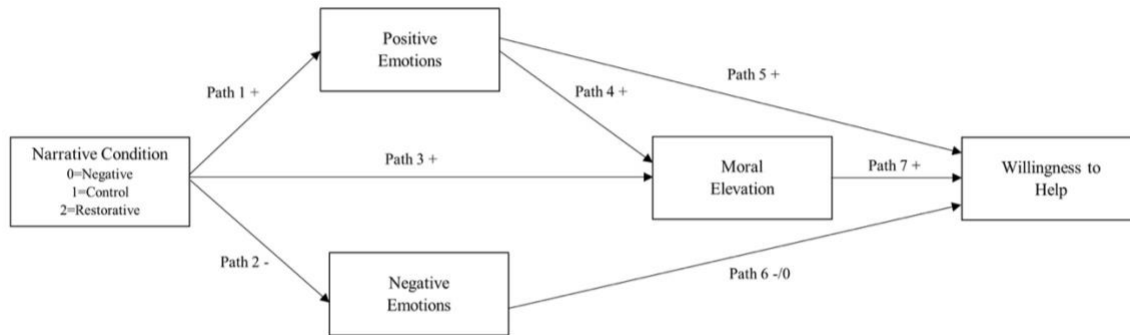
To test these hypotheses, in Study 1, we compare a traditional problem-focused version of a negative news story to a restorative narrative version of the same story. In Study 2, we conceptually replicate and extend the findings of Study 1 with a new story to examine the unique role of narrative ending.

Study 1

Method

We recruited participants from undergraduate communication courses in the northeastern United States and through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). A total of 372 participants (202 MTurk, 170 students) completed the survey. However, 57 participants failed a set of attention checks, leaving a final sample of 315 participants (186 MTurk, 129 students).[1] Of those, 157 were male and 158 were female; 204 (64.8%) were White, 50 (15.9%) were Asian/Pacific Islander, 30 (9.5%) were Black/African American, 19 (6.0%) were Hispanic/Latino(a), and 12 (3.8%) Other/Unknown. The mean age was 30.44 years ($SD = 13.39$; min = 18, max = 77). We conducted the study online using the survey platform Qualtrics. We randomly assigned participants to view one of three video news reports: restorative ($n = 103$), negative ($n = 107$), or a control narrative ($n = 105$).

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[1] We chose to combine the samples in both Study 1 and Study 2. The stimuli and measures were identical and there is no theoretical reason to expect the results would differ across student and non-student populations (or younger vs. older populations). Previous research shows relatively little difference between MTurk and student samples in general (e.g., Ramsey et al., 2016).

Story stimuli

The stimulus material was adapted from the CBS Sunday Morning News. The video features Ruben, a man who survived a devastating tornado in Joplin, MO, and saved several other people. Because we were particularly interested in examining the meaningful progression feature, we created three versions of the story by manipulating Ruben's progression. All versions contained character strengths (Ruben's courage). The restorative condition specifically demonstrated a meaningful progression (upward trajectory) for Ruben as he continued to improve his situation in the time since the disaster. The restorative video ends with Ruben being offered his dream job and the statement, "I'm going to keep going and do the best I can." The negative condition did not demonstrate a meaningful progression for Ruben; rather, this video focused on Ruben's description of the tornado and the devastation it caused. In this version, Ruben loses his dream job as a result of ongoing anxiety. The video ends with the statement, "It was horribly debilitating…what am I going to do?" The control condition provided no real progression or outcome for Ruben: viewers did not know what happened to Ruben and his feelings are unknown, with statements about the tornado only. We held all other characteristics of the videos constant. All conditions were 3 minutes and 30 seconds long.[2]

Measures

Emotional response

First, participants rated the degree to which they experienced a series of emotions in response to the video. We adopted the 20 emotion items from previous research (Dillard & Shen, 2006; Myrick & Oliver, 2015), which participants rated on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). We created four affect scales; *happy* (cheerful, happy, humorous, amused; α = .71), *meaningful* (touched, moved, compassion, awe, admiration, inspired; α = .88), *sad* (tearful, depressed, sad; α = .75), and *fear* (fearful, afraid, anxious; α = .87).[3]

Moral elevation

Participants completed two subscales from previous research to assess their moral elevation (Aquino et al., 2011): views of humanity, which consisted of five items, such as "The world is full of kindness and generosity," (responding on a scale from 1 *strongly disagree* to 5 *strongly agree*), and the desire to be a better person, which consisted of six items, including "Ruben has

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[2] We included a series of attention and manipulation checks for Study 1 and Study 2 (see Appendix). Details on these items can be found in the supplement on Open Science Framework: https://bit.ly/3iFpkcg. The videos are also available on OSF.

[3] We conducted a principal component analysis (PCA) to determine our emotion composite scales. For details on the PCA results, see Appendix or OSF supplement: https://bit.ly/3iFpkcg

shown me how to be a better person." Participants rated how often they were having those thoughts while viewing the news clip on a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always; combined α = .92).

Willingness to help

Participants responded to the items, "How likely are you to donate to disaster relief organizations?" and "How likely are you to volunteer at disaster relief organizations in your area?" on a scale from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 5 (extremely likely).

Continued engagement

To assess the desire to continue to engage with the media content in the future, we asked participants how much they would like to watch more stories like the one in the study and how likely they would be to share the story with others on a scale from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 5 (extremely likely).[4]

Results

To test our hypothesized main effects, we conducted analyses of variance (ANOVAs) with Tukey post hoc tests.

Emotional response

Consistent with H1a, the restorative narrative elicited more happy emotions than the negative and control narratives (both Tukey's $p < .001$; see Table 1 for means and ANOVA results). For meaningful affect, the difference between the restorative narrative and the negative narrative was approaching significance, where the restorative narrative elicited more meaningful affect than the negative ($p = .050$). Meaningful affect did not differ between the restorative and the control narrative ($p = .457$), or between the negative and control narrative ($p = .478$).

Consistent with H1b, results revealed a significant effect of narrative condition on both sad and fear emotions. The restorative narrative elicited less sadness than the negative ($p = .005$) and the control ($p = .005$). Sadness did not significantly differ between the negative and control ($p = 1.00$). Fear showed a slightly different pattern: although the restorative narrative elicited less fear than the control ($p = .005$), fear did not differ between the restorative and negative ($p = .314$). Similarly, fear did not differ between the negative and control narratives ($p = .204$).

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[4] We included other exploratory measures that we do not present here, including narrative transportation (Green & Brock, 2000), identification with the character (Cohen, 2001), anger, and attribution of responsibility for the individuals' situation. Results are available from the researchers upon request.

Table 1

Means and ANOVA Results Across Studies

	Negative	Control$_{S1}$; RNE$_{S2}$	Restorative	Univariate ANOVA Results	
	M (SD)	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*F(df), p*-value	η^2_p
Happy Emotions					
Study 1	1.86 (1.05)	1.83 (1.03)	2.57 (1.12)	$F(2, 311) = 16.22, p < .001$	.09
Study 2	1.47 (0.81)	1.72 (.98)	2.49 (1.13)	$F(2, 406) = 40.22, p < .001$	.16
Meaningful Emotions					
Study 1	4.31 (1.36)	4.54 (1.46)	4.78 (1.46)	$F(2, 311) = 2.77, p = .064$	.02
Study 2	3.37 (1.40)	3.35 (1.39)	4.65 (1.57)	$F(2, 406) = 36.68, p < .001$	.15
Sad Emotions					
Study 1	3.40 (1.45)	3.40 (1.46)	2.77 (1.40)	$F(2, 312) = 6.62, p = .002$	.04
Study 2	4.13 (1.62)	3.91 (1.64)	3.40 (1.39)	$F(2, 406) = 8.23, p < .001$	.04
Fear Emotion					
Study 1	2.68 (1.38)	3.03 (1.61)	2.37 (1.59)	$F(2, 311) = 4.96, p = .008$	.03
Study 2	2.63 (1.61)	2.68 (1.63)	2.19 (1.40)	$F(2, 406) = 4.23, p = .015$	.02
Moral Elevation					
Study 1	3.40 (0.76)	3.68 (.77)	3.64 (0.77)	$F(2, 312) = 3.97, p = .020$	.02
Study 2	3.54 (0.93)	3.66 (.75)	3.82 (0.70)	$F(2, 406) = 4.13, p = .017$	.02
Willingness to Volunteer					
Study 1	3.11 (1.07)	3.05 (1.09)	3.43 (1.02)	$F(2, 312) = 3.79, p = .020$	.02
Study 2	51.40 (32.50)	51.93 (31.57)	52.83 (32.32)	$F(2, 404) = 0.07, p = .933$	.00
Willingness to Donate					
Study 1	3.24 (1.05)	3.14 (1.09)	3.43 (0.95)	$F(2, 310) = 1.09, p = .337$	.01
Study 2	42.27 (32.43)	41.70 (33.40)	41.89 (31.01)	$F(2, 404) = 0.01, p = .990$	.00
Hypothetical Donate	4.96 (4.09)	4.03 (3.17)	5.59 (4.27)	$F(2, 406) = 5.77, p = .003$	.03
Read Similar Stories					
Study 1	3.24 (1.12)	3.26 (1.10)	3.33 (1.16)	$F(2, 308) = 0.18, p = .835$	.00
Study 2	3.54 (2.02)	3.65 (1.95)	4.50 (1.85)	$F(2, 406) = 10.30, p < .001$	.05
Share the Story					
Study 1	2.84 (1.02)	2.90 (1.16)	2.84 (1.23)	$F(2, 311) = 0.08, p = .927$	.00
Study 2	3.58 (2.02)	3.68 (1.99)	4.24 (1.95)	$F(2, 406) = 4.47, p = .012$	.02

Note: Hypothetical Donate only measured in Study 2.

Moral elevation

Although viewing the restorative narrative did not induce significantly more elevation than the negative narrative, the difference was again approaching significance ($p = .073$). However, the restorative did not differ from the control in terms of moral elevation ($p = .915$). Thus, although H4 was not fully supported, we found evidence in line with our hypothesizing.

Willingness to help

We found that viewing a restorative narrative led to significantly more willingness to volunteer than the control ($p = .028$) and more than the negative narrative at a level that approached significance ($p = .082$). However, narrative condition did not affect willingness to donate.

Continued engagement

Narrative condition did not affect the likelihood to watch similar stories (*RQ1a*) or the likelihood to share the story with others (*RQ1b*).

Model testing

We tested the hypothesized path model using maximum likelihood estimation in IBM Amos (Version 26; Hayes, 2013). We split Path 1 and Path 2 into separate paths to represent *happy* (Path1a) and *meaningful* (Path 1b) positive emotional responses and *sad* (Path 2a) and *fear* (Path 2b) negative emotional responses. We tested the model separately for willingness to donate and willingness to volunteer.

Willingness to donate

The model fit the data adequately for willingness to donate, $\chi^2(df = 4) = 27.02$, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 6.75$, comparative fit index (CFI) = .95, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .14, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .021. Although RMSEA was slightly high ($> .10$), this model fit estimate is often inflated in models with a small degree of freedom (see Kenny et al., 2015). Considering the other fit indices exceeded the typical cutoff criteria, the results suggest that the model fit the data reasonably well. The path coefficients were generally in line with our predictions (See Figure 2). In particular, we proposed that narrative condition would indirectly affect the willingness to help through emotional responses (H3) and moral elevation (H5). The results showed this pattern: there was a positive effect of narrative condition on happy emotions (Path 1a) and meaningful emotions (Path 1b), and a negative effect of narrative condition on sad emotions (Path 2a). Meaningful emotions had a significant effect on elevation (Path 4b), and subsequently, the effect of moral elevation on willingness to donate was significant and positive (Path 7). No other paths were significant. Thus, overall, it seems that moral elevation was indirectly affected by the narrative condition through the meaningful emotional responses, and moral elevation then affected the willingness to donate.

Willingness to volunteer

The model fit was acceptable for willingness to volunteer, $\chi^2(df = 4) = 29.42$, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 7.35$, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = .14, SRMR = .03. Again, the path coefficients in general supported our predictions for narrative condition indirectly affecting helping (see Figure 2). All direct and indirect paths from narrative condition to emotional responses and moral elevation replicated those for the willingness to donate. Two differences emerged for willingness to volunteer: the path from happy to volunteer was significant (Path 6a), and the path from moral elevation to willingness to volunteer was approaching significance (Path 8). Thus, the willingness to volunteer appeared to be influenced by both moral elevation and happy emotions.

Figure 2

Path Model Results from Study 1
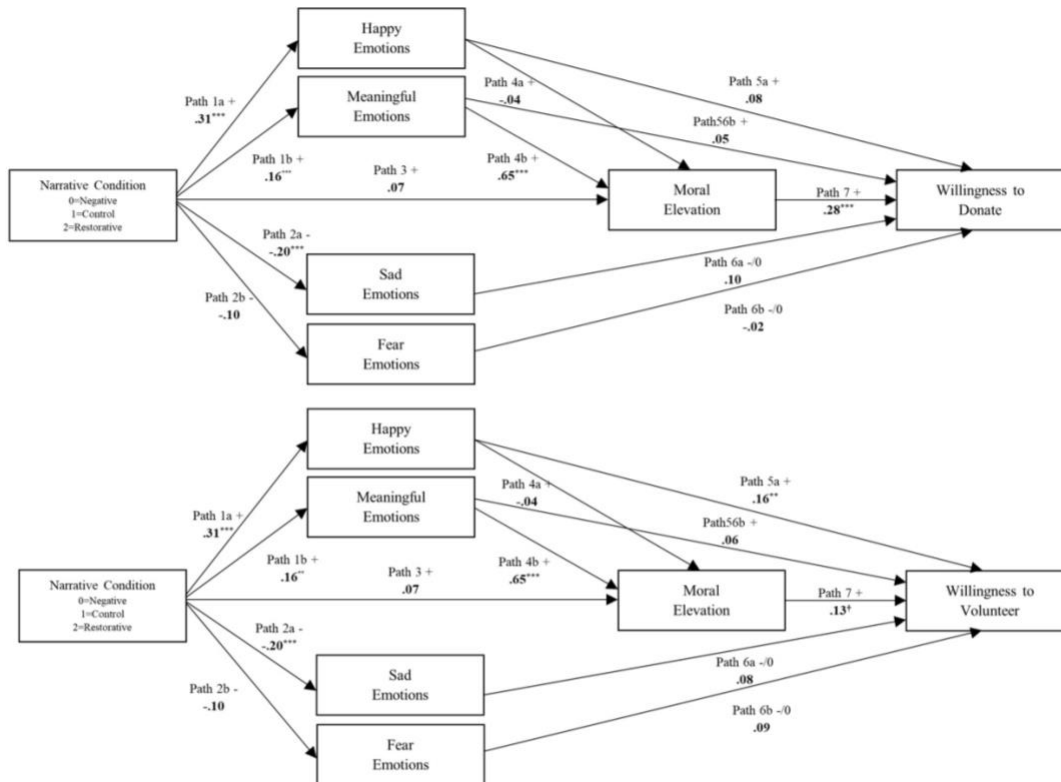
Note. All endogenous variables included error terms not shown here. Error terms of emotion items were correlated for all model tests. ***$p < .001$. **$p < .01$. *$p < .05$. †$p < .07$.

Discussion

Study 1 provided initial evidence for both the mechanisms as well as the proposed outcomes of restorative narratives. The restorative narrative elicited more positive emotions and a greater willingness to volunteer than the other story versions, and meaningful emotions and moral elevation appeared to play a key indirect role for the effects on helping. In a second study, we seek to provide a further test of the main restorative narrative effects; in particular, we seek to extend our Study 1 to test written narrative stimuli. Furthermore, Study 2 will also examine the role of narrative ending—an additional aspect of the meaningful progression feature.

We propose that meaningful progression is two-fold: the narrative trajectory should be positive, and the narrative ending should indicate a continuation of this trajectory. First, the story should focus on the progress of the individual(s) to reach a more positive end state (e.g., rebuilding their life, reestablishing normalcy). Second, viewers should perceive that this positive course will continue beyond where the story ends. In other words, the story ending should also

be positive; however, this assertion lacks experimental evidence. Thus, in Study 2, we sought to examine whether the positive trajectory in the body of restorative narratives is sufficient for the narrative to be effective, or if a positive ending is also necessary. We draw on peak-end rule of emotion to inform our predictions (Kahneman, 2000). Research on the peak-end rule states that people's overall emotional evaluation of an experience can be predicted by the emotions they experience at the moment of peak affect intensity (e.g., the strongest or most intense emotion) and the ending (Kahneman, 2000). Thus, a positive ending may be a necessary component to maintain positive evaluations of the full story as well as one's emotional reactions to it.

Study 2

To test the role of narrative ending, we compared three versions of a story about a man's experience with homelessness and drug addiction. These versions varied both trajectory and ending. The first story version was restorative. This condition contained both a positive trajectory—such that it involved a shift from negative to positive events—and a positive ending. Similar to Study 1, the positive ending demonstrated an optimistic point of view. The second version, negative, did not contain a restorative trajectory or a positive ending. The third version we called restorative with negative ending (RNE): it contained a positive trajectory like that of the restorative condition, paired with the same negative ending as in the negative condition. This design allowed us to isolate the role of narrative ending within restorative narratives.[5]

For Study 2, we used a written text rather than a video. We expect that restorative narratives should work in similar ways across different media, because the restorative content is the key mechanism of the effects. Testing restorative narrative effects in a different medium allows us to increase the generalizability of our theory. We proposed the same hypotheses and path model as in Study 1. Additionally, we examined whether the restorative narrative would differ from the RNE narrative on our variables.

Method

Participants were recruited from undergraduate communication courses in the northeastern United States and through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). A total of 521 participants (309 MTurk, 212 students) completed the survey online. However, 112 participants failed a set of reading checks (58 from MTurk, 54 from student sample), leaving a final sample of 409 participants (251 MTurk, 158 students).[6] Of those, 197 were male, 209 were female, and 2 were Transgender/Other; 280 (68.5%) were White, 62 (15.2%) were Asian/Pacific Islander, 32 (7.8%) were Black/African American, 21 (5.1%) were Hispanic/Latino(a), and 11 (2.7%) identified as

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[5] We did not conduct a full 2x2 because the fourth condition—no restorative trajectory with a positive ending—did not make sense with our stimuli, as a sudden recovery from addiction may be implausible.

[6] Details on inclusion criteria can be found in the Appendix and on OSF: https://bit.ly/3iFpkcg

Other/Unknown. The mean age for the total sample was 31.40 ($SD = 13.25$; min = 18, max = 77). The narrative conditions included $n = 146$ in negative, $n = 127$ in RNE, and $n = 136$ in restorative.

Story stimuli

The narrative was adapted from a story series titled "Stories from Skid Row," published by the Union Rescue Mission (URM). The story is of Brian, a man who struggled with homelessness and drug addiction before finding a better life at the URM. The original video was transcribed to a written narrative. We also included screenshots from the video in the narrative. We edited the narrative into the three conditions by altering some paragraphs in the story and presenting different endings in each version. All conditions begin with Brian experiencing tragedy (the loss of his son; his wife leaving him) and falling into drug addiction and homelessness. The restorative and RNE conditions follow the process of Brian's recovering from addiction through the help of the rescue mission and his own hard work, whereas in the negative condition, Brian goes to the URM but is unable to overcome his addiction. The restorative condition ends with Brian preparing to start a new life with his girlfriend, while the RNE and negative conditions both end with Brian falling back into his drug addiction. We held the length constant between conditions (937 words in negative; 931 in RNE; 927 in restorative).

Measures

We used the same measures in Study 2 as in Study 1, with minor exceptions: we expanded the scale for the willingness to help items from a 1-7 scale to a 0-100 scale as an attempt to find more nuanced differences between conditions. Donation willingness assessed the likelihood to donate to the URM specifically. We also included an additional item to assess donation willingness related to the narrative (helping the homeless): we added a hypothetical scenario in which participants imagined they were given $20 to donate to a charity. We provided them with a list of charities for different causes (e.g., endangered animals, children, homeless individuals) and asked them to indicate in dollars how much they would donate to each charity. All other measures were the same as in Study 1: Emotional responses (happy, $\alpha = .74$; meaningful, $\alpha = .88$; sad, $\alpha = .74$; fear, $\alpha = .86$), willingness to help, moral elevation ($\alpha = .90$), and continued engagement ($\alpha = .89$).

Results

Emotional response

Consistent with H1a and Study 1, our ANOVA results suggested that the restorative narrative elicited the most happy emotions (both $ps < .001$; see Table 1). The RNE and negative narrative did not differ on happy emotions ($p = .10$). This pattern was the same for meaningful emotions:

the restorative narrative elicited the most meaningful emotions (both ps < .001), but meaningful emotion did not differ between the negative and RNE narratives (p = .99).

A similar pattern emerged for negative affect. The restorative narrative elicited the least sad emotions overall (both ps < .05) as well as less fear than the RNE (p = .02). The difference between the restorative narrative and the negative narrative also was approaching significance, where the restorative narrative induced less fear than the negative narrative (p = .05). Neither sadness nor fear differed between the negative and RNE conditions. Taken together, these findings suggest that the story ending is important in eliciting positive emotions and minimizing negative emotions.

Moral elevation

We found a significant effect of narrative condition on moral elevation, such that the restorative narrative led to significantly more elevation than the negative narrative (p < .05). However, elevation did not differ between the RNE and negative conditions (p = .44) or the RNE and restorative conditions (p = .23). We would expect this finding, given the restorative and negative ending components of the RNE narrative.

Willingness to help

We found no significant direct effects for narrative condition on the willingness to donate or willingness to volunteer (H2; see Table 1). This lack of difference may relate the use of a 100-point scale for this item, which may have washed out potential effects of condition on willingness to help. However, for the hypothetical donation, participants in the restorative condition donated significantly more to a charity to help the homeless than those in the RNE condition. There were no other significant differences for this outcome variable.

Continued engagement

Those in the restorative condition reported the greatest desire to engage more with the story (read, share; both ps < .01). Engagement did not differ between the negative and RNE conditions (p = .841).

Model testing

We again tested the hypothesized model separately for willingness to donate and volunteer, with positive emotion paths split into *happy* and *meaningful* emotions and negative emotion paths split into *sad* and *fear* emotions.

Willingness to donate

The model fit the data well for willingness to donate, $\chi^2(df = 4) = 53.26$, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 13.31$, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .15, SRMR = .04 (see Figure 3). The same pattern emerged as in Study 1: narrative condition appeared to indirectly affect helping through emotional responses and moral elevation. We found significant effects of narrative condition on all four emotional responses in the predicted directions. Meaningful emotions again significantly affected elevation, and elevation subsequently affected the willingness to donate. We also observed slight differences from Study 1: the path from happy emotions to moral elevation was significant and negative. We did not predict this negative path; however, this finding could have emerged because the happy subscale included the items humorous and amused, which we would not expect to positively correlate with meaningful emotion items. In addition to the path from happy emotions to moral elevation, we also found that the path from meaningful emotions to willingness to donate and the path from fear to willingness to donate were significant and positive as well.

Willingness to volunteer

The model again fit the data adequately for willingness to volunteer, $\chi^2(df = 4) = 46.56$, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 11.64$, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .14, SRMR = .03. The paths from narrative condition to emotional response and moral elevation replicated those for willingness to donate. Again, the paths from moral elevation and meaningful emotions to willingness to volunteer were significant and positive. Interestingly, the path from fear emotions to volunteer was not significant, but the path from sadness to volunteer was significant and positive. Thus, willingness to volunteer differed from the willingness to donate only in terms of the effect of fear and sadness emotions in which the significance of the paths was reversed.

Figure 3

Path Model Results from Study 2
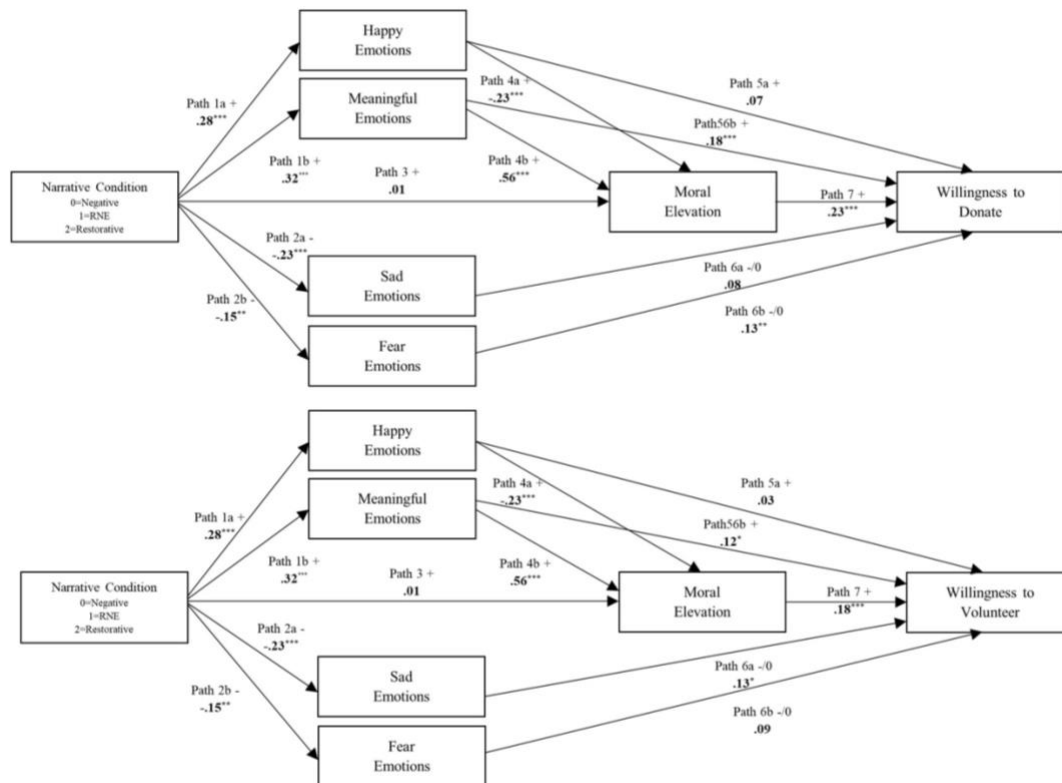
Note. RNE = Restorative with Negative Ending. ***p < .001. **p < .01. *p < .05. †p < .07.

Discussion

The goal of Study 2 was to provide a further test of the restorative narrative effects from Study 1 and examine the story ending aspect of meaningful progression. Our findings conceptually replicated Study 1 such that the restorative narrative elicited the most positive emotions of all conditions and more moral elevation than the negative condition. Moreover, those in the restorative narrative condition donated significantly more to a relevant charity in a hypothetical donation scenario. This study also supported the importance of a positive story ending. The story with the positive trajectory and negative ending (RNE) influenced participants in a manner more similar to the totally negative story than the restorative narrative. A limitation of Study 2 was that we did not compare a version of the narrative that consisted of only a positive ending with no progression. Future research should examine the extent to which positive outcome alone is predictive of restorative narrative effects.

General discussion

The current studies provided an initial test of a model of restorative narrative effects with a focus on the narrative trajectory. Individuals were more willing to help when exposed to a restorative narrative rather than a negative one, which was especially striking given that characters in negative narratives are arguably more in need of help. A character's meaningful progression toward recovery is an important element of restorative narratives. Furthermore, results suggested that the narrative ending was a key element of maintaining this trajectory. Across both studies, we found adequate fit of our model for both the willingness to donate and the willingness to volunteer. The indirect effects demonstrated by these models help us to better understand the nuanced effects of restorative narratives.

The role of emotion

In general, we proposed that restorative narratives would induce an emotional state that would drive prosocial motivations. Specifically, we hypothesized that restorative narratives would increase positive emotions (including those that are generally positive and those that are more meaningful) and decrease negative emotions (sadness and fear). This process should contribute to a state of moral elevation and greater willingness to help those affected. Consistent with this theoretical perspective, we found that restorative narratives led to more positive affect and less negative affect overall, and in some cases these emotions indirectly affected the willingness to help. Furthermore, we found a consistent pattern in which narrative condition contributed significantly to meaningful emotions. Meaningful emotions then affected moral elevation and subsequently the willingness to help. These results further suggest that meaningful emotions drive moral elevation and helping effects.

Notably, the findings for negative emotions differed between studies and between helping types. We hypothesized that the effect of negative emotions on helping would be nonsignificant or negative, regardless of helping type (Path 6a and 6b for all models). In Study 1, negative emotions did not influence helping. In Study 2, fear influenced the willingness to donate and sadness influenced the willingness to volunteer. Taken together, these findings may suggest that differences in the restorative stories might lead negative emotions to function differently and affect helping in slightly different ways. Future studies should test our model using a variety of restorative narrative stimuli to better understand the role of negative emotions.

The role of ending

In relation to narrative ending, our findings in Study 2 suggest that the effects of restorative narratives may be thwarted without a positive narrative conclusion. The story with the positive trajectory and negative ending (RNE) influenced participants in a manner more similar to the totally negative story than to the restorative narrative. Even when a story highlights the

meaningful progression of a victim, if that victim fails to encounter a positive outcome at the end of the story, the positive trajectory suggested by the narrative is broken. Moreover, the RNE story produced significantly less positive emotions, less moral elevation, and more negative emotions than the restorative narrative, despite being almost completely identical until the end of the story. This finding is indicative of the importance of narrative endings in fostering such effects. In line with the peak-end rule (Kahneman, 2000), the final emotions seemed to direct the readers' overall emotional response. Although we did not examine the peak part of this theory, our findings suggest that, even when the emotions at other points of the story are positive, the negative ending emotions outweigh them.

These findings suggest that restorative narratives may be an effective way of countering the collapse of compassion and increasing helping during times of crisis. Although journalists have a responsibility to report on negative events, our studies suggest that finding ways to highlight positive progress even in the midst of challenging situations can have important societal benefits by encouraging prosocial action.

Yet, while restorative narratives may have practical potential, there may be ethical considerations when using a restorative narrative format. The restorative narrative in Study 1 left viewers with a sense that Ruben had landed his dream job and was feeling optimistic about his future. This was not necessarily the most current portrayal of Ruben (Ruben did land his dream job, but he lost it due to PTSD). Nonetheless, our results found that ending the report with Ruben on a positive trajectory fostered more positive social and psychological outcomes than by showing Ruben as struggling.

Of course, not all stories can be presented in a positive or restorative way. Journalists must follow the ethical principles of accurate reporting. Our intent is not to suggest that restorative narratives should ignore setbacks or inaccurately present situations. Rather, highlighting strength and positive trajectory seems to be a beneficial strategy for increasing prosocial attitudes, and therefore journalists may want to consider these components when crafting their stories. For example, journalists might highlight a positive trajectory, if applicable and genuine, along with the details of a crisis rather than focusing on the crisis alone. If a news team interviews multiple people for a story, they might choose to highlight a person who demonstrates strength or is on the road to recovery. Alternatively, a restorative narrative might be presented as a sidebar or follow-up story along with a report about a tragedy. What information to present for what purpose is a judgment that journalists using restorative narratives will need to consider.

ivoh offers several types of narratives that are similar to restorative narratives on the surface but lack the particular characteristics that make them effective. For example, stories that provide a false sense of hope, or focus too much on tragedy, are not restorative (Tenore, 2015). The subtle variations in these restorative narrative imposters may provide useful comparisons beyond the wholly negative versions we used in the current studies. Similarly, comparing how and when restorative narratives differ from conceptually similar storytelling approaches may be a useful avenue for future research. For instance, research on underdog narratives (see Prestin, 2013) examines stories that begin with an individual facing some adversity and shift to how that

individual overcomes their challenges to achieve success. Such stories induce hope and therefore may have similar benefits to viewers as restorative narratives.

A limitation of the current study is that we provided a working definition of restorative narratives that did not include all of the features initially suggested by ivoh. Some of these features may play an important role in the effectiveness of restorative narratives (for example, a narrative that is perceived as inauthentic may have negative rather than positive effects on viewers). Future work might consider whether other features should be included in empirical studies and how they might be operationalized.

Implications for journalism and public interest communications

Our results suggest practical implications for journalists, journalism educators, and public interest communicators. For instance, public interest communicators could apply the knowledge gained in this research to create more actionable, empirically-based narrative campaigns that create positive social change by focusing on stories that include character strengths and positive trajectories. Furthermore, our findings provide an approach to journalism that could be integrated into an educational setting: journalism and communication educators could include curriculum related to the emotional mechanisms and outcomes of restorative narratives as a new type of journalism and public interest communications.

Implications beyond journalism

The effects observed here emerged across both text and video stories. This implies the utility of restorative narratives across a variety of media. As noted in the introduction, this format of storytelling could be applied to a wide range of media communications, rather than simply a journalistic context. For example, restorative narratives could be integrated into film, podcasts, music, fictional works, and goal-oriented campaign materials (e.g., public relations or health campaigns; see Fitzgerald et al., 2020). It seems likely that using a restorative narrative format would lead to beneficial outcomes, such as evoking positive emotions and motivating reader engagement and prosocial action, across a variety of media. Future work might more directly compare the efficacy of these narratives in different contexts or formats. Such work would have implications for instances such as crises or major events where media organizations might cover the same story using a variety of different formats (e.g., television broadcasting, radio, newspapers) and maintaining public engagement is important.

Limitations and future directions

Future studies should examine the characteristics that make restorative narratives more or less effective. For example, studies might vary the relative composition of tragedy statements versus restorative statements. Other work could compare narratives with a mainly positive trajectory to

narratives with a more turbulent progression pattern and determine if restorative narratives are viewed differently based on the overall trajectory of the individual. Though these different patterns may both fit the current conceptual definition of restorative narratives as demonstrating a meaningful progression (and not necessarily excluding progressions that include setbacks), the number or type of setbacks chronicled in these stories may affect readers' judgments.

Conclusion

Restorative narratives provide a way to share negative news while increasing the willingness for viewers to help those affected. Our current studies offer evidence of the mechanisms that foster restorative narrative effects above and beyond other versions of the same stories. Specifically, restorative narratives evoked a state of moral elevation through meaningful emotions, and this elevation influenced helping, regardless of story or helping type. These results suggest that a restorative approach to storytelling may be advantageous in situations where helping is needed but emotion regulation is likely to occur, including ongoing social issues or during times of crisis. As Mallary Tenore, executive director of ivoh, stated: "We're not saying, 'Don't cover the trauma or the tragedy,'…We're saying the story doesn't end there. In many ways, it's just the beginning" (as cited in DeJarnette, 2016, para. 11).

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Appendix

Manipulation and attention checks

Study 1 contained two multiple-choice attention checks which asked participants (a) where Ruben and the others hid from the tornado and (b) what happened to Ruben at the end of the video. Participants who responded incorrectly to either question were excluded from analyses. Participants also indicated by free response what natural disaster devastated Joplin. All responses that included "tornado" or related terms such as "storm" or "bad weather" were included in the final sample. Study 2 contained an attention check which asked participants to select from three options what tragedy Brian experienced. The correct answer (the loss of his son) would be clear to anyone who had read the story. The manipulation check asked which of three items best described how the story ended (Correct answers: "Brian is preparing to start a new life with his girlfriend" for restorative; "Brian fell back into his drug addiction" for negative and RNE). Participants who incorrectly answered either check were excluded from all analyses.

As an additional check to our manipulation in Study 2, we included a measure to assess whether participants felt that Brian was on a positive trajectory by the end of the story. Participants rated their prediction of his future on three 9-point semantic differentials (unpleasant/pleasant, negative/positive, and unhappy/happy; $\alpha = .98$). Those who read the restorative narrative predicted Brian's future to be more positive overall (both Tukey p's $< .001$), $F(2, 406) = 214.54$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .51$. The negative and RNE narratives did not differ ($p = .16$).

Stimulus material in Study 1

The original full-length video (8 minutes, 51 seconds) included an interview with Ruben and an update on Ruben's life since the tornado. Ruben had acquired his dream job and was feeling optimistic about his future; however, immediately afterwards, Ruben notes that he has since lost this job due to PTSD. An additional large portion of the video is simply footage of the Joplin area and devastation from the tornado. Thus, we were able to use Adobe Premiere Pro video editing software to edit the available scenes into three separate conditions.

Principal component analyses (PCA) results for Study 1 and Study 2

We submitted our emotion items in Study 1 to a PCA with Promax rotation with Kaiser normalization (Kappa = 4). Results indicated that three factors best fit the data (63.68% total variance explained). Factor 1 included the items touched, moved, compassion, awe, admiration, and inspired; pattern matrix factor loadings of these items on the factor ranged from .61 to .87 and did not exceed ±.50 on any other factor. Factor 2 included the items tearful, depressed, sad, fearful, afraid, and anxious; pattern matrix loadings on this factor ranged from .60 to .87 and did not exceed ±.30 on any other factor. Factor 3 included the items cheerful, happy, humorous, and

amused; pattern matrix loading on this factor ranged from .64 to .74 and did not exceed ±.30 on any other factor. Notably, fear emotion items appeared to fit better (fearful, afraid, anxious; .87, .87, .82 respectively) than sad emotion items (tearful, depressed, sad; .60, .74, .61 respectively) for Factor 2. We would expect theoretical differences between these overall emotion factors. Thus, we chose not to collapse fear and sad emotion items together and conducted the same PCA again, restricting the number of factors to four. The results of this analysis indicated that four factors explained 68.32% total variance. We conducted the same PCA on the data from Study 2, restricting the number of factors to four for consistency with Study 1. Results from Study 2 indicated that four factors explained 71.67% of the total variance.

Book Review: *Story Movements: How Documentaries Empower People and Inspire Social Change*

By Caty Borum Chattoo, American University

Reviewed by Jasper Fessmann, West Virginia University

From the point of view of public interest communications (PIC), Caty Borum Chattoo's book, "*Story Movements: How Documentaries Empower People and Inspire Social Change,*" provides deep insights into a critical aspect of PIC often overlooked: The tremendous power of documentary filmmaking in awareness building, inspiring, and mobilizing allies. Combining insightful storytelling with the analytical clarity of academic research, the book makes a compelling argument for documentaries as increasingly important avenues of supporting social change. Similar to investigative journalism, documentaries can tell in-depth, intimate, and visceral stories that can have a large impact on moving the needle on a social issue.

At its core, *Story Movements* is about stories: the story of documentary filmmaking as a profession, stories of its impact on social change, and stories of individual quests for a deeper truth to be shared with a larger audience. Borum Chattoo uses these stories to create an overall understanding of the power of documentaries for social change. The individual documentaries and their stories serve here as an American Quilt: each has a unique shape and texture but together they create an overall picture.
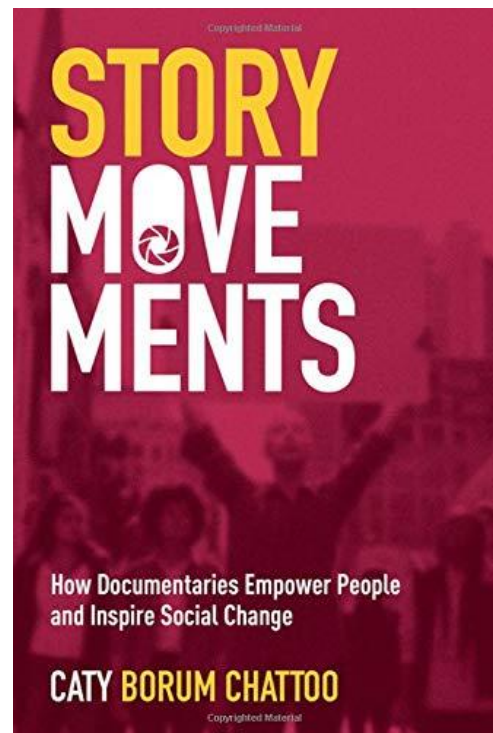
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Each story of a film is a tale of how documentary filmmakers are able to achieve sustained social change through their artistic presentation. The book shows how deeply personal storytelling, strategic outlook, and alliances with other stakeholders can have real social impact. The stories of the documentaries highlighted in the book are deeply moving and inspiring, no less so than some of the most successful PIC mass and/or social media campaigns.

Borum Chattoo captures the artistic nature of documentary filmmaking, explaining the freedom and authenticity this gives to the final film. From a narrative framing point of view, the book provides scores of examples of powerful framing at its best: the titles of the films are great examples of word-smithing, capturing in a few words the essence of the whole issue (e.g. *Black Fish*—the misery of Killer Whales in captivity at Sea World; *Bully*—a deep look at bullying; *The Feeling of Being Watched*—surveillance of Muslim communities in the United States; *Heroin(e)*—community responses to the opioid crisis).

A key theme discussed throughout is the relationship of documentaries to journalism. Documentaries can have an intimate and visceral impact that few news stories can achieve. The book outlines how in the participatory network era of mass communications—the age of streaming and social media—documentary filmmaking flourishes more than ever before, filling voids left by a declining role of traditional news media. At the same time, *Story Movements* shows how the independence from news organizations creates major hurdles for the filmmakers and can expose them to dangers from which news organizations protect their journalists. In this regard, the book highlights how PIC organizations, such as the Ford Foundation, have played a key role in funding and creating the necessary infrastructure to make the production of social impact documentaries possible.

A key difference between documentary filmmaking and journalism is that documentaries take a specific, authentic point of view. Journalists often eschew taking a point of view, trying instead to be objective, even though it is well understood that journalism can never be fully objective. The book illuminates the power of authentic, impactful stories with a clearly subjective view, but which apply the highest standards of journalistic practice with regard to accuracy and fact checking.

Beyond the obvious audience of documentary film students, the book offers insights and inspiration for journalists and all those working in communication for social good. For PIC, the book offers insight into an important strategic option available for advocacy, resource mobilizations, and alliances: working with documentary filmmakers and social impact producers. The cases used in the book suggest that building a social impact alliance and having a story of injustice told through a documentary can be as significant as the typical mass and/or social media strategy. So, any PIC campaign planning should include thinking about this option and the book provides a good guide for this.

Overall, Borum Chattoo's *Story Movements* gives a scholarly overview of the field of social impact documentaries in the public interest. The book also highlights the close relationship to social impact and investigative journalism and offers an underused strategic option for PIC campaigns.