

An Examination of *Fortune* 500 Companies' and *Philanthropy* 200 Nonprofit Organizations' Relationship Cultivation Strategies on Facebook

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ABSTRACT

This study extends research on relationship theory by examining how *Fortune* 500 companies and nonprofit organizations from the *Philanthropy* 200 use Facebook to cultivate relationships. The Facebook pages and posts of a random sample of *Fortune* 500 companies ($n = 100$) and *Philanthropy* 200 nonprofit organizations ($n = 100$) were coded for the presence of relationship cultivation strategies. Both *Fortune* 500 companies and nonprofit organizations most frequently use strategies—openness and disclosure and access—that exemplify one-way communication. Corporations outperform nonprofit organizations in their usage of the assurance strategy, as evidenced by the fact that corporations responded to users' questions on average 75% of the time, whereas nonprofit organizations responded on average 45% of the time. Neither type of organization is fully utilizing the interactive relationship cultivation strategies of networking and sharing of tasks. Implications for practice are provided.

Public relations practitioners are increasingly using Facebook to build community and engagement between their organizations and strategic publics (Bullas, 2012). Originating in 2004, Facebook now attracts more than 900 million users to its site at least once per month and 526 million users per day (Hachman, 2012). Eighty-nine percent of nonprofit organizations ("Facebook: 89 Percent," 2012) and 58 percent of *Fortune* 500 companies have a Facebook page (Andrews, 2012). Despite these compelling statistics and the fact that public relations practitioners and researchers anecdotally tout the ability of Facebook to build and maintain relationships between organizations and publics, sparse research has empirically investigated the specifics of the relationship cultivation process through Facebook.

Relationships, not persuasion or one-way influence, constitute the core of ethical, effective public relations practice. Relationship theory (Hon & J.E. Gruing, 1999) provides an explanatory framework for explaining the relationship process between organizations and key publics. Relationship theory posits a three-step process (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997): (a) relationship antecedents, (b) relationship cultivation

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strategies, and (c) relationship outcomes that scholars have linked to greater organizational effectiveness (Hon, 1997). A robust line of research has indicated the connection between relationship outcomes and indicators of effectiveness, such as changes in public attitudes and behaviors (Bruning, DeMiglio, & Embry, 2006; Ledingham, Bruning, & Wilson, 2000; O'Neil, 2007, Park & Rhee, 2010; Waters, 2008, 2009a, 2009b), but scholars have given less attention to the relationship cultivation strategies that engender the relationship outcomes. Research has examined relationship cultivation strategies in the context of websites (Bortree, 2007; Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Ki & Hon, 2006; Williams & Brunner, 2010), blogs (Kelleher & Miller, 2006), and Twitter (Rybaldo & Seltzer, 2010), but not Facebook.

This study contributes to relationship theory through its explication of how *Fortune* 500 companies and nonprofit organizations from the *Philanthropy* 200 use Facebook to cultivate relationships. Recent research (Waters & Bortree, 2012) indicates that organizational type—nonprofit, corporate, and political—impacts how publics perceive their relationship with an organization. According to Waters and Bortree, nonprofit-volunteer and nonprofit-donor relationships can be best characterized as a communal, because both parties work for the good of the other, even if they receive nothing in return. Corporate-consumer relationships, on the other hand, are more reflective of an exchange relationship, because both parties expect future benefits based on past exchanges. Recognizing the possible differences in relationship type and mission, this study seeks to analyze whether there are differences in how nonprofits and corporations cultivate their relationships with publics via Facebook. In their goal to fulfill an educational or charitable mission, nonprofits may be using Facebook to engage, network, and collaborate with other organizations and people to support that goal. Corporations, on the other hand, may be using Facebook as a tool to primarily drive sales or to respond to customer concerns and questions, a strategy that fits more squarely with an exchange type of relationship.

Results have professional and theoretical implications. From a professional perspective, results provide a snapshot of how large nonprofits and corporations are organizing their Facebook pages and communication with publics through their Facebook posts. Public relations practitioners at both types of organization may more fully understand the strengths and weaknesses of their respective approaches based upon this study's comparative approach. From a theoretical perspective, results provide a better understanding of a key relationship theory component—relationship cultivation—in the context of online communication. To this researcher's knowledge, this study is among the first that develops a coding scheme to conceptualize and measure relationship cultivation strategies as conceived by relationship theory on Facebook.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dialogic Strategies

Scholars have examined relationship cultivation strategies from two theoretical perspectives: dialogic theory and relationship theory. Kent and Taylor's dialogic theory

(1998, 2002) positions dialogue as central to ethical and honest public relations practice. The theory is rooted in philosophy and relational communication theory. According to Kent and Taylor (1998, 2002), the World Wide Web is an ideal space for public relations practitioners to facilitate dialogue, which they define as “any negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions” (1998, p. 325). Public relations practitioners can enhance the dialogic process between organizations and publics on the Web through five dialogic strategies: providing useful information to a variety of publics, generating return visitors, providing ease of interface, conserving visitors by encouraging them to stay on websites, and facilitating a dialogic loop (Kent & Taylor, 1998, 2002).

Public relations scholars have examined online communication for the presence of dialogic strategies. In their study of websites of activist organizations, Taylor, Kent, and White (2001) found that although the websites were easy to use and contained useful information, they did not generate return visits or exhibit ease of interface. In a follow-up study, Kent, Taylor, and White (2003) found that activist organizations utilizing a greater number of dialogic strategies in their website features were more likely to respond to stakeholders. Park and Reber (2008) examined the websites of *Fortune* 500 companies and found that corporations were not fully using the dialogic principle of generating return visitors and conserving visitors. Scholars later examined Kent and Taylor's dialogic principles in the contexts of weblogs (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007; Sweetser & Lariscy, 2008), Facebook (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009), and Twitter (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010). The two studies on Facebook (Bortree & Seltzer) and Twitter (Rybalko & Seltzer) indicated a linkage between dialogic strategies and dialogic outcomes, including organizational responsiveness to posts and tweets. A consistent finding of this stream of research on dialogic theory and online communication is that organizations are not fully using two-way communication to facilitate the dialogic loop (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Lovejoy, Waters, & Saxton, 2012; Park & Reber, 2008; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010).

Relationship Cultivation Strategies

Public relations scholars have also researched relationship cultivation strategies from the perspective of relationship theory. Relationship theory, identified as the second most investigated theory in public relations scholarship (Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, & Jones, 2003), elucidates how public relations initiatives build and maintain relationships with strategic publics (J. E. Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & J.E. Grunig, 1999). Ferguson (1984) first advocated that relationships be the primary focus of public relations scholarship. Since her landmark paper, public relationship researchers have sought to identify and measure relationship antecedents, relationship cultivation strategies, relationship outcomes, and the effect of relationship outcomes on producing changes in the behaviors and attitudes of publics.

Hon and J.E. Grunig (1999) borrowed from interpersonal communication concepts conceptualized by Stafford and Canary (1991) to develop their relationship public relations cultivation strategies. Relationship cultivation strategies, originally referred to as maintenance strategies (Broom et al., 1997; Ki & Hon, 2009), are those daily tactics used by public relations practitioners to produce relationship outcomes (J. E. Grunig &

Huang, 2000; Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999). The six strategies originally conceptualized by Hon and J.E. Gruning include access, assurances, openness/disclosure, positivity, networking, and sharing of tasks. Research suggests that these relationship cultivation strategies are important, because they help organizations create the relationship outcomes of control mutuality, satisfaction, trust, and commitment (J.E. Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & J.E. Grunig).

As implied by its name, access refers to the organization making itself accessible to publics. Hon and J.E. Grunig (1999) explain that access includes providing communication channels so that publics can reach the organization. For example, the organization "will answer phone calls or read letters or e-mail messages from the other. Either party is willing to go to the other when they have complaints or queries, rather than taking negative reactions to third parties" (Hon & J.E. Grunig, p. 14). In the context of websites, Ki and Hon (2006) defined access as the organization providing telephone numbers, company addresses, and email contacts.

Organizations use the relationship cultivation strategy of assurances when they assure their publics that their concerns are important (Hon & J.E. Grunig, 1999). Listening can facilitate assurances. If an organization responds to the requests or concerns of a public, then it has used the strategy of assurances.

Openness and disclosure relate to the "organization's efforts to provide information about the nature of the organization and what it is doing" (Ki & Hon, 2009). Honesty and transparency are the hallmarks of openness and disclosure. Organizations practice openness and disclosure when they provide company overviews and information.

Positivity refers to an organization's efforts to make the relationship enjoyable or pleasant for key publics (Hon & J.E. Grunig, 1999). In their examination of company websites, Ki and Hon (2006) defined positivity as attempts to facilitate ease of use on a website, such as through "clear labeling and operational links" (p. 32). An easy-to-use website has the potential to enhance a public relationship. Bortree (2007) posits that games and multimedia content in online forums constitute positivity.

Networking relates to the degree of "an organization's efforts to build networks or coalitions with the same groups that their publics do" (Ki & Hon, 2009, p. 9). Organizations may build networks with groups such as environmentalists, unions, and community groups (Hon & J.E. Grunig, 1999).

Sharing of tasks has to do with the organization's efforts to collaborate with publics to solve problems of mutual interest (Hon & J.E. Grunig, 1999). These tasks may include environment, community, and education initiatives in which the organization is working with key publics to better society.

Recent research has examined relationship cultivation strategies of both nonprofits and corporations, although not on Facebook. Based upon a survey of 275 members of five different nonprofit organizations in South Korea, Park and Ree (2010) used factor

analysis to demonstrate that relationship cultivation strategies engender relationship outcomes. In their examination of 286 *Fortune* 500 websites, Ki and Hon (2006) found that openness was the most frequently used cultivation strategy and networking was the least used cultivation strategy. Ki and Hon also found differences in the usage of positivity, openness, and access based upon industry type. Bortree (2007) coded the websites of 41 nonprofits for the presence of relationship cultivation strategies. She found that larger nonprofit organizations were more likely to use openness and sharing of tasks than smaller organizations. Williams and Brunner (2010) later examined 129 non-profit organization websites to better understand how they cultivate relationships. The findings of Williams and Brunner's research differed from that of Ki and Hon. Williams and Brunner found that nonprofits used positivity most frequently and assurances the least frequently.

Although not focused specifically on relationship cultivation strategies per se, recent research has examined how organizations foster effective relationships via social media. For example, Briones, Kuch, Liu, and Jin (2011) conducted in-depth interviews with 40 employees of American Red Cross to study how and why the nonprofit builds relationships through social media. American Red Cross employees said that their nonprofit uses Facebook and Twitter to dialogue with key publics, provide timely information for the media, and listen and secure feedback. Other research studies have indicated that nonprofits primarily use Facebook and Twitter as a one-way communication tool, and that they are not fully taking advantage of the ability afforded by social media to involve and engage external publics in two-way communication (Lovejoy, Waters, & Saxton, 2012; Muralidharan, Rasmussen, Patterson, & Shin, 2011; Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) analysis of 100 nonprofits indicated that nonprofits are primarily using Twitter to share information (one-way communication), followed by efforts to engender community and action.

Research Questions

In summary, scant research has examined relationship cultivation strategies as prescribed by relationship theory in online communication. The handful of studies have examined relationship cultivation strategies present in websites only, not Facebook, which currently boasts more than 900 million monthly users. Moreover, research has yielded contradictory results regarding which strategies public relations practitioners use most often. Additionally, most studies to date have examined only one type of organization, either nonprofits or corporations. Because nonprofits and corporations have fundamentally different goals and objectives, and possibly relationship types, there may be significant differences in their cultivation approaches. Therefore, this study examined the following two questions:

RQ1: Do *Fortune* 500 companies and *Philanthropy* 200 nonprofits differ in their usage of the relationship strategies of access, assurances, networking, openness and disclosure, positivity, and sharing of tasks through their Facebook pages and posts?

RQ2: Which relationship cultivation strategy—access, networking, openness and disclosure, positivity, and sharing of tasks—do organizations enact most frequently through Facebook?

METHOD

Two independent trained coders conducted a content analysis of Facebook pages and the ten most recent posts of *Fortune* 500 companies ($n = 100$) *Philanthropy* 200 nonprofits ($n = 100$) from February 13 through March 2, 2012. Content analysis is a method “of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 156).

One hundred companies were randomly selected from the 2011 *Fortune* 500 listing and 100 nonprofits were randomly selected from the 2011 *Philanthropy* 200 listing. Randomly selected organizations that lacked a Facebook page (corporations = 49; nonprofits = 5) were excluded from the sample. When this occurred, replacement organizations were randomly selected to bring the total sample to 200.

Organizational Facebook pages and their ten most recent posts were designated as the units of analysis for this project. The researcher developed a comprehensive coding sheet derived from relationship theory that was then reviewed by five public relations professionals.

Access was operationalized as the organization’s providing on its Facebook page its phone number, address, website link, email contact, and whether the organization enabled outsiders to make original posts to its wall. A composite measure ranging from 0 to 5 was created based upon these five indicators.

Assurances was operationalized as the organizational response rate to questions posted on its Facebook wall by publics. This response rate was constructed by dividing the number of questions posed by publics in their five most recent posts by the number of times the organization responded. Because assurances was measured by only one item, a composite score was not created for assurances.

Networking was operationalized by the number of likes of a group or public that was not self-serving (ranging from 0; 1-2 groups = 1; and 3 or more = 2) and whether one of the organization’s ten posts tagged another non self-serving organization (ranging from 0-10). A like “is a way to give positive feedback or to connect with things” (Facebook help center, 2012) the organization cares about. “A tag links a person, page, or place to something” (Facebook help center, 2012) in the organization’s posts. The organization’s likes and tags of self-serving organizations were excluded because they do not illustrate the spirit of networking: the organization’s collaboration with groups that also interact with their publics, “such as environmentalists, unions, or community groups” (Ki & Hon, 2006, p. 32). The following example illustrates a self-serving group. Pier 1 Imports, a furniture and home décor store, likes groups such as HGTV, which promotes many of

its products. A composite measure ranging from 0 to 12 was created based upon the indicators of networking.

The openness and disclosure strategy was operationalized by whether the organization provided an "About section," "Founded" information, and a "Mission statement" in the information section of its Facebook page. A composite measure ranging from 0 to 3 was created.

Positivity was operationalized by the total number of uploaded photos, videos, and polls/quizzes in the ten most recent posts of the organization. These features make the Facebook experience more enjoyable, or positive, for users. An organization can upload only one of the three—photo, video, or poll/quiz—in one post, so a composite measure ranging from 0 to 10 was created based upon whether the organization posted one of the three in its ten posts.

Sharing of tasks was operationalized by whether one of the organization's ten posts was about a program or event involving external publics to solve a problem of mutual interest. An example of a post that would illustrate sharing of tasks includes "Donate today to support our Green Initiative to reduce carbon emissions by 20% in the next three months." Because the organization's ten most recent posts were analyzed, the composite measure for sharing of tasks could range from 0 to 10.

The investigator conducted a pretest with the Facebook pages and 10 most recent posts of 10 corporations and 10 nonprofits (10% of the sample) by two trained coders. Intercoder reliability was calculated via *Holsti's* (1969) formula for the relationship cultivation measures and found to be acceptable (93%).

RESULTS

The sample of nonprofits in this study included 7 arts and humanities organizations, 2 educational organizations, 28 healthcare organizations, 24 human service organizations, 12 public/society benefit organizations, and 27 religious organizations. The sample of corporations in this study included 28 consumer discretionary, 6 consumer staples, 10 energy, 17 financial, 5 health care, 11 information technology, 18 industrials, 3 materials, and 2 telecommunication services.

Research Question 1

Research question one sought to investigate whether *Fortune* 500 companies and *Philanthropy* 200 nonprofits differ in their usage of access, assurances, networking, openness and disclosure, positivity, and sharing of tasks through their Facebook pages and posts. Individual indicators of the relationship cultivation strategies were first analyzed, as indicated by Table 1.

Chi-Square tests illustrate that nonprofit organizations use more indicators of access than corporations. Nonprofit organizations more frequently share their phone number

($\chi^2 (2, N=200) = 8.86, p = .01$), address ($\chi^2 (2, N=200) = 14.22, p = .001$), and email contact ($\chi^2 (2, N=200) = 11.75, p = .00$) than corporations. There is no significant difference, however, among nonprofit organizations and corporations in terms of providing a website link ($\chi^2 (2, N=200) = 2.02, p = .364$) or whether they enable outsiders to post to their walls ($\chi^2 (2, N=200) = 5.31, p = .070$).

Corporations use the assurances relationship strategy more frequently than nonprofits. As indicated by Table 2, corporations responded to questions posed by publics 75% of the time. In contrast, nonprofits responded to questions from publics only 45% of the time.

Nonprofit organizations display greater usage of the networking strategy. Nonprofit organizations like more non-self-serving organizations ($\chi^2 (4, N=200) = 46.83, p = .00$) and more frequently tag non-self-serving organizations ($t (198) = 6.64, p = .00$) than corporations.

Nonprofit organizations use more tactics associated with the openness and disclosure strategy than corporations. As indicated by Table 1, nonprofits more frequently provide an "About section" ($\chi^2 (2, N=200) = 12.40, p = .002$), "Founded" section ($\chi^2 (2, N=200) = 15.79, p = .00$), and a "Mission" statement ($\chi^2 (2, N=200) = 22.39, p = .00$).

Nonprofit organizations and corporations do not differ in their usage of positivity tactics. As indicated by Table 1, nonprofits do not differ from corporations in their usage of photos ($t (198) = .27, p = .79$), videos ($t (198) = -.5, p = .62$), or embedded polls/quizzes ($t (198) = -.7, p = .49$).

Table 2 illustrates the series of independent *t*-tests performed to analyze for differences among nonprofits and corporations in their usage of the composite relationship cultivation strategies. Nonprofit organizations use access ($t (198) = 4.86, p = .000$), openness and disclosure ($t (198) = 6.1, p = .000$), sharing of tasks ($t (198) = 3.64, p = .000$), and networking ($t (198) = 6.63, p = .000$) strategies more frequently than corporations through Facebook. Nonprofits and corporations do not differ in their usage of positivity ($t (198) = -.099, p > .05$) on Facebook.

Table 1

Nonprofits' and Corporations' Usage of Indicators of Relationship Cultivation Strategies on Facebook

Cultivation Strategies	Nonprofits N=100	Corporations N=100
<i>Access</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Phone number present	41%	24%*
Address present	60%	34%*
Website link present	100%	98%
Email contact present	34%	16%*
Enable outsiders to post to wall	86%	73%
<i>Openness/Disclosure</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
"About" section present	95%	78%*
"Founded" section present	85%	60%*
"Mission statement" present	84%	53%*
<i>Assurances</i>	<i>N and Percentage</i>	<i>N and Percentage</i>
Number of questions posed by publics	40=N	107=N
Number of times org responded to questions	18=N	80=N
Response rate of assurances	45%	75%
<i>Networking</i>		
Number of non self-serving groups liked by org.	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
None	13%	59%
1-2 groups	12%	8%
3 or more groups	75%	33%

	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>
Number of non-serving groups tagged in posts	2.54 (1.78)	1.02 (1.42)
<i>Positivity</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>
Number of photos in 10 posts	1.85 (2.13)	1.77 (2.03)
Number of videos in 10 posts	.83 (1.2)	.91 (1.12)
Number of embedded polls/quizzes in 10 posts	.06 (.28)	.09 (.32)
<i>Sharing of Tasks</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>
Number of posts out of ten that involve working with public to solve community problem	1.92 (1.84)	1.03 (1.64)*
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* Statistically significant differences; $p < .05$		

Table 2

Nonprofits' and Corporations' Usage of Relationship Cultivation Strategies on Facebook

Strategies	Nonprofits' <i>M (SD)</i> and Index		Corporations' <i>M (SD)</i> and Index	
Openness/Disclosure (Range 0-3)	2.63 (.73)	88	1.91 (.93)*	64
Access (Range 0-5)	3.21 (1.2)	64	2.45 (.1)*	49
Positivity (Range 0-10)	2.73 (2.4)	27	2.78 (2.3)	28
Networking (Range 0-12)	2.54 (1.78)	21	1.02 (1.42)*	8
Sharing of Tasks (Range 0-10)	1.92 (1.84)	19	1.03 (1.64)*	10

Indexes were calculated by the following: Mean score of composite strategy/range of composite score x 100

** t-tests indicate statistically significant difference in mean scores*

Research Question 2

Research question two sought to determine which relationship cultivation strategy corporations and nonprofit most often use. As indicated by Table 2, both nonprofits and corporations most frequently use the strategies of openness and disclosure, followed by access, and subsequently followed by positivity. The strategy used least frequently by nonprofits is sharing of tasks. Corporations use the networking strategy the least often.

DISCUSSION

The first purpose of this study was to analyze whether *Fortune* 500 corporations and *Philanthropy* 200 nonprofit organizations differ in how they use Facebook to cultivate relationships with key publics. Results of this study indicate that nonprofit organizations enact greater usage of access, openness and disclosure, networking, and sharing of tasks compared to corporations. The fact that nonprofits are outperforming corporations in four of the six relationship cultivation strategies contradicts the research of Williams and Bruner (2010), which indicated that nonprofit organizations lag behind corporations in terms of using relationship cultivation strategies on their websites.

Although it was beyond the scope of this study to empirically determine why these discrepancies exist between nonprofit organizations and corporations, a few plausible explanations exist. First, there is no fee to develop a Facebook page. The expense incurred by using Facebook relates to the person hours needed to post information and to listen and communicate with publics. Compared to other marketing tools such as advertising, promotion, and special events, Facebook represents a relatively small expense. Thus, nonprofit organizations may be seeking to leverage their limited resources by using some features available through Facebook.

Nonprofit organizations and corporations also prioritize different publics. Whereas both nonprofit organizations and corporations build and facilitate relationships with community partners, governmental agencies, and the media, nonprofit organizations typically place greater emphasis on building relationships with donors, volunteers, and other organizations for the purposes of supporting and advocating on behalf of a cause. Facebook represents an ideal place to cultivate relationships with donors and volunteers (Briones et al., 2011), particularly through the relationships cultivation strategies of networking and sharing of tasks. Finally, it may be that the relationship cultivation strategies of access, openness and disclosure, networking, and sharing of tasks are more conducive to relationships that are communal than for those that characterized as exchange.

Corporations outperform nonprofit organizations in their usage of the assurance strategy. Corporations responded to users' questions on average 75% of the time, whereas nonprofit organizations responded on average 45% of the time. Why this is so is puzzling. Perhaps corporations consider the enactment of assurances to be representative of excellent customer service, which ultimately may engender increased

sales. In any case, nonprofit organizations need to be more diligent in responding to user questions posted to their Facebook walls.

The second purpose of this study was to determine which relationship cultivation strategy was used most frequently through Facebook. This study indicates that nonprofit organizations and corporations use the openness and disclosure strategy most often through Facebook. This finding reinforces the research of Ki and Hon (2006), who also found that *Fortune* 500 corporations most frequently used the openness and disclosure strategy in their websites. This study operationalized the openness and disclosure strategy as the dissemination of information in the "About section," "Founded," and "Mission" information portion of Facebook. This type of information represents one-way communication and requires little upkeep from the organization once the practitioner writes and posts the information. Although both nonprofit organizations' and corporations' frequent use of this strategy is not surprising, they should be commended for taking the time to share basic information about their history, organization, and mission with publics. Moreover, Waters et al. (2009) found that only 43% of nonprofit organizations provided a mission statement and only 22% provided a history on Facebook. This study indicates that nonprofit organizations have made strides in this area. In this study, 84% of nonprofits provided a mission statement, 95% provided an "About section," and 85% provided a "Founded" section. Although it is too early to predict whether Facebook pages will replace organizational web sites (Shankland, 2011), the fact that 524 million users worldwide log on to Facebook on a given day (Hachman, 2012) means that all organizations need to communicate their history and mission, at a minimum.

This study also showed that access was the second most frequently used relationship strategy among both nonprofit organizations and corporations, again reinforcing the findings of Ki and Hon (2006). This study operationalized access as the organization's providing on its Facebook page its phone number, address, website link, email contact, and whether the organization enabled outsiders to make original posts to its wall. In this study, 100% of nonprofit organizations and 98% of corporations provided a link to their websites. A significantly much smaller percentage of organizations provided their phone number (nonprofits=41% and corporations=24%) and email contact information (nonprofits=34% and corporations=16%). Williams and Brunner (2010) also found that most nonprofit organizations did not display their telephone and email on their websites. Perhaps some organizations lack the staff to respond in a timely fashion or they don't consider questions or inquiries generated through Facebook to be important. However, because so many people now use Facebook to learn about organizations, nonprofit organizations and corporations should provide basic email and phone numbers in order to increase their accessibility, a key component of relationships.

Positivity was the third most frequently used strategy among nonprofit organizations and corporations. On average, both types of organizations share nearly two photos and one video per ten posts. Organizations do not use polls and quizzes as frequently. Organizations likely use videos and photos to engage with and entertain their publics. The fact that both nonprofit organizations and corporations use positivity is encouraging,

because people are more likely to continue allowing posts from organizations to appear in their personal news feed if they enjoy reading or engaging with the organization-generated posts. Moreover, research has indicated a linkage between positivity and the relationship outcomes of trust and satisfaction (Williams & Bruner, 2010).

Sharing of tasks and networking were the two least used strategies. In particular, corporations used the networking strategy the least often, reinforcing the findings of Ki and Hon (2006), who analyzed corporate websites. In this study, corporations tagged on average only one other non-serving group in its ten posts. Fifty-nine percent of *Fortune* 500 companies analyzed did not “like” any other non-self-serving organizations. These findings suggest that corporations can do a better job of displaying their connections to environmental groups, unions, and community groups, all tangible signs of engagement and dialogue—hallmarks of excellent public relations practice. The study’s findings do not indicate whether the *Fortune* 500 companies are not networking with other community groups or whether they’re failing to communicate those connections.

Nonprofit organizations used the sharing of tasks strategy the least frequently in their Facebook communication, reinforcing the findings of Williams and Brunner (2010), who found that nonprofits did not share much community activity information on their websites. Hon and J.E. Grunig define (1999) sharing of tasks as the organization’s effort to collaborate with publics. Sharing of tasks is illustrated by this post of a nonprofit organization, Organization Compassion, examined in this study: “Organization Compassion sends more than six million seed packets to Africa and Central America this week to provide food and income to needy families living in rural poverty. More than 600,000 people helped.” Because nonprofit organizations exist to fulfill a mission that depends upon their connections with members, donors, and volunteers, the fact that they used the sharing of task strategy the least often is surprising. On average, nonprofits talked about collaborations with other groups in only two out of ten posts. Nonprofits need to talk about their collaborative efforts, because research suggests that communication that clearly demonstrates the nonprofit’s mission and work relates positively to donations (O’Neil, 2008). Corporations shared less information about their collaborations than nonprofit organizations. On average, corporations posted a sharing-of-task-related message in only one of ten posts. Again whether corporations are not collaborating to solve problems or failing to communicate about their collaborations remains unknown.

In summary, on Facebook both *Fortune* 500 companies and nonprofit organizations are most frequently using relationship cultivation strategies—openness and disclosure and access—

that exemplify one-way communication. They both moderately use the positivity strategy, as primarily manifested through postings of photos and videos, which also constitutes one-way communication. Neither type of organization is fully utilizing the interactive relationship cultivation strategies of networking and sharing of tasks. An encouraging finding is that corporations are using the assurances strategy, as

measured by their responses to users' questions. This latter approach is an excellent example of using Facebook to dialogue and engage with publics.

Limitations and Future Research

Future research could address some of the limitations of this research. First, this research examined only ten posts of each of the 200 organizations during a small window of time that ranged from a few days to a few weeks, depending on the organization. A longitudinal study could examine posts throughout designated times of the year in order to capture seasonal or monthly changes in Facebook communication. Second, this study examined only large nonprofit organizations and corporations. Future research might also analyze organizations of different sizes to determine if smaller or mid-size organizations differ in their approaches. Third, this study focused on only one facet of relationship theory—relationship cultivation strategies—by coding for their presence. While this study is important in that it analyzes that component, future research could examine whether the usages of certain strategies are positively correlated to the relationship outcomes of trust, commitment, satisfaction, and control mutuality. For example, future researchers could implement a survey with an organization's Facebook fans to determine how they assess the organizational-public relationship. These results could then be compared to the organization's usage of relationship cultivation strategies on Facebook. This type of work might answer both academic and practitioner concerns regarding the value of Facebook communication and dialogue.

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