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How Local Nonprofit Organizations can use Narratives to Build Organizational-public Relationships on Digital Media

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HOW LOCAL NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS CAN USE
NARRATIVES TO BUILD ORGANIZATION-PUBLIC RELATIONSHIPS
ON DIGITAL MEDIA

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
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requirements for the degree of
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in

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by
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ABSTRACT

The nonprofit sector's adaptation and implementation of digital media is one that has received surprisingly little exploration. While some research has been conducted in this area, these studies tend to generalize results across all organization types within the nonprofit sector. Often, these studies overlook specific advantages nonprofits of varying types, sizes, and locations may potentially have in regard to fostering relationships with their communities. This study explores how these differences may impact organizational use of digital media, and how organizations can potentially use these media to more efficiently achieve their goals. Specifically, this study focuses on the use of narratives in organizational blogs and the varying appeals nonprofits can make to build stronger relationships with their publics.

This study utilized a 2 (appeal type: rational vs. emotional) X 2 (issue proximity: local vs. broad) X 2(issue type: adult literacy vs. at-risk youth) mixed factorial experimental design was implemented to test the hypotheses and research questions, with issue proximity and appeal type being between-subjects factors and issue type being a within-subjects factor. Dependent measures included perceived local impact of an issue, levels of organizational trust, levels of organizational commitment, and supportive behavioral intentions. This experimental study was conducted online with a sample of undergraduate and graduate students (N = 268). Participants were randomly placed into one of four possible conditions, viewing a narrative organizational blog for each issue type respectively.

Results were analyzed using a repeated-measures mixed-factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA). While the study did not find main effects for issue proximity or appeal type, it did find significant main effects for issue type. The results revealed a significant main effect for issue type across all outcome measures, as well as several significant interactions between issue

type and both issue proximity and appeal type respectively. These results suggest that the specific mission of the organization plays a major role in the effectiveness of localization and the use of particular appeals on respective target publics. These results and their implications are discussed.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It is not easy having to rely on the kindness of strangers. Nonprofit organizations, by their very nature, do this on a daily basis. Nonprofits must rely on the support of the community to rally behind any given cause for the betterment of their community as a whole. These organizations rely on marketing themselves through their work, demonstrating how what they do as organizations can ultimately impact all members of the community at large (Merchant, Ford, & Sargent, 2010). Typically, these organizations must do this with a small number of resources and manpower, as they are only as capable of investing in promotion as their donors allow them to be (Shier, Handy, & McDougle, 2014). This has been the framework for nonprofit organizations since their inception. While most have come to rely on this framework to survive, convincing members of the community to engage with the organization in a way that is beneficial for both parties is sometimes an uphill struggle, especially considering these limitations.

Recent shifts in digital media, however, have provided a remarkable new opportunity for nonprofits, as well as other organizations. The interactivity of digital media allow for a much more intimate relationship between organizations and publics, as the flow of feedback is immediate and immense. Digital media provide an opportunity for engagement with publics as well as an open forum that more traditional media have not been able to support. As digital media continue to progress, organizations have found themselves needing to adapt to this sudden shift in order to remain relevant among their key publics (Kang & Yang, 2010; Kent, 2008; Kent & Taylor, 1998). Organizations now rely on building relationships with their publics via these

outlets instead of the one-way model used in the past (Kanter, 2009). With this advent of digital media, the relationship between organizations and the publics they cater to has never been more vital.

While most organizations definitely benefit from this advancement, nonprofits in particular have a unique advantage, as this is the model by which they have traditionally been operating, merely transferred to the digital space. Nonprofits have always relied on cause-based marketing which typically involves telling narratives of constituents in order to build strong support between publics and the organization (Marchand & Filiatrault, 2002; Merchant et al. 2010). These narratives can greatly influence the attitudes of various publics and ultimately make a major difference in regard to reaching organizational goals (Merchant et al., 2010).

Nonprofit organizations have started to realize this potential of this new digital space (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Despite its eventual downfall, the Kony 2012 campaign is a perfect example of the power of digital media in rallying support for a nonprofit organization behind a specific cause. The campaign involved the creation of a YouTube documentary illustrating the war crimes of Joseph Kony and subsequent promotion across social media platforms. In this case, the campaign provided an easy means of users to share the video, eventually leading to over 100 million views, over \$30 million in donations and mass support for the organization (Wasserman, 2012). These results demonstrate that, if implemented well, digital media campaigns can rally mass support for an organization.

However, the Kony 2012 campaign also represents the consequences of not proactively maintaining these relationships, as the organization's success proved very short-lived (Wasserman, 2012). When maintained, this type of support can be fostered into a profitable relationship between a nonprofit and its constituents. While digital media allow for this type of

mass support, it is up to the organization to maintain these relationships in order to ensure continuous support of the organization. Successes such as the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge demonstrate how, when an organization reaches out to its supporters in an effort to create a stronger, long-lasting relationship, these publics are likely to continue supporting the organization in the long run (Diamond, 2014).

Even with such successes demonstrating the potential of digital media in the nonprofit sector, the possibilities of digital media for nonprofits have been demonstrated by such campaigns, successful adaptation of social media among nonprofits remains slower than for-profits (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). Additionally, research on how nonprofits can use social media still remains limited in scope.

This study aims to fill these gaps, as the nonprofit sector is composed of nonprofits of many different sizes advocating for a broad spectrum of issues. Though the spectrum of digital media is also broad, this study is primarily focused on blogging platforms as a means of communication for nonprofit organizations. Research on blogging as a means of promotion for nonprofit organizations shows that blogs allow these organizations to present organizational messages and narratives in a way that is engaging and sufficiently frames the issue the organization seeks to address (Kang & Yang, 2010; Kent, 2008). Blog content is also easily shareable across other media platforms, allowing nonprofits to spread content to constituents on a large scale (Blood, 2004). Blog pages, for these reasons, appear to be the best digital medium to transfer the traditional narrative format of nonprofits organizations.

The first purpose of this study is to determine which types of messaging appeals are the most effective among publics when used in organizational narratives on blogging platforms. Previous research indicates that nonprofits have not yet incorporated social media in a manner

effective to their causes (Waters, 2009; Waters et al., 2009). This is one reason this study is relevant, as it may potentially determine successful tactics indicating the impact narrative marketing on digital media can have on a nonprofit's relationship with its publics. As digital media progress and the amount of content generated by all organizations increases, making a lasting impact on publics becomes more difficult. Nonprofits must determine how to cut through the noise created by the mass flow of content on social platforms.

Nonprofits should find a way of telling impactful, complete stories of their constituents in a very concise way in order for them to be fully effective in a digital space. This study examines how certain types of appeals effectively work in narratives written and applied to blogs by using an experimental design. Specifically, this study explores the extent to which publics are engaged through rational and emotional appeals, and how these differing types of appeals may each engage different aspects of the relationship between publics and an organization. By determining how differing appeals impact various aspects of the relationship between nonprofits and constituents, the findings of this study may help nonprofits create the most effective use of their efforts on digital media. Nonprofits can maximize their output with little input.

The second purpose of this study is to explore the impact of localization in nonprofit narratives. Though a good bit of research has been conducted in regard to social media and nonprofits, there is little to no research that takes the localization of nonprofits into account. While larger scale nonprofits are the subject of most existing research, it is the purpose of this study to examine how smaller-scale nonprofits can use the localization of an issue to their advantage when building relationships with publics. It is not sufficient to find a general communication strategy for all nonprofits, as the variability of size and resources differs from organization to organization.

While most research conducted focuses on organizations at the national level (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Saxton & Waters, 2014), a very small minority of nonprofits actually have the resources and followings of these larger organizations. Therefore, it is not sufficient to create a single model for all nonprofits, as some do not have the resources of others. Though they may not have the reach of larger organizations, local nonprofits have the advantage of being able to cater issues directly to their respective communities and build stronger relationships with the publics they do reach. Taking Bibb Latane's (1984) social impact theory into account, the present study attempts to test the effect of issue proximity on participants' relationship with the organization and issue perception. This study may provide implications that assist nonprofit organizations at the local level create long-lasting fruitful relationships with publics.

Overall, this study attempts to determine steps nonprofit organizations of all shapes and sizes can take toward adapting more traditional means of cause-marketing narratives onto digital platforms, particularly blog pages. This implementation will streamline the relationship building process and allow organizations to reach a larger number of publics than previous efforts. The results of this study will provide valuable tactics for practitioners in the nonprofit sector when creating digital campaigns. These tactics will assist them in cutting through the clout of content on digital media and reach specific organizational goals. The findings of this study will also contribute to the literature on nonprofit marketing, an area that, as indicated by the limited amount of prior research, warrants exploration.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Nonprofits and Relationship Building

Relationships are important to nonprofit organizations in that the publics they form these relationships with ultimately provide the resources that allow these organizations to continue functioning and achieving their missions. Kylander and Stone (2012) emphasized the importance of strong relationships between nonprofits and constituents, stating that “[w]hen an organization’s employees and volunteers all embrace a common brand identity, it creates organizational cohesion, concentrates focus, and reinforces shared values” (p. 39). These strengthened relationships can ultimately lead to a higher level of social impact and likely a greater level of credibility among publics (Kylander & Stone, 2012).

Local nonprofits gain a primary advantage over larger-scale nonprofits by being able to directly address and impact their respective communities. According to Shier, Handy, and McDougale (2014), these organizations promote civic engagement by providing opportunities to volunteer, collaborating with other local organizations, promote community education and awareness, and by enacting programs and events that brings members of different organizations together. Typically, nonprofits with perceived closer ties to urban elites as well as relationships with other organizations in the community proved to show higher rates of growth (Galaskiewicz, Bielefeld, & Dowell, 2006). Essentially, the stronger the relationships with their publics, the more capable nonprofit organizations are of making a change within the community and attaining organizational goals.

The major measures for organization-public relationships come from Linda Hon and James Grunig (1999). According to Hon and Grunig, all organizations seek to build positive, long-term relationships with their respective publics. Strong relationships between an

organization and its publics usually involve six major outcomes that indicate the strength of the relationship. These outcomes include trust, commitment, satisfaction, exchange relationship, communal relationship, and control mutuality. Each of these outcomes measures a different dimension of the relationship between an organization and its publics. These outcomes help organizations gauge how connected they are with publics, what areas they can improve the relationship, and give insights to potential strategies for doing so.

The components defined by Hon and Grunig (1999) are as follows:

- Control mutuality is defined as “the degree to which parties agree who has rightful power to influence one another. Although some imbalance is natural, stable relationships require that organizations and publics each have some control over the other” (p. 3). Essentially, this measure indicates the degree to which organizations and publics are responding to the input of each other and, ultimately, shaping the relationship based off of this input.
- Trust refers to “one party’s level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party” (p. 3). There are three dimensions to trust: “1) *integrity*: the belief that an organization is fair and just; 2) *dependability*: the belief that an organization will do what it says it will do; and 3) *competence*: the belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will do” (p. 3). Essentially, this measure indicates the degree to which publics believe the organization is genuine about its stated goals and able to reach them.
- Satisfaction indicates “the extent to which each party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced. A satisfying relationship is one in which the benefits outweigh the costs” (p. 3). Essentially, this measure indicates that the expected outcomes of each party’s investment are being fulfilled.

- Commitment indicates “the extent to which each party feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote. Two dimensions of commitment are continuance commitment, which refers to a certain line of action, and affective commitment, which is an emotional orientation” (p. 3). Essentially, this measure indicates the degree that both parties are willing to invest time, energy, and resources into each other.
- Exchange relationship indicates that “one party gives benefits to the other only because the other has provided benefits in the past or is expected to do so in the future” (p. 3). Essentially, this measure indicates that each party respectively only contributes to the other with the expectation that this investment will be returned.
- Communal relationships exist when both parties provide benefits to the other because they are concerned for the welfare of the other, even when they get nothing in return. For most public relations activities, developing communal relationships with key constituencies is much more important to achieve than would be developing exchange relationships” (p. 3). Essentially, this measure indicates that each party has a genuine interest in the other’s continued well-being and will invest time and energy to ensure this well-being.

Much research has been conducted examining organizational-public relationships. In their study to determine the mediating effects of OPR outcomes on public supportive intentions, Kang and Yang (2010) state that without the formation of these organization-public relationships, nonprofits will have trouble retaining supporting intentions among publics in the community. Additionally, Vecina, Chacón, Marzana, and Marta (2013) found that engagement and commitment were two separate factors within an OPR. While organizational commitment

was related to remain with the organization for a long term, volunteer engagement was related to internal factors such as self-acceptance and personal growth. Morgan and Hunt (1994) identified relational commitment and trust as mediating factors of successful relationships between publics and organizations. These relationships ultimately lead to positive behavioral and purchase intentions. Nonprofits, by their nature, rely on these supportive intentions (e.g., volunteering, donating) to achieve organizational goals and continue operating (Shier et al., 2014). Thus, creating and strengthening OPRs is important to nonprofit organizations, as it is a method of influencing the behavioral intentions of target publics in a manner that will allow these organizations to have a greater impact in achieving their missions.

Relationship Building on Digital Media

These measures have become especially relevant with the progression of digital and social media use by organizations. boyd and Ellison (2007) defined social media as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site” (p. 2). Marketo (2010) further defined social media as a process involving the production, construction, and exchange of information through online social interactions and platforms. Anzulis, Panagopoulos, and Rapp (2012) further these definitions and describe social media as “the technological component of the communication, transaction and relationship building functions of a business which leverages the network of customers and prospects to promote value co-creation” (p. 308).

The dynamics of OPRs are shifting with the forward progression of technology. The progression of the Internet has played a major role in relationship management since its

implementation. Kent and Taylor (1998) first explored the Internet's role in relationships between constituents. They found that the Internet allows organizations to form OPRs through dialogic components, which allow input by and communication to publics. The initial methods of building OPRs include tactics, such as comment forms and emails. Further measures include incorporating useful information to the website, frequently updating websites and generating new content to engage publics, making the websites easy to use and navigate, and striving to keep publics on the website.

Hallahan (2008) explored how Hon and Grunig (1999) relationships model could be applied to Kent and Taylor (1998) principle aspects of building OPRs. Hallahan created five criteria, similar to those of Hon and Grunig's, to measure the strength of OPRs online: the degree that publics find organizations believable and consistent online (trust), the willingness of organizations and publics to interact (commitment), the level of interactivity taking place between organization and publics (control mutuality), the degree to which organizations share beliefs, interests and views with publics (communality), and the level that publics believe the organization has met their needs and expectations (satisfaction).

Nonprofits have gradually been adopting social media as means of promotion and relationship building with publics. In an analysis of large nonprofits and Twitter. Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) found that most organizations had adopted Twitter and used the platform to mobilize publics. According to Waters (2009), nonprofit organizations use social media to streamline management functions, educate the public about programs and services, and communicate messages with constituents. The interactivity of these websites allows publics to self-organize around specific causes through collaboration with each other (Kanter, 2009).

In a content analysis of large nonprofit Facebook pages, Saxton and Waters (2014) found that publics responded positively to three messages types: information sharing, promotion and mobilization, and community building. Generally, publics were more likely to respond when organizations posted community-building updates. Though there has been a push for adoption, nonprofits lag behind other organizations in social media adoption, typically waiting to see how others utilize the technology (Waters, 2009). Waters, Burnett, Lamm, and Lucas (2009) also found that nonprofits that have adopted social media are not taking full advantage of the potential to cultivate relationships.

Blogs in particular appear to be useful to nonprofits. Blood (2004) defines the basic format of blogs as “frequently updated, reverse-chronological entries on a single Web page” (p. 53). Blogs initially rose to prominence in the late 1990’s as means of individual users and organizations to gather and share content from throughout the Internet. Blog pages initially separated themselves from the typical online journals of the period by only serving as hubs for a collection of links to other content. Eventually, the websites evolved to include written narratives from the creators, allowing for cross-linking to other pages as well as immediate feedback from readers on the blog page itself (Blood, 2004). The creation of blogging Websites, such as Blogger, has escalated the amount of blog users as this software has drastically reduced the difficulty of creating and maintaining a blog page. Blogs have gradually been incorporated into the web of social media, often serving as hub pages from which other websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, draw content (Blood, 2004).

Kent (2008) updated his previous findings which outlined the Internet as a beneficial area for organizations to form OPRs (Kent & Taylor, 1998), and applied them to the use of blogs in relationship building to gauge how organizations were using these social media strategically. He

found that the dialogic nature of blogs allow them to provide a means of issue framing, relationship building, fostering trust, and identification. By using blogs to identify with publics, an organization can foster trust and empathy with said publics. Kang and Yang (2010) also found blogs to be effective means of creating a personal connection with users, generating positive attitudes toward an organization, and encouraging word of mouth intention.

Overall, the literature on digital media indicates that the interactivity of social media can be used as a means of creating useful, strong relationships between organizations and publics. Blogs in particular appear to serve as a useful tool for nonprofits, as they provide a method for communicating organizational narratives to publics in a digital space that is interactive and shareable across other digital media, while maintaining the traditional format of cause-related narratives (Merchant, Ford, & Sargeant, 2010).

Narratives and Cause-Marketing

Nonprofits have typically relied on storytelling as a means of marketing their respective causes to publics (Marchand & Filiatrault, 2002; Merchant et al., 2010; Warwick, 2001). Stories are an effective means of marketing in that storytelling helps people understand and manage their social worlds and relationships (McGregor & Holmes, 1999). These stories allow people to makes sense of respective situations through the interaction of symbols and their sense of living in that moment (Richert, 2003). According to Goodman (2006), stories tend to convey ideas better than mere facts. Goodman also states that nonprofits should create stories out of the constituents they serve as a means of relating the issue to members of the public. Telling the story of constituents and presenting the possibility of a favorable outcome is the foundation for fundraising efforts (Warwick, 2001).

Stories are structured in such a way that they produce an unbalanced state within the reader (Papadatos, 2006). This is typically accomplished by introducing a problem or hurdle that must be overcome (Woodside & Chebat, 2001). Woodside, Sood, and Miller (2008) referred to this obstacle as the inciting incident. This incident engages the reader to the protagonist and attempts to persuade the reader to take some action to resolve this unbalanced state created by the inciting incident.

This format is effective because of what Cialdini et al. (1987) refers to as the negative state relief model. This model implies that a person may engage in charitable behavior not out of selflessness, but rather to repair a negative mood state (e.g., sympathy, anger, sadness) incited by the organization (Cialdini et al., 1987). Nonprofit organizations typically incite negative emotions in publics as a means of activating giving intentions (Basil, Ridgway, & Basil, 2008; Dillard & Peck, 2000). Bagozzi and Moore (1994) found that producing empathy in public service announcements (PSAs) could potentially lead consumers to engage in giving behavior. Marchand and Filiatrault (2002) found that by inciting negative emotions and presenting the possibility of positive emotions through engagement, it is possible to affect the behavioral intentions of publics.

Taking previous research of the emotions in regard to charitable giving as well as the relations between nonprofit missions and storytelling, Merchant et al. (2010) developed a structured narrative, which consisted of a problem statement intended to invoke negative emotions as well as a resolution phase in which publics can take action to resolve the problem (e.g., volunteering, donating) in an attempt to deal with the previously invoked negative emotions. Using an experimental design, the researchers tested whether different parts of an organizational narrative could impact readers' intentions and attitudes toward the organization.

The results of this study indicated that problem statements in organizational narratives produced negative emotions and that the possibility of donating or getting involved in some capacity positively influenced readers' intentions toward the organization in order to overcome these emotions. Essentially, these findings indicate that charitable organizations can use structured storytelling as means of influencing the behaviors and attachments of publics with the organization itself. The researchers also suggest that, due to a lack of studies on storytelling and charitable giving, future research could incorporate different types of problem statements and appeals to determine their effects on consumer behaviors and attitudes (Merchant et al., 2010).

Issue Proximity

The degree to which constituents feel a particular issue impacts them personally may also play a role in the development of organization-public relationships. Previous research on issue proximity typically incorporates social impact theory proposed by Bibb Latane (1981), which suggests that responses to influence are determined by immediacy or proximity to physical sources. Latane focuses on three key principles of the theory: 1) social forces, 2) psychosocial law and 3) multiplication versus division of impact. The principle of social forces states that a person will experience a greater impact of an action if the source is of high status, close in proximity, and if there are a greater number of sources. Latane's description of psychosocial law states that, as the number of sources of impact increase, the impact itself decreases. Finally, the concept of multiplication versus division states that if a person is the sole target of impact, the impact will be stronger than if they are among multiple targets of a social impact (Latané, 1981).

An example of this theory in practice is the study conducted by Andras Takacs-Santa (2007), in which Americans did not indicate a high level of concern for garbage disposal issues in Australia and New Zealand, but showed high levels of concern for garbage problems in the

United States. As the issue was not of immediate proximity, the attitudes of participants indicated higher levels of concern for the community of more immediate proximity to them. In a study on the role of issue proximity in the effects of guilt appeals in “green” advertising, Chang (2012) discovered that higher levels of issue proximity typically showed an impact the “green” behavioral intentions of participants with low levels of environmental consciousness. In an experimental study designed to test the impact of high and low threat messages regarding sexual assault, Morrison (2005) found that participants exposed to messages that mentioned a local sexual assault taking place in the community led to a higher degree of perceived threat than in participants exposed to low-threat messages, which included verbiage from a generalized campaign to stop rape not particular to any area.

The findings of these previous studies suggest that localizing an issue can potentially lead publics to believe the issue is more relevant to their daily lives and, in turn, impact perceptions of the issue. Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed regarding issue perception:

H1: Participants exposed to narratives with a higher degree of issue proximity will show a higher degree perceived local impact of the issue.

Previous research also suggests that higher levels of issue proximity are capable of impacting attitudes and behaviors of consumers (Chang, 2012). As suggested by Kylander and Stone (2012), the more cohesion between publics and organizations, the greater the potential for social impact. Thus, the stronger the relationships between a nonprofit and its publics, the more likely these parties will be willing to contribute time and resources into helping reach the organization’s mission. It is believed that publics believing an issue to be relevant to their local community will feel a stronger relationship with a nonprofit organization (Shier et al., 2014).

Thus, the following hypotheses were proposed regarding public levels of trust, commitment, and behavioral intentions:

H2: Participants exposed to a narrative with higher issue proximity will show a higher degree of trust for the organization.

H3: Participants exposed to narratives with higher issue proximity will show a higher degree of intended commitment for the organization.

H4: Participants exposed to narratives with higher issue proximity will show more positive behavioral intentions toward the organization.

Rational Versus Emotional Appeals

Panda, Panda, and Mishra (2013) conducted a comprehensive analysis of emotional appeals research in regard to how these appeals impact brands. The authors suggest that the brain has two functional methods of processing information: knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. Knowledge by acquaintance centers on the emotions one creates as they process data from the internal and external environment. Knowledge by description is the analytical process through which a recipient appraises the environment, or the logical analysis of a situation (Panda et al., 2013). Simply put, emotional appeals use images and feelings to influence people's attitudes, whereas rational appeals use information and logical reasoning to persuade consumers toward a certain attitude of a brand.

Research on rational and emotional appeals has shown benefits for both types respectively. For example, Kemp, Kennett-Hensel, and Kees (2013) found that generating sympathy in consumers led to a higher degree of attention to the needs of others a greater sense that these others need to be taken care of. Alternatively, in a meta-analysis of literature investigating rational appeals in communication messages, Allen and Priess (1997) found that

statistical or rational appeals seemed to be more effective in persuasion than narrative or emotional appeals. The result of this meta-analysis indicate that messages including summarized large amounts of cases through sets of statistics and numerical data tended to lead to higher levels of persuasion among participants. A reason Allen and Priess suggest for this result is that results presented through statistical evidence seem more objective and ultimately less biased. Marchand and Filiatrault (2002) found that rational appeals led to a greater concern for those suffering from AIDS, while emotional appeals led to more positive behavioral intentions, such as getting involved through volunteering and donating.

Emotions play a major role in shaping relationships (Groppel-Klein, 2014). Positive emotions experienced as a result of consuming messages from the brand can lead to a stronger perception of brand quality, brand competence, brand attractiveness, and sympathy. Trust typically mediates cooperation with an entity while distrust leads to isolation (Groppel-Klein, 2014). Thus, the emotions evoked by varying appeals can potentially impact OPR outcomes. With previous research on rational and emotional appeals showing that each have differing effects on these outcomes respectively, the following research questions were proposed:

RQ1: How do different appeal types affect participants' perceived local impact of the issue?

RQ2: How do differing appeal types affect participants' degrees of trust toward the organization?

RQ3: How do differing appeal types affect participants' degrees of commitment toward the organization?

RQ4: How do different appeal types affect specific behavioral intentions?

There has not been any prior research looking exclusively at a potential interaction of message appeals and issue proximity in organizational messages. As such, this study also attempts to explore this potential interaction between issue proximity and the type of appeal used. The following research questions were created:

RQ5: Do appeal type and issue proximity interact in affecting perceived local impact of the issue?

RQ6: Do appeal type and issue proximity interact in affecting trust?

RQ7: Do appeal type and issue proximity interact in affecting commitment?

RQ8: Do appeal type and issue proximity interact in affecting behavioral intentions?

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

This study explored how varying levels of issue proximity and appeal types in cause narrative posts on nonprofit blogs affected relational outcomes between publics and a nonprofit organization. A 2 (appeal type: rational vs. emotional) X 2 (issue proximity: local vs. broad) X 2(issue type: adult literacy vs. at-risk youth) mixed factorial experimental design was implemented to test the hypotheses and research questions, with issue proximity and appeal type being between-subjects factors. According to Reeves and Geiger (1994), message repetition helps to generalize message effects across larger samples than that being represented in a respective study. Ultimately, this will lead to higher levels of external validity (Reeves & Geiger, 1994). Thus, issue type was included as a within-subjects factor for message repetition purposes. The design was a posttest-only design.

Stimuli

In order to test the varying proximity levels and appeal types in digital media content, a series of blog posts were created as stimuli. Blog posts were chosen as stimuli because they are a useful means of sharing complete narratives digitally. The format of posts on other social media such as Facebook and Twitter is typically not long enough to include the type of narrative used for cause marketing. Blogs are also a good digital medium for framing issues (Kent, 2008), as well as for sharing content across other digital media (Blood, 2004). However, as the study is more concerned with content over interactivity, it only used screen shots of narrative blog posts instead of interactive blog posts. The posts did not contain hyperlinks, viewer comments, or videos as it sought to explore effects of the narrative content of the posts rather than how interactive elements may impact outcomes.

Issue type was included as a within-subjects factor to generalize the possible effects of localization and appeal types across nonprofits of various causes. To prevent participant fatigue, blog posts were only created for two hypothetical nonprofit organizations: Advocates for Adult Literacy (ALA) and Leaders of Tomorrow (LOT). The ALA was an organization whose mission focused on educating those struggling from adult illiteracy, while LOT's mission was to help at-risk youth who are struggling academically. Real organizations were not used to prevent participants from having prior experience with the nonprofits. These organizations were appropriate for this study as, while they are both education-based nonprofits, they still advocate for different issues.

The blog posts were created according to the structure used by Merchant et al. (2010). This structure is intended to influence the emotions of consumers to illicit organizational support and supportive behavioral intentions and has been shown to be effective in print PSAs. Within issues, each post began with the same introduction paragraph regarding the impact of the issue the respective organization seeks to alleviate in order to trigger negative emotions of sympathy among viewers. Subsequently, the post featured a problem statement including either a narrative from a professional within the organization stating statistics regarding the impact of the issue (rational appeal) or a personal story of a specific constituent of the organization negatively impacted by the issue (emotional appeal), the manipulations of which are described below. Finally each post ended with the same resolution phase suggesting how readers can help the organization in dealing with the issue (donating, volunteering, etc.). The images remained constant across conditions for each respective issue type. Four posts (one per condition) were created for each organization, eight blog posts in total. The final stimuli can be found in Appendix A.

Manipulations of Independent Variables

Appeal type and issue proximity were manipulated in order to examine the impact of each factor on outcome measures. Emotional appeals are instances of using images and feelings to elicit emotions from viewers (Panda et al., 2013). In this study, emotional appeals were operationalized as narratives centering on one specific person's struggle with adult literacy (i.e. an exemplar) and the difficulties this person has encountered throughout daily life. Rational appeals are defined as appeals using information and logical reasoning to change brand attitudes (Panda et al, 2013). For this study, rational appeals were constructed as narratives using specific statistics regarding both levels of adult literacy and how the organization has contributed to reduce these statistics.

Issue proximity indicates the spatial proximity between an individual and a given issue. In this study, issue proximity was operationalized as an issue being either local or broad within problem statements. Problem statements with local issue proximity indicated the immediate area of the participants, in this case Baton Rouge, while broad issue proximity made no mention of the nonprofit's location or the community in which the organization operates. In the local conditions, the organization names and logos included the city in their title (e.g., Advocates for Adult Literacy of Greater Baton Rouge), while the broad condition did not indicate any location within the content of the blog post.

Pre-test

Before conducting the experiment, it was important to determine if the manipulations of both issue proximity and appeal type within conditions was effective. In order to attribute any outcome effects to these manipulations, it is crucial to ensure that they are being perceived by participants. In order to test the manipulations across the experimental conditions, the stimuli

were pretested with a smaller number of participants (N = 40) recruited through the Media Effects Lab at Louisiana State University.

For appeal type, a manipulation check item was included for both emotional appeals: “The post referenced specific stories of constituents of the organization.” A manipulation check item was also included for rational appeals: “The post lists specific statistics to describe the problem the organization is addressing.” Both of these manipulations appeared to be successful across both issue types. For the adult literacy organization, participants in the rational condition ($M = 5.04, SE = 1.63$) indicated significantly higher levels of agreement with the rational manipulation check than those in the emotional condition ($M = 3.00, SE = 1.32$), $t(38) = -4.18, p < .001$. This was also the case for the at-risk youth organizations, with the rational appeals group ($M = 5.75, SE = 1.39$) indicating significantly higher levels of agreement than the emotional condition ($M = 4.00, SE = 1.75$), $t(38) = -3.51, p < .001$.

Table 1:
Appeal Type Pre-Test

	<u>At-Risk Youth</u>		<u>Adult Literacy</u>	
	<u>Rational</u>	<u>Emotional</u>	<u>Rational</u>	<u>Emotional</u>
Man. Check (Rational)	5.75 _a (1.39)	4.00 _b (1.75)	5.04 _a (1.63)	3.00 _b (1.32)
Man. Check (Emotional)	4.25 _a (1.92)	5.44 _b (1.32)	3.46 _a (1.64)	5.38 _b (1.36)

Adult Literacy: $t(38) = 3.87, p < .001$ (Emotional); $t(38) = -4.18, p < .001$ (Rational)

At-risk youth: $t(38) = 2.16, p < .001$ (Emotional); $t(38) = -3.51, p < .001$ (Rational)

Notes:*Table displays group means and standard deviations in parentheses

** Means not sharing lowercase subscripts within issue type rows are significant at $p < .001$

The emotional manipulation also appeared to be successful across both issue types.

Within the adult literacy organization those who viewed blogs with emotional appeals indicated

significantly higher levels of agreement with the emotional manipulation check item ($M = 5.38$, $SE = 1.36$) than those who viewed rational appeals ($M = 3.46$, $SE = 1.64$), $t(38) = 3.87$, $p < .001$.

This was also the case for the at-risk youth organization, with those in the emotional appeals group ($M = 5.44$, $SE = 1.32$) indicating higher levels of agreement than those in the rational group ($M = 4.25$, $SE = 1.92$), $t(38) = 2.16$, $p < .001$. Pretest results for the manipulation of appeal type can be found in Table 1.

A manipulation check item was also included for issue proximity: “A specific community was mentioned in the blog post.” This manipulation appeared to be successful across both issue types as well. Within the adult literacy organization those who viewed blogs with high issue proximity (local) indicated significantly higher levels of agreement with the issue proximity manipulation check item ($M = 5.77$, $SE = 1.41$) than those who viewed blogs with low issue proximity (broad) ($M = 3.72$, $SE = 1.87$), $t(38) = -3.95$, $p < .001$. This was also the case for the at-risk youth organization, with those in the local group ($M = 6.00$, $SE = .98$) indicating higher levels of agreement than those in the broad group ($M = 3.94$, $SE = 1.98$), $t(38) = -4.28$, $p < .001$. Pretest results for the manipulation of issue proximity can be found in Table 2.

Table 2:
Issue Proximity Pre-Test

	<u>At-Risk Youth</u>		<u>Adult Literacy</u>	
	<u>Broad</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Broad</u>	<u>Local</u>
Man. Check (Proximity)	3.94 _a (1.98)	6.00 _b (.98)	3.72 _a (1.87)	5.77 _b (1.41)

At-Risk Youth: $t(38) = -4.28$, $p < .001$

Adult Literacy: $t(38) = -3.95$, $p < .001$

Notes:*Table displays group means and standard deviations in parentheses

** Means not sharing lowercase subscripts within issue type rows are significant at $p < .001$

Because the manipulations for both independent variables appeared to be successful, the subject pool was broadened and the pretest responses were included in the overall results of the study. Additionally, no significant differences were found within groups for both causes.

Dependent Measures

Perceived Local Impact of Issue

Perceived local impact of the issue is operationalized as the degree to which participants feel that the issue directly impacts their community. Measures for perceived local impact of issue were adapted from Morrison (2005). Morrison initially adapted measures of perceived invulnerability to assess participants' perceived threat in regards to sexual assault in their local community after reading various ads with varying levels of issue localization.

These were measured through four Likert scale items (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Each of the items was adapted for both adult literacy as well as at-risk youth. The scale of perceived local impact included: (a) Others have more of a chance of encountering [illiteracy/at-risk youth] than I do; (b) The [illiteracy rate/ number of at-risk youth] in my community could be improved; (c) [Adult illiteracy/At-risk youth] is not a major concern in my community; (d) I am likely to encounter [someone struggling with illiteracy/at risk youth] (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$).

Relationship Measures: Trust and Commitment

Outcome measures included levels of trust and levels of commitment measured of participants toward the organization. Both measures were directly pulled from Hon and Grunig's (1999) initial proposed model of organizational-public relationships. Trust and Commitment were chosen specifically because they are the outcomes most immediately impacted by messaging. Satisfaction, exchange relationships, communal relationships, and control mutuality

require a longer period of investment and reciprocity from publics and the organization in order to see any real change (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Hon and Grunig (1999) operationalized trust through six Likert scale items (e.g., “This organization treats people like me fairly and justly.”) designed to measure publics’ beliefs that the organization is competent and receptive to input. In this study, levels of trust were measured using these six 7-point Likert scale items (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The items comprising this scale included: (a) This organization treats people like me fairly and justly; (b) This organization can be relied on to keep its promises; (c) Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me; (d) I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions; (e) I feel very confident about this organization’s skills; (f) This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .91$).

Hon and Grunig (1999) operationalized commitment as the willingness of publics to invest in a relationship with an organization, both physically and emotionally. In this study, commitment was measured through five Likert scale items developed by Hon and Grunig (1999): (a) I feel this organization is trying to maintain long-term commitment to people like me; (b) There is a long lasting bond between this organization and people like me; (c) I would rather work together with this organization than not; (d) Compared to other organizations, I value my relationship with this organization more; (e) I can see that this organization wants to maintain a relationship with people like me (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .88$). These items were also measured on a 7-point scale, with 1 = strongly disagree, and 7 = strongly agree.

Behavioral Intentions

Behavioral intentions was operationalized as participants' intentions to contribute to the organization in some way (e.g., volunteering, donating, and requesting information). Shier et al. (2014) indicate that these types of supportive behaviors are ultimately what allow nonprofits to achieve their organizational mission. A scale consisting of five Likert scale items each gauging specific behavioral intentions of participants was created.

These measures took into account that, as most participants were undergraduate students, not all participants necessarily had the means to contribute to the organization. The items included: (a) I want to help those struggling with literacy; (b) I would volunteer for this organization; (c) If I had the means, I would make a donation to this organization; (d) I want to find out more about this organization; (e) If I had the time to do so, I would join this organization (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$). These items were measured on a 7-point scale, with 1 = strongly disagree, and 7 = strongly agree.

Control Variables

To take previous views toward charity and philanthropy into account, attitudes toward helping others in general as well as attitudes toward charitable organizations were measured as control variables. Webb et al. (2000) proposed two scales that effectively measure both attitudes: a scale measuring the general attitudes of potential donors toward helping others, and a scale measuring the attitudes of potential donors toward helping nonprofit organizations.

The scale measuring participants' attitudes toward charitable organizations included five Likert scale items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$) such as "The money given to charities goes to good causes," and "Much of the money donated to charity is wasted." These items were also measured on a 7-point scale, with 1 = strongly disagree, and 7 = strongly agree.

The scale measuring participants' attitudes toward helping others included four Likert scale items such as "People should be more charitable toward others in society," and "People in need should receive support from others" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$). These items were also measured on a 7-point scale. These two types of attitudes were measured before participants were exposed to respective blog posts.

Sample

The sample for this study included a total of 296 undergraduate and graduate students recruited through the Media Effects Lab at Louisiana State University. Participants completed the study for extra course credit. Twenty-eight responses (9.5%) had to be discarded due to incompleteness. This sample ($N = 268$) was appropriate as recruitment through a specific university would make it possible to localize the experimental stimuli to the specific community of the participants of the study, in this case Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Additionally, as indicated by Basil, Brown, and Bacarnea (2002), nonprobability samples are sufficient in testing the consistency of processes in communication research.

A majority of the sample was female (81.4 %), and the mean age for participants was 20.4 ($SD = 3.24$). The majority of participants were 21 or younger (81.9%). A large majority of participants identified themselves as Caucasian (80.6%), with the remainder of the sample identifying themselves as African American (10.1%), Hispanic or Latino (4.1%), Asian (3.0%), or Other (2.3%). Additionally, nearly half of the participants identified themselves as conservative (46.3%), followed by moderate (27.6%), and liberal (26.1%). A majority of students indicated being from outside of Baton Rouge (76.1%), while a majority of participants indicated being from Louisiana (75.7%).

Procedure

Participants signed up to participate in the study through the Media Effects Lab at Louisiana State University. The web-based experiment was administered to subjects via Qualtrics, an online survey research software package widely used in academic and private sector research. Qualtrics randomly assigned participants to one of four groups: a broad/rational (N = 68), broad/emotional (N = 59), local/rational (N = 70), or local/emotional (N = 71) group respectively. To check the randomization, a balance check was conducted across groups. Overall, with the exception of a large number of Asian participants being placed into the broad/rational group, the groups appeared to be sufficiently balanced.

Participants first viewed a consent form disclosing the purpose of the study. They were then instructed to answer the series of control items, attitudes toward charitable organizations and attitudes toward helping others. Participants were then instructed to view a screenshot of a blog post for one of the organizations for their respective condition. In order to eliminate the possible confounding effect of message sequence (Reeves & Geiger, 1994), all participants viewed the two blog posts in a random order. Following the first post, participants were asked to complete the manipulation check items, followed by the perceived local impact items, and finally the items comprising the relationship measures of trust, commitment, and behavioral intentions. Participants then repeated this process for the remaining organization's blog post. Lastly, participants completed a series of demographic questions, including age, gender, race, and political lean. They were then thanked for their participation and given extra credit for their participation.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This study examined the effects of issue proximity and appeal type on levels of perceived local impact, trust, commitment, and behavioral intentions among participants. Additionally, it included a within-subjects factor of issue type in an attempt to generalize the effects across nonprofit types, in this case at-risk youth and adult literacy. To test the hypotheses and research questions, a series of mixed models repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA), employing a multivariate approach, were run. Before analyzing data, a check for univariate and multivariate outliers was conducted as suggested by Tabachnik and Fidell (2001). No outliers were found in the current data set. The results for each respective outcome measure are below.

Manipulation Checks

A manipulation check item for the emotional appeals condition, “The post referenced specific stories of constituents of the organization,” was included to ensure the manipulations were successful between appeal type conditions. This item was measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). An independent samples t-test revealed that those in the emotional appeals condition ($M = 5.73$, $SD = 1.29$) indicated significantly higher levels of agreement with this item for the at-risk youth blog post than those in the rational appeal condition ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 1.66$), $t(269) = 6.43$, $p < .001$. This was also true with adult literacy post, as those who viewed emotional appeals ($M = 5.61$, $SD = 1.24$) indicated higher levels of agreement than those who viewed rational appeals ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 1.70$), $t(268) = 7.62$, $p < .001$. Thus, the manipulation was successful.

A manipulation check item for the manipulation of rational appeals, “The post lists specific statistics to describe the problem the organization is addressing,” was also included to ensure the manipulations were successful between appeal conditions. This item was measured on

a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). An independent samples t-test revealed that those in the rational appeal condition ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 1.25$) indicated significantly higher levels of agreement with this item than those in the emotional appeal condition ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 1.83$), $t(269) = -8.76$, $p < .001$. This was also true with the adult literacy post with those in the rational appeal group ($M = 5.64$, $SD = 1.28$) indicating higher levels of agreement than those in the emotional appeal group ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.80$), $t(268) = -9.39$, $p < .001$.

Finally, a manipulation check item for the manipulation of issue proximity, “A specific community was mentioned in the blog post,” was included to ensure the manipulations were successful between appeal conditions. This item was measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). An independent samples t-test revealed that those in the high issue proximity (local) condition ($M = 5.84$, $SD = 1.19$) indicated significantly higher levels of agreement with this item than those in the low issue proximity (broad) condition ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.76$) for the at-risk youth blog post, $t(269) = -7.76$, $p < .001$. This was also the case in the adult literacy post, with the local group ($M = 5.94$, $SD = 1.29$) indicating higher levels of agreement than the broad group ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.77$), $t(268) = -9.09$, $p < .001$. Thus, the manipulation of issue proximity was successful.

Perceived Local Impact of Issue

A mixed model repeated-measures ANOVA, employing a multivariate approach, was conducted to explore differences in levels of perceived local impact of an issue with issue proximity and appeal type as between-subjects factors, and issue type as a within-subjects message repetition factor. The results of this analysis are below.

H1 predicted that participants exposed to narratives with higher issue proximity would show higher levels of perceived local impact of an issue. However, this hypothesis was not

supported, as no main effect was found for issue proximity, $F(1, 264) = .043, p = .84$.

Participants who viewed blogs with low issue proximity ($M = 4.45, SE = .09$) did not perceive significantly higher levels of impact on the community than those who viewed localized blogs ($M = 4.42, SE = .09$).

RQ1 examined what effects different appeal types would have on levels of perceived local impact of an issue. Participants who viewed blogs with emotional appeals ($M = 4.51, SE = .09$) indicated slightly higher levels of perceived local impact than those who viewed blogs with rational appeals ($M = 4.36, SE = .09$). This difference was not statistically significant, $F(1, 264) = 1.41, p = .24$.

RQ5 examined what the interaction would be between issue proximity and appeal type on levels of perceived local impact of an issue. The results indicated that there was no significant interaction between issue proximity and appeal type on levels of perceived local impact of an issue, $F(1, 264) = .66, p = .42$. These results can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4:
Appeal Type X Issue Proximity on Perceived Local Impact

	Broad	Local
Emotional	4.57 _{aA} (.13)	4.45 _{aA} (.12)
Rational	4.32 _{aA} (.13)	4.40 _{aA} (.12)

$F(1, 264) = .66, p = .42$

Notes: *Table lists groups means and standard errors in parentheses

**Means within rows not sharing common lowercase subscripts differ at $p < .05$. Means within columns not sharing common uppercase subscripts differ at $p < .05$

Issue type was included as a within-subjects message repetition factor in the hopes of generalizing the effects across different organization types. The results ultimately yielded a significant main effect for issue type on levels of perceived local impact among participants.

Participants generally indicated higher levels of perceived local impact for the at-risk youth organization ($M = 4.65, SE = .07$) than for the organization advocating for adult literacy ($M = 4.33, SE = .07$). This difference was statistically significant, Wilk's $\lambda = .86, F(1, 264) = 42.65, p < .001, \eta^2 = .14$. The results can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5:
Issue Type on Perceived Local Impact

	<u>At-Risk Youth</u>	<u>Adult Literacy</u>
<i>M</i>	4.65 _a	4.33 _b
<i>SE</i>	(.07)	(.07)

Wilk's $\lambda = .86, F(1, 264) = 42.65, p < .001, \eta^2 = .14$

Notes: *Means within rows not sharing common lowercase subscripts differ at $p < .001$.

However, no significant interaction was found between issue type and issue proximity, Wilk's $\lambda = .99, F(1, 264) = .45, p = .50$, and between issue type and appeal type, Wilk's $\lambda = .99, F(1, 264) = .25, p = .62$. There was no three-way interaction among issue proximity, appeal type, and issue type, Wilk's $\lambda = .99, F(1, 264) = 1.15, p = .29$. The means across groups are located in Table 6.

Table 6:
Levels of Perceived Local Impact

	<u>At-Risk Youth</u>				<u>Adult Literacy</u>			
	<u>Emotional</u>		<u>Rational</u>		<u>Emotional</u>		<u>Rational</u>	
	<u>Broad</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Broad</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Broad</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Broad</u>	<u>Local</u>
<i>M</i>	4.83	4.58	4.54	4.64	4.32	4.30	4.12	4.16
<i>SD</i>	(.99)	(1.12)	(1.19)	(1.19)	(1.29)	(1.10)	(1.21)	(1.16)

Trust

A mixed model repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to explore differences in levels of trust with issue proximity and appeal type as between-subjects factors, and issue type as a within-subjects message repetition factor.

H2 predicted that participants who viewed blogs with higher issue proximity would indicate higher levels of trust for the organization, $F(1,264) = .69, p = .41$. However, no significant main effect was found for issue proximity on levels of trust. Participants who viewed localized blogs ($M = 4.86, SE = .07$) indicated higher levels of trust than those who viewed blogs with low issue proximity ($M = 4.77, SE = .07$). Thus, H2 was not supported.

RQ2 examined what effects different appeal types would have on levels of trust for the organization. The results indicated that participants who viewed blogs with emotional appeals ($M = 4.83, SE = .07$) did not significantly differ from those who viewed blogs with low issue proximity ($M = 4.80, SE = .07$) regarding levels of trust for the organization, $F(1, 264) = .10, p = .76$.

RQ6 examined what the interaction would be between issue proximity and appeal type on levels of trust for the organization. The results indicated that there was no significant interaction between issue proximity and appeal type on levels of trust toward the organizations, $F(1, 264) = 1.10, p = .30$. These results can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7:
Appeal Type X Issue Proximity on Trust

	Broad	Local
Emotional	4.74 _{aA} (0.12)	4.92 _{aA} (0.10)
Rational	4.81 _{aA} (0.10)	4.79 _{aA} (0.10)

$F(1, 264) = 1.10, p = .30$

Notes: *Table lists groups means and standard errors in parentheses

**Means within rows not sharing common lowercase subscripts differ at $p < .05$. Means within columns not sharing common uppercase subscripts differ at $p < .05$

Issue type was included as a within-subjects message repetition factor in the hopes of generalizing the effects across different organization types. However, the results yielded a

significant main effect for issue type on levels of trust among participants. Participants generally indicated higher levels of trust for the organization advocating for at-risk youth ($M = 4.87$, $SE = .05$) than for the organization advocating for adult literacy ($M = 4.76$, $SE = .05$). This difference was statistically significant, Wilk's $\lambda = .20$, $F(1, 264) = 5.46$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$. These results can be found in Table 8.

Table 8:
Issue Type on Trust

	<u>At-Risk Youth</u>	<u>Adult Literacy</u>
<i>M</i>	4.87 _a	4.76 _b
<i>SE</i>	(.05)	(.05)

Wilk's $\lambda = .20$, $F(1,264) = 5.46$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$

Notes: *Means within rows not sharing common lowercase subscripts differ at $p < .05$.

There was also a significant interaction between issue type and appeal type on levels of organizational trust, Wilk's $\lambda = .96$, $F(1, 264) = 10.69$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .04$. Participants who viewed blogs with rational appeals indicated higher levels of trust for the organization advocating for at-

Table 9:
Appeal Type X Issue Interaction on Trust

	<u>At-Risk Youth</u>	<u>Adult Literacy</u>
Emotional	4.81 _{aA} (.08)	4.85 _{aA} (.08)
Rational	4.92 _{aA} (.08)	4.68 _{bA} (.08)

Wilk's $\lambda = .96$ $F(1, 264) = 10.69$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .04$

Notes: *Table lists groups means and standard errors in parentheses

**Means within rows not sharing common lowercase subscripts differ at $p < .05$ using Holm's sequential bonferroni post hoc comparison. Means within columns not sharing common uppercase subscripts differ at $p < .05$

risk youth ($M = 4.92$, $SE = .08$) than for the organization advocating for adult literacy ($M = 4.68$, $SE = .08$), $M_{diff} = .25$, $p < .001$ Those who viewed blogs with emotional appeals did not

significantly differ in levels of trust between the at-risk youth organization ($M = 4.81, SE = .08$) and the adult literacy organization ($M = 4.85, SE = .08$). The results of this interaction can be found in Table 9.

However, no significant interaction was found between issue type and issue proximity, Wilk's $\lambda = .99, F(1, 264) = .73, p = .40$, nor was there a three-way interaction among appeal type, issue proximity, and issue type, Wilk's $\lambda = 1.00, F(1, 264) = .08, p = .79$. The means across groups are located in Table 10.

Table 10:
Levels of Trust Across Groups

	At-Risk Youth				Adult Literacy			
	Emotional		Rational		Emotional		Rational	
	<u>Broad</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Broad</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Broad</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Broad</u>	<u>Local</u>
<i>M</i>	4.69	4.93	4.92	4.92	4.78	4.92	4.70	4.65
<i>SD</i>	(1.03)	(.78)	(.84)	(.88)	(.96)	(.81)	(.79)	(.94)

Commitment

A mixed model repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to explore differences in levels of commitment with issue proximity and appeal type as between-subjects factors, and issue type as a within-subjects message repetition factor. The results of this analysis are below.

H3 predicted that participants who viewed blogs with higher issue proximity would indicate higher levels of commitment for the organization. However, no significant main effect was found for issue proximity on levels of commitment, $F(1, 264) = .10, p = .75$. While participants who viewed localized blogs ($M = 4.56, SE = .08$) indicated slightly higher levels of trust than those who viewed blogs with low issue proximity ($M = 4.53, SE = .08$), this difference was not statistically significant. Thus, H3 was not supported.

RQ3 examined what effects different appeal types would have on levels of organizational trust among participants. The results indicated that, while participants who viewed blog posts with emotional appeals ($M = 4.61$, $SE = .08$) indicated slightly higher levels of commitment than those who viewed blog with rational appeals ($M = 4.48$, $SE = .08$), this difference was not statistically significant, $F(1, 264) = 1.31$, $p = .25$.

RQ5 examined what the interaction would be between issue proximity and appeal type on levels of organizational commitment. The results indicated that there was no significant interaction between issue proximity and appeal type on levels of organizational commitment, $F(1, 264) = .38$, $p = .54$. These results can be seen in Table 11.

Table 11:
Appeal Type X Issue Proximity on Commitment

	Broad	Local
Emotional	4.55 _{aA} (0.12)	4.66 _{aA} (0.12)
Rational	4.50 _{aA} (0.11)	4.46 _{aA} (0.12)

$F(1, 264) = .38$, $p = .54$

Notes: *Table lists groups means and standard errors in parentheses

**Means within rows not sharing common lowercase subscripts differ at $p < .05$. Means within columns not sharing common uppercase subscripts differ at $p < .05$

Issue type was included as a within-subjects message repetition factor in the hopes of generalizing the effects across different organization types. The results yielded a significant main effect for issue type on levels of commitment among participants. Participants generally indicated higher levels of commitment for the organization advocating for at-risk youth ($M = 4.58$, $SE = .06$) than for the organization advocating for adult literacy ($M = 4.41$, $SE = .06$). This difference was statistically significant, Wilk's $\lambda = .94$, $F(1, 264) = 18.18$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$. The results can be seen in Table 12.

Table 12:
Issue Type on Commitment

	<u>At-Risk Youth</u>	<u>Adult Literacy</u>
<i>M</i>	4.58 _a	4.41 _b
<i>SE</i>	(.06)	(.06)

Wilk's $\lambda = .94$, $F(1, 264) = 18.18$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$

Notes: *Means within rows not sharing common lowercase subscripts differ at $p < .001$.

However, there was no significant interaction between issue type and issue proximity, Wilk's $\lambda = 1.0$, $F(1, 264) = .39$, $p = .54$, and between issue type and appeal type, Wilk's $\lambda = .94$, $F(1, 264) = 18.18$, $p = .93$. There was no three-way interaction among appeal type, issue proximity, and issue type, Wilk's $\lambda = .94$, $F(1,264) = 18.18$, $p = .44$. The means across groups are located in Table 13.

Table 13:
Group Means for Commitment

	<u>At-Risk Youth</u>				<u>Adult Literacy</u>			
	<u>Emotional</u>		<u>Rational</u>		<u>Emotional</u>		<u>Rational</u>	
	<u>Broad</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Broad</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Broad</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Broad</u>	<u>Local</u>
<i>M</i>	4.73	4.75	4.62	4.60	4.38	4.57	4.37	4.33
<i>SD</i>	(1.07)	(.88)	(1.05)	(1.12)	(1.18)	(.98)	(1.18)	(1.10)

Behavioral Intentions

A mixed model repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to explore differences in levels of positive behavioral intentions with issue proximity and appeal type as between-subjects factors, and issue type as a within-subjects message repetition factor. The results of this analysis are below.

H4 predicted that participants who viewed blogs with higher issue proximity would indicate higher levels of positive behavioral intentions toward the organization. However, this hypothesis was not supported, as no main effect was found for issue proximity on levels of

positive behavioral intentions. While those in the local condition ($M = 5.01, SE = .08$) indicated slightly higher levels of positive behavioral intentions than those in the broad condition ($M = 4.96, SE = .08$), this difference was not statistically significant, $F(1, 264) = .18, p = .68$.

RQ4 examined what effects different appeal types would have on levels of positive behavioral intentions toward the organization. The results indicated that while participants who viewed blogs with emotional appeals indicated slightly higher levels of positive behavioral intentions than those who viewed blogs with rational appeals ($M = 4.91, SE = .08$), this difference was not statistically significant, $F(1, 264) = 1.65, p = .20$.

RQ8 examined what the interaction would be between issue proximity and appeal type on levels of positive behavioral intentions toward the organizations. The results indicated that there was no significant interaction between issue proximity and appeal type on levels of organizational trust, $F(1, 264) = .38, p = .49$. These results can be seen in Table 14.

Table 14:
Appeal Type X Issue Proximity on Behavioral Intentions

	Broad	Local
Emotional	5.00 _{aA} (.12)	5.12 _{aA} (.11)
Rational	4.93 _{aA} (.11)	4.90 _{aA} (.11)

$F(1, 264) = .38, p = .49$

Notes: *Table lists groups means and standard errors in parentheses

**Means within rows not sharing common lowercase subscripts differ at $p < .05$. Means within columns not sharing common uppercase subscripts differ at $p < .05$

Issue type was included as a within-subjects message repetition factor in the hopes of generalizing the effects across different organization types. The results yielded a significant main effect for issue type on levels of positive behavioral intentions among participants, Wilk's $\lambda = .92, F(1, 264) = 22.94, p < .001, \eta^2 = .08$. Participants generally indicated significantly higher

levels of behavioral intentions for the organization advocating for at-risk youth ($M = 5.12$, $SE = .60$) than for the organization advocating for adult literacy condition ($M = 4.85$, $SE = .70$). These results can be found in Table 15.

Table 15:
Issue Type on Behavioral Intentions

	<u>At-Risk Youth</u>	<u>Adult Literacy</u>
<i>M</i>	5.12 _a	4.85 _b
<i>SE</i>	(.60)	(.70)

Wilk's $\lambda = .92$, $F(1, 264) = 22.94$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$

Notes: *Means within rows not sharing common lowercase subscripts differ at $p < .001$.

However, the results yielded no significant interaction between issue type and issue proximity, Wilk's $\lambda = .99$, $F(1, 264) = 2.24$, $p = .14$, and between issue type and appeal type, Wilk's $\lambda = 1.00$, $F(1, 264) = .004$, $p = .95$. There was no three-way interaction among issue type, issue proximity, and appeal type on levels of positive behavioral intentions, Wilk's $\lambda = 1.00$, $F(1, 264) = .28$, $p = .60$. The means across groups are located in Table 16.

Table 16:
Group Means for Behavioral Intentions

	<u>At-Risk Youth</u>				<u>Adult Literacy</u>			
	<u>Emotional</u>		<u>Rational</u>		<u>Emotional</u>		<u>Rational</u>	
	<u>Broad</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Broad</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Broad</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Broad</u>	<u>Local</u>
<i>M</i>	5.10	5.29	5.01	5.09	4.89	4.96	4.85	4.70
<i>SD</i>	(1.10)	(.85)	(1.14)	(1.03)	(1.23)	(.96)	(.99)	(1.14)

Additional Analyses for Specific Supportive Behaviors

As the scale for positive behavioral intentions was composed of several different possible supportive behaviors (e.g., volunteering and donating), a mixed model repeated measures ANOVA was run for each item to examine if any particular supportive behavior was

independently impacted by either issue proximity or appeal types. The results for each respective supportive behavior are below.

Volunteering

The first item examined was intent to volunteer for the respective organizations: “If I had the time, I would volunteer for this organization.” The results revealed a main effect of appeal type on intent to volunteer. Participants who viewed blogs with emotional appeals ($M = 5.00, SE = .10$) indicated higher levels of intent to volunteer than those who view blogs with rational appeals ($M = 4.82, SE = .10$). This difference was statistically significant, $F(1, 264) = 4.32, p < .05, \eta^2 = .02$.

However, no main effect was found for issue proximity on intent to volunteer. While participants who viewed localized blogs ($M = 5.00, SE = .10$) indicated higher levels of intent to volunteer than those who viewed blogs with low issue proximity ($M = 4.93, SE = .10$), this difference was not statistically significant, $F(1, 264) = .27, p = .60$. Additionally, there was no interaction between appeal type and issue proximity, $F(1, 264) = 1.02, p = .31$.

The results revealed a significant main effect for issue type on levels of intent to volunteer for the respective organizations, Wilk’s $\lambda = .95, F(1, 264) = 13.93, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05$. Participants indicated higher levels of intent to volunteer for the organization advocating for at-risk youth ($M = 5.11, SE = .08$) than for the organization advocating for adult literacy ($M = 4.82, SE = .08$) (see Table 17).

Table 17:
Issue Type on Intent to Volunteer

	<u>At-Risk Youth</u>	<u>Adult Literacy</u>
<i>M</i>	5.11 _a	4.82 _b
<i>SE</i>	(.08)	(.08)

Wilk’s $\lambda = .95, F(1, 264) = 13.93, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05$

Notes: *Means within rows not sharing common lowercase subscripts differ at $p < .001$.

Additionally, there appeared to be an interaction between issue type and issue proximity in influencing levels of intent to volunteer among participants, Wilk’s $\lambda = .98$, $F(1, 264) = 5.26$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Those viewing blogs of localized nonprofits indicated higher levels of intent to volunteer for the organization advocating for at-risk youth ($M = 5.23$, $SE = .12$) than for the organization advocating for adult literacy ($M = 4.76$, $SE = .11$), $M_{diff} = 5.23 - 4.76 = .47$, $p < .001$. There were no significant differences between the at-risk youth ($M = 4.98$, $SE = .11$) and adult literacy ($M = 4.87$, $SE = .12$) organizations for those who viewed blogs with low issue proximity. Additionally, there was no difference within organization types between local and broad groups. These results can be seen in Table 18.

Table 18:
Issue Proximity X Issue Interaction on Intent to Volunteer

	<u>At-Risk Youth</u>	<u>Adult Literacy</u>
Broad	4.98 _{aA} (.11)	4.87 _{aA} (.12)
Local	5.23 _{aA} (.12)	4.76 _{bA} (.11)

Wilk’s $\lambda = .98$, $F(1, 264) = 5.26$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$

Notes: *Table lists groups means and standard errors in parentheses

**Means within rows not sharing common lowercase subscripts differ at $p < .05$, while means within columns not sharing common uppercase subscripts differ at $p < .05$ using Holm’s sequential bonferroni post hoc analysis.

However, the results did not yield a significant interaction between appeal type and issue type, Wilk’s $\lambda = .98$, $F(1, 264) = .02$, $p = .89$, nor was there a three-way interaction among issue type, appeal type, and issue proximity, Wilk’s $\lambda = 1.00$, $F(1, 264) = .20$, $p = .66$.

Donating

The second item examined was intent to make a donation to the respective organizations: “If I had the means, I would make a donation to this organization.” The results yielded no main

effects for either issue proximity or appeal type on levels of intent to make a donation. While participants who viewed localized blogs ($M = 5.04, SE = .09$) indicated slightly higher levels of intent to donate to the organizations than those who viewed blogs with low issue proximity ($M = 4.92, SE = .10$), this difference was not statistically significant, $F(1, 264) = .83, p = .36$.

Likewise, while participants who viewed blogs with rational appeals ($M = 5.03, SE = .09$) indicated slightly higher levels of intent to donate to the organizations, this difference was not statistically significant, $F(1, 264) = .58, p = .45$. Additionally, there was no interaction between appeal type and issue proximity on intended donations, $F(1, 264) = .95, p = .33$.

The results revealed a significant main effect for issue type on levels of intent to make a donation to the respective organizations. Participants indicated higher levels of intent to make a donation after viewing the blog of an organization advocating for at-risk youth ($M = 5.07, SE = .08$) than for the organization advocating for adult literacy ($M = 4.90, SE = .08$). This difference was statistically significant, Wilk's $\lambda = .98, F(1, 264) = 4.80, p < .05, \eta^2 = .02$. The results can be found in Table 19.

Table 19:
Issue Type on Intent to Donate

	<u>At-Risk Youth</u>	<u>Adult Literacy</u>
<i>M</i>	5.07 _a	4.90 _b
<i>SE</i>	(.08)	(.08)

Wilk's $\lambda = .98, F(1, 264) = 4.80, p < .05, \eta^2 = .02$

Notes: *Means within rows not sharing common lowercase subscripts differ at $p < .05$.

However, the results yielded no significant interaction between issue type and appeal type, Wilk's $\lambda = 1.00, F(1, 264) = .61, p = .44$, and between issue type and issue proximity, Wilk's $\lambda = 1.00, F(1, 264) = .43, p = .52$. There was no three-way interaction among the three factors, Wilk's $\lambda = 1.00, F(1, 264) = .03, p = .87$.

Seeking Information

The third item examined was participants' intent to seek out information about the organizations: "I wish to know more about this organization." The results did not yield a significant main effect for either issue proximity or appeal type. While participants who viewed localized blogs ($M = 4.85, SE = .10$) indicated higher levels of desired information about the nonprofits than those who viewed blogs with low issue proximity ($M = 4.79, SE = .10$), this difference was not statistically significant, $F(1, 264) = .16, p = .69$. Likewise, while participants who viewed blog posts with an emotional appeal indicated slightly higher levels of desired information about the nonprofits organizations than those who viewed blogs with rational appeals ($M = 4.73, SE = .10$), this difference was not statistically significant, $F(1, 264) = .21, p = .21$. Additionally, there was no significant interaction between issue proximity and appeal type on levels of desired information about the nonprofits, $F(1, 264) = .53, p = .53$.

The results revealed a significant main effect for issue type on levels of intent to seek out information about the respective organizations. Participants generally indicated wanting to learn more information about the at-risk youth organization ($M = 5.00, SE = .08$) than the adult literacy organization ($M = 4.65, SE = .08$). This difference was statistically significant, Wilk's $\lambda = .94, F(1, 264) = 17.30, p < .001, \eta^2 = .06$. The results can be found in Table 20.

Table 20:
Issue Type on Intent to Seek Out Information

	<u>At-Risk Youth</u>	<u>Adult Literacy</u>
<i>M</i>	5.00 _a	4.65 _b
<i>SE</i>	(.08)	(.08)

Wilk's $\lambda = .94, F(1, 264) = 17.30, p < .001, \eta^2 = .06$

Notes:*Means within rows not sharing common lowercase subscripts differ at $p < .001$.

However, the results did not yield a significant interaction between issue type and appeal type, Wilk's $\lambda = 1.00$, $F(1, 264) = .17$, $p = .68$, and between issue type and issue proximity, Wilk's $\lambda = 1.00$, $F(1, 264) = 1.45$, $p = .23$. The three-way interaction among issue type, appeal type and issue proximity was not statistically significant regarding participants' desire to learn more information about the nonprofit organizations, Wilk's $\lambda = .99$, $F(1, 264) = 1.63$, $p = .20$.

Assist Constituents

The fourth item examined was intent to assist constituents of the organizations. The results did not yield significant main effects for either issue proximity or appeal type. While participants who viewed localized blogs ($M = 5.41$, $SE = .08$) indicated higher levels of intention to assist those constituents of the nonprofit organization than those who viewed blogs with low issue proximity ($M = 5.38$, $SE = .08$), this difference was not statistically significant, $F(1, 264) = .08$, $p = .77$. Likewise, while participants who viewed blogs with emotional appeals ($M = 4.47$, $SE = .08$) indicated slightly higher levels of intention to assist those constituents of the organization than those who viewed blogs with rational appeals ($M = 5.32$, $SE = .08$), this difference was not statistically significant, $F(1, 264) = 1.86$, $p = .17$. Additionally, there was no significant interaction between issue proximity and appeal type on intentions to assist constituents of the organizations, $F(1, 264) = .10$, $p = .75$.

The results revealed a significant main effect for issue type on levels of intent to help constituents of the respective organizations, Wilk's $\lambda = .98$, $F(1, 264) = 6.72$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Participants generally indicated higher levels of intent to assist with those struggling with the organizational cause for the at-risk youth nonprofit ($M = 5.48$, $SE = .07$) than for the adult literacy nonprofit ($M = 5.31$, $SE = .07$). These results can be found in Table 21.

Table 21:
Issue Type on Intent to Seek Out Information

	<u>At-Risk Youth</u>	<u>Adult Literacy</u>
<i>M</i>	5.48 _a	5.31 _b
<i>SE</i>	(.07)	(.07)

Wilk's $\lambda = .98$, $F(1, 264) = 6.72$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .03$

Notes: *Means within rows not sharing common lowercase subscripts differ at $p < .05$.

However, there was no significant interaction between issue type and issue proximity, Wilk's $\lambda = 1.00$, $F(1, 264) = .20$, $p = .23$, and between issue type and appeal type, Wilk's $\lambda = 1.00$, $F(1, 264) = .63$, $p = .43$. There was no three-way interaction among issue type, issue proximity, and appeal type, Wilk's $\lambda = 1.00$, $F(1, 264) = .003$, $p = .96$.

Join Organization

The final item examined was intent to join the organizations. The results did not yield a significant main effect for either issue proximity or appeal type. While participants who viewed blogs with low issue proximity ($M = 4.77$, $SE = .10$) indicated higher levels of intent to join the organization than those who view localized blogs ($M = 4.75$, $SE = .10$), this difference was not statistically significant, $F(1, 264) = .01$, $p = .94$. Likewise, while participants who viewed blogs with emotional appeals ($M = 4.85$, $SE = .10$) indicated higher levels of intent to join the organization than those who viewed blogs with rational appeals ($M = 4.67$, $SE = .10$), this difference was not statistically significant, $F(1, 264) = 1.68$, $p = .20$. Additionally, there was no significant interaction between appeal type and issue proximity on levels of intent to join the organization, $F(1, 264) = .44$, $p = .51$.

The results revealed a significant main effect for issue type on levels of intent to join the organizations, Wilk's $\lambda = .93$, $F(1, 264) = 21.25$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$. Participants generally indicated higher levels of intent to join the organization advocating for at-risk youth ($M = 4.95$,

$SE = .08$) than the organization advocating for adult literacy ($M = 4.57, SE = .09$). These results can be found in Table 22 below.

Table 22:
Issue Type on Intent to Join Organization

	<u>At-Risk Youth</u>	<u>Adult Literacy</u>
M	4.95 _a	4.57 _b
SE	(.08)	(.08)

Wilk's $\lambda = .93, F(1, 264) = 21.25, p < .001, \eta^2 = .07$

Notes: *Means within rows not sharing common lowercase subscripts differ at $p < .001$.

However, the results yielded no significant interaction between issue type and appeal type, Wilk's $\lambda = 1.00, F(1, 264) = .19, p = .67$, and between issue type and issue proximity, Wilk's $\lambda = 1.00, F(1, 264) = .58, p = .45$. There was no three-way interaction among issue type, appeal type, and issue proximity, Wilk's $\lambda = .90, F(1, 264) = .02, p = .90$.

Correlations Between Outcome Measures

Though the study yielded limited significance between independent variables, an observation of the mean scores of participants across outcomes indicated consistency among individual participants in terms of levels of outcome measures. It appeared that, regardless of what point individual participants landed on the scale, they typically indicated similar levels of perceived local impact, trust, commitment, and behavioral intentions.

According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), organizational trust and commitment could be singled out as mediators which would ultimately drive behavioral intentions. Thus, correlation coefficients were computed among the four outcome measures (perceived local impact, trust, commitment, and behavioral intentions) for each of the two organization types to determine if they fell in line with these findings. These results can be found in Table 23 for adult literacy and Table 24 for at-risk youth respectively.

Table 23:
Correlations between Variables for Adult Literacy

	Perceived Local Impact	Trust	Commitment
Trust	.128*		
Commitment	.196**	.768**	
Behavioral Intentions	.290**	.622**	.720**

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 24:
Correlations between Variables for At-Risk Youth

	Perceived Local Impact	Trust	Commitment
Trust	.177**		
Commitment	.249**	.762**	
Behavioral Intentions	.335**	.638**	.709**

Note: ** $p < .01$

Along with being significant, the results yielded strong correlations between trust, commitment, and behavioral intentions for both issue types, all being greater than $r = .60$. Perceived local impact of an issue was weakly correlated with trust and commitment in both issue types and weakly correlated with behavioral intentions in the adult literacy condition. In the at-risk youth conditions, it appeared to have a medium correlation with behavioral intentions. In general, these results would indicate that the levels of trust, commitment, and behavioral intentions a participant has toward an organization typically fall in line with each other. This can be said, to a lesser extent, about perceived local impact of an issue.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

General Discussion of Results

Previous research on nonprofit adoption of digital media typically tends to generalize nonprofits into one category, not taking into account that the nonprofit sector consists of organization ranging numerous types, sizes, which cater to different communities (Saxton & Waters, 2014; Waters, 2009). This study sought to explore the nonprofit sector at varying levels: the larger organization appealing to many publics and the smaller organization catering a limited local community. It also attempted to examine how these organizations could use varying appeal types in creating organizational blogs in order to achieve specific goals in reaching their respective missions. Essentially, it examined the relationship-building process of varying nonprofits on organizational blogs in the hopes of progressing the literature on nonprofits as well as providing useful tactics to those in the nonprofit sector. Theoretical and practical implications of the study are discussed below.

Issue Proximity

The first major tactic in organizational blogs this study examined was the impact of issue proximity on participants. Previous research suggested that the close in proximity an issue is to an individual, the more likely the individual will consider it an issue of relevance (Latane, 1981; Takacs-Santa, 2007). Taking this suggestion into account, this study predicted that those participants viewing blog posts which included localization and placed the problem being addressed within the community of the participants would lead to higher levels of perceived local impact of the issue on that respective community. Contrary to H1, participants' perceptions of local impact of the issue did not significantly differ between the two groups, with those viewing rational appeals actually indicating slightly higher levels of perceived local impact. These results

can likely be explained by the fact that a majority of the sample (about 75%) was not originally from the Greater Baton Rouge area, and thus may only think of the community as a temporary residence.

It was also predicted that higher issue proximity would lead to higher levels of trust, commitment, and behavioral intentions toward the organization. However, the results indicated that, overall, there was no significant difference between those who read localized blogs and those who read blogs with no mention of a specific community. While it is worth noting that those who viewed localized blogs did typically indicate higher levels of trust, commitment, and behavioral intentions, these differences were not significant. Taken with the lack of significance of issue proximity in regard to perceived local impact, this is not surprising. If participants do not perceive an issue as being relevant to their immediate community, it is less likely that they will support the organizations in question, as they may deem the organizations to be advocating for an issue that is unimportant. If participants do not deem an organizational mission important, they are unlikely to support the organization.

This was evident when the effect of issue proximity on specific supportive behaviors was examined. The results yielded an interaction between issue type and issue proximity on levels of intent to volunteer, with those viewing localized blogs indicating higher levels of intent to volunteer for the at-risk youth organization than with the adult literacy organization. This would suggest the importance of organizational mission, as participants appeared to be more willing to volunteer their time to address the problem of at-risk youth in the community than the problem of adult literacy. This was not the case for those who viewed blogs with lower issue proximity, as neither problem appeared to inspire participants to volunteer for the respective organization more than the other. As the issues were not catered directly to the immediate community, it is

likely participants in this condition did not deem either issue relevant. This interaction provides support to the belief that, when matched with certain organizational missions, localizing an issue can inspire publics to engage in supportive behaviors toward the organization.

Rational & Emotional Appeals

This study also examined how emotional appeals vs. rational appeals affected levels of perceived local impact, trust, commitment, and behavioral intentions when used in narrative blogs posts. Based on previous research (Allen & Priess, 1997; Marchand et al., 2002; Panda et al., 2013), it was predicted that the different appeal types could be used to achieve different purposes when used strategically in blog posts. However, there was no significant difference in levels of trust, commitment, perceived local impact, or behavioral intentions between those who read blogs with emotional appeals and those who read blogs with rational appeals. It should be noted, however, that participants who viewed emotional appeals typically indicated slightly higher levels of all overall outcome measures than those who viewed rational appeals.

This marginal effect of emotional appeals may be partly due to a significant interaction between issue type and appeal type on levels of trust, as those who viewed blogs with rational appeals indicated higher levels of trust for the at-risk youth organization than for the adult literacy organization. This could also explain why emotional appeals did not differ across organization types, as in both cases the appeal featured one constituent struggling with the respective issues, which may have been more plausible among participants. This would again stress the importance of the type of organizational mission. Though both organization types implemented similar tactics in providing statistics to appeal to publics, the at-risk youth organization again resulted in more success, in this case on trust. Participants were likely more familiar with the problem of at-risk youth or than adult literacy, giving the rational appeals in the

at-risk youth blog post organization blog more impact. Participants may have been more likely to prioritize the problem of at-risk youth than adult illiteracy, as it would be more plausible that this issue was affecting a large constituency as the rational appeals would imply.

Additionally, when specific behavioral intentions were examined, a significant main effect of appeal type was found on intention to volunteer, with those viewing emotional appeals indicating stronger intentions to volunteer than those who viewed rational appeals. This falls in line with the negative state relief model (Cialdini et al, 1987), which states that audiences who feel negative emotions will engage in behaviors to combat those emotions. In this case, participants who viewed emotional stories of constituents likely felt sympathy for those struggling. In order to deal with this sympathy, they intended to volunteer to help these constituents, as this would allow them to feel as if they had contributed to a resolution of the problem.

Organizational Mission Type

Arguably, the most important finding of this study was the impact different issue types had on levels of supportive attitudes and behaviors. While this study initially incorporated different types of nonprofit causes in an attempt to generalize the results across the nonprofit spectrum, the within-subjects factor of issue type resulted in significant differences between outcome measures between both organizations. It appeared that most participants indicated significantly higher levels of perceived local impact, trust, commitment, and behavioral intentions toward the at-risk youth organization than the adult literacy organization.

This can likely be explained by awareness of the issue types. As at-risk youth is typically a more prominently known issue than adult illiteracy, it likely had to benefit of higher level of awareness among participants completing the study (National Center for Education Statistics,

2015; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). Ultimately, this may have resulted in the higher levels of supportive intentions, as it had less ground to cover in terms of convincing participants of its relevance as an issue affecting the community.

Theoretical Implications for Social Impact Theory

The results of this study help in expanding Latane's Social Impact Theory (1981), as they imply that more factors may be involved in the eventual social impact than the theory initially posits. While Latane states that social impact will be determined by the immediate proximity to the target of the impact and the status of the party seeking the impact, this study provides insight that there may be more factors at work. Ultimately, the intended impact on publics who read the blog posts was not significantly impacted by proximity alone, as the type of mission being advocated for also played a role in the eventual impact that organizational messages had on audiences. This would imply that status level and physical proximity may not be the only determinants of social impact, and that the nature of the impact may be equally as important.

Practical Implications for Nonprofit Organizations

As indicated by the results, issue proximity and appeal types appeared to be successful mostly when paired with specific issue types. This finding is indicative that organizations advocating for different goals and assisting different constituents may need to implement different tactics to achieve similar goals. While this study initially sought to derive a generalizable set of tactics for use across varying nonprofit types, the results would indicate that certain tactics, such as differing appeal types, have the potential to affect supportive intentions differently depending on the type of cause being advocated for. Some organizational missions address more commonly regarded issues than others. These organizations may already have a higher degree of inherent trust among publics of the issue's prominence. Thus, organizations advocating for less

commonly known issues, such as adult literacy, may have to initially implement different tactics to demonstrate the importance of their cause among publics.

The consistency among outcome measures for individual participants is also of note. Morgan and Hunt (1994) suggest that organizational trust and commitment could be singled out as mediating factors which ultimately lead participants to engage in supportive behavioral intentions. The correlational analysis run on outcome measures supported this claim, as trust, commitment, and behavioral intentions appeared to be strongly correlated with each other across both issue types. Although effects of issue proximity and appeal type were not consistent between participants, the outcome measures of trust, commitment, and behavioral intentions tended to follow similar patterns across participants. This would suggest that, in the cases where issue type, issue proximity and appeal type were effective, this effect will likely translate across trust, commitment, and behavioral intentions. As shown in this study, issue type played a major role in the effectiveness of appeals and issue proximity among publics. Ultimately, these results would indicate that, if organizations of specific missions successfully cater the content of narrative blogs to achieve organizational goals, it is likely that the effect will spread across levels of trust and commitment, leading to a much higher likelihood of behavioral intentions.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is not without its limitations. First, the study did not include a large variety of cause-types representing a larger variety of nonprofit organizations. The number of issue types was kept low in order to prevent participant fatigue when completing the study, as more than two conditions could be deemed problematic. The study only examined the effects of issue proximity and appeal type on two issue types, at-risk youth and adult literacy. As shown by the differences in the outcome measures between issue types, the type of issue being addressed plays a role in

the resulting levels of support from audiences reading the blog post. The nonprofit sector features a large variety of different cause types. Additionally, while both of the issues examined in the study can be grouped under the category of education, it is clear that the different constituents they advocate for (i.e., children vs. adults) played a role in the varying levels of support for the organizations. Thus, even nonprofits that can seemingly be grouped together may result in drastically different outcome and may require different tactics to promote organizational support. Future research can explore how the factors tested in this study may impact various other types of organizations (e.g., arts, environmental, health) to determine if this is the case across the spectrum or if each nonprofit type requires its own set of tactics.

Second, the sample for this study consisted of a majority of undergraduate and graduate students. While the use of student samples has been shown to be acceptable (Basil et al., 2002), students do not typically have the means readily available in the way that older, working professionals might. Thus, the outcome measures for behavioral intentions had to be worded as hypotheticals. While the behavioral intentions of a college student sample are not to be discounted, future research can test the effectiveness of issue proximity and appeal type on other samples who have the means to contribute to the organization in some way (e.g., donating and volunteering). By examining the potential effects across a greater variety of publics, it can be determined what tactics are more effective than others and further research in this field.

Third, as a major factor in this study was issue proximity, the study was localized to Baton Rouge, as this is the city in which the sample was recruited from. However, as the sample descriptives indicate, only about one-fourth of respondents are actually from Baton Rouge, with only about three-fourths being from the state of Louisiana. Although these participants may be current residents of Baton Rouge for the purposes of attending university, this may not

necessarily mean that they consider the area to be a primary residence. The city and surrounding areas may be thought of as a temporary residence, lessening the potential impact of the issue, as described by Latane (1981). Future research can explore how different locales may potentially result in different outcomes. Further research can ensure that the localization of the stimuli is applicable to the sample of participants taking part in the study. Additionally, the manipulation check for emotional appeals for this study centered on the presence of a story within the blog posts, as opposed to whether or not these stories incited negative emotions. Future studies can include more effective manipulations checks to determine if the appeals are not only being perceived, but if they are effective as well.

Additionally, the low issue proximity condition was operationalized as mentioning no specific community in which the organization operated, not explicitly stating that the organization operated in a community outside of the participants' current city. This could possibly have led some participants to believe the issue was locally occurring, essentially creating the same effect as if they were in the high proximity condition. Future studies can avoid this possible pitfall by explicitly implying that the low issue proximity conditions take place in another community, so as to lead to no confusion among participants. A good example of this is the study conducted by Andrus Takacs-Santa (2007), which explicitly named another community (Australia) in the low issue proximity condition, leading to significant results.

Finally, though this study centered on studying the adoption of digital media by nonprofit organizations, it focused only on the content of blog posts and did not incorporate an interactive component. This was in part due to the little amount of research in this area, as the study hoped to serve as a foundation for further studies to incorporate other aspects of digital media. Digital media, by its nature, is interactive and connected. Future studies can find ways to incorporate this

interactivity into the basic experimental design in order to explore the role interactivity plays in the development of beneficial relationships between publics and organizations. Additionally, this study only focused on blogging as a digital medium. Future studies can examine how similar factors play out on other types of digital media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

YouTube in particular would be a fascinating medium for this type of study, as it would allow the researcher to create similar narratives structures as suggested by Merchant et al. (2010) but incorporate visual and thematic elements in a way that static blog posts cannot. Localization in this medium might stand out more than in the static blog content of the current study.

Conclusion

This study aimed to make major contributions to limited research on the nonprofit sector as well as provide useful tactics for nonprofits adapting to the new digital media environment. In particular, it sought to explore the different advantages of smaller, local nonprofits in terms of fostering relationships with the local community over larger organizations attempting to reach a larger audience. It was believed that localizing issues to audiences would result in stronger, higher quality relationships than those of larger nonprofits catering to a larger variety of publics. Though the results of this study in regards to issue proximity were not significant, it still serves as a foundation for future studies hoping to explore this concept.

Additionally, this study aimed to explore how varying appeal types could be used to achieve specific organizational goals, allowing nonprofits to cater narrative content for specific purposes. This would be especially useful on digital media, a domain in which content is quickly moving and the attention span of its audience grows shorter and shorter. Some positive effects from emotional appeals across the various outcomes, such as volunteering, indicate that there is potential for exploration when it comes to appeals and narratives.

If this study has demonstrated anything, it is that the nonprofit sector is not one in which one set of tactics is generalizable to all of its members. The nonprofit sector is one that warrants much more exploration when it comes to digital media, as it has much to gain from these new forms of promotion. This study can be considered not just a first step in examining nonprofit organizations' adaptation of digital media, but also a first step in examining how this adaptation may differ at varying levels of the nonprofit sector. The nonprofit sector could benefit from more research of this nature, as much of the potential remains untapped.

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APPENDIX A: STIMULI

Advocates for Adult Literacy (AAL) Blogs

AAL High Proximity/Rational Blog Content

Closing the Literacy Gap in Baton Rouge

At the Advocates for Adult Literacy (AAL), we are constantly working to reduce the growing literacy gap. To be fully literate in today's complex society, a person must be able to read, write, do math and use a computer. Without these skills, fluid navigation through society and upward social movement are challenging. Without the proper resources and support, those struggling from illiteracy are unlikely to ever have the chance to move forward.

John Garay, our executive director in Baton Rouge, has witnessed this challenge firsthand. "At the Advocates for Adult Literacy, we help Baton Rouge natives, mostly in the mid-city region near our office, as they attempt to move forward with their lives by providing one on one education that would otherwise be unavailable to our students," says John. "A growing number of employers in the area require a GED, and we try to get our students where they need to be."

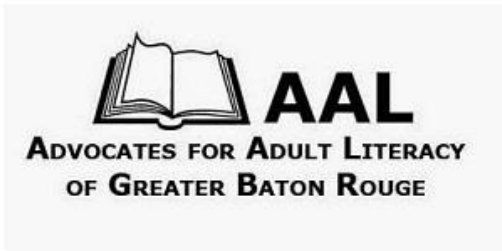
Recently, it was reported that fourteen percent of adults over 16 in Baton Rouge and surrounding areas read at or below a 4th grade reading level. One out of every three students in the area do not complete high school or obtain equivalency. This number continues to rise.

"In the past year alone, we have raised over \$15,000 toward education and tutoring resources and have helped over 25 students of a wide range of ages obtain their Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED)," says John. "We have made great strides toward reaching our goals."

Despite this, we are still losing the fight against the growing literacy gap in our city. Many in the Baton Rouge community rely on the education resources from the AAL, as no other organization offers the one on one experience that we do. However, we currently have a limited number of resources and our waiting list continue to grow with the literacy gap.

You can help us close the gap! Advocates for Adult Literacy (AAL) aims to help those struggling with illiteracy by implementing education programs and providing resources. By either getting involved with AAL or by making a donation, you are helping us grow and fight the battle against illiteracy. You can help us provide these people with the possibility of a better future. The possibility can start with you!

AAL High Proximity/Rational Blog Layout



Closing the Literacy Gap in Baton Rouge

At the Advocates for Adult Literacy (AAL) of Greater Baton Rouge, we are constantly working to reduce the growing literacy gap. To be fully literate in today's complex society, a person must be able to read, write, do math and use a computer. Without these skills, fluid navigation through society and upward social movement are challenging. Without the proper resources and support, those struggling from illiteracy are unlikely to ever have the chance to move forward.

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AAL Low Proximity/Rational Blog Content

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AAL High Proximity/Emotional Blog Content

Baton Rouge Native Confronts Struggle with Literacy

At the Advocates for Adult Literacy (AAL), we are constantly working to reduce the growing literacy gap in the greater Baton Rouge area. To be fully literate in today's complex society, a person must be able to read, write, do math and use a computer. Without these skills, fluid navigation through society and upward social movement are challenging. Without the proper resources and support, those struggling from illiteracy are unlikely to ever have the chance to move forward.

Ed, one of our students in Baton Rouge, has experienced this struggle firsthand. After dropping out of high school, Ed began doing factory work in Port Allen, eventually working his way up to floor manager. Recently, Ed's company offered him a promotion with a higher salary. However, the position required a high school diploma or equivalent. Ed currently reads at a 6th grade reading level.

"I had been struggling with my reading for years, but I knew it was finally time to do something about it," said Ed. "I've just been working so hard and so long to provide for my family that I never really had the time to look into my GED. This could really make a difference for them now."

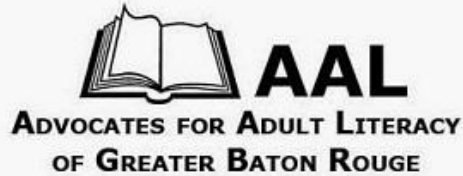
Ed has been working with the AAL for about a year, and has slowly but surely been improving his literacy skills. However, he still has a long way to go before he is ready to obtain his GED.

"It's hard to balance working with my tutoring sessions," said Ed. "Some days are harder than others but I know that this will make a difference to my family." Ed did not receive the promotion because he did not have a high school diploma, but hopes to obtain his GED for future opportunities.

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AAL Low Proximity/Emotional Blog Content

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Leaders of Tomorrow (LOT) Blog Posts

LOT High Proximity/Rational Blog Content

Leaders of Tomorrow Helps Baton Rouge At-Risk Youth Achieve their Goals

For more than 50 years, Leaders of Tomorrow (LOT) has operated under the belief that inherent in every child is the ability to succeed and thrive in life. An astounding number of children today are at risk of venturing down the wrong path. Because of a lack of proper guidance, a growing number of young children are dropping out of school and more likely to engage in criminal activity. Ultimately, many will not move forward to reach their full potential because they lacked a positive role model early in their lives.

At Leaders of Tomorrow, we make meaningful, monitored matches between adult mentors and children, ages 6 through 18 in the Greater Baton Rouge area. We develop positive relationships that have a direct and lasting effect on the lives of young people in the hopes of pushing them to achieve their goals. Recent studies show that Baton Rouge students involved in our mentor programs are 43 percent less likely to use illegal drugs, 24 percent less likely to skip school, and over 70 percent less likely to engage in violence with others.

“It’s remarkable to see the difference one person can make in a child’s life,” says Rita Gordon, executive director of the organization. “We step into these kids’ lives during a critical period and make sure to steer them in the right direction and allow them to realize what they’re capable of,” says Gordon, a Baton Rouge native who has been a part of the organization for twenty years.

“For Baton Rouge and its surrounding areas, LOT has raised over \$30,000 in the past year alone to create engagement programs, such as baseball leagues and after-school clubs, to bring the kids together, keep them out of trouble, and teach them valuable life skills. We’ve also matched over 100 kids with mentors. It’s been a huge success for the Baton Rouge community.”

Despite this, Gordon still believes there is much to be done. “We’ve barely made a dent in the bigger picture. About 15 percent of children in our capitol city alone are estimated to be at risk of engaging in negative behaviors, and we simply do not have enough mentors currently to address this number. Our end goal is to make sure that each child in Baton Rouge is equipped with the guidance and confidence they need to succeed.”

You can help us reach this goal! Leaders of Tomorrow matches at-risk youths with mentors in hopes of creating a one-to-one relationship built on trust and friendship that can grow into a future of unlimited potential. By volunteering to be a mentor or making a donation to the organization, you are not only improving the individual lives of many children, but also improving our society as a whole. Help create tomorrow’s leaders now!

LOT High Proximity/Rational Blog Layout



Leaders of Tomorrow Helps Baton Rouge At-Risk Youth Achieve their Goals

For more than 50 years, the Leaders of Tomorrow (LOT) Baton Rouge Chapter has operated under the belief that inherent in every child is the ability to succeed and thrive in life. An astounding number of children today are at risk of venturing down the wrong path. Because of a lack of proper guidance, a growing number of young children are dropping out of school and more likely to engage in criminal activity. Ultimately, many will not move forward to reach their full potential because they lacked a positive role model early in their lives.

At Leaders of Tomorrow, we make meaningful, monitored matches between adult mentors and children, ages 6 through 18 in the Greater Baton Rouge area. We develop positive relationships that have a direct and lasting effect on the lives of young people in the hopes of pushing them to achieve their goals. Recent studies show that Baton Rouge students involved in our mentor programs are 43 percent less likely to use illegal drugs, 24 percent less likely to skip school, and over 70 percent less likely to engage in violence with others.



"It's remarkable to see the difference one person can make in a child's life," says Rita Gordon, executive director of the organization. "We step into these kids' lives during a critical period and make sure to steer them in the right direction and allow them to realize what they're capable of," says Gordon, a Baton Rouge native who has been a part of the organization for twenty years.

"For Baton Rouge and its surrounding areas, LOT has raised over \$30,000 in the past year alone to create engagement programs, such as baseball leagues and after-school clubs, to bring the kids together, keep them out of trouble, and teach them valuable life skills. We've also matched over 100 kids with mentors. It's been a huge success for the Baton Rouge community."

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LOT High Proximity/Emotional Blog Content

Baton Rouge Native Finds Inspiration through Leaders of Tomorrow

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At Leaders of Tomorrow, we make meaningful, monitored matches between adult mentors and children, ages 6 through 18. For example, 10-year-old Joshua, a Baton Rouge native, was struggling in school, had trouble focusing on class lessons, and was suspended for his violent outbursts toward his teachers. Joshua lives in a single-parent household with his father, Tom near the downtown area.

“He’s always been creative kid, but very stand-offish. He would spend most of his time drawing and sketching by himself and not really put any effort into his schoolwork. When we would approach him about it, he would throw a tantrum.” says Tom. “He would lash out at his teachers and other students. It was becoming a major problem and I just didn’t understand it.”

Tom contacted LOT and requested a mentor for Joshua. “I would do as much as I could for him, but I work full-time and knew that he needed an extra push in the hours I couldn’t spend with him,” said Tom. As a result, LOT recently paired Joshua with Lauren, a local artist in the Baton Rouge area. “I’m hoping for the best. I just want my son to build his confidence and realize that he has the ability to do great things.”

There are many children in Baton Rouge just like Joshua who simply need extra guidance in achieving their goals. At LOT, we hope to help each one of these children discover what they are fully capable of. However, as the number of at-risk youths increases, we are struggling to reach the growing number of children in need.

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LOT Low Proximity/Emotional Blog Content

Ten-Year-Old Joshua Finds Artistic Inspiration through LOT

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LOT Low Proximity/Emotional Blog Layout



Ten-Year-Old Joshua Finds Artistic Inspiration through Leader of Tomorrow

For more than 50 years, Leaders of Tomorrow (LOT) has operated under the belief that inherent in every child is the ability to succeed and thrive in life. An astounding number of children today are at risk of venturing down the wrong path. Because of a lack of proper guidance, a growing number of young children are dropping out of school and more likely to engage in criminal activity. Ultimately, many will not move forward to reach their full potential because they lacked a positive role model early in their lives.

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APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE

PAGE 1: Informed Consent

Informed Consent Form

PAGE 2: Instructions

Thank you for participating in this study. In this section, you will be asked about your views toward helping others and toward charitable organizations. There are no right and wrong answers.

PAGE 3: Control Variables

Please identify your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

Scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat disagree, 4=Neutral, 5=Somewhat agree, 6=Agree, 7=Strongly agree

1. The money given to charities goes to good causes.
2. Much of the money donated to charity is wasted.
3. People should be more charitable toward others in society.
4. People in need should receive support from others.
5. Charitable organizations have been quite successful in helping the needy.
6. Charitable organizations perform a useful function for society.
7. People should be willing to help others who are less fortunate
8. Helping troubled people with their problems is very important to me.
9. My image of charitable organizations is positive.

PAGE 4: Instructions

Instructions:

You are about to view a blog post for a nonprofit organization advocating for adult literacy. Please read the post carefully.

PAGE 5: Randomized Stimuli

[Randomized Stimuli]

PAGE 6: Manipulation Check

Please identify your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

Scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat disagree, 4=Neutral, 5=Somewhat agree, 6=Agree, 7=Strongly agree

10. The post lists specific statistics to describe the problem the organization is addressing.
11. The post referenced specific stories of constituents of the organization.
12. The post encouraged readers to get involved with the organization.
13. A specific community was mentioned in the blog post.

PAGE 7: Instructions

In the next sections, you will be asked a series of questions regarding [issue type]. Please read each question carefully. There are no right or wrong answers.

PAGE 8: Perceived Local Impact

[Note: Version of questions depends on order of Issue Type]

Please identify your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

Scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat disagree, 4=Neutral, 5=Somewhat agree, 6=Agree, 7=Strongly agree

14. Others have more of a chance of encountering [illiteracy/at-risk youth] than I do.
15. The [illiteracy rate/ number of at-risk youth] in my community could be improved.
16. [illiteracy/at risk youth] is not a major concern in my community.
17. I am likely to encounter [someone struggling with illiteracy/at risk youth].

PAGE 9: Instructions

In the next sections, you will be asked a series of questions regarding the organization. Please read each question carefully. There are no right or wrong answers.

PAGE 10: Trust, Commitment, & Behaviors

Please identify your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

Scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat disagree, 4=Neutral, 5=Somewhat agree, 6=Agree, 7=Strongly agree

18. I feel this organization is trying to maintain long-term commitment to people like me.
19. This organization treats people like me fairly and justly.
20. I want to find out more about this organization.
21. There is a long lasting bond between this organization and people like me.
22. I would rather work together with this organization than not.
23. I would volunteer for this organization.
24. This organization can be relied on to keep its promises.
25. If I had the means, I would make a donation to this organization.
26. Compared to other organizations, I value my relationship with this organization more.
27. Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.
28. I want to help those struggling with literacy.
29. I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.
30. If I had the time to do so, I would join this organization.
31. I can see that this organization wants to maintain a relationship with people like me.
32. I feel very confident about this organization's skills.

PAGE 11: Instructions

Instructions: You are about to view a blog post for a nonprofit organization advocating for at-risk youth. Please read the post carefully.

PAGE 12: At-Risk Youth Stimuli

[Randomized At-Risk Youth Stimuli]

PAGE 13: Manipulation Check

Please identify your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

Scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat disagree, 4=Neutral, 5=Somewhat agree, 6=Agree, 7=Strongly agree

- 33. The post lists specific statistics to describe the problem the organization is addressing.
- 34. The post referenced specific stories of constituents of the organization.
- 35. The post encouraged readers to get involved with the organization.
- 36. A specific community was mentioned in the blog post.

PAGE 14: Instructions

In the next sections, you will be asked a series of questions regarding at-risk youth. Please read each question carefully. There are no right or wrong answers.

PAGE 15: Perceived Local Impact

[Note: Version of questions depends on order of Issue Type]

Please identify your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

Scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat disagree, 4=Neutral, 5=Somewhat agree, 6=Agree, 7=Strongly agree

- 37. Others have more of a chance of encountering [illiteracy/at-risk youth] than I do.
- 38. The [illiteracy rate/ number of at-risk youth] in my community could be improved.
- 39. [illiteracy/at risk youth] is not a major concern in my community.
- 40. I am likely to encounter [someone struggling with illiteracy/a youth at risk].

PAGE 16: Instructions

In the next sections, you will be asked a series of questions regarding the organization. Please read each question carefully. There are no right or wrong answers.

PAGE 17: Trust, Commitment, & Behaviors

Please identify your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

Scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat disagree, 4=Neutral, 5=Somewhat agree, 6=Agree, 7=Strongly agree

- 41. I feel this organization is trying to maintain long-term commitment to people like me.
- 42. This organization treats people like me fairly and justly.

43. I want to find out more about this organization.
44. There is a long lasting bond between this organization and people like me.
45. I would rather work together with this organization than not.
46. I would volunteer for this organization.
47. This organization can be relied on to keep its promises.
48. If I had the means, I would make a donation to this organization.
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54. I can see that this organization wants to maintain a relationship with people like me.
55. I feel very confident about this organization's skills.

PAGE 18: Demographic Information

Demographic Information

This is the final section of the study. Check or fill in the appropriate box to answer the question.

56. What is your sex? 1) Male 2) Female

57. How old are you? _____years old

58. How would you describe your political views?
 - Very Conservative
 - Conservative
 - Somewhat Conservative
 - Moderate
 - Somewhat Liberal
 - Liberal
 - Very Liberal

59. Are you from the Baton Rouge area?
 - Yes
 - No

60. If you answered "no" to above, are you from outside the state of Louisiana?
 - Yes
 - No

61. How do you describe yourself?

- American Indian or Alaska native
- African American
- Asian
- Caucasian
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Other

62. (For MEL) If you are participating in this study for course credit, please enter your MEL ID below to receive credit.

Thank you very much for your participation!

APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL & INFORMED CONSENT

IRB Approval

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST



Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

TO: Ryan Delaune
Mass Communication

FROM: Dennis Landin
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: January 20, 2015

RE: IRB# E9144

TITLE: To make a long story short: Issue proximity and message appeals in nonprofit blog narratives

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: New Protocol

Review Date: 1/16/2015

Approved **Disapproved**

Approval Date: 1/16/2015 **Approval Expiration Date:** 1/15/2018

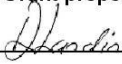
Exemption Category/Paragraph: 2a

Signed Consent Waived?: Yes

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable): _____

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable) _____

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman 

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –

Continuing approval is **CONDITIONAL** on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.

8. SPECIAL NOTE:

**All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>*

Participant Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Ryan DeLaune at Louisiana State University. If you decided to participate, you will be asked to view a set of nonprofit blog posts and complete a posttest questionnaire. The entire study should take no more than 30 minutes.

1. **Study Title:** Appeals in nonprofit narrative blogs
2. **Performance Site:** Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College
3. **Investigator:** Ryan DeLaune (rdelau8@tigers.lsu.edu)
4. **Purpose of the Study:** This study aims to determine the effect of various rational and emotional appeals in narrative blog posts from nonprofit organizations have on organizational-public relationships/
5. **Subject Inclusion:** Undergraduate and Graduate Students (All participants must be 18 years of age or older).
6. **Number of Subjects:** 200-300
7. **Study Procedure:** Participants will read a set of narrative blog posts from nonprofit organizations and be asked to complete a post-test for each respective narrative. The study should take no more than 30 minutes.
8. **Benefits:** There are no direct benefits to participants. However, the study may yield valuable information that helps build knowledge in nonprofit communication.
9. **Right to Refuse:** It is stated that participation in the study is voluntary and that subjects may change their mind and withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they may otherwise be entitled.
10. **Privacy:** All responses will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law. No names or identifying information will be used in the reporting of results.
11. **Signatures:** The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered.

I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dr. Dennis Landin, Chairman, LSU Institutional Review Board, (225)578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. By clicking below, I agree to participate in this study.

VITA

Ryan DeLaune graduated from Louisiana State University in May 2013 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mass Communication with an emphasis in public relations, and a minor in English. He has previously worked in marketing for the healthcare industry at AlwaysCare Benefits, as well as several nonprofit organizations such as Baton Rouge Green, The Baton Rouge Literacy Coalition, and The Capital Area Animal Welfare Society (CAAWS). Upon graduation, he hopes to pursue a career in either the nonprofit sector or higher education. He is a candidate to earn his Masters of Mass Communication with an emphasis in strategic communication in May 2015.