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Volunteer based organizations: bridging the gap between political efficacy and civic engagement

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VOLUNTEER BASED ORGANIZATIONS: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN POLITICAL
EFFICACY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
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by
Kristin Marks
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ABSTRACT

With the declining participation in civic engagement behaviors such as voting, people are turning to other means to demonstrate civic participation. This study examined the role of volunteering as a means to establish civic engagement. Because of this civic participation behavioral shift, the relationship between civic engagement and the communication tactics used by volunteer-based organizations was investigated. Thus, this study investigated the relationship between civic engagement and political efficacy. Additionally, this study examined the interplay between organizational characteristics (trust, control mutuality, exchange relationship, and commitment) and civic engagement. Lastly, perceptions of new and traditional methods of communications to encourage civic engagement and build trust of volunteer-based organizations were explored.

To address these relationships, this study used an online survey with 245 adults and the data were analyzed using a linear regression analysis and SPSS Textual Analysis for Surveys. This study used volunteer and snowball sampling. This survey used various civic engagement scales and James Grunig's *PR Relationship Measurement Scale* for organizational factors. Findings show higher levels of political interest and trust lead to higher levels of political efficacy. Additionally, stronger control mutuality beliefs of an organization lead to higher levels of civic engagement. Participants reported email and direct mail to be the methods of communication they are most familiar with from their volunteer-based organizations that encourage engagement. Furthermore, ease and access to information are crucial for volunteers regarding engagement and trust.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

United States public policy, over the last five decades, has sought ways to increase Americans' involvement in service activities and volunteering (Ellis & Campbell, 2005). In 2009, President Obama's legislation, the Serve America Act, provided more authority to national policies and institutions that supported service and volunteering. This act was renamed as the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act and passed into law April 21, 2009. Nesbit and Brudney (2010) explain that "the proliferation of volunteering policies since the 1960s and their continued expansion with the Serve America Act suggest that volunteering and national service are becoming prominent policy solutions heading into 2020" (p. 107).

This legislation plans to make available more venues for individuals to volunteer at every stage of life specifically targeting young people, minorities, and seniors. Furthermore, parts of the act promote programs designed to increase youth engagement. For instance, the act includes service learning components designed for high schools and middle schools (Nesbit & Brudney, 2010). Increased national service placements, higher financial incentives for student participation, additional service learning opportunities, and more government-supported service roles for minorities are programs proposed by the Service Act. Through the act, it is promised that volunteers will increase from 75,000 to 250,000 by 2017 in the AmeriCorps programs of the Corporation for National and Community Service. Peter Levine (2008), director of the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement reported that, "school based service is related to volunteering attitudes and behaviors, interest in politics, enhanced self-concept, belief in personal efficacy, and interest in current events" (cited in Nesbit & Brudney, 2009, p. 108).

Funk (1998) explains that “just over half of the United States population reports some charitable volunteer activities each year” (cited *Public Perspective*, 1996) and that “almost three quarters of American households give money to nonprofit organizations, often to churches or other religious organizations” (p. 601). Behaving in this manner demonstrates that citizens “are involved in efforts to address collective needs and more generally, participate in community affairs” (Funk, 1998, p. 601).

With the public management trend of the 1980s and 1990s to modernize the public sector, nonprofit organizations are increasing their role in public service delivery. This new public management environment

decentralizes management within public services (e.g., the creation of autonomous agencies and devolution of budgets and financial control), increasing use of markets and competition in the provision of public services (e.g., contracting out and other market-type mechanisms), and increasing emphasis on performance, outputs and customer orientation. (Larbi, 1999, iv)

This shift stems from a fiscal crisis resulting from various economic, social, political, and technological factors leading to a repurposing of funds and new management styles. Increased advocacy and policy making are roles nonprofit organizations are adopting in this new political landscape. Therefore, it is crucial to study the values, beliefs, and messages held and disseminated by volunteer-based organizations as they are now acting similarly to traditional governmental institutions in terms of public service.

This thesis will analyze the relationship between civic engagement and political efficacy through volunteer participation with volunteer-based organizations. The characteristics of volunteer-based organizations will be analyzed as they may contribute to volunteer activism. The methods with which volunteer-based organizations disseminate messages also contribute to civic engagement as the content generates a mutual relationship promoting involvement. This

study evaluates young adults which are not typically examined when researching civic engagement. This contributes and strengthens the civic engagement literature by including the beliefs and attitudes held by young adults. Furthermore, this study connects civic engagement with organizational theory in a novel way creating a more thorough evaluation of both concepts.

CHAPTER 2

ENGAGED AND FEELING GOOD ABOUT IT

Political Involvement and Citizenship

David (2009) explains that “the literature germane to political knowledge and its role in democratic society finds that education, prior knowledge, and political involvement are some of the most consistent determinants of knowledge about public affairs” (p. 243; citing Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996, Price & Zaller, 1993). Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) differentiate between political knowledge as a resource rather than a trait. From this perspective that political knowledge is a learned skill, all individuals have the opportunity to participate in political discourse because they can develop the skills needed to increase their knowledge. Gaining knowledge is a process that first begins when an individual has access and opportunity to receive the message. Then, the individual must have interest, motivation, general intelligence/overall knowledge of the subject, engagement, and lastly cognitive and analytical skills for the content of the message to be integrated into the individual’s numerous and known messages. Furthermore, they must grapple with those messages to identify what is relevant and what is unnecessary.

Cohen, Stotland, and Wolfe (1955) describe the need for cognition as “a need to structure relevant situations in meaningful, integrated ways. It is a need to understand and make reasonable the experiential world” (p. 291). The people who engage in the need for cognition are able to integrate social issues into their personal lives, favor critical thinking, and typically are more politically active. Cacioppo and Petty (1982) describe the need for cognition simply as the “tendency for an individual to engage in and enjoy thinking” (p. 116). Those that are politically engaged have a high need for cognition as their political discussions rationalize political actions (Cacioppo & Petty, 1992; Berent & Krosnick, 1995)

The ideal citizen, as described by normative democratic theory, is civically engaged, contributes to the democratic process, and uses relevant and accurate information to make participatory decisions (Chambers, 2003; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Habermas, 1984). In the current citizenship literature, scholars still debate how to qualify citizenship. Marshall (1950) explains that citizenship, in its most basic form, demonstrates a membership to a community along with related rights and obligations of that membership. Moreover, the membership does not only include a relationship between individuals and the governing power but a relationship among individuals in the community. Analyzing citizenship under this lens is generally agreed upon in the literature; however, the balance between rights and obligations is a topic of debate reducing the consensus (Lister, 2003).

Civic Engagement

Verba, Scholzman and Brady (1995) explain that the institutions, the venues creating an environment for participation in civic life, have changed over the past three decades. Today, individuals in college rank higher in volunteer participation than individuals not in college because the college environment harbors civic engagement activities (Zaff, Youniss & Gibson, 2009). In the past, the workplace environment has facilitated civic engagement but with the significant changes in the labor market, the workplace is unable to maintain this activity (Finley, Flanagan & Wray-Lake, 2011). National service opportunities for civic engagement have added to or replaced the missed opportunities on college campuses and workplace environments (Finley et al., 2011).

Typically, civic engagement “derives from its presumed ability to enhance the democratic process by involving them in decision making, information sharing, opinion representation, and transparency in governance” (Kalu & Remkus, 2009, p. 138). Individuals have expressed and

demonstrated civic engagement characteristically through political action and voting.

Additionally, political involvement via public meeting attendance, serving on committees, and working with political parties demonstrates civic engagement (Putnam, 1995a).

While some researchers argue that civic engagement in its traditional form of voter turnout and political activism has declined, others argue that civic engagement has simply changed in nature (Edwards & Foley, 2001; Youniss & Yates, 1997). Voting strength and political participation are no longer the only components defining civic engagement. Farmer and Piotrkowski (2009) define civic engagement as involvement in “activities such as volunteering, political participation, and social activism” (p. 196). Civic engagement also includes the process of behavior, either individually or collectively, to solve community problems (Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli-Carpini, 2006). While there are many forms of civic engagement, this thesis operationalizes that “volunteering to help the needy, fundraising for nongovernmental organizations, participating in community services, or being an active member of an environmental organization would all fall under the category of civic engagement” (Valenzuela, Park, and Kee, 2009, p. 879).

Although volunteering is a component of civic engagement, some believe volunteering can be a catalyst for political activism. Liu et al. (1998) offers that by simply participating in social organizations individuals may be more receptive to be recruited to other groups that are politically oriented. Furthermore, it has been suggested that nonpolitical organizations are arenas for political recruitment (Brady et al., 1999; Verba et al., 1995). Individuals are more likely to support a political issue if they have prior exposure to that issue which can develop during participation with a volunteer-based organization. Social capital scholars, particularly Robert Putnam, believe that involvement with nonpolitical voluntary associations has beneficial

outcomes as it facilitates political engagement and ignites governmental response (Putnam 1995a, 2000).

Self-efficacy

Self-concept theory conceptualizes self-efficacy as the “relationship between perceived ability and interests” in comparison to peers that is “mediated by expectations of personal effectiveness” (Lapan, Boggs, & Morrill, 1989). Lapan et al. (1989) state that prior experience compounded with efficacy expectancy will increase self-efficacy. This theory is operationalized by participants rating their confidence levels of preparation and success expectations before experiencing a stressful situation in comparison to their peers.

Wood and Bandura (1989) conclude that “self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one’s capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources of action needed to meet given situational demands” (p. 408). More simply, Bandura believes that the belief in a person’s ability to achieve success in a given circumstance creates self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977); Bandura operationalized this concept by creating four categories identifying self-efficacy: “enactive mastery (personal attainments), vicarious experience (modeling), verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal (e.g., anxiety)” (cited in Gist & Mitchell, 1992).

The locus of control model includes cues from internal and external sources which aids in theorizing about self-efficacy. Internal cues are determined when people compare their ability in a particular area only to themselves by identifying their success or failure in similar areas. External cues are determined when people compare their abilities in a particular area to their peer’s ability in the same area. Where a person perceives they receive their efficacy impacts the level of self-efficacy. Internal and external loci of control were operationalized in this study by

identifying self-perceived abilities for solving various problems (math and verbal problems) and self-perceived abilities in various subjects (academic subjects) (Bong, 1998).

Political Efficacy

Political efficacy is derived from research conducted by Albert Bandura and social cognitive theory. Political efficacy is the “feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, namely, that it is worthwhile to perform one’s civic duties” (Campbell, Gurin & Miller, 1954, p. 187). People’s beliefs of influencing societal change through direct contributions are defined by internal and external factors. Internal political efficacy “concerns personal beliefs regarding the ability to achieve desired results in the political domain through personal engagement and an efficient use of one’s own capacities and resources” (Caprara, Vecchione, Capanna & Mebane 2009). Caprara et al. (2009) explain that “external political efficacy concerns people’s beliefs that the political system is amenable to change through individual and collection influence” (p. 1002).

Several studies have shown that internal political efficacy plays a crucial role in endorsing a variety of forms of political participation (Finkel, 1985, Kenski, 2004; Madsen, 1987, Morrell, 2003 Caprara et al. 2009). Civic engagement and political interest have been shown to be correlated with internal political efficacy in some studies (Pinkleton & Austin 2001; Cohen, Vigoda & Samorly, 2001; Morrell, 2003). Other studies demonstrated that external political efficacy is associated to the general trust of practices conducted by the political system and related institutions (Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991).

Caprara et al. (2009) assert that “unless people believe they can produce desired outcomes; they have little incentive to address challenging tasks to pursue ambitious goals and to persevere in the face of difficulties” (p. 1004). While people may feel they possess adequate

knowledge to make political decisions and have a good understanding of the political process, it does not equate to possessing self-efficacy to influence political processes. For instance, one can be fully informed on foreign policy but lack a sense of efficacy to influence decision making.

Civic Engagement Factors and Indicators

Volunteering is a distinctive behavior to help. Volunteers typically seek out opportunities to donate their time, efforts, and sometimes money. When individuals decide to volunteer, it is usually a long-term commitment without financial compensation. Certain characteristics lend to this type of engagement as “volunteerism is the active role of the individual in choosing to serve and in charting the course of volunteer action such that it reflects processes of choice and the influence of personal values and motivations” (Omoto, Snyder, & Hackett, 2010).

David (2009) describes motives as “the extent to which individuals seek out information and how much they pay attention to it” (p. 244, cited Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Atkinson (1964) and Hull (1943) assert that motivations are the catalyst for individuals to engage in goal-oriented behaviors. Motivations encourage or drive individuals to pursue tasks and achieve a particular outcome. Funk (1998) describes three basic social motives: “motives for one’s own benefit, for another’s benefit, or for the collective welfare” (p. 603; cited Brewer & Gardner, 1996). As circumstances change, so does the collective. Typically, goals of benefiting oneself and others are involved in decision making motivations (Brewer & Miller, 1996).

Recent studies have demonstrated that political behavior is related to motives regarding positive influential decisions towards the collective. Studies conducted in laboratories that evoke a group identity or draw attention to collective goals are able to elicit self-sacrificing behavior (Brewer & Kramer, 1986; Dawes, van de Kragt & Orbell, 1990). Unger (1991) discovered that

volunteers do not simply act on personal motives alone but are able to address and attend to collective goals. Brewer and Miller (1996) offer that it is a combination of personal goals and collective needs that construct individual motives for action.

According to Bromley, Curtice and Seyd (2004), “low political efficacy among the public helps to explain the declining vote, since trust, efficacy, and turnout are linked” (cited in Livingstone & Markham, 2008, p. 352). While voting is not the only indicator of civic engagement, it is the simplest tool to identify an individual’s political participation (Norris, 1999). As such and according to the literature, voter turnout has declined significantly which is most clearly reported through voting records across the decades (Norris, 1999). As voter turnout declines, we must turn to other indicators to analyze civic participation, such as political interest. This can take the form of political discussions (Livingstone & Markham, 2008).

Funk (1998) defines social interest as “a value orientation that influences judgments of political issues, persons, and events” and values as “general and enduring beliefs that provide standards or normative prescriptions by which people evaluate themselves, others, issues, and events” (p. 602). A social interest value indicates a desire to benefit a community and society overall when forming political judgments and making behavioral decisions (Funk, 1998).

Organizations operate under the concept of social capital because it perpetuates social relationships. James Coleman (1990) introduced the concept of social capital, which connects social ties, shared norms, and trust to influence economic efficiency and the well-being of individual citizens. Kalu and Remkus (2010) explain that “social capital is a precondition for a credible civic society and is perhaps more relevant in building the kind of democratic discourse, shared values, and trust necessary for political consensus and collective action” (p. 137). Putnam (1995a) and Fukuyama (1999) offer that social capital “involves the development of networks

based on shared trust, ideas, and norms as well as understandings that facilitate cooperation within or among groups” (Kalu & Remkus, 2009, p. 135-136).

Social networks, norms, and trust described by social capital allow individuals to work together more efficiently to achieve mutually agreed upon goals. Putnam (1995b) explains that “to the extent that the norms, networks, and trust link substantial sectors of the community and span underlying social cleavages – to the extent that the social capital is of a “bridging” sort – then the enhanced corporation is like to serve broader interests and to be widely welcomed” (p. 665). As individuals spend more time together, the shared trust increases and as that trust increases they participate in more shared objectives. While Putnam illustrates the correlation between social capital and civic engagement, Serageldin (1998) offers that sustainable development is achieved through social capital. He believes that without social capital, economic growth is slowed and the well-being of society is diminished. Furthermore, social capital is the shared cultural and social elements of society governing the ways in which people interact. Some researchers have simplified the concept of social capital as the “resources available to people through their social interactions” (Valenzuela, Park & Kee, 2009, p. 877; Lin, 2001; Putnam, 2000).

Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley (2004) differentiate citizenship into two categories: choice based theories and structural models of citizenship. The choice based theories attempt to identify “why individuals seek civic or political information, and claims that education, knowledge and motivation are crucial” (Livingstone & Markham, 2008, p. 353) through use of cognitive engagement models (Pattie et al., 2004). Structural models of citizenship attempts “to explain why [individuals] are motivated to use such information, and so efficacy, social norms regarding participation and personal/group incentives for participation are stressed more” (Pattie et al.,

2004 cited in Livingstone & Markham, 2008, p. 353). Comprising the structural model are three models: the civic volunteerism model, the equity-fairness model and the social capital model. First, the civic volunteerism model evaluates civic skills (voting) and political efficacy which are based upon the access to community resources (Pattie et al, 2004). Social comparisons and expectations are indicators for the equity-fairness model which are nontraditional forms of engagement (Pattie et al, 2004). Lastly, social trust and political trust are factors of social capital (Putnam, 2000) which enable individuals to participate in voluntary civic engagement behaviors.

So far, political efficacy has been applied to typical forms of civic engagement, political action. From the literature, we see that civic participation represents more than political participation in the form of voting and political campaign involvement. Now, civic engagement includes volunteering which can lead to political involvement. Thus, it is important to treat volunteering as a component of civic engagement and study its relationship to political efficacy.

CHAPTER 3

CREATING RELATIONSHIPS

Public Relations

PR News founder, Denny Griswold explains that “public relations is the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and plans and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance” (cited in Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 8). Organizations use public relations to connect with its publics. The communication tactic selected is dependent upon the characteristics of the situation and the needs of that public (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier 2006). Public relations help shape the organization’s reputation, which “produces support for the company” (Fombrun & van Riel, 2003, p. 5).

Early public relations research was defined as a process of one-way communication. Research stated that public relations implemented communication strategies where organizations provided necessary information to its publics. By the 1950s, researchers instead claimed that public relations is a form of two-way communication and a form of management (Cutlip & Center, 1952). Here, organizations are incorporating feedback from its public to strengthen its communication tactics. Grunig (1976) evaluated the current public relations literature and evaluated it as still vague and incomplete. From his observations, he suggested the symmetrical communication model by way of organizational theory to strengthen the two-way communication approach utilized in the practice of public relations. Broom and Smith (1978, 1979) furthered the management function and role of public relations.

As public relations research was without a comprehensive model for analysis, Grunig proposed a thorough evaluation of the literature. The Excellence Study conducted by Grunig and five other public relations scholars created a practicing paradigm and general theory for public

relations research. Two questions were posed in this evaluation: How does public relations make an organization more effective, and how much is that contribution worth economically? What are the characteristics of a public relations function that are most likely to make an organization effective (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier 2006)? The evaluation formed a public relations model definition:

The Excellence theory is a broad, general theory that begins with a general premise about the value of public relations to organizations and to society and uses that premise to integrate a number of middle-range theories about the organization of the public relations function, the conduct of public relations programs, and the environmental and organizational context of excellent public relations. (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier 2006, p.54)

The researchers (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier 2006, p. 53) identified five theoretical propositions that were possessed by organizations that employ public relations effectively:

1. Participative rather than authoritarian organizational cultures.
2. A symmetrical system of internal communication.
3. Organic rather than mechanical structures.
4. Programs to equalize opportunities for men and women and minorities.
5. High job satisfaction among employees.

This study illustrates “that public relations is a unique management function that helps an organization interact with the social and political components of its environment” (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier 2006, p.55). From this comprehensive study, organizations have research to use as a model for effective measures to interact with their publics in a way that benefits both the organization and the public.

Relationship Development

Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (2000) assert that relationships form “when parties have perceptions and expectations of each other, when one or both parties need resources from the

other, when one or both parties perceive mutual threats from an uncertain environment, or when there is either a legal or voluntary necessity to associate” (p. 17). For a relationship to be meaningful to both parties, the relationship must be maintained through ease of access, openness, and enjoyment (Hon and Grunig, 1999). Hon and Grunig (1999) explain that outcomes and processes can measure the effectiveness of relationship maintenance. They explain that “often mutually beneficial exchanges can begin to build trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction” (p. 21).

Initially, evaluation of public relations was one-way and asymmetrical as it relied only upon analysis of the communication by the organization to the public. However, this is insufficient as Grunig and Hon (1991) argue that over time a relationship is most effective when both parties benefit. Thus, a meaningful public relations measurement tool evaluates the relationship between both parties which is built through the process of symmetrical two-way communication. Relationships form because “one party has consequence on another party” (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 12). Because these relationships occur in the public domain, between an organization and a public, the relationships are situational and subject to change as circumstances change (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Hon and Grunig (1999) suggest several factors that contribute to relationship building: access, positivity, openness, assurance, networking, sharing of tasks, integrative, distributive, and dual concern. Access allows public members to interact with the organization, particularly the public relations personnel (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Openness allows for the organization to be transparent by being forthcoming about decision reasoning and planning processes (Hon & Grunig, 1999). It is crucial for organization’s to continually demonstrate their commitment to its publics by assuring them that their questions and concerns are valid (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Networking allows for an organization to generate new relationships with relevant publics that are related to the organization's mission and values (Hon & Grunig, 1999). When organizations share tasks, such as "managing community issues, providing employment, making a profit, staying in business," they reflect the interests of both parties (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 15). Integrative behaviors of an organization demonstrate its desire to maintain a mutual relationship because the organization is willing to cooperate with its public through discussions and joint decision making (Hon & Grunig, 1999). When an organization engages in behaviors that benefit itself more than its public it is enacting a distributive behavior. Distributive behaviors occur when the organization "seek[s] to maximize gains and minimize losses within a win-lose or self-gain perspective" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 16). An organization concerned with the interest of its public in addition to its own interest is engaged in dual concern. If an organization effectively uses these factors, it can build successful long-term relationships with its publics.

Organizational Characteristics and Factors

On the organizational level, identity is conceptualized as the differences between one organization to another (Davies et al., 2001). It is also defined through perceptions held by an organization's members through a bottom-up analysis in organizational identity research (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994). An organization's identity is generated through its reputation. Because reputation reflects the public's broad recognition of the organization (Rindova et al., 2005), Lang, Lee, and Dai (2011) assert that the construct organizational reputation has yet to be definitively defined. However, they observe three themes emerging from the literature describing organizational reputation. The first theme is being known; this is the general prominence, visibility, and awareness of an organization. The second theme is being known for something. Rindova et al. (2005) describe it as "perceived quality" meaning the

“degree to which stakeholders evaluate an organization positively on a specific attribute, such as ability to produce quality products” (p. 1035). Lang et al. (2011) define generalized favorability, the third conceptualization of organizational reputation, as “perceive judgments about the firm that are based on aggregated multiple organizational attributes rather than being dependent on a given audience’s expectations for specific organizational outcomes” (p. 159; cited Fischer & Reuber, 2007). Hon and Grunig (1999) suggest that an organization’s reputation reflects its behaviors. Behaviors are a crucial element in building relationships because they demonstrate how one party acts to the other. Therefore, the organization’s behaviors contribute to the organization’s identity and image.

Grunig and Hon (1999) offer that trust, control mutuality, exchange relationship, commitment, satisfaction, and communal relationship are six factors that allow for organizations to generate and maintain long-term relationships with its key publics. Hosmer (1995) defined trust as a basic business practice and a representation of normative ethics. Greenwood and Van Buren III (2010) combined Hosmer’s definitions to create a new trust definition,

the reliance by one person, group, or firm, upon a voluntarily accepted duty on the part of another person, group, or firm, to act in a manner that is ethically justifiable; that is, undertake morally correct decisions and actions based upon ethical principles of analysis towards all others engaged in a joint endeavor or economic exchange. (p. 426)

According to this definition, it is important to note that “the trust party (or principal) is left vulnerable to the uncertain actions of the trusted party (or agent) and it is thus dependent upon that party” (Greenwood & Van Buren III, 2010 p. 426). Individuals become vulnerable when they lend trust in another party because the individual is relying on that external entity regarding something of importance. Greenwood and Van Buren III (2010) cite Phillips (1977) to state that “stakeholders, for example, contribute resources to and make sacrifices for corporations” (p. 426). Individuals trust organizations while accepting that there are potential negative effects of

being vulnerable; individuals engage in this trust because they believe some benefit will occur from the exchange (McAllister, 1995; Hosmer, 1995). If an enforcement process is unavailable to require ethical behaviors of an organization, individuals use factors to determine level of trust. Trust can be based on social norms (Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 1995).

Mayer, David, and Schoorman (1995) argue for three critical elements creating trustworthiness: ability, benevolence, and integrity. Ability describes an entity's capabilities to complete the task at hand. An organization's ability refers to its capabilities of effectively using resources to deliver promised results to stakeholders. Benevolence entails the perception of an organization to want to act in conjunction with a set of principles. Lastly, integrity is the perception that an organization adheres to a set of principles that stakeholders consider worthy.

Greenwood and Van Buren III (2008) postulate another form of trust, organizational trust. They define it as "the trust between individuals, and/or groups of individuals, and the organization as an entity in and of itself" (p. 430). They also argue that "the notion that an organization can be an object of trust and display characteristics of trustworthiness (such as ability, and integrity) is predicted on the organization being considered a moral agent – albeit one that exercises its morality through the actions of its members" (p. 430).

Public relations strategy implements two-way communication to allow both parties to benefit and participate in the development of the relationship. Hon and Grunig (1999) state that control mutuality is "the degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another" (p. 3). Because relationships are dynamic, the balance of power will shift. However, for a relationship to be considered successful, both parties (the organization and the public) must feel that they have some control over the other (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Moreover, a communal relationship develops when "both parties provide benefits to the other because they

are concerned for the welfare of the other – even if they get nothing in return (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 3). The public must feel that an organization is committed to them in order to continue spending time and energy to promote that relationship (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Commitment is built upon two dimensions: continuance and affective (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Continuance “refers to a certain line of action” while affective commitment demonstrates an “emotional orientation” (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 20).

Volunteer-based organizations operate partially by volunteers who donate their time and/or provide financial donations to the organization. In order for volunteers to continue donating time and money, organizations must provide some type of benefit for them; thus, creating an exchange relationship (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Because one party feels a sense of obligation to repay another party for some type of benefit, a continuous relationship forms. However, the public believes that organizations have a sense of responsibility to provide a benefit to the community rather than themselves even when the organization has not received a benefit from the public (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Here, stakeholders must feel satisfaction, “the extent to which each party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced” (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 3). Satisfaction helps maintain relationships because both parties are meeting the needs of the other.

Media Usage

With the advent of the Internet, people have new avenues in which to communicate; Kornfeld (2009) explains that “the digital innovations of the last decade made it effortless, indeed second nature, for audiences to talk back and talk to each other” (p. 9). Now, organizations have additional tools to use to connect with its publics and strengthen existing relationships and generate new relations. Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, allow

organizations to interact with its publics in more personal, consistent and meaningful ways. This type of communication occurs on a more regular basis, potentially every day, simulating an interpersonal relationship.

With the increase in Internet usage, traditional news consumption of newspapers, television, and radio are decreasing (Stempel, Hargrove, & Bernt, 2000). Hennig-Thurau, Malthouse, Friege, Gensler, Lobschat, Rangaswamy and Skiera, (2010) define new media as “websites and other digital communication and information channels in which active consumers engage in behaviors that can be consumed by others both in real time and long afterwards regardless of their spatial location” (p. 312). User-generated content via Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Wikipedia, and Twitter account for more than 11 percent of internet traffic worldwide (Alexa, 2010).

With advancements in technology, people are able to consume information on any topic at any time. Digital and social media allow individuals to share opinions, research ideas, and participate in discourse in an online forum enabling civic engagement. Newspaper consumption, one of Putnam’s (2000) indicators of the decline in civic engagement, is no longer the only avenue in which to obtain information. With the advent of the Internet and television, citizens have other sources to gain information regarding political topics.

Selectivity is a key concept analyzed in communication research as it describes an individual’s media selection or choice. Typically, traditional media develop content that is not tailored to a specific topic for larger markets. On the other hand, the content disseminated on the Internet is specialized by topic (Greenberg, 1999; Rash, 1997; Sunstein, 2001). Kim (2008) offers that “communication scholars have conceptualized selectivity as an approaching strategy rather than an avoidance strategy” (p. 603). Selectivity can also be examined as a non-

instrumental consideration, such as, personal issue importance (Berent & Krosnick, 1993). Most people are unable to attend to all of the messages disseminated by the media due to a lack of resources and motivations (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Thus, media consumers must select which messages to attend to through selection and processing and which to avoid (Wang, 1997).

If individuals believe a message to be of high personal importance, they seek out additional information and attribute cognitive energy to scrutinize the content (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Kim (2008) explains that “even though individuals see an issue as important to the country as a whole, (e.g. national defense), they may not consider the issue as personally important if they do not subjectively value the issue” and that “situational relevance does not define personal issue importance” (p. 605). Kim (2008) explains that “Atkin’s (1973) extrinsic instrumental utility theory proposes that selective information seeking can be explained as having a utilitarian purpose, where an individual uses it directly as a means toward solving political problems” (p. 603). Under this perspective, individuals use the media to solve practical problems.

Knoblock-Westerwick and Meng (2009) offer that “cognitive dissonance will produce motivation to dissolve the conflicting perceptions, for example, through reinterpreting the information or through selective exposure to information that helps to resolve the cognitive conflict” (p. 427). Festinger (1957), one of the first researchers identifying selective exposure through his research on cognitive dissonance, hypothesized that people strive for cognitive equilibrium. This theory illustrates that media uses select messages that corroborate previously held attitudes or reflect those attitudes and avoid media content with messages that are counter-attitudinal. Selectivity is a framework in which to analyze how media users choose which social

media networks to participate in. Furthermore, selectivity addresses which digital media forms to engage with (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010).

New Communication Methods

In the past, organizations had limited channels to disseminate information to its publics and it was a lengthy process for those publics to receive the message. Today, organizations can communicate with its publics instantaneously and receive instant feedback with changes in technology. Valenzuela, Park and Kee (2009) explain that “investment in social networks enables individuals to develop norms of trust and reciprocity, which are necessary for successful engagement in collective activities (e.g. participation in neighborhood associations) (p. 877). Social networking sites foster both civic engagement and political participation as it invokes social capital by connecting individuals through shared objectives (Valenzuela, Park & Kee 2009). For example, some argued that the delay of the introduction of the Canadian copyright bill was due to the 20,000 Canadian citizens who joined a Facebook page campaigning for the delay (Nowak, 2008).

Research presenting data that social networking sites promote social capital is limited. However, there is ample research supporting the role of the Internet on increasing social capital. The Internet provides a forum for encouraging mutual trust and community participation as well as sharing pessimistic attitudes and beliefs. In order to demonstrate social networking as a catalyst for civic engagement, researchers must conceptualize how people use the service (Ji-Young, 2006; Kwak, Shah, & Holbert, 2004). If Internet usage is operationalized as time spent online, social capital cannot be achieved because the data does not reflect motives and interactions with a variety of audiences (Nie & Hillygus, 2002). When Internet usage is operationalized as types of uses, for instance, recreational, informational, and communicative,

researchers find a positive relationship between motives and social capital (Beaudoin, 2008; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke 2008; Shah et al., 2001). Valenzuela et al. (2009) explains that “the patterns of new media use related to information acquisition and community building (e.g. online news, political blogs, virtual communities) are positively associated with individual-level production of social capital” (p. 880).

Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, and Wright (2004) define blogs as “frequently modified web pages in which dated entries are listed in reverse chronological sequence” (p. 1). Companies and organizations understand that blogs can be a communication tool to connect individuals within a company or organization with the public. For online content to be considered a blog it must also have frequent updates, hyperlinks, and the ability for readers to comment on posts (Herring et al., 2004). Reader perceptions of whether online content creates a blog must also be included in analyzing blogs (Kelleher & Miller, 2006).

Kelleher and Miller (2006) explain that personal and professional communication have helped develop organizational blogs. According to Sifry (2004), corporate bloggers “are people who blog in an official or semi-official capacity at a company, or are so affiliated with the company where they work that even though they are not officially spokespeople for the company, they are clearly affiliated.” Kelleher and Miller (2006) adapted Sifry’s definition to describe the components of an organizational blog. These criteria are: “1) maintained by people who post in an official or semiofficial capacity at an organization, 2) endorsed explicitly or implicitly by that organization, and 3) posted by a person perceived by publics to be clearly affiliated with the organization” (p. 399).

The social networking site Facebook can promote collective action as it provides a forum for users to fulfill their informational needs (Kenski & Stroud, 2006). Facebook is an online

forum for social networks, a key element for increased social capital. The 'News Feed' component of Facebook provides a list of updates from the 'friends' of the users. The stories are updated in real time so every time the user logs in the stories will be different as to reflect the current updates. Thus, Facebook strengthens relationships and community ties as it constantly keeps the user updated to the changes made by his/her friends (Hargittai, 2007).

Facebook also has a feature where members can join groups to share related interests. This application makes available what groups user's friends are in as well as publishing the user's groups to friends. Valenzuela, Park, and Kee (2009) offers that "those who belong to a political group within Facebook can receive mobilizing information that may not be available elsewhere and can encounter opportunities to engage in political activities" (p. 882). The researchers extend this idea to civic groups who engage in similar practices on social media networking sites.

Reber and Kim (2006) explain that "the use of website press rooms and online tactics by activist groups may meet this standard of building control beneficial exchanges that can lead to exchange and communal relationships" (p. 314)

Twitter users write messages of 140 characters or less to everyone that has chosen to receive them, they are called Tweets. This type of communication is identified as a microblog, (Red Herring, 2009). Any device that is connected to the Internet can access Twitter. Many companies have begun using Twitter to communicate with its public, utilizing its capability to disseminate messages to a large group of people quickly (Jansen et al., 2009).

CHAPTER 4

HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As the political landscape changes, individuals are finding new methods to demonstrate their political activism and civic engagement. This study examines the interplay between civic engagement (volunteering, voting habits, and political participation) and political efficacy. Based on the theoretical foundations of political efficacy and organizational theory, the following hypotheses were developed.

H1: Stronger rankings of civic participation indicators (political interest and higher voting records) will positively predict stronger political efficacy beliefs.

H2: Stronger rankings of civic engagement social and political factors (social capital, social expectations, political trust, and participation in political discussion) will positively predict stronger political efficacy beliefs.

H3: Stronger expression of values beliefs will positively predict stronger political efficacy beliefs.

The civic engagement literature can be applied to organizational research to illustrate a new relationship. The characteristics possessed by the volunteer-based organization may play a role in its volunteers' levels of civic engagement. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed into four parts to address four organizational factors.

H4a: Stronger beliefs of trust of an organization will positively predict individual civic engagement.

H4b: Stronger beliefs of control mutuality of an organization will positively predict individual civic engagement.

H4c: A positively perceived exchange relationship of an organization will positively predicts individual civic engagement.

H4d: Stronger beliefs of commitment of an organization will positively predict individual civic engagement.

With the evolving technological landscape of new media, volunteer-based organizations are developing new means to communicate with their publics to build relationships or strengthen pre-existing relationships. This leads organizations to use the technological advancements as tools to encourage engagement from those individuals. New media, particularly social media, creates an opportunity for organizations to create communities for its publics which potentially generates new volunteers for the organization. Additionally, as exploratory research, this study attempts to identify how adults who have volunteered respond to both traditional and new media communication methods by volunteer-based organizations. Thus, the following research questions were posed.

RQ1: What are the perceptions of information sent through new media and traditional media on encouraging civic engagement?

RQ2: How, if at all, do the perceptions of new media and traditional media practices by an organization impact the trust of that organization to the message recipient?

CHAPTER 5

METHOD

Study Design and Rationale

This thesis examines the relationships between political efficacy with civic participation indicators and civic engagement social and political factors. Moreover, this study attempts to identify how organizational factors relate to civic engagement. Lastly, the study's participants evaluated their relationships with an organization that they have volunteered for and the communication strategies employed by the organization. To address the hypotheses and research questions, this study utilized a survey by way of a volunteer and snowball sample of adults who have volunteered for an organization at least once during their lifetime.

To address this study's hypotheses and research questions an online survey was developed. Surveys are a "system for collecting information" and "by asking questions or having participants respond to stimuli statements, researchers can collect data that can be used to describe, compare, or explain knowledge, attitudes, or behavior (Fink, 1995 cited in Keyton, 2011, p. 161). Surveys are designed to address characteristics of a specific population, which reflect the purposes of the research questions and hypotheses of this thesis. The concepts of this thesis are best measured through a survey because they address attitudes (e.g. political efficacy) and behaviors (e.g. volunteering, voting). A main goal of asking questions in a survey format is to generalize the findings from that sample to a larger population (Keyton, 2011).

With online surveys, there is the risk of collecting data that is of poor quality (Keyton, 2011). This happens because some participants use cognitive shortcuts to answer the questions (Keyton, 2011). Furthermore, respondents try to interpret the meanings of the questions and "seem to use the proximity of the items as a cue to their meaning, perhaps at the expense of reading each item carefully" (Keyton, 2011, p. 163 cited in Toepoel, Das & Van Soest, 2008).

To counteract this, the survey used in this study randomized items within questions and within question blocks.

Online surveys offer the following advantages: “cost effective, time efficient, respondents can return data quickly, easy to present visual information, and survey programs make it easy for respondents to skip items or branch to sections based on their responses to previous items” (Keyton, 2011, p. 165). Because of the nature of this online survey, participants had the opportunity to share the survey link with their own network (snowball sampling) which increased the variance of the sample. Nevertheless, online surveys have the following disadvantages: “challenging to identify populations and samples, concerns of computer security, and must have accurate e-mail addresses” (Keyton, 2011, p. 165). To combat this, additional demographic questions were used to identify important characteristics of the participants (e.g. media usage, volunteering habits).

This survey included four open-ended questions which provide data from the subject’s point of view rather than the researcher’s (Fink, 1975 cited in Keyton, 2011). Because data collected from these types of questions are hard to translate into numerical data, they are used infrequently and typically at the end of surveys (Keyton, 2011). For this reason, the open-ended questions were asked after the closed-ended questions and before the demographic questions. Furthermore, open-ended questions are useful when investigating unexplored or relatively new topics. This study explored the use of new media communication methods; thus, the research questions which relate to communication methods (including new media, particularly social media) are exploratory.

Using an online survey limits this thesis in identifying a cause and effect relationship between political efficacy and civic engagement with a volunteer-based organization. However,

the research questions and hypotheses do not require this as they examine the relationship between the messages disseminated by volunteer-based organizations, civic engagement, and political efficacy.

Survey Procedure

To address this study's hypotheses and research questions, an online survey was administered. The survey was designed to last approximately 20 minutes and hosted by Qualtrics, an online survey building software (See Appendix). In order to accommodate for participants geographic locations, the survey was intended for participants to complete the survey in a setting of their choice (e.g. home or computer lab). Thus, participants were able to manage survey completion and avoid forced answering that laboratory settings can evoke. In order to complete the survey, participants were prescreened to identify whether or not they have volunteered or been involved with a volunteer-based organization. If they had never volunteered for an organization, they advanced to the end of the survey and additional data was not collected or used for analysis of that participant. The survey used established scales, increasing the survey's reliability and validity, to address the hypotheses through use of 7-point Likert-type scales. Participants were asked to identify an organization they have an established relationship with before answering the scales regarding organizational characteristics.

Finally, participants were asked about media usage (e.g. email, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and how often they sought information about their organization through various mediums (e.g. email, newsletters, Facebook, Twitter, etc.). As another control measure, participants were asked to identify their moral duty beliefs about volunteering. This statement was asked about the participant's own belief and how he/she felt regarding others. Additionally, participants were asked to identify their political views and religious affiliations.

The online survey was pre-tested by 79 undergraduate Mass Communication students at Louisiana State University through the MEL subject pool to determine the reliability and validity of the scales used. After the pre-test analysis, the statement developed by Livingston and Markham (2008) determining voting habits was changed; for this study, the same statement was used but the scale categories changed from agree to disagree to (1) never, (4) sometimes, and (7) always ($M=4.68$, $SD=1.97$). New participants were recruited for the survey.

Measurements

Participants first completed a scale regarding their political efficacy. Political efficacy is the belief that an individual's political action has the ability to affect the political process (Campbell, Grurin & Miller, 1954); sample statements include "voting is the only way that people like me can have any say about how the government runs things" and "you can affect things by getting involved in issues you care about." This study adopted the political efficacy scale by Niemi, Craig, and Mattei (1991), consisting of 4 questions. Two additional political efficacy statements developed by Livingstone and Markham (2008) were added to the Niemi et al. (2004) scale. From the pre-test reliability analysis, the initial Cronbach's alpha was low ($\alpha=.53$, $M=4.61$, $SD=.88$). After conducting a factor analysis, it was determined that the political efficacy scale had two factors. Factor one represents the political efficacy scale by Niemi, Craig, and Mattei (1991) and consisted of three items ($\alpha=.65$, $M=4.05$, $SD=1.29$). Factor two represents the political efficacy items developed by Livingstone and Markham (2008) and consisted of two items ($r=.60$, $p<.001$, $M=5.46$, $SD=1.13$). The sixth item that was included in this political efficacy scale was shown to be loading on both factors and was excluded from analysis. These items were asked on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree.

Next, participants completed the General Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1979). Ten-items comprise this scale and measure self-efficacy where each item “refers to successful coping and implies an internal-stable attribution of success” (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995, p. 2). Self-efficacy is an individual’s belief to achieve success in a particular circumstance (Wood & Bandura, 1989) which is measured through questions such as “I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough” and “thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.” From the pre-test reliability analysis, the Cronbach’s alpha of these ten questions was .89 ($M=5.53$, $SD=.77$). These items were asked on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree.

This study adopted the Internality, Powerful Others, and Chance Scales for Locus of Control to measure individuals’ beliefs about three components of control (Lefcourt, 1991). Lefcourt (1991) states that “locus of control refers to assumed internal states that explain why people actively, resiliently, and willingly try to deal with difficult circumstances, while others succumb to a range of negative emotions.” For purposes of this study, the questions relating to chance were eliminated as they did not address the hypotheses or research questions. This scale is comprised of fifteen items measuring one’s belief of the power of internal and external factors on situational outcomes ($\alpha=.80$, $M=4.55$, $SD=.76$); sample questions include “I feel like what happens in my life is mostly determined by powerful people” and “people like myself have very little chance of protecting our personal interests when they conflict with those of strong pressure groups.” These items were asked on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree and the internal reliability was calculated from the pre-test data.

Five items were selected from the Bang and Ross (2005) survey which was based upon the Volunteer Motivations Scale for International Sporting Events (Bang & Chelladurai, 2003). Although this scale is intended for sporting events, the items selected address general values regarding volunteering. This scale is comprised of five items ($\alpha=.92$, $M=6.26$, $SD=.78$) creating the motivational factor, Expression of Values which identifies an individual's concern for others, a particular event, and/or society (Bang & Ross, 2005). These items were asked on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree and the internal reliability was calculated from the pre-test data with sample questions of "volunteering creates a better society" and "I want to do something worthwhile."

A political participation scale was generated by using established statements identifying social capital, social expectations, political trust, political interest, and participation in political discussion ($\alpha = .80$). Social capital consisted of three items with a Cronbach's alpha of .70 ($M=4.36$, $SD=.88$) (Livingston & Markham, 2008). Social expectations consisted of two items ($r=.64$, $p<.01$, $M=5.24$, $SD=1.27$) (Livingston & Markham, 2008). Political trust consisted of three items ($\alpha=.86$, $M=3.59$, $SD=1.46$) (Livingston & Markham, 2008). Livingston and Markham (2008) used another social and political factor which identifies an individual's political discussion habits with others. However, they presented a list of political themes individuals may follow, then participants answered the following statement "Talking these things that matter to you, how often do you tend to talk to others about these kinds of things?" For purposes of this study and to maintain continuity in this block of questions, that statement was translated to "You are generally interested in what is going on in politics" ($M=4.41$, $SD=1.75$). For these items, questions were asked on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree.

Because of a volunteer-based organization's desire to maintain long-term relationships with its key publics, it is crucial to assess the organization (Paine, 2011). Grunig and Hon (Paine, 2011) created the *PR Relationship Measurement Scale* to evaluate the relationship between an organization with its publics. Grunig's scale is the first to examine these long-term relationships rather than measuring the success of short-term outcomes and outputs of short-term public relations programs (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Outputs are defined as "the immediate results of a particular PR program or activity" whereas "outcomes measure whether target audience groups actually received the messages directed at them, paid attention to them, understood the message, and retained those messages in any shape or form" (Grunig & Hon, 1999, p. 2).

The Grunig Relationship Survey was used to identify participants' opinions regarding an organization's behavior (Paine, 2011). From this survey, the concepts addressing trust, control mutuality, commitment, and exchange relationships were used. For the purposes of this study, the satisfaction and communal relationship factors were not used because they do not directly relate to civic engagement. These two factors evaluate the participant's values of how others perceive this organization. The trust component consisted of eleven items ($\alpha=.82$, $M=5.29$, $SD=.76$). The control mutuality component consisted of eight items ($\alpha=.75$, $M=4.65$, $SD=.83$). The commitment component consisted of eight items. Because the initial Cronbach's alpha calculated was slightly low ($.72$, $M=4.42$, $SD=.88$), a factor analysis was conducted. Two factors were determined. Factor one represents the feelings of a volunteer that the organization desires to connect to him/her and consisted of six items ($\alpha=.85$, $M=4.98$, $SD=1.10$). Factor two represents the volunteer's desire to not connect with their selected organization and consisted of two items ($r=.50$, $p<.01$, $M=2.75$, $SD=1.51$). The exchange relationship component consisted of four questions ($\alpha=.85$, $M=4.06$, $SD=1.28$). All items were asked on a 7-point Likert-type scale

ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree and the internal reliability was calculated from the pre-test data.

Four open-ended questions were developed to address the research questions of this thesis:

- What do you think about your organization's communication to you through social media and new media (email, e-newsletters, website updates, etc.)?
- What do you think about your organization's communication to you through more traditional methods (mail, newsletters, etc.)?
- How if at all, does your organization use communication to encourage you to volunteer?
- What can your organization do to strengthen their relationship with you?

So far, civic engagement and organizational identity research have been mutually exclusive. However, as civic engagement behavior is changing to include volunteering, it is important to examine those volunteer-based organizations. Volunteer-based organizations are using the evolving political landscape and technological advancements to communicate with its publics in innovative and meaningful ways. Thus, this study connects political efficacy and civic engagement behaviors directly to the behaviors of volunteer-based organization. Comparing civic engagement attitudes with participants' organizational characteristic (trust, exchange relationship, control mutuality, and commitment) beliefs connects the volunteer-based organization's ability to civically engage its public and potentially affect political efficacy.

Research Participants

A volunteer and snowball sample are most appropriate for this thesis as the population being examined is an engaged group. Engaged groups, typically will self-select into survey participation. Both sampling techniques are a type of non-probability sampling which “does not

rely on any form of random selection” (Keyton, 2011, p. 128). Volunteer samples occur when the “researcher relies on individuals who express interest in the topic or who are willing to participate in research” (Keyton, 2011, p. 129). This type of sampling is most appropriate for research when the purpose is to examine participants with particular characteristics (Keyton, 2011). For this study examining the attitudes and beliefs of individuals who have volunteer experience, this sampling technique is most appropriate. To increase the variance of the sample, snowball sampling was implemented. Snowball sampling is used “when the research topic is controversial or a specific population of participants is difficult to find” (Keyton, 2011, p. 131). Because this study examined the attitudes of volunteers, the researcher utilized the participants’ networks and “the sample grows, or snowballs, as participants help the researcher to identify more participants with the same characteristics” (Keyton, 2011, p. 131). Subject pool

Participants were recruited from a variety of sources to create a representative sample of ages and geographic locations. The respondents from the Manship School of Mass Communication’s Media Effects Laboratory (MEL) subject pool at Louisiana State University represented the volunteer sample. This subject pool included students at various points in their undergraduate career and across majors in addition to Mass Communication; thus, the variance of the participants is increased. Furthermore, the subject pool included the target age group as this study examines social media usage and connections with volunteer-based organizations. To increase the sample size, a snowball sampling technique was implemented. Respondents were emailed the web URL of the online survey. These respondents were volunteers from the Louisiana Capital Area Red Cross Chapter, Starlight Children’s Foundation and various churches, among a variety of others. Additionally, social media was a tool to increase survey

participation. The survey link was posted on the researcher's Facebook and Twitter accounts; members of those networks were asked to share the survey's URL.

Although 272 surveys were collected, only 245 were used. The unused surveys were not completed as coded by Qualtrics or the participant answered no to the pre-screen question (Have you volunteered for an organization at least once during your lifetime?). From this sample, 37 were male (13.6%) and 193 were female (71%). The ages of the participants ranged from 18-62 with a mean of 22.54 (SD=8.20). From this study, respondents were predominantly Caucasian (71.3%). For additional demographic information, see Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Information

	Frequency	Percent
African American	21	7.7
Asian	6	2.2
Caucasian	194	71.3
Latino	4	1.5
Other	4	1.5
Extremely Liberal	13	4.8
Slightly Liberal	44	16.2
Moderate	69	25.4
Slightly Conservative	57	21.0
Extremely Conservative	48	17.6
Catholic	115	42.3
Protestant	62	22.8
Jewish	1	.4
Muslim	1	.4
Hindu	1	.4
Nonreligious	28	10.3
Spiritual	8	2.9
Other	15	5.5

This survey examined behaviors and attitudes of participants who have or are currently volunteering for an organization. Generally, people view volunteering as a positive behavior; thus, responses may reflect social desirability rather than the respondent's true attitude. To address this, respondents were asked to answer "How much of a moral duty do you feel people

should have to volunteer?” ($M=5.15$, $SD=1.36$) and “How much of a moral duty do you feel you have to volunteer?” ($M=5.35$, $SD=1.37$). So, individuals, as expected, responded positively.

Of this sample, 109 volunteer for only one organization (40.1%), 59 volunteer for two organizations (21.7%), 41 volunteer for three organizations (15.1%), 8 volunteer for four organizations (2.9%), and 9 volunteer for five or more organizations (3.3.%). Participants were asked to identify how often they sought out information regarding a self-identified organization. Organizations use both traditional means of communication (e.g. direct mail) and new mediums (e.g. Facebook) to disseminate information to its publics. Surprisingly, participants use Twitter more than ($M=2.95$, $SD=2.29$) the organization’s website ($M=2.83$, $SD=1.67$). Participants use brochures the least when seeking out information related to their volunteer ($M=1.83$, $SD=1.35$). The remaining descriptive statistics are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Media Usage Regarding Self-identified Organization

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Facebook	2.68	2.29
Twitter	2.95	2.29
Email	3.37	2.06
E-newsletter	2.57	1.73
Org. website	2.83	1.67
Direct mail	2.06	1.48
Brochures	1.83	1.35
Physical newsletter	1.87	1.41
News source	2.01	1.58
Flyer	2.05	1.53

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS

Research Overview

This thesis examined how civic engagement indicators and factors impact political efficacy beliefs held by individuals. According to the literature, organizational characteristics play a role in developing relationships with volunteers that generates civic engagement. Thus, this study investigated the communication strategies utilized by volunteer-based organizations to engage its community.

To address these questions four hypothesis were generated: Stronger rankings of civic participation indicators (political interest and higher voting records) will positively predict stronger political efficacy beliefs. Stronger rankings of civic engagement social and political factors (social capital, social expectations, political trust, and participation in political discussion) will positively predict stronger political efficacy beliefs. Stronger expression of values beliefs will positively predict stronger political efficacy beliefs. Stronger beliefs of four organizational characteristics (trust, control mutuality, exchange relationship, and commitment) will positively predict individual civic engagement.

In an attempt to address the perceptions of the communication methods utilized by volunteer-based organizations, two research questions were posed: What are the perceptions of information sent through new media and traditional media on encouraging civic engagement? How, if at all, do the perceptions of new media and traditional media practices by an organization impact the trust of that organization to the message recipient? The data collected from this study were analyzed using a linear regression analysis via the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 19 and SPSS Text Analytics for Surveys. The descriptive statistics for the variables analyzed in this study are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Variable Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Political interest	4.19	1.67
Voting	4.78	2.00
Social capital	4.85	1.21
Social expectations	4.99	1.32
Political trust	3.93	1.32
Participation in political discussion	4.06	1.88
Expression of Values	6.19	.80
Trust	5.22	.83
Control mutuality	4.55	.81
Exchange relationship	3.98	1.23
Commitment	5.24	.99

Hypotheses Relating to Civic Engagement and Political Efficacy

To address the first three hypotheses which investigated the relationships between civic engagement and political efficacy, a stepwise linear regression analysis was conducted via SPSS. Additionally, for H1, H2, and H3, civic engagement was parsed into three dimensions, civic participation indicators, civic engagement social and political factors, and expression of values. First, the civic engagements indicators and factors were placed into an index. These items included political interest, social capital, social expectations, political trust, and expression of values. The factors voting and participation in political discussion were each comprised of only one item. So, they remained as a single item in the analysis.

In this stepwise linear regression analysis, the independent variables were civic participation indicators, civic engagement social and political factors, and expression of values. The dependent variable was political efficacy. Because the Expression of Values scale evaluates the desire to help others and benefit society, questions addressing moral duty were added as a control variable. Additionally, self-efficacy was added as another control variable as it is closely related to political efficacy. The indexes addressing moral duty and self-efficacy were entered in the first step of the stepwise linear regression as control variables. The indexes for the civic

participation indicators, the civic engagement social and political factors, and the expression of values were entered in the second step as the independent variables.

Overall, the model was statistically significant, Adjusted $R^2 = .13$, $F(10, 212) = 6.78$. Specifically, H1 examined the relationship between the civic participation indicators political interest and voting with political efficacy. This analysis revealed that political interest ($p < .01$, $\beta = .41$) is a significant predictor of political efficacy. However, voting was not shown to be a significant predictor.

Secondly, this study investigated the relationship between the civic engagement factors social capital, social expectations, political trust, and participation in political discussion with political efficacy (H2). Of these factors, political trust was the only factor to be a significant predictor of political efficacy ($p < .001$, $\beta = .22$). Although no other factors were shown to be significant predictors, it is important to note that social capital had a p-value of .12.

H3 explored the relationship between expression of values and political efficacy. The stepwise linear regression analysis showed that the Expression of Values factor was not a significant predictor of political efficacy. The findings illustrate that H1 and H2 are partially supported whereas H3 was not supported; Table 4 illustrates the summary of this stepwise regression analysis.

Table 4. Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Political Efficacy

Predictor Variables	Zero-Order r	β
Step 1		
Self-efficacy	.30	.25*
Moral agency – you	.23	.13
Moral agency – others	.20	.03
Step 2		
Political interest	.32	.41**
Voting	.25	.08
Social capital	.28	.12
Social expectations	.29	-.02
Political trust	.31	.22***

Table 4 Continued. Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Political Efficacy

Participation in political discussion	.25	-.23
Expression of Values	.24	.09

Note: $N = 222$, Step 1: $R^2 = .11$, $F(3, 219) = 9.01$. Step 2: $R^2 = .24$, $\Delta R^2 = .13$, $F(10, 212) = 6.78$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Hypotheses Relating to Organizational Factors and Civic Engagement

Before participants responded to statements regarding organizational characteristics, they were asked to identify an organization they have volunteered (e.g. performed a service) for and have a relationship with. Habitat for Humanity was the organization with the highest frequency ($n=28$) and church volunteering came in second ($n=13$). For a complete list of named organizations, see Table 5.

Table 5. Complete List of Named Organizations

Organization	n	Organization	n
Habitat for Humanity	28	Girl Scouts of America	2
Church	13	Helping Hands for the Disabled	2
American Red Cross	12	Heritage Ranch Christian Children's Home	2
Boys & Girls Clubs of America	10	Hospital	2
Volunteers in public schools	7	Humane Society	2
Invisible Children	5	Kids Hope USA	2
Key Club	5	Lighthouse for the Blind	2
Second Harvest Food Bank	5	Local food bank	2
UNICEF	5	National Honor Society	2
Baton Rouge Food Bank	4	PILS	2
Children's Miracle Network	4	PTA	2
Make a Wish Foundation	4	Race for the Cure	2
St. Jude's Hospital	3	Starlight Children's Foundation	2
Relay for Life	3	United Way	2
Susan G. Komen	3	Volunteer LSU	2
YMCA	3	Volunteers of America	2
American Cancer Society	2	Youth Rebuilding New Orleans	2
Boys Hope Girls Hope	2		

Organizations Receiving Only One Mention

AGE	Ducks Unlimited	LSU's BSU	Puget Sound Blood Center
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Table 5 Continued. Complete List of Named Organizations

AIFS	EBR Public Defender	LSU's MLK Committee	Ron Paul Presidential Campaign Committee
American Diabetes Association	Energy Express	March of Dimes	Rose Hill Baptist Church
American Heart Association	Everybody Reads Reading Program	Masonic Lodge #38	S.E.A.R.C.H. Homeless Services
Amplify Resources	Family and Youth	Millennium Volunteers	Saint Michael Special School
Animal Rescue Association of New Orleans	Family and Youth	Miracle League	Salesian Charity
Appalachian Service Project	FIRST Robotics	Motivating Students for Success Program	Seattle Hempfest
Archbishop Shaw Key Club	Foundation 56	Muscular Dystrophy Association	Service Learning Reading Partnership with Southeast Middle School
Archbishop Shaw Mu Alpha Theta	Gifts of Love	National Kidney Foundation	Spanish Honor Society
Archbishop Shaw Mu Alpha Theta	Greater New Orleans Sports Foundation	National Multiple Sclerosis Society	St. Vincent de Paul
ASPCA	HHPPL	National Society for Leadership and Success	Student Council
AYSO	Hispanic Apostolate of NOLA	Neighborhood civic assoc.	Texas Scottish Rite Hospital
Barack Obama	Holiday on Campus	New Horizon Calvary Chapel NSCS	The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
Baton Rouge Children's Advocacy Center	International Order of the Rainbow for Girls	One Million Bones	The Pablove Foundation
Baton Rouge Garden Alliance	Khi Alpha	One on One Print club	Toys for Tots
Baton Rouge Zoo	Kiwanis Club	Order of the Eastern Star	TWOLHA
Best Buddies	KLSU	PALS	Urban Impact (Seattle)
Big Brother Big Sister	Knights of Columbus	PCUSA	VIPS

Table 5 Continued. Complete List of Named Organizations

BR Communal Art Gallery	Life Teen	Pennies for Peace	Voices for Planned Parenthood
Capital Area Animal Welfare Society (CAAWS)	LiveStrong	Pi Sigma Epsilon	Walk for Leukemia
CASA	Local library	Political campaigns	World Changers
Cat Haven	Local museum boards	Pregnancy Resource Services	Youth association
Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana	Local non-profit	Prevent Child Abuse America	Youth Athletics
College Democrats at LSU	Local Playground	Prison ministry	Youth hockey organization
Connections for Life	Louisiana Girls State	Pro Life	YWCA
Country Days Summer Camp	LSU Ambassadors	Project Cuddle	Zeta Tau Alpha
Court Appointed Special Advocates	LSU PHO	Scottish Rite	

To respond to H4, which examined the relationship between organizational factors (trust, control mutuality, exchange relationship, and commitment) and civic engagement, a linear regression analysis was executed. Indexes for trust, control mutuality, exchange relationship and commitment were created. The independent variables were trust, control mutuality, exchange relationship, and commitment. The dependent variable was civic engagement parsed into three factors (indicators, political and social factors, and expression of values). Refer to Table 3 for variable descriptive statistics. Overall, findings indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between organizational factors and civic engagement.

For H4a, there is a partial relationship between trust and civic engagement. There is a significant relationship between trust and expression of values ($p < .001$, $\beta = .32$) and possible relationship between trust with civic engagement social and political factors ($p = .09$, $\beta = .15$). Therefore, H4a is partially supported.

Control mutuality was shown to significantly predict civic engagement because it is strongly related to the civic engagement social and political predictors ($p < .001$, $\beta = .30$), civic engagement indicators ($p < .05$; $\beta = .21$) and a potential relationship with expression of values ($p = .09$, $\beta = .13$); thus supporting H4b (see Table 6).

The presence of an exchange relationship between a volunteer-based organization and a volunteer for that organization is not a significant predictor of civic engagement as shown in Table 6; therefore, H4c is not supported.

The findings for commitment show a partial relationship between civic engagement and commitment. There is a significant relationship between commitment and expression of values ($p < .05$, $\beta = .16$) and a possible relationship between commitment and civic engagement indicators ($p = .07$, $\beta = .17$); thus, H4d is partially supported. In summary, H4b is supported, H4a and H4d are partially supported, and H4c is not supported.

Table 6. Linear Regression Predicting Civic Engagement

Predictor Variables	Civic Participation Indicators		Civic Engagement Social & Political Factors		Expression of Values	
	Zero-Order r	β	Zero-Order r	β	Zero-Order r	β
Trust	.10	-.12	.32	.15 [†]	.49	.32***
Control	.22	.21*	.38	.30***	.40	.13 [†]
Mutuality						
Exchange	.01	-.08	.05	-.01	.01	.01
Relationship						
Commitment	.20	.17 [†]	.24	-.01	.42	.16*

Note: CE Indicators: $N = 220$. $R^2 = .05$, $F(4, 216) = 3.77$.

CE Social and Political Predictors: $N = 216$. $R^2 = .15$, $F(4, 212) = 10.13$.

Expression of Values: $N = 218$. $R^2 = .26$, $F(4, 214) = 20.31$.

[†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Research Questions Relating to Communication Practices

Four open-ended questions were used to address RQ1 and RQ2. The findings were analyzed using SPSS Textual Analysis for Surveys. Categories were created by frequency of

terms. RQ1 investigated the perceptions of information sent through new and traditional means of communication to encourage civic engagement. Participants were asked to use the organization they identified earlier in the survey to respond to the four open ended questions.

Participants discussed traditional methods of communication more vaguely than new media methods of communication. The words most frequented here were no communication ($f=31$), newsletters ($f=19$), mail ($f=25$), and communication ($f=19$). Respondents used the phrase no communication to explain that their organization did not use forms of new media, particularly social media. When respondents evaluated their organization's traditional media usage, the strongest connections were between the words no with both communication and mail (see Figure 1). From these connections, volunteers stated that their organization did not use any forms of traditional media while others stated that of traditional media methods they did not receive mail. Overall, respondents had less detailed analyses of their organization's traditional media methods resulting in less connections overall when compared to new media methods.

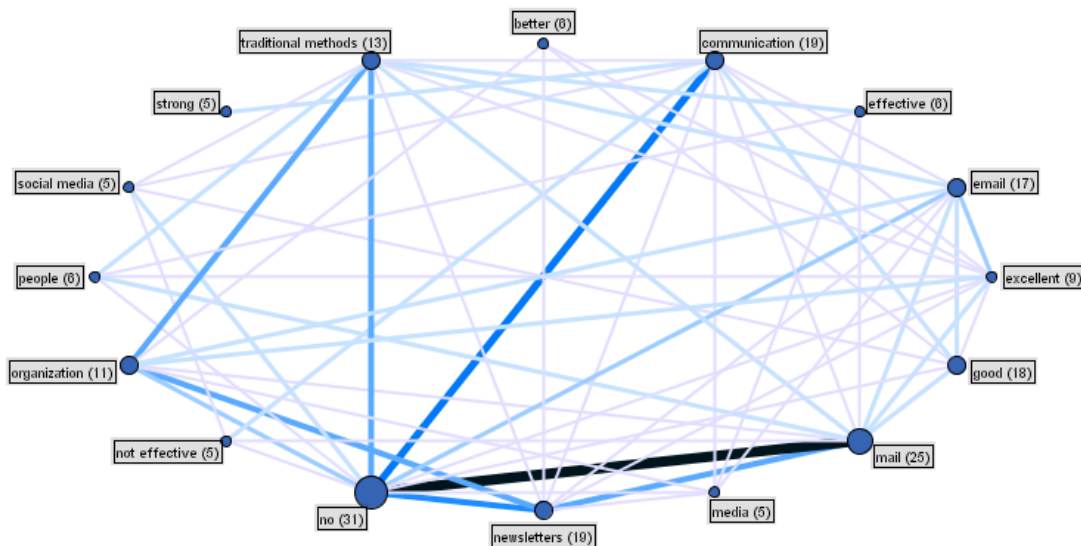


Figure 1. Web of Terms for Perceptions of Traditional Media
Note. The thicker the line, the stronger the relationship between terms.

When asked about new media, the words with the highest frequency were emails ($f=24$), organization ($f=40$), and communication ($f=25$). There were more strong connections amongst the responses participants provided when evaluating their organization's new media communication strategies as compared to their evaluation of their organization's traditional media communication strategies. Figure 2 illustrates relationships amongst the terms respondents used regarding new media forms of communication.

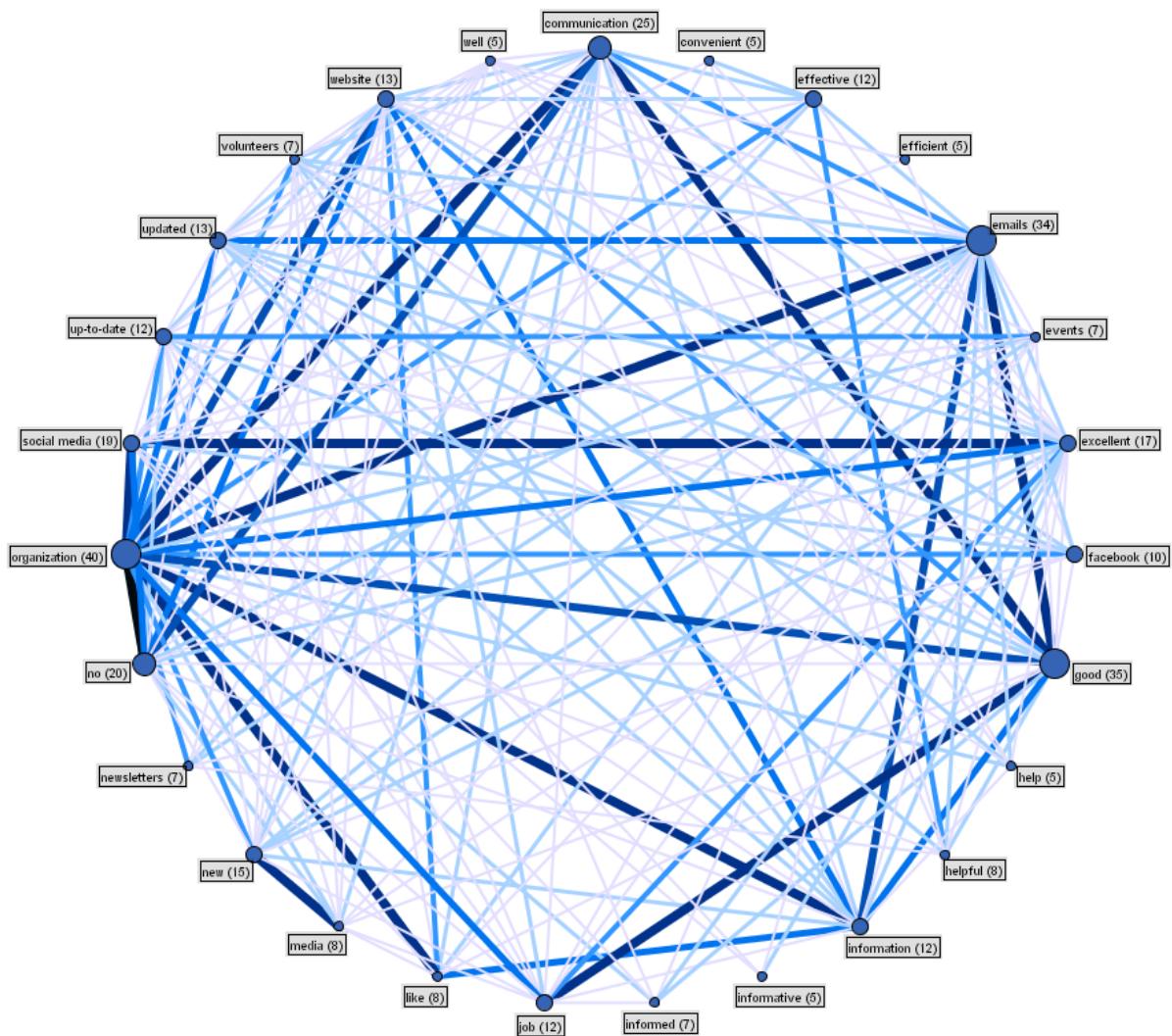


Figure 2. Web of Terms for Perceptions of New Media

Note. The thicker the line, the stronger the relationship between terms.

The findings regarding new media communication show that social media was strongly connected to the word excellent. Additionally, the word good was strongly connected with emails. The organization's website was strongly connected to information. The word communication was strongly connected to both the word go and the word no. In summary, the strongest connections were between words categorized as positive. However, one of these strong connections was associated with a negatively categorized word. This connection illustrated participants' perceptions that their organizations do not implement new media methods.

From the textual analysis, new and traditional media terms and the valence of associated words were analyzed. The findings show that when participants are asked about their organization's use of new and traditional media they stated email ($f=24$) and direct mail ($f=25$) most frequently. Table 7 illustrates the complete findings. Comparing participant responses to both new media and traditional media open ended questions, the statements regarding new media was much lengthier than discussion of traditional media. Participants wrote in shorter sentences and sometimes phrases when referring to traditional media. Participants' perceptions of traditional media were more global than perceptions of new media.

Generally, they discussed and analyzed traditional media as one entity rather than discuss its individual components (e.g. mail, phone, etc.). Participants were more skilled when discussing new media because their vocabulary was more advanced; their vocabulary allowed them to discuss individual factors of new media. For example, respondents discussed social media as both Facebook and Twitter, evaluated the website, and discussed the effectiveness of each method.

Table 7. New Media and Traditional Media Terms

New Media Terms		Traditional Media Terms	
Category	Frequency	Category	Frequency
Email	34	Mail	25

Table 7 Continued. New Media and Traditional Media Terms			
Website	13	Newsletters	19
Social media	13	Traditional Methods	13
Online newsletter	13		
Facebook	10		
Twitter	4		

Overall, participants felt more favorably towards new methods of communication than traditional methods of communication (see Table 8 and Table 9). However, words, such as good, excellent and convenient, were used to describe both communication methods. Interestingly, of the negative terms, participants most frequently stated that their organization did not use new media methods of communication ($f=31$). Oppositely, three participants preferred traditional methods of communication. Additionally, subjects found that that traditional media communication had unclear messages ($f=4$), were not effective ($f=38$), and were not updated ($f=5$). Subjects found that traditional means of communication could be improved upon ($f=6$). Of the responses, the following statements best capture perceptions of both communication methods.

- They are really good with getting their message out through all means.
- Their communication through social media keeps volunteers and those interested in the organization in the know about what is going on with the organization. Their website is full of useful information.
- I think they need to use social media more. If I was more informed on events that are going on I would be more willing to participate.
- I think that they do a great job of maintaining contact and spreading awareness through Twitter and websites, but don't do a great job of connecting to individuals on a personal basis through these means (which is what I feel social media excels at).
- I do not strongly identify with the more traditional media, except magazines and TV.
- Their newsletters are great. I get to learn about what members from around the world are working to fulfill the organization's mission.

Table 8. Valence of New Media Terms			
Positive New Media Terms		Negative New Media Terms	
Category	Frequency	Category	Frequency
Good	35	No communication	25
Updated/Up-to-date	25	No updates	5
Informed/Informative	24	Unclear messages	4

Table 8 Continued. Valence of New Media Terms			
Excellent	17	Bad	4
Helpful	13	Annoying	3
Like	8	Problem	3
Convenient	5		
Useful	4		
Organized	4		
Fast	4		
Important	4		

Note: N=223

Table 9. Valence of Traditional Media Terms			
Positive Traditional Media Terms		Negative Traditional Media Terms	
Category	Frequency	Category	Frequency
Good	18	Could do better	6
Excellent	9	Not effective	38
Effective	6	Non-existent	5
Strong	5	Bad	3
Convenient	4		
Prefer (traditional methods)	3		
Working well	6		
Updated	3		
Necessary	3		
OK	3		

Note: N=221

RQ2 studied the perceptions of organizational use of new and traditional methods of communication to generate trust between the message recipient and the organization via open-ended questions. Emails ($f=34$) were the communication method that most engaged audiences. When asked what their volunteer-based organization could do via communication to strengthen their relationship, 14 participants stated that they were unaware of any traditional methods of communication used by their organizations. Volunteers stressed the importance of awareness of upcoming events and opportunities ($f=7$). Respondents stressed the importance of appreciation and opportunities to be thanked. The following statements best reflect the attitudes of the respondents.

- The e-mails usually say how appreciative they are for our help.

- They give us a chance to voice our opinions and are very open minded.
- The emails are very encouraging and make it easy to know what is going on at the school. I think the accessibility of the information is their way of encouraging us to volunteer.
- I have a great relationship with VIPS and really have enjoyed my time with them. I think they practice great stewardship by having an end of the year award ceremony.
- They do a great job so far, but sometimes they are very slow to respond to personal emails or phone calls. I think including a segment in the newsletter about volunteer testimonials will not only garner more participants, but allow the past volunteers to feel appreciated.

When participants were asked how their volunteer-based organization encourages them to volunteer, the findings illustrate a strong connection between emails and volunteering.

Furthermore, the word help is associated with events (see Figure 3). Respondents' statements showed a strong relationship between the words better and communication when asked how their volunteer-based organization could strengthen their relationship. However, there is a strong connection between the words good and relationship; additionally, there is a strong relationship between organization and excellent (see Figure 4). Participants' had more diversity in their vocabulary when explaining how their volunteer-based organization can strengthen their relationship as compared to their evaluation of their ability to encourage participation.

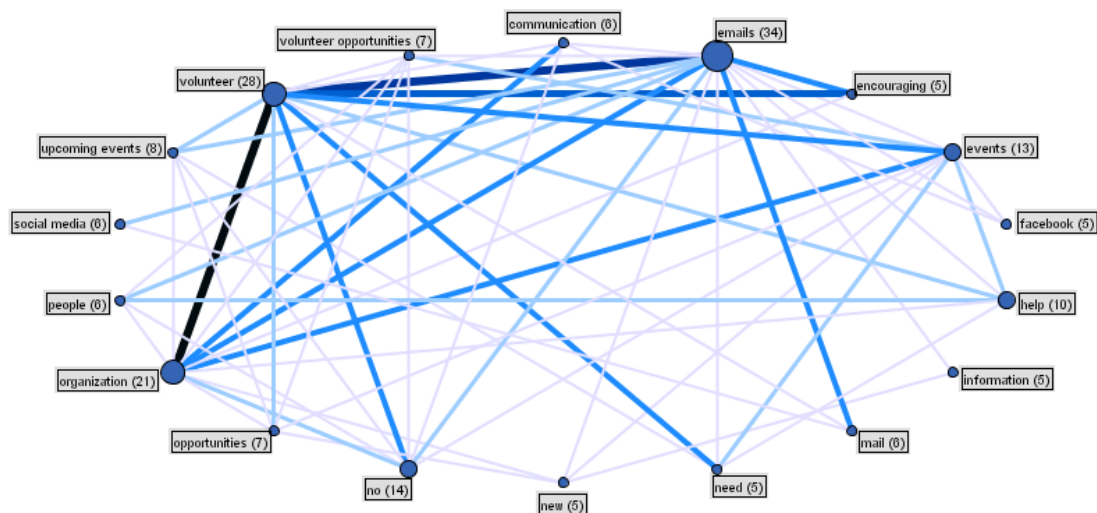


Figure 3. Web of Terms for Communication Methods Encouraging Volunteering
Note. The thicker the line, the stronger the relationship between terms.

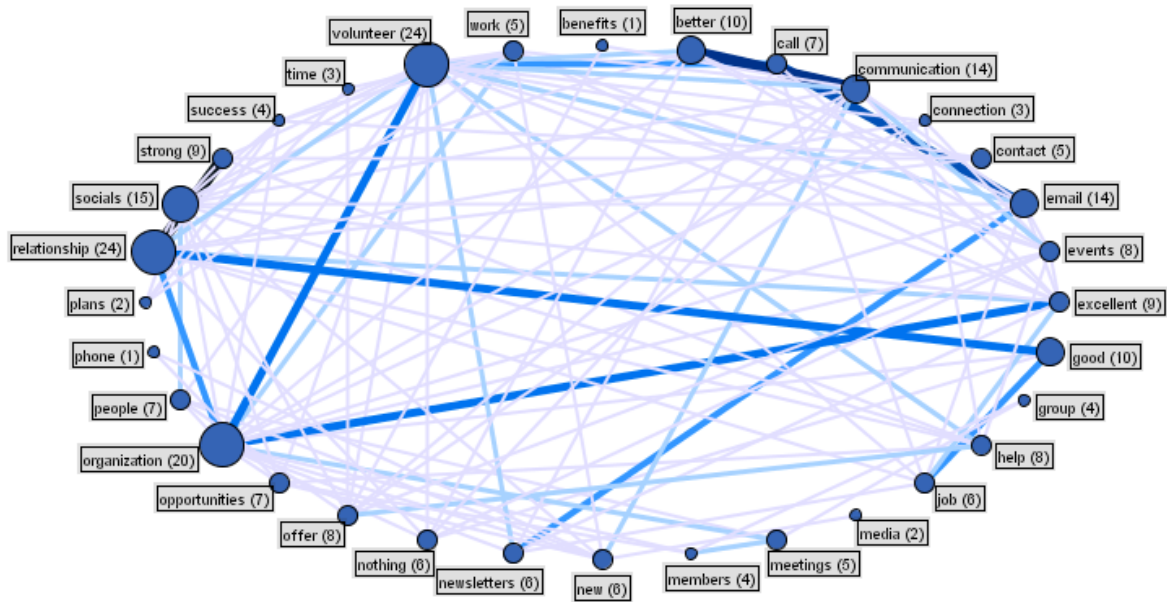


Figure 4. Web of Terms for Strengthening the Volunteer and Organization Relationship
Note. The thicker the line, the stronger the relationship between terms.

CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION

Implications of the Findings

This thesis explored the relationships between political efficacy, civic engagement, and four organizational factors. Overall, the findings show that political efficacy has a significant relationship with some civic engagement factors and indicators. Civic engagement levels were predicted only by the organizational characteristic, control mutuality. Additionally, respondents reported that ease and access of information were crucial in civically engaging the volunteer and building trust.

As Marshall (1950) explains, citizenship occurs when individuals display membership behaviors to a particular community. Civic engagement factors and indicators are tools used to measure activity levels within that membership. Research shows that voting and political involvements are no longer the only behaviors which demonstrate civic engagement (Edwards & Foley, 2001; Youniss & Yates, 1997). Now, civic engagement includes social activism and volunteering (Farmer & Piotrkowski, 2009). In this study, civic engagement consisted of three dimensions: civic participation indicators, civic engagement social and political factors, and expression of values. Civic engagement was parsed in this manner to examine how each dimension independently relates to political efficacy.

Findings show that of the civic engagement indicators and factors, political interest and political trust, predict political efficacy. Thus, stronger feelings of trust of the governing entity increase political efficacy. Moreover, increased interest in political issues related to increased political efficacy. Research links political interest with internal political efficacy (Pinkleton & Austin 2001; Cohen, Vigoda & Samorly, 2001; Morrell, 2003) and political trust with external efficacy (Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991). Thus, the findings of this study are consistent with

previous research. Political interest develops through personal control as the individual is responsible for his/her level of information on a given political issue. This personal responsibility relates to internal political efficacy because the individual uses his/her resources and abilities to pursue political change. So, when individuals pursue their political interests their have increased internal political efficacy. Publics engage in trust because they believe there is some type of benefit. However, this relationship involves some vulnerability because each party cannot control the other. As this study shows political trust as a significant predictor of political efficacy, particularly external political efficacy, participants believe that the political system is capable of change.

Bromley, Curtice, and Seyd (2004) used the decline of voting to account for lower political efficacy beliefs. Surprisingly, voting was not shown to be a significant predictor of political efficacy. Voting may reflect civic engagement behaviors but findings of this study demonstrate that participants do not believe their vote or political action impacts the political process (Campbell, Grunin & Miller, 1954). Political issues are not always bipartisan issues which may explain why voters feel that their vote does not directly lend itself to political change. Additionally, voting occurs infrequently (i.e. two years, four years, etc.), which may reduce people's ability to see their vote enact political change.

Expression of values was the third dimension of civic engagement which did not have a significant relationship with political efficacy. This dimension evaluates an individual's desire to help others and benefit society. An individual's desire to aid his/her community has no relationship to changes in political efficacy beliefs. In this study, social factors (social capital, social expectation) and the participation in political discussions were not shown to predict changes in political efficacy. Yet, Brewer and Miller (1996) explain that volunteers rely on

personal goals and the needs of the collective as motivators for action. However, the study's findings illustrate that volunteers are motivated by political trust and political interest rather than social factors. Volunteers' political efficacy is influenced by the issue and responsible party than social factors.

The literature offers that volunteering is a component of civic engagement (Norris, 1999). Therefore, this study also investigated the relationship between volunteer-based organizations and its publics. Organizations build positive relationships through mutually beneficial relationships (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Of the four organizational characteristics evaluated, control mutuality was the only factor to significantly predict civic engagement. Control mutuality represents the balance of power between an individual and the related organization. According to the findings of this study, when individuals believe they have the ability to influence the choices executed by their volunteer-based organization they have a relationship with, their civic engagement increases. So, participants engage in additional civic engagement behaviors if they believe their actions affect outcomes performed by their volunteer-based organization.

In addition, the findings illustrate that there are relationships between trust and commitment with some of the civic engagement components. Both trust and commitment have a significant relationship with a volunteer's desire to benefit society and help others. Because commitment is based on two dimensions, volunteers must have a positive emotional attachment to their volunteer-based organization and believe that their organization engages in positive and meaningful actions. Volunteer-based organizations must demonstrate ability, benevolence, and integrity in order to develop trust with its volunteers. So, the volunteer-based organizations capability to complete tasks, to want to act in conjunction with a set of principles, and to actually

act upon the set of principles help predict civic engagement via the desire to benefit society and help others. Overall, trust and commitment partially predict civic engagement.

The presence of an exchange relationship was the only organizational factor to not have a significant relationship with any of the three civic engagement components. Thus, an exchange relationship has no bearing on predicting individual levels of civic engagement. Exchange relationships occur when a party receives some type of benefit from the other. So, an organization's desire to maintain long-term relationships with its volunteers through providing some type of benefit and the volunteers desire to maintain a positive relationship with their volunteer-based organization have no bearing on increasing civic engagement.

To complement the hypotheses examining civic engagement and organizational characteristics, exploratory research questions inquiring about the communication methods used by volunteer-based organizations were posed. There were clear distinctions between participants' perceptions of new and traditional methods of communication regarding civic engagement. They valued direct mail and email the most. These forms of communication are the most used methods in traditional and new media communication practices, respectively. Adults expect communication from their volunteer-based organizations through direct mail and email. Although, participants use the website for information they stated general use of social media, specifically, Facebook and Twitter, more frequently. Currently, Facebook and Twitter are the most popular social media sites which may lend to its higher frequencies.

Participants clearly expressed the importance of information and staying informed of their organization's events and activities. Ease of access to information simplifies the efforts required by the individual which may lead to increased engagement. Interestingly, participants noted that their organizations were not participating in social media conversations.

Organizations are missing an opportunity to enhance and build mutually beneficial relationships because social media operates via two-way communication.

For some volunteer-based organizations, respondents stated that the new media messages were unclear or updated infrequently. If organizations continue posting unclear messages or no messages at all, they eliminate opportunities for its publics to participate and engage as volunteers. Others said that social media communication made them feel as if they were part of the cause because they received constant information. The constant flow of information allows them to feel as if they are part of the process since they receive updates on ongoing issues of their volunteer-based organization.

Respondents most positively reported that newsletters were their favorite form of traditional communication. Newsletters present more in-depth information than postcards or flyers; volunteers may invest more time in newsletters because they provide a variety of information. Some participants stated that traditional forms of communication were necessary as they connect information to different populations. Thus, volunteer-based organizations should maintain communication through a variety of communication methods to allow all of its publics the opportunity to obtain relevant information.

Access to information encourages civic engagement as well as building trust. People are dependent upon the organization for information (Greenwood & Van Buren III, 2010). To build trust, the volunteer-based organization must demonstrate integrity and the ability to accomplish set goals. Here, the organizations have made available information through its communication tactics.

Participants stated that awareness was a crucial element in developing trust between them and their volunteer-based organization. Ensuring that volunteers are constantly aware of

upcoming changes made by the organization and events may increase trust. This happens because the volunteer-based organization is demonstrating its ability to reduce the individual's level of vulnerability (Greenwood & Van Buren III, 2010). Vulnerability is reduced because the organization has followed through and the individual has received some type of benefit, awareness. Furthermore, it was stressed that volunteers feel appreciated. They hoped for increased stewardship through volunteer appreciation sections of (e)newsletters and mentions through social media. When volunteer-based organizations acknowledge their volunteers and thank them for their efforts they are building trust. Furthermore, volunteers then feel a sense of satisfaction because their efforts are recognized by the organization they are volunteering for.

Limitations

This study holds some limitations. First, a volunteer sample was used which limits the generalizability of the findings to the remaining population. While young adults, particularly college students, are active volunteers that do not represent the entire population of those that volunteer. To increase the generalizability of the findings, the study also used snowball sampling. Again, this type of sampling does not guarantee an accurate representation of the volunteer population. This study's respondents were primarily female (71%) and Caucasian (71.3%). Therefore, this study may have yielded different results if there were more variance in the participants' demographic information. Because young adults are active in the volunteer community, this study's findings are expected to be meaningful.

Before participants completed the survey items regarding organizational factors, they were asked to identify an organization they have or currently volunteer for. Some respondents listed more than one organization. Thus, they were using attitudes regarding several organizations instead of only one when answering questions about trust, commitment, an

exchange relationship, and control mutuality. Because this study examines the characteristics of individuals that have volunteered, these findings may be subject to social desirability bias.

Usually, the public finds volunteering to be a favorable behavior which may have influenced their answers to the survey questions.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study demonstrates that civic engagement social and political factors account for some variance in political efficacy. Voting, the method most easily evaluating civic engagement, did not account for any changes in self-efficacy. This study treated voting as one action. It is recommended that future researchers parse apart voting into national and local levels. Civic engagement research shows that individuals may feel more involved with their communities rather than as a country (Putnam, 2000). Thus, we may find that voting in local and school elections may yield different political efficacy findings.

While this study applied *The PR Relationship Measurement Scale* to volunteer-based organizations, it could also extend to politically-oriented organizations. Individuals involved in these types of organizations may have a larger variance in demographic information. Additionally, their exposure to political events and politicians may lend to greater change in their political efficacy responses. Because volunteers donate their time/funds usually without a financial incentive, future researchers should evaluate participants' levels of altruism. The presence of an exchange relationship was not a factor for encouraging civic engagement; yet, respondents stated that their volunteer-based organization demonstrate appreciation for their efforts. This demonstrates some inconsistency on what type of benefit volunteers expect from their volunteer-based organization. So, future research should evaluate the types of benefits volunteer-based organizations provide for its volunteers.

Once individuals become engaged through volunteering or participation with an organization, they begin a process of developing loyalty to an organization. Technology allows loyalty to develop in new ways because organizations can create and develop more personal relationships with its members. Therefore, it is important to investigate the types of members involved with organizations. Specifically, Li and Bernoff (2008) explain that individuals have different social media activity and engagement levels. More frequently, organizations are using social media as a main method of communication. Because social media perpetuates the generation of new material and the constant communication, it is important to evaluate the attitudes and behaviors of those participating in social media.

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APPENDIX SURVEY

This survey was adapted for this medium from its original Qualtrics presentation. Subheadings were included for easier interpretation of the scales.

Pre-screen question

Have you volunteered for an organization at least once during your lifetime?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Political efficacy

Please rate how much you agree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree or Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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- Voting is the only way that people like me can have any say about how the government runs things.
- People like me don't have any say about what the government does.
- You can affect things by getting involved in issues you care about.
- I don't think public officials care much what people like me think.
- You feel that you can influence decisions in your area.
- Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.

Self-efficacy

Please rate how much you agree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree or Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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- I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.
- If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.
- It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.
- I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.
- Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.
- I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.
- I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.
- When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.
- If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.

- I can usually handle whatever comes my way.

Locus of control

Please rate how much you agree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree or Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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- Although I might have good ability, I will not be given leadership responsibility without appealing to those in positions of power.
- When I make plans, I am almost certain to make them work.
- I feel like what happens in my life is mostly determined by powerful people.
- People like myself have very little chance of protecting our personal interests when they conflict with those of strong pressure groups.
- If important people were to decide they didn't like me, I probably wouldn't make many friends.
- I can pretty much determine what will happen in life.
- My life is chiefly controlled by powerful others.
- My life is determined by my own actions.
- Whether or not I get to be a leader depends mostly on my ability.
- Whether or not I get into a car accident depends mostly on the other drivers.
- Getting what I want requires pleasing those people above me.
- Whether or not I get into a car accident depends mostly on how good a driver I am.
- In order to have my plans work, I make sure that they fit in with the desires of people who have power over me.
- When I get what I want, it's usually because I worked hard for it.
- I am usually able to protect my personal interests.
- How many friends I have depends on how nice a person I am.

Expression of values

Please rate how much you agree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree or Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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- Volunteering creates a better society.
- I want to help out in any capacity.
- I want to help make the event a success.
- I feel it is important to help others.
- I want to do something worthwhile.

Political participation

Please rate how much you agree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree or Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------	----------------------	---------------------------------	-------------------	-------	-------------------

- Being involved in your local neighborhood is important to you.
- You play an active role in one or more voluntary, local or political organizations.
- People at work would expect you to know what's going on in the world.
- You trust the government to do what is right.
- You trust politicians to tell the truth.
- You are involved in voluntary work.
- You are generally interested in what's going on in politics.
- You trust politicians to deal with the things that matter.
- Your friends would expect you to know what's going on in the world.
- You discuss political issues with others.

Never | | | Sometimes | | | Always

- You generally vote in elections (school, local, state, and/or national levels).
- You discuss political issues with others.

Volunteer Habits

What type of organization(s) have you volunteered for or would like to volunteer with? (Select all that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> School related organization | <input type="checkbox"/> Local charity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> International organization | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Related organization |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental organization | <input type="checkbox"/> Children related organization |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Humanitarian organization | <input type="checkbox"/> Global issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community organization | <input type="checkbox"/> Art related organization |
| <input type="checkbox"/> National organization | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Organization |

Please identify an organization you have volunteered (e.g. performed a service) for and have a relationship with. Example organizations: American Red Cross, UNICEF, Boys and Girls Club, etc.

Organizational Characteristics

Using the organization you just named, identify how important the below characteristics are to you in maintaining a relationship with that organization.

Not Important			Neither unimportant or important			Very Important
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- Know others there
- Reputation of organization
- Status of organization
- Mission statement
- Reflects personal values
- Convenience
- Challenge
- How I can best help others
- Degree of help needed
- Location
- Time available
- Relates to personal interest
- Relate to purpose of organization
- Prestige offered
- Nature of opportunity
- Personal satisfaction
- Relates to personal skill

Trust

Please use the organization that you named earlier to rate how much you agree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree or Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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- This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.
- This organization treats people like me fairly and justly.
- I feel confident about this organization's skills.
- I think it is important to watch this organization closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me.
- This organization is known to be successful at the things it tries to do.
- Sound principles seem to guide this organization's behavior.
- I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.
- I am very willing to let this organization make decisions for people like me.

- This organization can be relied on to keep its promises.
- Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.
- This organization does not misled people like me.

Control Mutuality

Please use the organization that you named earlier to rate how much you agree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree or Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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- This organization won't cooperate with people like me.
- I believe people like me have influence on the decision makers of this organization.
- When I have an opportunity to interact with this organization, I feel that I have some sense of control over the situation.
- This organization believes the opinions of people like me are legitimate.
- This organization and people like me are attentive to what each other say.
- The management of this organization gives people like me enough say in the decision-making process.
- This organization really listens to what people like me have to say.
- In dealing with people like me, this organization has a tendency to throw its weight around.

Exchange Relationship

Please use the organization that you named earlier to rate how much you agree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree or Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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- I would rather work together with this organization that not.
- I feel a sense of loyalty to this organization.
- I can see that this organization wants to maintain a relationship with people like me.
- There is a long-lasting bond between this organization and people like me.
- I have no desire to have a relationship with this organization.
- I could not care less about this organization.
- I feel that this organization is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to people like me.
- Compared to other organizations, I value my relationship with this organization more.

Commitment

Please use the organization that you named earlier to rate how much you agree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree or Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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- Whenever this organization gives or offers something to people like me, it generally expects something in return.
- This organization takes care of people who are likely to reward the organization.
- Even though people like me have had a relationship with this organization for a long time, it still expects something in return whenever it offers us a favor.
- This organization will compromise with people like me when it knows that it will gain something.

Perceptions of organization's messages - traditional & new (social) media

INSTRUCTIONS: Please answer the following questions using the organization that you named earlier. When answering the questions, think about things like how committed your organization is to their cause and/or you, how transparent and/or honest they are, and how much of an influence you believe you have in working for them.

What do you think about your organization's communication to you through social media and new media (email, e-newsletters, website updates, etc.)?

What do you think about your organization's communication to you through more traditional methods (mail, newsletters, etc.)?

How if at all, does your organization use communication to encourage you to volunteer?

What can your organization do to strengthen their relationship with you?

Demographic questions

Please rate how much you agree with the following statements.

No Moral Duty			Some Moral Duty			A lot of Moral Duty
------------------	--	--	--------------------	--	--	------------------------

- How much of a moral duty do you feel people should have to volunteer?
- How much of a moral duty do you feel you have to volunteer?

How often do you use the following to seek information about your organization?

Never	Less than Once a Month	Once a Month	2-3 Times a Week	Once a Week	2-3 Times a Day	Daily
-------	------------------------------	-----------------	---------------------	----------------	--------------------	-------

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Email
- E-newsletter
- Organization's Website
- Direct Mail
- Brochures
- Physical Newsletters
- News source
- Flyer

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Please indicate your ethnicity (select only one).

- ☐ African American
- ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ Latino
- ☐ Asian/Asian American
- ☐ Pacific Islander
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Other

How often do you use/do the following?

Never	Less than Once a Month	Once a Month	2-3 Times a Week	Once a Week	2-3 Times a Day	Daily
-------	------------------------------	-----------------	---------------------	----------------	--------------------	-------

- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Read the newspaper (print/online)
- ☐ Watch TV
- ☐ Listen to the radio

How many organizations do you currently volunteer for?

- ☐ One
- ☐ Two
- ☐ Three
- ☐ Four

- Five or more

How old are you? Please type your age using numbers.

What is your level of education?

- Some High-school
- High-school
- Some College
- College
- Some Graduate School
- Graduate School
- Some Ph.D.
- Ph.D.

Have you participate in a service learning course?

- Yes
- No

If yes, for what organization?

Which of the following best describes your religious affiliation?

- Christian – Catholic
- Christian – Protestant
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Hindu
- Nonreligious
- Spiritual
- Other

What degree of guidance would you say your religion provides in your day-to-day living?

- No guidance
- Some guidance
- Much guidance
- Don't know

Which best describes your political views?

- Extremely Liberal
- Slightly Liberal
- Moderate
- Slightly Conservative
- Extremely Conservative

Are you receiving course credit for participating in this study?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please provide your unique 5-digit MEL number below.

VITA

Kristin Marks graduated from the University of Washington in June 2009 with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. She enrolled in the master's program at Louisiana State University in August 2010. She has worked with Starlight Children's Foundation, The American Red Cross, and Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC). Following graduation, Kristin will continue her career in mass communication by pursuing a position in the public relations field.