THESIS

THE TWEETING ORG: USING GROUNDED THEORY TO BUILD A LANGUAGE FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOUNT USE OF TWITTER

Submitted by

Alyssa Kate Reynolds

Department of Journalism and Technical Communication

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Science

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2015

Master's Committee:

Advisor: Joseph Champ

Cindy Christen
Kathleen Kelly

ABSTRACT

THE TWEETING ORG: USING GROUNDED THEORY TO BUILD A LANGUAGE FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOUNT USE OF TWITTER

The Internet has changed how daily life functions on both personal and organizational levels, especially since the advent of Web 2.0. Many options for communicating are available, each with its own unique language and user base. Twitter, with more than 200 million users worldwide, is a platform worth studying and, likes its compatriot Facebook, it has heretofore been free to use.

For nonprofits with limited resources, such platforms could see good returns in active audience and message visibility – for little investment. Before return can be measured, however, what is being said must first be addressed. The researcher employed a grounded theory approach with a sampling of nonprofit accounts in order to construct an understanding of the platform's 'language'. This resulted in the discovery of both inter-organizational and cross-organizational normative practices, as well as the development of a coding instrument for use in future research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Internet has changed how daily life functions on both personal and organizational levels, especially since the advent of Web 2.0. Livingston (2007), identifies the differences between the first and second incarnations of Web functionality:

> The difference between Web 1.0 and now is the new interpretative foundation that has created a frenzy around the socialization of, and interaction with, content created, read, and shared by you and me, as well as traditional media. This is the social media revolution, and it is defined by interactive publishing, broadcast, discovery, and search channels that make all of this content available to the masses. It changes the entire game … (pp. 7-8)

Social media have been cultivated by this type of Web, and have become fixtures in the daily lives of Internet users worldwide. They have become one of the most effective means of engaging Internet users, from finding and interacting with friends on Facebook to micro-blogging on Twitter to interactive polling (Livingston, 2007, pp. 34-35). Individuals and organizations alike are seeking to harness the power of social media to build relationships and identity – "carving out spaces in the online abyss" (Faina, 2012, p. 64). The power in utilizing this type of Web is that the variety of social media platforms available allows an Internet user to effectively personalize his or her experience with regard to communication content, as messages can be both individually chosen and used for comment and dialog with other users (Carr, 2009, pp. 137-139).

Many platforms for communicating are available, with most differing sufficiently to warrant individual study. According to Pew Research Center data published in 2015, "Facebook remains by far the most popular social media site. … Other platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and LinkedIn saw significant increases over the past year in the proportion of online adults who now use their sites" (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2015, p. 2). Duggan et al. (2015) specifically reported on American usage of social media sites among adults (ages 18 and older) toward the end of 2014, the top five being Facebook (58%), LinkedIn (23%), Pinterest (22%), Instagram (21%), and Twitter (19%) (p. 4). Those are not small percentages when considering that Facebook currently has been reported to have 1.3 billion active monthly users worldwide, and Twitter has 271 million active monthly users worldwide – Twitter's 3% increase since 2012 signifies the addition of more than 50 million news users in two years (McCarthy, 2014, para. 1-2; Duggan & Brenner, 2013, p. 2). Delo (2014) explains the key difference: "Facebook doesn't have the immediacy of Twitter, but its format allows for richer posts" (p. 10).

Twitter garners attention because of its continued growth and 2014 initial public offering (IPO). A free Web service that allows users to publish short messages of information ("tweets," limited to 140 characters), Twitter has become an increasingly popular social media option for individuals and organizations alike (Huberman, Romero, & Wu, 2009). Even older data shows Twitter's incredible growth. According to Fox (2013):

> Since 2010, Twitter's international user base has grown 745% -- from 20 million to 169 million users. Its user base in the United States has only grown 390%, from 10 million to 49 million users. (no page)

Successful and unsuccessful organizational adoptions of social media strategies include a variety of companies and services, but they share a common thread: They "engage users on an individual basis and humanize the company with various levels of participation within the organization" (Gunning, 2009). In a time where the nonprofit sector is struggling to maintain the confidence of its publics (O'Neill, 2009, p. 237), a shift to social media could be vital to the ability of these organizations to continue their roles in local and other communities. Additionally, as discussion deepens over the next incarnation of the Web, many believe it will retain several of the characteristics of Web 2.0. As Gideon (2011) summarizes:

> If Web 1.0 was the basic blogs of the internet, and Web 2.0 was the launch of user-generated content (e.g. Wikipedia, IMDB and so on), then Web 3.0 is the moment when you forget you're doing any of this stuff. In other words, it's when using the internet becomes so casual, so much as part of your natural life, that you don't think about it any more. You don't think "I'm going to create a website" or "I'm going to do this online", you just do stuff and you no longer have that conscious sense of a dividing line between the real and the online world [*sic*]. (no page)

Nonprofit organizations often lack funding for communication, which makes the less-expensive social media route an attractive option for spreading messages and rallying individuals to specific causes (Wittke, 2008). If predictions concerning Web 3.0 are realized, organizations that move to make use of social media platforms, such as Twitter, will have the opportunity to better manage relationships and a different forum for disseminating organizational messages for many years to come.

Before return can be measured, however, what is being said on Twitter must first be addressed. Few studies have pursued an understanding of the platform itself, instead focusing on its uses. To gain a more defined knowledge of the platform, a grounded theory approach was utilized with a sample of messages from organizational Twitter accounts. These messages provided valuable insights into both inter-organizational and cross-organizational normative practices, as well as allowed for the construction of a coding instrument for use in future research endeavors.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A perusal of the literature concerning nonprofits and the evolution of their social media use over the last decade illuminates the scattered nature of such investigations. In particular regard to the social media platform, Twitter, very little research has emerged that addresses the fundamental nature of the platform itself. The contents of this chapter are presented to provide an overview of what has been made available concerning social media platforms, which, in turn, contributes to the conceptualization of the four research questions at its end. These goals grant reason for the methodological decisions made and described in Chapter 3: Methodology.

Social Media and Web 2.0

After 23 consecutive years of advertising using television spots during the Super Bowl, Pepsi decided to forgo doing so in 2010 – to venture into a large-scale social media campaign. According to Gregory (2010), it is confirmation that "the days when mass-market media is the sole vehicle to reach an audience are officially over." Livingston (2007) calls for public relations to "engage or die" with regard to social media (p. 17). As social media become fixtures in the daily lives of Internet users worldwide, it has become increasingly important that they be understood for their added value to organizational communication (Livingston, 2007, pp. 30-31). Aragón and Domingo (2014) speak to the advantage of implementing such strategies:

> When it comes to the benefits of implementing online interactive strategies and actions, we found that those are: providing a direct, agile and flexible communication

> channel that enhances the response capacity of the company; managing the relationship between the company and the customer, adding value to the relationship; improving the knowledge about the consumer; and engaging the customer in the company's processes, such as the development of the company's range of goods/services. (p. 560)

But as transformative as the adoption of such technologies might prove, there is little guidance in terms of how those technologies ought to be used. Macnamara and Zerfass (2012) claim that, in practice, social media use is "unregulated and largely unmanaged," citing studies that speak to the lack of rules and exploratory nature of organizational use (p. 289). Their conclusion:

> It is clear that significant gaps remain in knowledge of how organizations are using social media and how these important new channels of communication can and should be utilized in the context of public relations and corporate communication. (p. 289)

The incorporation of social media into daily life has changed conversations, "as it enables two-way and more symmetrical interaction between organizations and their publics which is identified as 'Best Practices' in Excellence theory" (Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012, p. 288). The idea that anyone can be a "content maker" has altered how Internet users interact with each other and with organizations, and it has also changed how organizations interact with individual users (Livingston, 2007, pp. 33-35). Nearly three-quarters of the online adult population is making use of social networking sites (Brenner & Smith, 2013, p. 2). The popularity of such social media within the Web 2.0

framework continues to increase and to heavily intersect with life. Echoing ideas predicted of the transition from Web 2.0 to Web 3.0, Carr says (2009):

> We *are* coming to live inside the World Wide Computer. It's becoming the default forum for many of our commercial and personal relationships, the medium of choice for storing and exchanging information in all its forms, the preferred means of entertaining, informing, and expressing ourselves. (p. 124)

Since the publication of Carr's *Now is Gone* in 2009, the infiltration of the World Wide Web into and the use of social media in an individual's regular flow of life has continued to increase with the ongoing development of mobile data, with "cell tower-based data traffic growing 81% worldwide in 2013" (Petronzio, 2014, para. 1). While opinions vary on just how much mobile technology increases or merely changes Internet usage, it remains true that many adopters are not only using desktops and laptops to access the Internet on a daily basis. Mobile devices have even surpassed personal computers in online retail interaction (Siwicki, 2013).

Social media adoption among organizations. Over the course of the last decade, organizations have experimented with social media and with mixed results. Macnamara and Zerfass (2012) claim that "because of the widely perceived benefits, private and public sector organizations are increasingly using social media for corporate and organizational communication and public relations (PR)" – citing several statistics indicating roughly two-thirds of organizations utilize social networking sites as well as plan "to increase their use of social media to engage and build relationships with employees and other stakeholders" (p. 288).

According to Aragón and Domingo (2014), this original intent to utilize interactive social media platforms – as a means of building better customer relations and to ensure the intersection of messages with specific publics who have moved into online spaces – has not happened:

> Panellists perceived stronger factors constraining the development of interactivity than facilitating it. … companies rejected interactivity when they perceived that it would decrease their power and control over the relationships with their customers. There is a 'fear of the unknown' (due to lack of information on how to implement and manage interactive strategies and actions) and the tendency to rely on the mechanisms, actions and channels they are already familiar with. (p. 561)

Aragón and Domingo's (2014) findings specifically suggest "a gap between the potential of online interactivity and its adoption in organizations' relational strategies" (p. 561). In the same vein, a survey conducted by Macnamara and Zerfass (2012) indicates an overstatement of PR practitioner knowledge concerning social media and "of particular concern, according to social media specialists interviewed, is that many organizations have no social media policy or guidelines for employees at all" (pp. 297-299).

As discussed previously, both successful and unsuccessful adoptions alike attempt to "engage and build relationships" (Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012, p. 288). Adoption has the potential to provide a number of valuable opportunities, according to Aragón and Domingo (2014):

> When it comes to the benefits of implementing online interactive strategies and actions, we found that those are: providing a direct, agile and flexible communication

channel that enhances the response capacity of the company; managing the relationship between the company and the customer, adding value to the relationship; improving the knowledge about the consumer; and engaging the customer in the company's processes, such as the development of the company's range of goods/services. (p. 560)

Since the coining of the term 'Web 2.0' by Tim O'Reilly in the mid-2000s, companies have tried to seize these opportunities in a number of ways (Brake, 2014, p. 592). Many of the best-known case studies focused upon earlier adopters. Dell established its own socially based tech center, which allows members to interact "directly" with engineers at the company, asking questions and receiving answers (Morrissey, 2010); H&R Block attempted to use Twitter as a way for potential customers to ask questions, but those potential customers were reluctant to share tax-oriented information in a public forum, so the company built its own community site, which has proven much more successful (Morrissey, 2010); the Red Cross combined its volunteers and social media during disaster situations to keep the public better informed and the phone congestion to a minimum (Livingston, 2007, pp. 23-25); Southwest Airlines created a blog run by its CEO and its blog team to discuss possible company policy changes and understand its customer's preferences for air travel (Livingston, 2007, pp. 41-44); and General Motors used blogging in its attempts to increase favorability ratings among U.S. customers (Livingston, 2007, pp. 74-76). Although each organizational strategy was different, each company tried (and some failed) to be where its customers were – online and in social media spaces.

Pepsi and the shift of traditional advertising dollars. Pepsi's decision in 2010 to refrain from more traditional Super Bowl advertising seems to many organizations to be a much bigger risk than simply engaging with publics in online spaces, as the return on investment for social media strategies has yet to be measured in the same way as traditional avenues (Morrissey, 2010). Super Bowl advertising was dismissed in light of Pepsi's year-long "Refresh" initiative, the values of which the company claims clashed with paying $2.5-3 million for a 30-second television spot during the Super Bowl (Gregory, 2010; Zmuda, 2010). According to Morrissey (2010), Pepsi saw the Super Bowl advertising expense as unwarranted when placed next to the goal of making grants to community projects, and employed social media to lower costs and to increase interaction with the brand (primarily through Facebook, Twitter, and the initiative's interactive voting system on its website).

The company placed a "staggeringly large bet", and the marketing world watched and waited to see if the company's funding of social media resulted in a return on investment that was worth a larger changeover from traditional advertising and communication outlets (Morrisey, 2010, p. 2). While corporate social responsibility programs have become important components in the building of organizational images, the long-held belief is that "little is known about their effect upon consumers" – much less what role they might play when coupled with social media (David, Kline, & Dai, 2005). Global Director of Digital and Social Media at Pepsi, Bonin Bough, placed the company's value on engagement and social media at the center of its Refresh initiative:

> What is at the core of our efforts is how can we continue to help and support the space by being an organization that is open to exploring and working with all of the bright minds and emerging technologies that are driving social media forward. (2010, no page)

Opinions are mixed as to the campaign's success. Pepsi's official statement reads that, "The Pepsi Refresh Project far surpassed consumer engagement and awareness expectations and industry benchmarks within the first several months of the campaign" (Crain, 2010). If the campaign was intended to increase brand share as a top U.S. soda, Diet Coke still "bypassed Pepsi as the nation's No. 2 soda" in March, 2011 ("Pepsi Refresh from start to finish", 2011). Crain (2011) believes that the campaign might have built more momentum had Pepsi kept its traditional Super Bowl audience in addition to its aggressive social media campaign, including snippets of an interview with Ralph Santana (formerly of PepsiCo): "What we learned was that the predominant use of social media and narrow-casting tactics missed the masses – and Pepsi is about as mass as a brand can be" (p. 2).

Regardless of differing opinions, however, on the effectiveness of the campaign or its ability to build the company's brand, Pepsi did return to its traditional Super Bowl advertising strategy in 2011 ("Pepsi Refresh from start to finish", 2012). The last round of Refresh grants was awarded in January 2012, and the initiative's website was removed shortly thereafter ("Pepsi Refresh from start to finish", 2012).

Organizational adoption trends since 2010. Since 2010, much of organizational adoption trends has focused on internal use with employees and potential employees (Lipshultz, 2013; Meister, 2014). Due to lack of research concerning engagement with stakeholders on organizational social media platforms, it is assumed that this shift in attention also indicates a continuation of established social media practices rather than an integration of new ones.

Twitter's emergence as a value-laden platform. In January, 2015, Pew Research Center reported 23% of online adults are now using Twitter, which is more than a 5% increase in the number of online adults using Twitter from the organization's 2013 report (Duggan et al., 2015). Additionally, the platform has been well-received internationally (Fox, 2013).

Launched in 2006, Twitter has only recently become prominent in academic study. It has become a platform of interest for its ability as "a new technological tool of information dissemination" (Armstrong & Gao, 2011, p. 501), its role in politics and elections (Burgess & Bruns, 2012), and its use in the classroom (Elavsky, Mislan, & Elavsky, 2011). Faina says that "YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter are all predicated on a notion of recognition" (2012, p. 64), and that these "new communication technologies and social media have combined technological and identity concerns around a notion of hyper-publicity" (p. 66). However, few studies have looked at how participating in Twitter assists or detracts from online identity, which is an important part of social media participation, or at building a thorough understanding of Twitter itself and how different elements of its language interact with one another.

Nonprofit Organizations and Social Media

Many in the nonprofit sector struggle to maintain the confidence of their publics (O'Neill, 2009, p. 237). As the digital world has shifted to Web 2.0 and a more userdriven content creation model, the adoption of social media by the nonprofit sector could be vital to the ability of these organizations to continue their roles in local communities. Nonprofit organizations often lack funding for communication, which makes the less-expensive social media route an attractive option for spreading messages and rallying individuals to specific causes (Wittke, 2008).

The diffusion of social media to the nonprofit sector has taken a different course than that of the for-profit sector, primarily due to its shortage of resources, which some argue has created an organization-based digital divide (Kenix, 2008). In particular, nonprofit organizations have begun to branch into social media through the use of social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter, but many are not making full use of the sites' capabilities and additionally do not possess the time or personnel needed simply to keep a Facebook profile up-to-date (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). While research has begun to evaluate the nonprofit sector's incorporation of social media into its communication strategies, it is still a nascent area of study. Blogs and websites such as mashable.com and bethkanter.org have sought to fill the gap between academic study and how to put social media into practice, with especial focus on how to implement social media within the nonprofit sector. Blog entries are designed to encourage organizations seeking to use and implement social media successfully and creatively. Additional research is needed to determine whether these encouraged best practices are rooted in more than experiential knowledge, applicable to pubic relations and/or marketing on a greater level, or rooted in any established theoretical understanding.

As organizations are structured differently than individuals, they interact with adoption differently, requiring a different modeling and understanding of the diffusion process (Rogers, 2003, pp. 402, 420-432). Therefore, additional theoretical underpinnings are necessary to understand how and why nonprofits are moving to social media. It is not necessary that organizations be treated differently when theoretically examined, however. As relayed by Massey (2013):

> Although organizations are different from individuals in important ways, organizations can be and are treated in the same way as individuals by many theorists and practitioners. (p. 14)

Winston's (1995) model of technological brakes and accelerators provides some insight to why nonprofit organizations have moved to adopt social media. The increasing use of social media within society and the needs of individual nonprofit organizations to effectively continue to engage with their publics and to do so at increasingly less-prohibitive costs have created the supervening social factors needed for these organizations to adopt social media for themselves (Winston, 1995, pp. 68-69). The opportunity to test the proverbial waters of such technologies is over, and the continued trend of usage prompts organizations to "determine how to get their company or organization successfully engaged in social media, and quickly" (Livingston, 2007, p. 21) – whether or not they have social media policies or guidelines readily available for use (Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012, p. 299).

The organizational 'Digital divide'. While most studies within the conceptual framework of the *digital divide* examine the concept through socially based groups of people, there are a few researchers who have begun to consider the knowledge/ability gap on an organizational level – examining the differences between nonprofit and for-profit organizations, as well as between large-scale, well-endowed nonprofit organizations and smaller advocacy groups who have even fewer budgetary resources to expend on communication (Kanayama, 2003; Zimmer, 2003). As a sub-concept and application of diffusion of innovations theory, the digital divide focuses on disparities between social groups (most commonly believed to form through financial disparities) that prevent the adoption of digital technologies by those groups of people (Rodino-Colocino, 2006).

Most investigation to this point regarding nonprofit organizations and their use of information and communication technology (ICT) "has been to learn the characteristics of organizations that use ICT and of those that do not" (Kanayama, 2003) and, more recently, "social media adoption rates and social media affordances" – limiting focus to which platforms are being used and why they were chosen rather than examining their actual day-to-day use (Obar, 2014, pp. 212-214). Some hold to the logic that social media, with proper training, could prove to bridge that gap of inequality on the organizational level – allowing nonprofit and for-profit organizations alike to spread their messages in the online spaces where their publics are spending their time (Livingston, 2007, p. 27).

Early success with social media fundraising has shown the power of mobilizing publics worldwide with campaigns such as Twestival, Tweetsgiving, and others (Livingston, 2010). More recent success has been demonstrated with the viral "Ice Bucket Challenge" campaign to benefit the ALS Association (Silverman & Gellman, 2014). One of the largest obstacles to adoption, however, has routinely been a lack of resources, specifically for training, which is a need that would not necessarily be solved simply by migrating a nonprofit organization's strategic communicative framework to social media (Kanayama, 2003). These traditional limitations make it more difficult for organizations to implement new technologies at an effective level:

> With this comes the increased pressure to strategically manage these change processes and communicate effectively with all stakeholders on an ongoing basis. ... The key implication of this is that managers must seek out regular feedback about the impact and adoption of the strategy throughout the organization. Traditional communication and change readiness assessments do not provide the level of detail needed for this feedback. What is needed is a more granular level of analysis that allows organizations to tap into the informal communication networks that determine how work in organizations really gets done. (Eisenberg, Johnson, & Pieterson, 2015, p. 152)

Additionally, organizations need to be aware that social media campaign success – particularly in the realm of fundraising – can result in "new stakeholders and higher scrutiny, ratcheting up expectations and putting a premium on communication and transparency" (Silverman & Gellman, 2014, no page).

Ramifications for publics. The impact of the use of social media by nonprofit and other organizations could largely affect the social media and Internet sectors themselves. It is possible that Web audiences might have initially chosen to use social media platforms because they were advertisement-free, having adapted ways to ignore traditional means of advertising (Gillbreath, 2009). In recent years, Twitter has integrated mobile advertising and still continues to add users – indicating that the platform is sought after for other reasons than being free of advertising (Koh, 2014); however, it remains to be seen whether social media users will grow discontented with the number of organizational messages and advertisements that have come to populate previously advertisement-free online spaces.

While it is now true, as Pepsi claims, that "digital is culture", it is possible that a backlash against online advertising (whether by for-profit or nonprofit organizations) could result in migrations away from online spaces (Morrissey, 2010). While organizations are "excited about what can be done", they often ignore "what should be done" and some fail to invest in social media on a consistent basis or create too much content with little vision or purpose behind it (Gunning, 2009). Organizations also ought to avoid pay-for-play models for their content. Regardless of the message, free channels tend to be received best (even if not practical as a long-term model for business), and even informal polling has shown that Internet publics don't plan to pay for content unless it is unique (such as from *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal*) – if it's not free, users typically aren't motivated enough to use it or to consume its message (Pew Research Center, 2010). This is why it is essential for nonprofit organizations to have both a specific vision for their messages and to understand both how social media works and how it can help actualize that vision (Gunning, 2009).

It is not likely that digital and social media platforms will replace traditional media entirely, at least for the foreseeable future and barring any radical impetus for change. Specifically, organizations must keep in mind that publics who are not users of Twitter, Facebook, or other social media might still want to participate in and share input on what the organization is doing (Parpis, 2009). As a result, organizations making use of social media must also be sure not to alienate key demographics (e.g. older populations) by having social media be the sole avenue for building relationships between the organization and the individual. To invest all efforts into social media could result in the estrangement of such important publics.

With the incorporation of social media strategies into the habits of Internet users, it is possible that their selection of messages might fragment (rather than unite) society as a whole. For instance, a user who can more easily tailor his or her Twitter feeds to personal interests could possibly become removed further from society as a whole. An individual who enjoys receiving updates about a specific cause might only see information about that cause and no longer any information about other arenas that (though not of interest to him or her) might be important to know – in particular, newsworthy items that traditional outlets would have covered.

Relationship building. Perhaps the most important aspect to a nonprofit organization making use of social media is that it allows such an organization the possibility of developing better relationships with its publics (Livingston, 2007, pp. 15-17). As organizations move to models that make use of social media, they have the opportunity to have a better handle on relationship management, the key task of public relations, and thereby seek to improve their corporate images and reputations.

Utilizing social media at its lower cost could also allow nonprofit organizations to focus more on their efforts on the community level. Instead of spending well-fundraised money on communication about a crisis such as the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, an organization such as the Red Cross would be able to spend that money on supplies and transport to meets its organizational vision of providing humanitarian aid (Hodge, 2010).

Trust and transparency. With trust already being an issue where nonprofit organizations are concerned (O'Neill, 2009, p. 237), one main concern has been that moving to social media platforms means organizations must purposively give up their former near-complete control over the conversation (Livingston, 2007, p. 26). In the last several years, a primary use of social media at the organizational level has been that of monitoring and understanding brand conversation (Morrissey, 2010). A shift has occurred, however, as for-profit organizations have become more familiar with what social media mean for their companies and organizations. They have increasingly become aware of the fact that suppressing every negative comment that does not agree with their values is not an acceptable practice in the social media sphere. As Barefoot and Szabo (2010) state, "A cult of honesty has developed in tandem with technical innovation, likely spurred by a desire for genuine connection with like-minded individuals" (p. 10). This is bolstered by research relayed by Belew (2014), which says that an individual's highest sense of trust belongs to those in his or her "personal network" and that one of the best ways to garner trust online is by making use of "online peers" when attempting to target a specific audience (pp. 57-61).

This has further resulted in an increased value of organizational transparency – because of the ease with which defamatory information about an organization can be created and spread online (even through comments on organizational blogs), "You've got to be up front about who you are, what company you're working for, and what your motivations and goals are" (Barefoot & Szabo, 2010, p. 67). It's no longer enough to feign interest and transparency. Organizations must transition from traditional impression-based models (which audiences have learned to ignore) to engagement-based models of advertising (Gilbreath, 2009). Gilbreath refers to this as "marketing with meaning", or "advertising that earns and rewards" the attention of the audience (2009). An organization has to be consistent in its actions and with its words, such as Pepsi's attempt to show its customers that it supports community projects rather than just stating it; the company's publics actually saw and chose where the money went with the Pepsi Refresh initiative (Zmuda, 2010). Since Pepsi, several organizations have attempted to wrangle the power of this type of crowd-sourced decision making, but it has continued to prove difficult to measure the success of such endeavors (Kanter & Paine, 2012, pp. 239-243).

Nonprofit organizations already have meaning, as most support specific causes – the challenge in the current media environment is to translate that meaning into messages that reach widespread audiences through social media. Social media must have purpose and clear-cut goals or they will become what most traditional advertising has become: Noise (Gunning, 2009). If successful, even small nonprofit organizations have a chance to take their places in what Chris Anderson (2008) has termed 'the Long Tail economy':

> In short, although we still obsess over hits, they are not quite the economic force they once were. Where are those fickle consumers going instead? No single place. They are scattered to the winds as markets fragment into countless niches. The one big growth area is the Web, but it is an uncategorizable sea of a million destinations, each defying in its own way the conventional logic of media and marketing. … That mass of niches has always existed, but as the cost of reaching it falls – consumers finding niche products, and niche products finding consumers – it's suddenly becoming a cultural and economic force to be reckoned with. (pp. 2, 6)

Research Questions

Taking all of the above into consideration, the following comprise the research questions driving the study proposed in Chapter 3:

1. Based on this study's examination of six nonprofit organizations, what can be understood about how these organizations attempt to make use of Twitter in order to engage and build relationships with stakeholders?
2. Based on this study's examination of six nonprofit organizations, what patterns can be discerned from the tweets of these organizations that might indicate the presence or absence of a social media policy or guidelines?
3. Based on this study's examination of six nonprofit organizations, how do the Twitter accounts of these organizations reflect the notion of "hyper-publicity", or an over-promotion of organizational image?
4. Based on this study's examination of six nonprofit organizations, how can trust and transparency be measured through the Twitter accounts of these organizations?

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

It is difficult to find a suitable framework to encompass the desired scope of study in the concepts and theories discussed in the second chapter. Some might attribute this to a lack of theory-driven research in the field of public relations, with most focus falling instead on "the professional development of the field" (Massey, 2003, p. 3). However, that lack is not relegated to public relations alone. Few academic endeavors have provided even a rudimentary lexicon to investigate the components of Twitter's platform-based language. For this reason, the study presented here was a prime candidate for an examination through a constant comparative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), borrowing the spirit of grounded theory while accepting the limitations of my previous engagement with the topic and that of my time. Additionally, I employed a few key purposive modifications to the method to ensure a capture of the desired nonprofit population and to constrain the capture of tweets themselves. All modifications are discussed in greater detail in the following pages.

Disclaimer of Researcher Bias

Due to a number of methodological changes to this project throughout the last five years, it was not possible for me to come into this methodological approach *a priori*, or without prior knowledge or preconceived ideas of the subject matter, which is often encouraged with a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). This prior knowledge includes a large portion of current literature concerning Twitter, social media platforms, and theoretical frameworks in which this topic area has been investigated over the last decade. This influence is reflected in the inclusion of the research questions listed at the end of the previous chapter. Additionally, my pre-existing familiarity with the Twitter platform since 2009 has caused me to encounter the sample from the perspective of a platform user, rather than as an unbiased observer. Because of this, the appropriate terms will often be used to describe categories outlined in the fourth chapter and in the resultant coding instrument rather than terms crafted simply from observation, a common goal of grounded theory.

Sampling

To ensure the desired population, I undertook a two-tiered approach to sampling. These tiers manifested themselves in the selection of organizational accounts for tweet analysis and then the selection of the individual tweets themselves for capture and coding. In order to enable consistent sampling for the second tier of sampling, each organizational account was established to have been active for at least the previous calendar year (December 9, 2013–December 8, 2014). This is consistent with other studies where social media were captured (Aparaschivei, 2011, p. 44; Lasorsa, Lewis & Holton, 2012, p. 25.) Due to the fully public nature of all data involved (accessible to any and all through Twitter's interface), there was no need to seek approval from the institutional review board (IRB).

Type of Twitter accounts. As this study aimed to look specifically at organizational Twitter accounts belonging to nonprofit organizations, this population was established by first limiting the sample to nonprofit organizations. These accounts were coded as either (a) a nonprofit or (b) not, which resulted in the account's inclusion or removal from said sample, respectively.

Twitter accounts were selected using the website, wefollow.com, a Twitter directory. At the time of this writing, wefollow.com was the top search result on Google when the search terms, "Twitter directory" were entered, after Twitter itself. Similar directories have been used for sampling purposes in a number of Twitter studies, such as the Romanian site Zelist.ro, TweetCongress, and muckrack.com (Aparaschivei, 2011; Glassman, Straus & Shogan, n.d.; Lasorsa, 2012).

Within wefollow.com's "Nonprofit" category, more than 7,000 accounts were listed as of December 8, 2014, when a listing of the top 150 accounts was captured for use in the first tier of sampling (see Figure 3-1). Wefollow.com orders accounts using a "Prominence Score", the result of a proprietary algorithm that produces scores ranging from 1–100 and is calculated as a combination of an account's number of followers, re-tweets and interactions (Wefollow.com, n.p.; see Figure 3-2). Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton (2012) practiced this manner of purposive sampling when they used muckrack.com's prominence listings to evaluate journalists' Twitter accounts (p. 25). Because of the factors used in calculating the wefollow.com "score", a study of the most "prominent" organizational accounts here allowed for the examination of not only what organizations are saying on Twitter, but of those organizations which (presumably) have the widest audiences. Additionally, this directory's unique score could be used to draw an additional correlation between its assignment of prominence to certain variables. For the purposes of this study, a constructed two weeks of tweets were captured for each organization included in the sample.

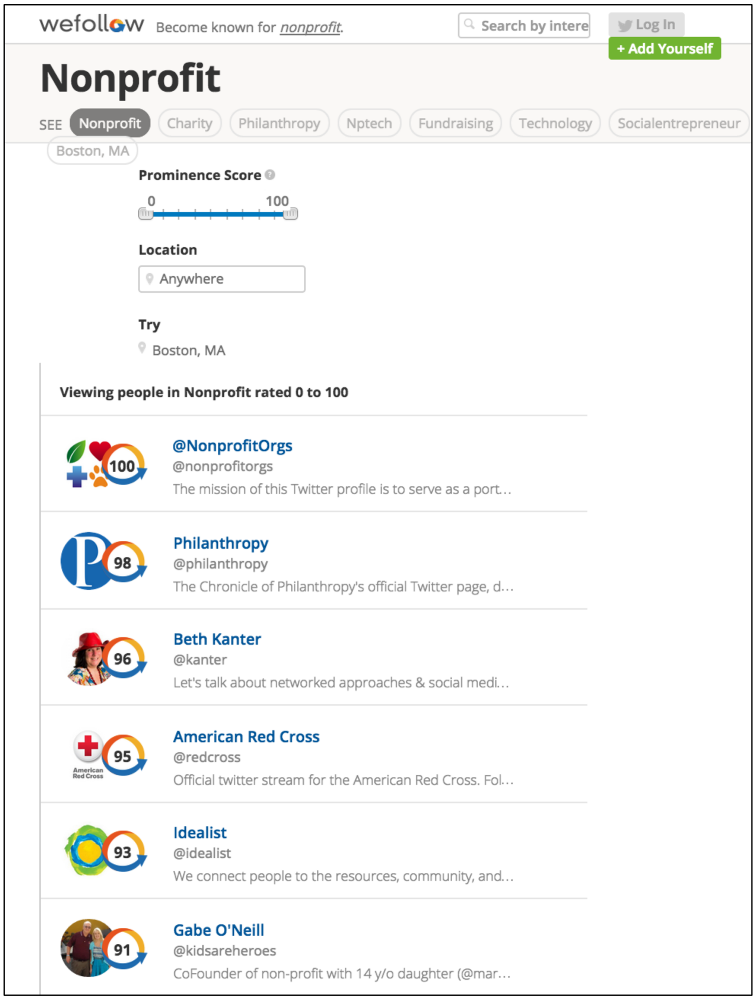

Figure 3-1. Wefollow.com's Nonprofit listing.

How Wefollow does it

Wefollow Prominence Scores range from 1 to 100 — the higher the score, the more prominent. Simple.

However, unlike other personal metric sites that use complicated ranking systems based off how many followers, retweets and interactions a person has (like a popularity contest), Wefollow uses an algorithm similar to PageRank.

Why PageRank? Because it takes into account not only how many people are listening to you, but how prominent those people are.

Figure 3-2. Wefollow.com's explanation of its Prominence Score.

Account inclusion. In order to be included for the second tier of sampling (tweet capture), an organization's account had to (a) be coded clearly as a nonprofit organization and (b) established as an active account since (at the least) December 9, 2013 (one year prior to the date of capture). Often, the small information section on a Twitter profile was insufficient for categorizing accounts in this directory, but it proved helpful in identifying account activity (see Figure 3-3). Additional searching through an account's extra-platform web pages was often necessary and was therefore used to confirm an account's categorization. The full capture of wefollow.com's top 150 accounts resulted in the emergence of five distinct categories (see Figure 3-4 for an example). I coded each account as one of the following categories: Nonprofit, sponsored, individual, umbrella, or unclear.

Figure 3-3. Standard account information for Twitter account in native environment. The 'Joined' date was used to establish account activity.

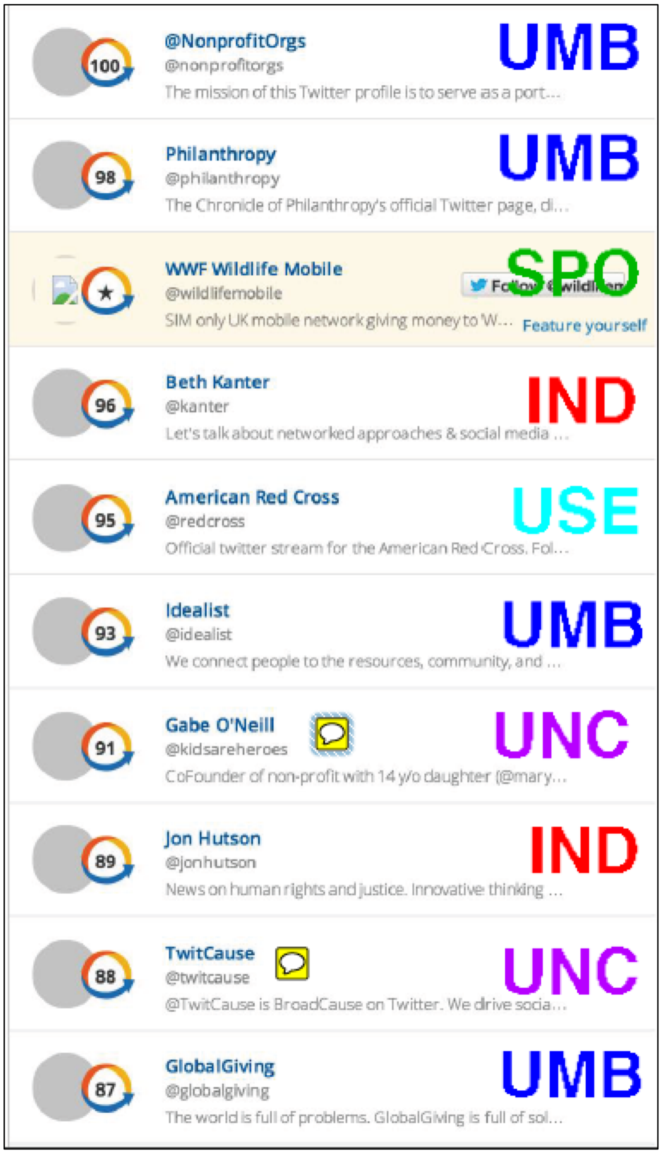

Figure 3-4. Capture document for top 10 Nonprofit listings of wefollow.com directory. Each listing is stamped with a three-letter code to identify its category.

Organizational accounts. Organizational accounts are created by those who represent a company or a group. These accounts fell into two sub-categories: Nonprofit and what I've labeled 'umbrella'. Initial identifying characteristics included the use of the collective first person ("we", "us", "our", etc.); a mention of the company/group doing something collectively; the use of a company or group name; or the inclusion of a link to an organizational website (many, but not all, ending in ".org").

Nonprofit organizational accounts. These accounts were characterized by a focus on a cause or specific goal that can be more easily accomplished by many people rather than by a single person. They typically centered on this expressed purpose and had the aim of putting all money raised toward the mission of the organization, rather than for the purpose of profit or impressing stockholders. Sometimes the specific words, "organization", "nonprofit", "charity", "foundation", etc. were helpful in identifying such accounts. The following list of common types of nonprofits designated by the United States was also used to aid identification of these organizations ("Many types of nonprofits", n.d.):

- 501(c)(3) – Religious organizations (church)
- 501(c)(4) – Social welfare organizations (adoption group)
- 501(c)(5) – Labor organizations (union)
- 501(c)(6) – Chambers of commerce
- 501(c)(7) – Social and recreation clubs (YMCA or senior center)
- 501(c)(23) – Veterans' organizations
- 509(a)(1) – Publicly supported charities
- 521(a) – Farmers' cooperative associations

Nonprofit organizations were marked with a "USE" stamp on the capture document.

Umbrella organizational accounts. If the account spoke to helping organizations strategize (with regard to communicating or use of the Web or getting the word out, etc.)

or to helping connect people to different causes, I considered it an *umbrella* or *para-organizational account* – indicating an organization that dealt with multiple organizations. These were not always readily distinguishable from nonprofits, resulting in the inclusion of two nonprofit organizations in the final sample for capture that could also technically qualify as umbrella organizations. These organizations had clear mission statements dedicated to a specific cause, even while displaying some characteristics of an umbrella organization. Umbrella organizations were marked with a "UMB" stamp on the capture document.

Sponsored accounts. Wefollow.com inserts unrelated accounts into their directory listings (presumably as a means of advertising). These were easy to spot, as they were shaded with a tan color and included a "Follow" button for the account – obviously separated from the rest of the listing. Such accounts were marked with an "SPO" on the capture document.

Individual accounts. Some accounts specifically appeared to belong to individuals. These accounts specifically utilized the first person ("I", "me", "mine", "my", etc.) to market themselves; mentioned titles that conveyed position, power, or a self-perceived role within the company ("CEO", "VP", "activist", etc.); or used a combination of first and last names as the displayed name. These accounts were marked with an "IND" stamp on the capture document.

Unclear accounts. Even with additional investigation of the account through the use of linked websites, some accounts still could not be placed into one of the above categories. These were marked with an "UNC" stamp on the capture document and a comment was inserted to clarify why I considered it to be unclear.

Establishing account activity. For each account categorized as a nonprofit and marked with a "USE", I located each account online in its native Twitter environment and used the "Joined" date to ascertain whether the account had been in use for more than a full calendar year (see Figure 3-3).

Activity has been considered a critical part of the research that does exist concerning social media. Aparashivei (2011) considered blogs active if they had "a life longer than six months and … entries made several times a week" (p. 44). A similar understanding can be applied to Twitter accounts, though a full year helps keep at bay the risk of capturing too seasonal a sample or one based on specific events – a holiday such as Christmas, for instance, or an event such as Hurricane Sandy. If an account had not been active over the course of the previous year, it was removed from the list of organizational accounts for tweet capture, a precedent found in Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton (2012) in their study of journalists' Twitter accounts:

> Since some journalists closed or hanged their Twitter accounts after September 2009, and others did not use Twitter during the time frame of this study, the actual number of journalists studied was 430. (p. 25)

The final group of active, nonprofit accounts was then used for the capture of tweets, which is detailed in the next section.

Tweet capture parameters. From the final group of active, nonprofit accounts, I went through the list in order and captured tweets in a constructed set of two weeks for the top eight (8) accounts from wefollow's nonprofit listing that I had marked with "USE". When finished with the coding of these accounts, I expected I would need to capture tweets from additional accounts, but I reached saturation in the examination of the first six (6) accounts. Glaser and Strauss (1967) explain the difference of this type of sample:

> Since no proof is involved, the constant comparative method in contrast to analytic induction requires only saturation of data – not consideration of *all* available data, nor are the data restricted to one kind of clearly defined case. (p. 104)

Construction of two weeks for sampling. Days of the week were assigned in order, beginning with Sunday and running through Saturday, twice. Month and week placement within each month were selected separately using the random number generator at random.org. With the sampling of months, "1" equaled "January" and "12" equaled "December". To select weeks within a month, weeks were assigned using values of "1" through "5" to indicate the occurrence of a day of the week within the selected month (for example, the third occurrence in March for that day of the week). I used a practice of replacement, giving each month and week within the month an equal chance of being drawn for each capture date. Knowing that a fifth occurrence of a specific day of the week might not exist within a given month, a second number was also selected at random as a backup anytime a "5" was chosen. Replacement was not used when selecting backup weeks, as the backup was intended to provide an alternative option to the possibly absent fifth occurrence. Table 3-1 lists the dates selected for capture.

Table 3-1

Randomized Date Selections for Tweet Data Capture

Day of the Week	Month (Random)	Week (Random)	Resulting Date
Sunday-1	6-June	5 (2 as backup)	June 29, 2014
Monday-1	1-January	5 (4 as backup)	January 31, 2014
Tuesday-1	9-September	4	September 23, 2014
Wednesday-1	6-June	3	June 18, 2014
Thursday-1	7-July	4	July 24, 2014
Friday-1	1-January	5 (2 as backup)	January 13, 2014
Saturday-1	2-February	3	February 15, 2014
Sunday-2	12-December	5 (2 as backup)	December 29, 2013
Monday-2	10-October	3	October 20, 2014
Tuesday-2	12-December	2	December 10, 2013
Wednesday-2	6-June	1	June 4, 2014
Thursday-2	1-January	2	January 9, 2014
Friday-2	4-April	3	April 18, 2014
Saturday-2	6-June	5 (1 as backup)	June 1, 2014

Tweet selection. While a number of methods have been established for capturing social media, and tweets in particular, "social media content capture is an emerging topic that has not consolidated around standards for capture" ("White Paper on Best Practices for the Capture of Social Media Records", 2013, p. 9). An enumeration of capture methodologies published by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) provided a list of known and usable utilities for social media capture ("White Paper on Best Practices for the Capture of Social Media Records", 2013, p. 10). Unfortunately, upon further examination of the options, none allowed for the capture of a Twitter timeline for anyone other than the account holder. This is mostly due to Twitter's recent switch away from Rich Site Summary or Really Simple Syndication (RSS) (Warren, 2012). All tweets for the two constructed weeks were therefore captured through the use of Twitter's own Advanced Search function, which was brought to public attention in November 2014 (Gibbs, 2014).

Tweet capture. Using the Advanced Search function, each organization's handle was searched for tweets on the date required (see Figure 3-5). I captured all tweets (including re-tweets and replies) for each date in the constructed set of weeks using Apple Grab, a screen capturing utility that captures an image of an open window on a computer screen (see Figure 3-6). Due to the variance in daily tweet numbers per organization, this created a sizeable sample that was stored digitally. For the purpose of coding, the tweets were printed to allow easy markup.

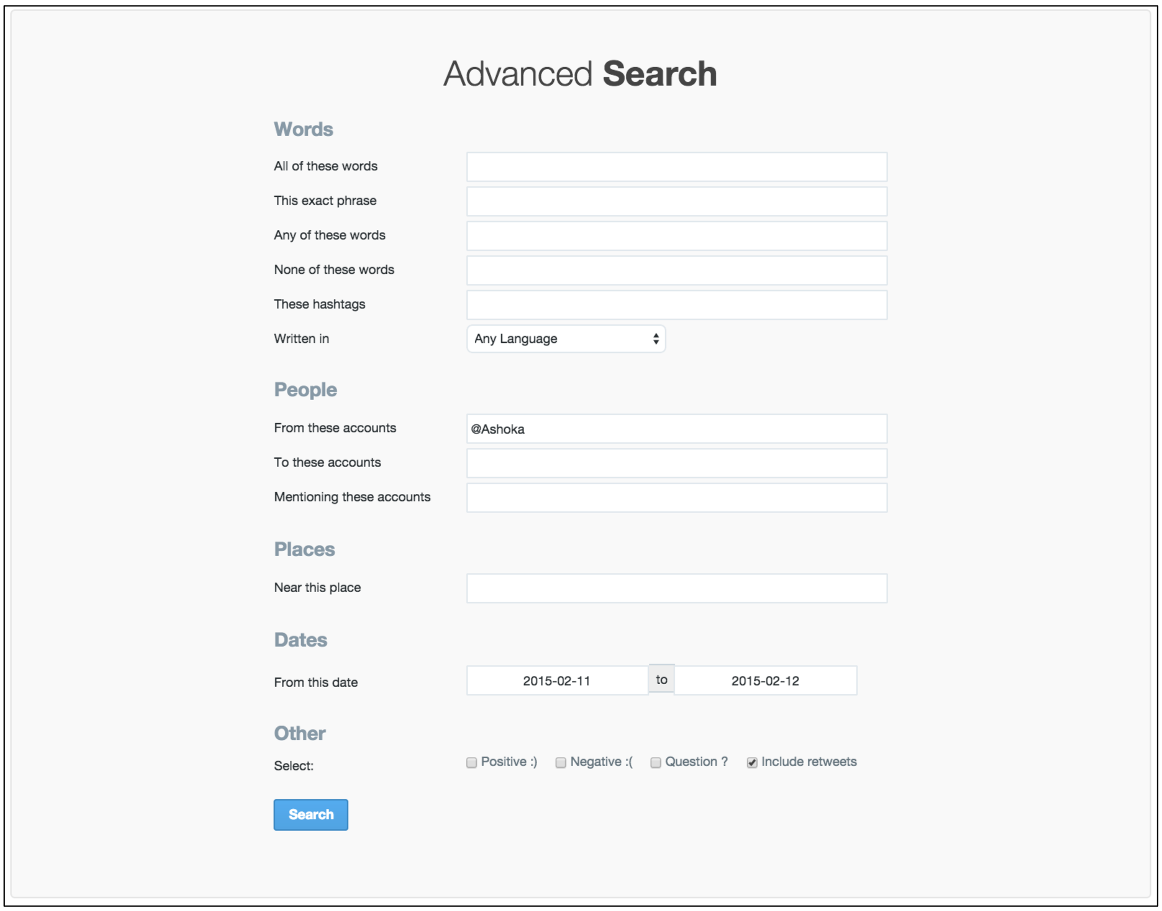

Figure 3-5. Twitter's Advanced Search function, located at twitter.com/search-advanced. The account handle was entered into "From these accounts" and the date selected in the first "From this date" box (with the day after selected in the second box).

Figure 3-6. Tweet capture for @AmericanCancer on January 9, 2014, using Apple Grab.

Alternate rules for unavailable dates. When tweets for a given day were not available for capture (meaning, there were zero tweets to be captured), I applied consistent rules to find the day closest in type to the original. First, I sought to select another of the same day of the week (for example, trading a Monday for another Monday), starting with that same day in the next week. If that day, too, was unavailable, I continued in order through those days of the week within the same month – cycling back to the beginning of the month when I arrived at its end. Second, if no other date holding the same day of the week was available, I attempted to find a similar day (for example, trading a Monday for another weekday, such as Tuesday or Wednesday), starting with the next available similar day. As a last resort, when a similar day was unavailable in the remainder of the month (multiple organizations lacked weekend tweets, for example), I chose the next day for which tweets were available that had not already been selected as a separate date for sampling.

Coding

Coding was done in the manner of the constant comparative method suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967). This resulted in three separate coding passes. I was the sole coder of all data. Due to the qualitative and exploratory nature of this research, a second coder was not employed for the purposes of intercoder reliability. The goal of the research presented is to provide a more informed understanding, rather than to produce a quantifiable measurement of the sample, which could be generalized to other samples. This aligns with a constructivist paradigm for research, where "the investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the 'findings' are *literally created* as the investigation proceeds" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111).

First pass. The first pass was intended to delineate categories as they emerged within the sample and is referred to as *open coding*. Glaser and Strauss (1967) view this as a fracturing of the data, "breaking down and out of the story" (p. 106). Several of these codes were marked using colored pencils, rather than individually recorded in the margins (to preserve readability for future coding passes and for easy identification of specific, reappearing items within tweets). See Figure 3-7 for a key to colored markings. As ideas took shape and became readily recognizable, I collapsed categories together and made memos to keep track of what I had done. After coding six (6) organizational accounts, I ceased to find any new categories – meeting Glaser and Strauss' criterion of saturation (1967). At this point, I aggregated my notes and memos into a complete listing of categories that I had encountered in the sample so that I might make use of it in the second and third coding passes (see Appendix A).

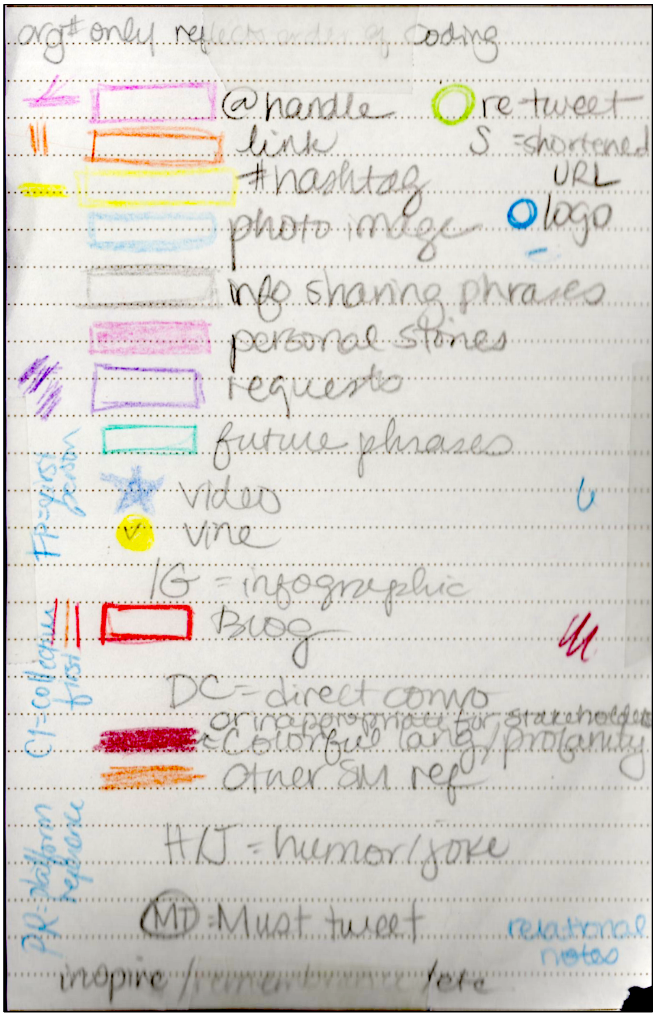

Figure 3-7. Key to colored markings of reappearing items within tweets.

Second pass. The second pass took a look at the categories identified in the first pass and sought to relate them to one another, which is also referred to as *axial coding*. According to Charmaz (2006), "The purposes of axial coding are to sort, synthesize, and organize large amounts of data and reassemble them in new ways after open coding" (p.

60). This process reconstitutes the fractured pieces of the first pass by identifying patterns that emerge among them.

By comparing one incidence of a category against another, linkages can be identified, which spurs "the analyst to make some related theoretical sense of each comparison" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This comparison was done both inside of individual accounts and across those accounts, providing insight into both organizational practices and those that might be considered "best practices" according to Grunig's theory of Excellence (Grunig, Grunig, & Toth, 2007). These notations were all made with a blue colored pencil and often included arrows to visually tie together two or more elements. As with the first pass, many ideas were collapsed together along the way and noted in memos. When I had once more coded the six organizations, I spent time aggregating my list of findings for use with the third coding pass (see Appendix B).

Third pass. Due to the emergent nature of coding while utilizing the constant comparative method, a third coding pass was employed to revisit the full sample. This coding pass sought to code any remaining items that may have been missed or that had not yet developed when encountered in either the first or second coding pass. Such a practice allowed for consistency of markup and coding throughout the sample, regardless of what pre-collapsed category or relationship a tweet may have been coded with initially. For an example of a page that has been through three coding passes, see Figure 3-8.

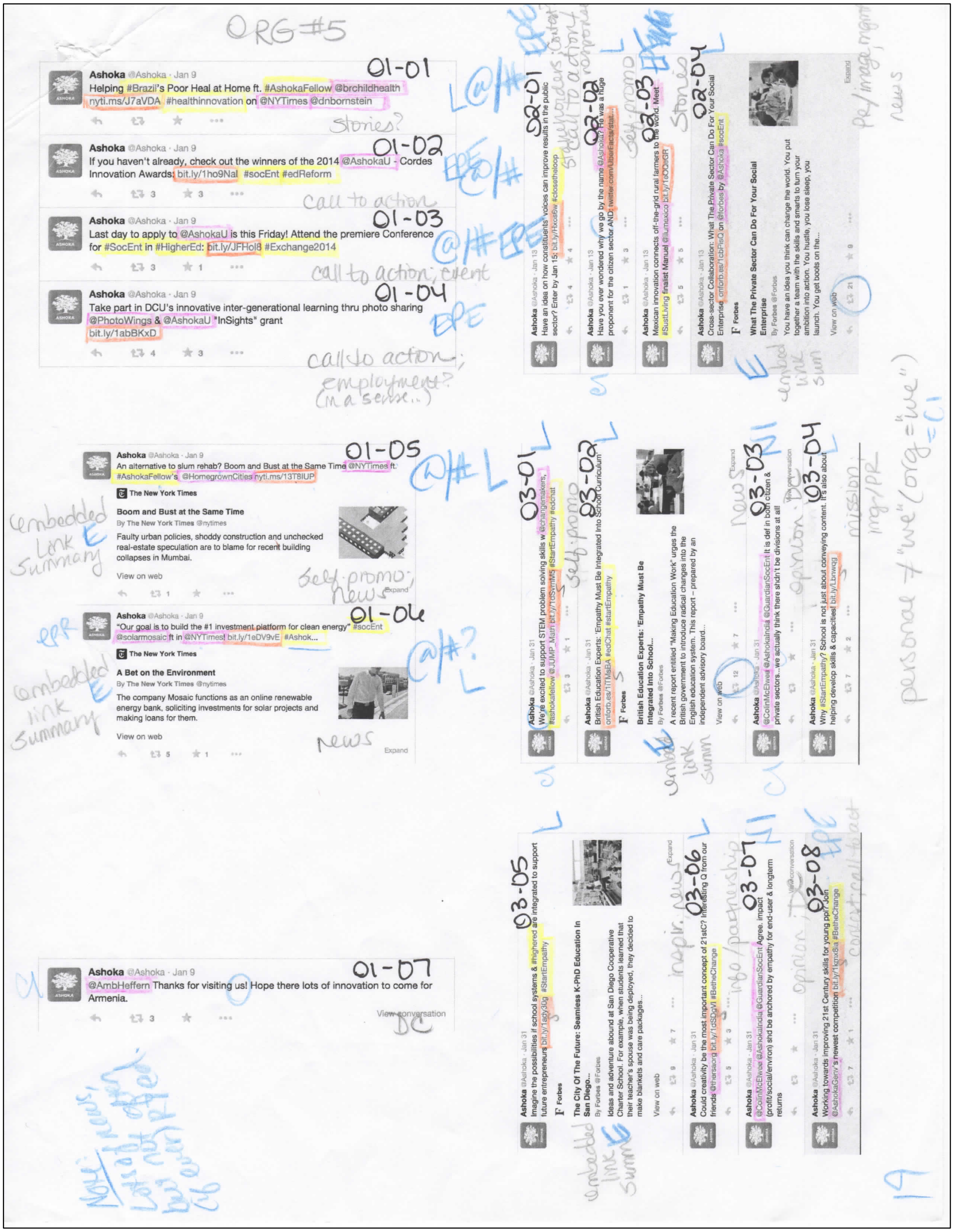

Figure 3-8. Example of page with three coding passes.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS

Throughout the sample of 407 tweets from six organizational Twitter accounts, a variety of categories and relationships were coded. These findings have been broken down into three sections for the sake of organization: language categories, conceptual categories, and axial relationships. The breakdown of these tweets by organization can be found in Table 4-1. Due to the small nature of the sample studied, any statistics are only relatable to the sample itself and cannot be used to make more generalized statements for the population as a whole. Such data and percentages shared in this chapter are used with the intent to provide a picture of the sample under study. Further research with proven reliability in a larger sample would be necessary to make statements that are more generally applicable outside of this particular sample. Where present, all decimals have been rounded up to the nearest hundredth if the numeral in the thousandth position is 5 or greater.

Table 4-1

Account Breakdown of Sample

Organization	Total tweets	Average Tweets/Day
American Cancer Society	53	3.79
American Red Cross	21	1.50
DoSomething.org	71	5.07
Camfed	35	2.50
Ashoka	134	9.57
Livestrong	93	6.64
Total tweets	407	

Section 1: Language Categories

It quickly became apparent that each tweet has a static framework with a few (sometimes) changing parts. A sample tweet is included in Figure 4-1 to allow for identification of this framework. Along the top of each tweet the following items appear, from left to right: The account's icon, the account's name, the account's handle, and the date. Along the bottom the following items appear, from left to right: A *reply arrow* button, by which someone can reply to the individual tweet using their own handle; a *retweet* button, which on its own functions as a shortcut for retweeting that single tweet into another user's personal timeline and, with a number to its right, can reflect how many times a particular tweet has been retweeted into other users' personal timelines; a *star* button, by which someone can 'favorite' a tweet for his or her own later reference (Twitter keeps track of these for each user) and, with a number to its right, can reflect how many times a particular tweet has been selected as a 'favorite' by other users; and an *ellipsis* button, which allows for additional options, as seen in Figure 4-2, which were not examined in this study.

Figure 4-1. Sample tweet, for identifying components that are consistent to the framework of all tweets.

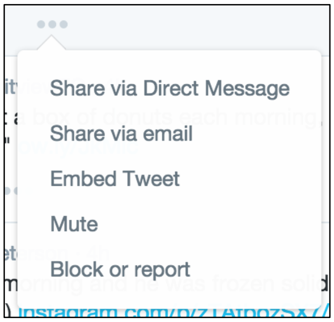

Figure 4-2. Additional options available under the *ellipsis* button.

Use of handle within tweet. One of the first noticeable pieces was the inclusion of other account handles within tweets. Such uses of handles appeared in 267 (or 65.6%) of captured tweets. As seen in Figure 4-3, a handle appears as an "@" symbol, followed by an alphanumeric string that does not contain any spaces. If inputted correctly, the handle displays in a different color (in this case, a blue). This assists in easy identification. Handles appear in different locations within tweets, as well as in singular and multiple instances.

Figure 4-3. Sample tweet with account handle highlighted.

At beginning of tweet. Of the tweets captured, 109 (or 26.8 %) had a handle at the very beginning of the tweet, as seen in Figure 4-4. These tweets only appeared when "All" was selected in the search preferences, meaning that they would not normally appear on the account's main timeline but under the "Tweets & replies" section instead.

Such tweets indicate a direct (but still public) engagement between the organizational account and another user.

Figure 4-4. Use of account handle at beginning of tweet.

Period (.) preceding handle. In rare instances, the handle was placed at the beginning of the tweet, but with one notable distinction – a "." preceded the handle in these cases. The study noted seven of these uses, three of which were embedded in retweets from other accounts and, therefore, not the linguistic choice of the organizational account under examination. As seen in Figure 4-5, this small difference enables the tweet to display in the main timeline, as opposed to being located under the "Tweets & replies" section.

Figure 4-5. Use of period to precede handle at beginning of tweet.

Mid-tweet. Accounts often used handles mid-tweet, seemingly as either (a) a means of engagement with another account, though not quite as directly as when the handle was placed at the very beginning of a tweet; or (b) a means of encouraging the other account to engage with whatever was being shared in the tweet.

Single vs. multiple. Some tweets contain a single handle and others contain multiple handles. As coding progressed, no discernible relationship emerged between the number of handles and the rest of the tweet. The decision was therefore made not to note the number of handles in any given tweet for final analysis.

Hyperlinks. Like account handles, hyperlinks display within tweets as a different color (in this case, blue). This appears to convey the interactive or linking nature of this component. These components were present in 245 (or 60.2%) of the sampled tweets. While each hyperlink serves the function of taking the user outside of the account's main timeline, there are several ways these links are presented.

Full hyperlink. Full hyperlinks appeared in 44 instances. They are often truncated and followed by an ellipsis to keep the tweet within the 144-character limit of the platform (but which preserves the full interactivity of the hyperlink). Figure 4-6 shows one such hyperlink.

Figure 4-6. A full hyperlink, which has been cut off due to length.

Shortened hyperlink. In the remaining 201 instances of hyperlink use within tweets, a shortened version appeared. These consist of a shortened root address, followed by an alphanumeric string (see Figure 4-7). Each is unique and links to a web page with a full web address. It is assumed that the common nature of such shortened hyperlinks indicates a widely accepted practice intended to preserve character spaces in a platform where characters are limited.

Third-party shortening. The most commonly observed shortener was *bit.ly*, a service which shortens hyperlinks through its website, bitly.com. Five out of the six organizations coded used bit.ly shortened hyperlinks, but only three of them used bit.ly exclusively. Ashoka used shortened hyperlinks from a variety of shorteners, each seemingly rooted in the original resource being passed along – namely *ow.ly*, the shortener built in to the social media management utility Hootsuite, and *goo.gl*, a shortening tool offered by Google. Livestrong's use of bit.ly is exclusive to third-party shortening, but is rare (two instances noted).

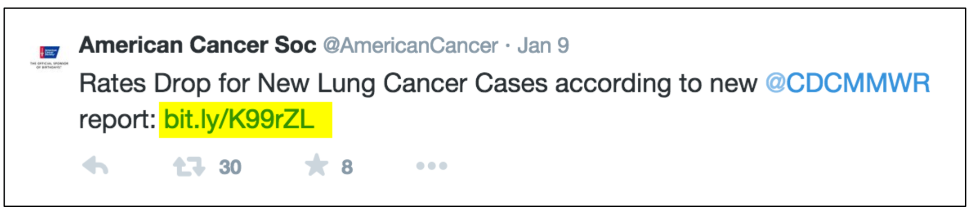

Figure 4-7. Example of shortened hyperlink, provided through a third-party shortener.

Organization-specific shortening. In addition to those created by third parties, many shortened hyperlinks appear with a prefix as a shorter version of the organization's name. These appear to provide more customized shortened hyperlinks for organizations who might wish to keep their links brand-specific, even while shortened. An example of the Red Cross's shortened prefix can be found in Figure 4-8. Others include DoSomething.org (dsorg.us), Livestrong (lvstr.ng), and several major news outlets (The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Forbes).

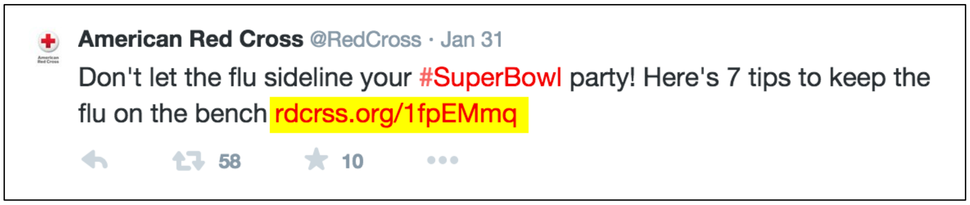

Figure 4-8. Example of organization-specific prefix on a shortened hyperlink.

Retweets. When an account chooses to copy another account's tweet and insert it into its own main timeline, it is referred to as a *retweet*. An account's retweets have two facets: (a) the borrowing of a tweet from another account and (b) the number of times a particular tweet is borrowed by other accounts. Retweets of borrowed content appeared 76 times within the sampled tweets (or 18.7%). Such retweets were observed in three different forms and in different volumes for each account (see Table 4-2). For each tweet in the sample, the number of times it had been retweeted was recorded.

Table 4-2

Account Breakdown of Borrowed Tweets

Organization	Total Tweets	Embedded	Copied	Average/Day	% Total
American Cancer Society	53	35	0	3.79	66.04%
American Red Cross	21	1	0	1.50	4.76%
DoSomething.org	71	17	0	5.07	23.94%
Camfed	35	0	12	2.50	34.29%
Ashoka	134	13	0	9.57	9.70%
Livestrong	93	0	7	6.64	7.53%

Counts. On each tweet, the count of how many times the tweet has been retweeted is located underneath the tweet's content and to the right of the *reply arrow* button. This number, seen in Figure 4-9, could provide an indicator (the quality of which has not been determined) of the reception of that tweet by an account's followers. For each account, the highest retweet count for an original tweet in the sample can be found in Table 4-3.

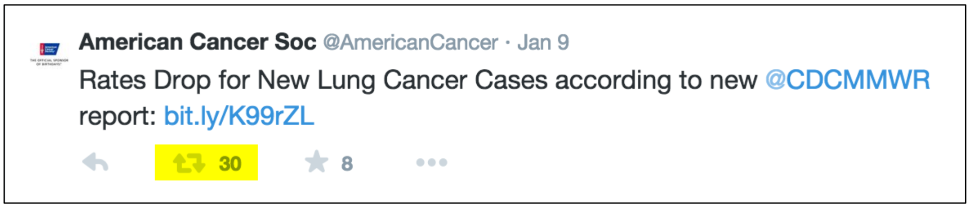

Figure 4-9. Highlighted retweet count.

Table 4-3

Highest Original Retweet Counts by Account

Organization	Highest RT Count
American Cancer Society	551
American Red Cross	224
DoSomething.org	9100
Camfed	34
Ashoka	31
Livestrong	126

Embedded retweets. One of the ways in which accounts can choose to borrow another account's tweets is by embedding the tweet directly into their timeline. This preserves the original account's authorship of the tweet (icon, name, handle) and places a small green retweet symbol followed by "(name of organization) retweeted" above the original tweet (see Figure 4-10). In this sample of tweets, embedding retweets was by far the most popular way to retweet content from other accounts – of the 76 observed, 58 (or 76.3%) were found in this form.

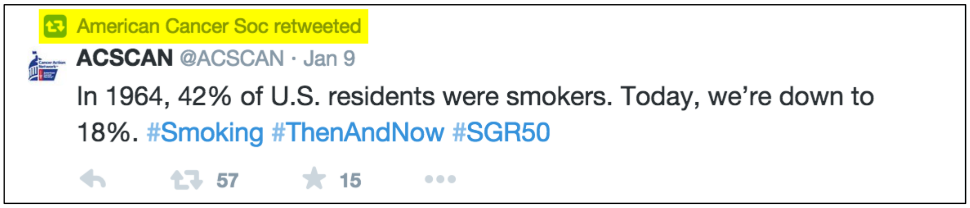

Figure 4-10. Example of an embedded retweet.

Copied retweets. Another means of retweeting another account's content can be found in the simple act of copying the text of the original tweet. The common format is placing "RT @(handle):" before inserting the text of the original tweet. Instead of the full copy of the original tweet's account information, as with embedded retweets, this results in the retweet taking on the identity of the account doing the retweeting (see Figure 4-11). This occurred 15 times within the sample.

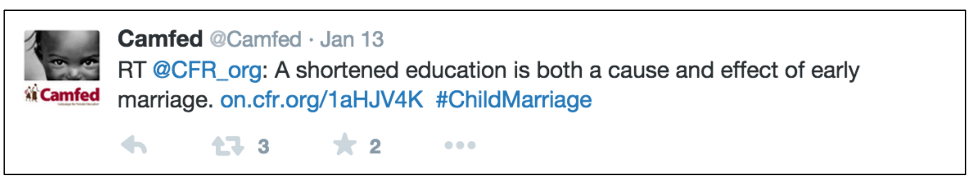

Figure 4-11. Example of a copied retweet.

Must-tweet. A third form of retweet appeared three times, the *must-tweet*. This presents itself almost identically to that of the copied retweet, but with an "MT" in place of the "RT" (see Figure 4-12). Because of the name of this form, it must be considered that such content was viewed by Camfed, the user of all three must-tweets located within the sampled tweets, as having more value than a typical retweet – that they had no choice but to retweet the original tweet's content.

Figure 4-12. Example of a must-tweet retweet.

Favorite counts. When an account favorites a tweet by pressing the *star* button underneath it, it does not appear in that account's main timeline as a retweet would. For this reason, each organizational account's favorites could not be observed from its timeline alone (and, perhaps, might be fodder for future study). The only observable component of favoriting a tweet was the count for how many times it had been favorited by other accounts, a number which appears to the right of the *star* button (see Figure 4-13). Like the retweet counts, this could provide an indicator of how a tweet was received by an account's followers. For each account, the count for the tweet with the highest number of favorites can be found in Table 4-4.

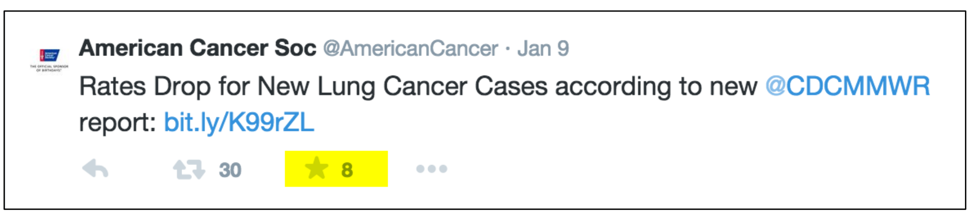

Figure 4-13. Highlighted favorite count.

Table 4-4

Highest Original Favorite Counts by Account

Organization	Highest Favorite Count
American Cancer Society	160
American Red Cross	118
DoSomething.org	2900
Camfed	21
Ashoka	18
Livestrong	124

Hashtags. A "#" sign, followed by an alphanumeric string (without spaces) indicates the presence of a *hashtag*. Hashtags occurred in 257 of the sampled tweets, with 147 instances making use of a single hashtag and 110 making use of multiple hashtags within a single tweet. Like with handles and hyperlinks, hashtags display in a different color (in this case, blue) to convey a level of interactivity. When one clicks on a hashtag, Twitter provides an indexing of every (public) tweet that contains that same hashtag. Due to the scale of many of these indexes, the study of hashtag use alone could prove profitable to understanding how hashtags develop and pass through different groups of users. Hashtags can appear as simple words or something more complex, often indicating event-based communication (see Figure 4-14). It is assumed to be more difficult to control the conversation in simpler, more colloquial hashtags, while easier to control when the hashtag is more unique.

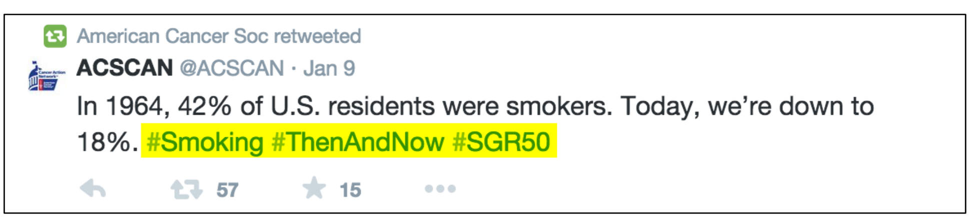

Figure 4-14. Examples of hashtags. #Smoking seems to be a more simple hashtag while #SGR50 is more unique and likely specific to something the organization supports.

Images. Twitter allows its users the option to post pictures as part of their tweets, displaying below the text portion of the tweet (see Figure 4-15). The main preview does not always contain the full image, cropping the top and bottom in order to fit the space allotted for an image tweet in the main timeline. Images were marked in several ways, including infographic, photographic, and graphic art types; the presence of an organizational logo; and the embedding of a link summary into the tweet. Every organization made use of the image function at least once. The total number of images observed in tweets was 72 (or in 17.7% of the total sample).

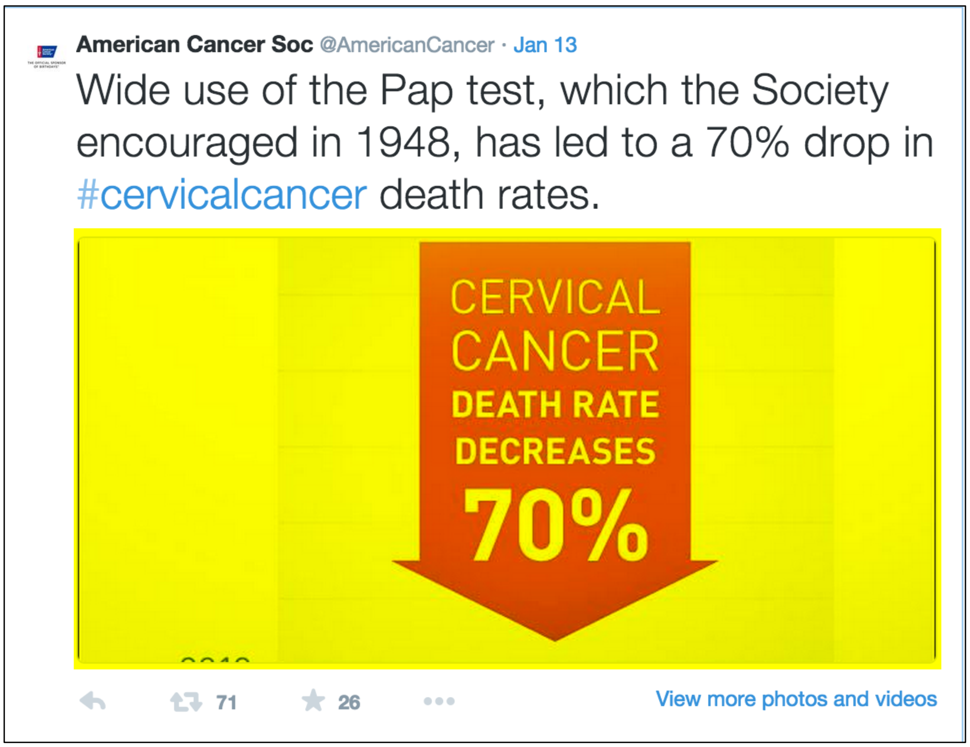

Figure 4-15. Example of an image situated below the text of a tweet.

Infographic images. Eleven of the tweets contained *infographic* images. These were categorized by the use of text in combination with some sort of imagery within the tweet (and not being native to the image itself – for instance, if an individual in the picture had writing on his shirt). Adding this type of image to a tweet enables the sharing of additional information that would not otherwise fit within the 140-character limit of each tweet (see Figure 4-16 for an example). The text can be simple or placed on top of a different type of image, such as a photograph. It is primarily the use of (non-native) text in the image that places such images in the infographic category. All six accounts used at least one infographic image in the tweets sampled.

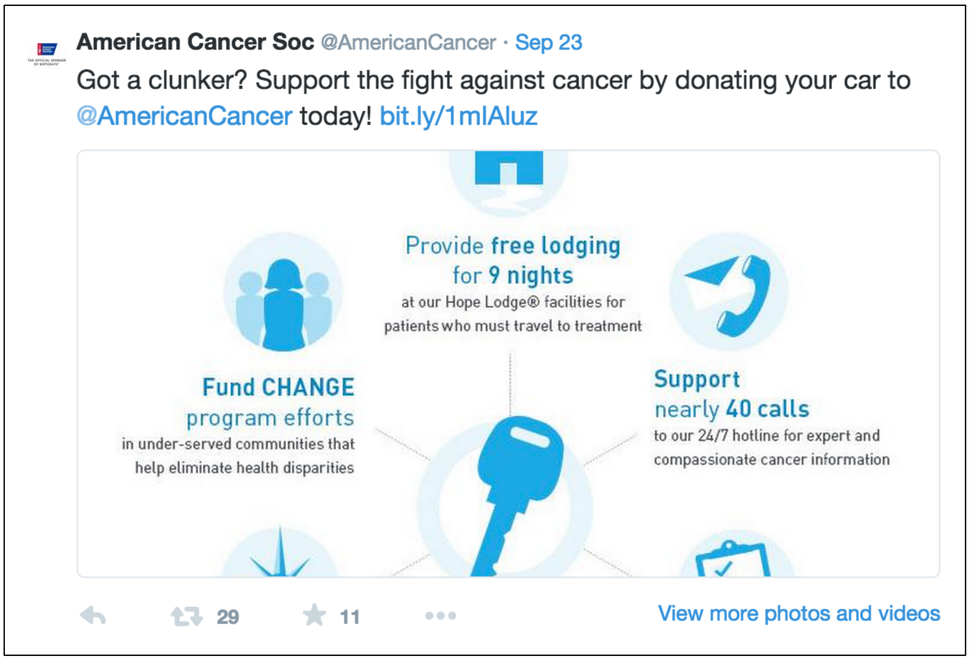

Figure 4-16. Example of a tweet with an infographic image.

Photographic images. *Photographic* images were found in 19 of the sampled tweets. These were characterized by the use of an image, which reflected the reality of what was being captured (see Figure 4-17). Some photographic images appear candid while others seem to be staged or from a set of stock photography, but all were created using a camera. None was drawn or painted with a physical or digital medium, such as a canvas or Adobe Illustrator. Of the six organizations, only DoSomething.org did not use a photographic image in any of its captured tweets.

Figure 4-17. Example of a tweet with a photographic image.

Graphic art. By far the least prevalent of the main image types, *graphic art* appeared only twice in the sample. These images both appeared to have been created using a computer, without the inclusion of text that shared additional information (such as to note a marked difference between graphic art and infographic art). See Figure 4-18 for one of the two examples.

Figure 4-18. Example of a tweet with graphic art.

Organizational logos. Within some images, the organizational logo (or a component of it, such as an organizational symbol) was present. This occurred 11 times throughout the sample of tweets. Such an inclusion can be seen as placing an additional brand-specific image before the audience, which could help increase identification of the brand itself. Sometimes, as in Figure 4-19, the logo is native to the image presented. Other times, it is non-natively placed into the image (for example, along the bottom, as shown in Figure 4-20). DoSomething.org was the only account that was not observed to have a logo placed in any of its images.

Figure 4-19. Example of a tweet with a logo native to the image.

Figure 4-20. Example of a tweet with a logo with non-native placement in the image.

Embedded link summaries. For a variety of web sites, Twitter allows the embedding of link summaries into the tweet. This does not take away from the 140-character limit of the tweet itself, but allows an image preview for the hyperlink used to display below the text of the tweet. These types of images made up the bulk of images coded in the sample, with 40 of the 72 images coded (or 55.6%). Such embedding does not occur with every hyperlink, seeming often to be connected to news outlets (see Figure 4-21) and other social media platforms (see Figure 4-22). There are a variety of sites for which Twitter allows embedding of link summaries, but there are also many for which it does not. A listing of embeddable sites found in this sample can be found in Table 4-5.

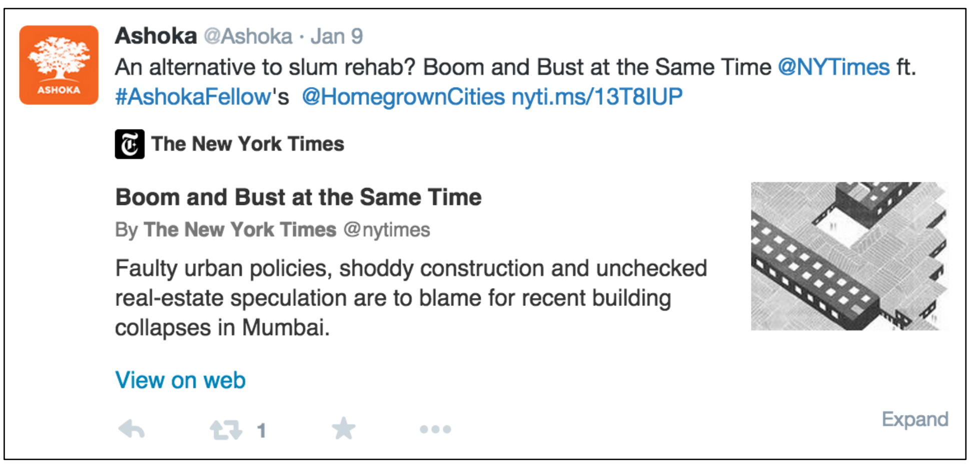

Figure 4-21. Example of a tweet with embedded link summary for a news outlet.

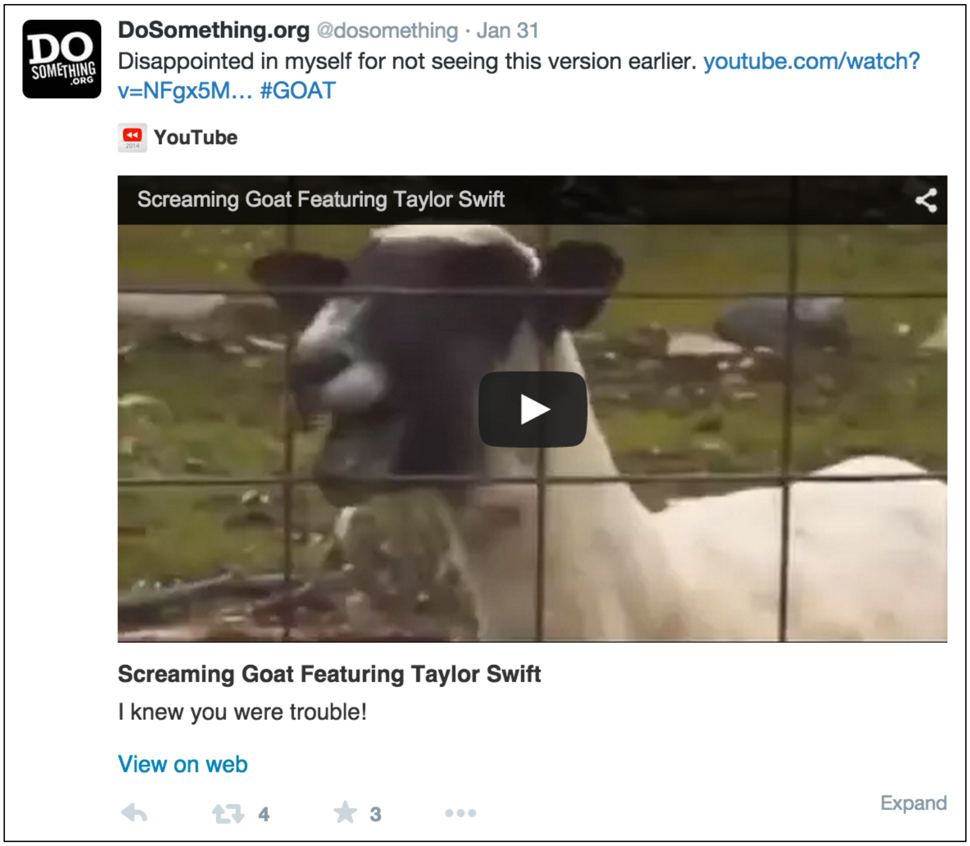

Figure 4-22. Example of a tweet with embedded link summary for another social media platform.

Table 4-5

Original Web Sites for Embedded Link Summaries Found in Study Sample

News Sources	Web & Social Media	Other
ESPN	Buzzfeed	allAfrica.com
Forbes	Eventbrite	BlogTalkRadio
Huffington Post	Pinterest	Co.Exist
NYT.com	Storify	I Had Cancer
SportingNews	WooBox	#itouchmyself Project
Washington Post	YouTube	Livestrong
WSJ.com	Vine	SkollWorldForum
		TechCrunch

Grammatical components. Each tweet was examined for grammatical components such as the use of first person, collective first person, active verbs, and the recurring presence of specific words. Many of these will be discussed further in Section 3: Axial relationships.

Use of first person. In 58 tweets, the account used the singular form of the first person as part of the tweet. This usage – indicated primarily by “me”, “my”, and “I” (see Figure 4-23) – suggests that a specific person within the organization is responsible for that particular tweet (rather than the organization as a whole).

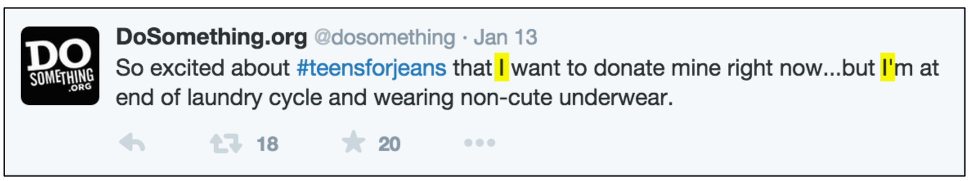

Figure 4-23. Example of a tweet using the first person in its singular form.

Use of collective first person. In 87 incidences, tweets made use of the collective form of the first person. These tweets were identified through the location of words such as, “we”, “us”, and “our” (as seen in Figure 4-24). While the singular form indicates an individual within the organization putting forth a tweet, the collective form communicates a unity of those in the organization in the same process.

Figure 4-24. Example of a tweet using the first person in its collective form.

Active verbs. During coding, it was noted that many tweets included active or imperative verb forms – verbs that ask the audience to do something without the presence of a question. Calls to vote, donate, volunteer, visit web pages, RSVP, and many others fall into this category. Some of these instances include Twitter-specific language such as a request to "follow" a specific account or to "RT" a given tweet. These verb forms were found in 133 tweets (or 32.7%).

Use of "via". Both Ashoka and Livestrong made use of the word "via". As these limited incidences were observed largely in tandem with conceptual categories, they will be discussed further in Section 3: Axial relationships.

Section 2: Conceptual categories

In addition to those categories easily discernible at a quick glance, there were also categories that emerged as a combination of factors or as needing more interpretation due to their latent nature. These variables are explored in the following pages.

Stakeholders and engagement. A number of accounts had a marked characteristic of using tweets to engage with their followers about who they are as an organization. This appears to reflect an expectation that at least some of these followers will develop or cultivate a personal stake in the cause that the organization seeks to further. These 130 tweets (or 31.9% of the sample) acknowledged these stakeholders and their engagement through a variety of ways.

Gratitude. Accounts conveyed gratitude in 17 of the 130 stakeholder-oriented tweets. These tweets were characterized by the direct use of "thank you" or "thanks" (see

Figure 4-25), as well as more general expressions of appreciation, thankfulness, and awe at what the followers were able to accomplish or contribute (see Figure 4-26).

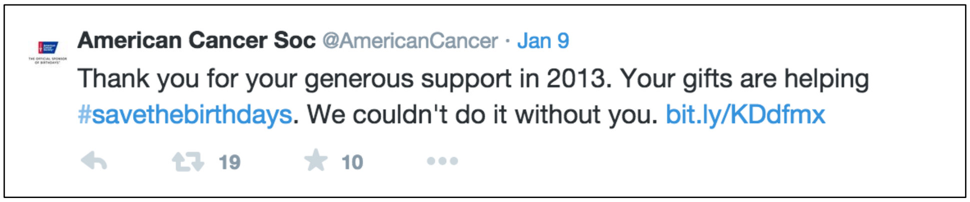

Figure 4-25. Example of a tweet expressing direct gratitude.

Figure 4-26. Example of a tweet expressing ambiguous gratitude.

Events and event promotion. Tweets that dealt with the details or promotion of a specific event or events had the intent of encouraging followers to engage with said event(s). Half of the tweets (65 of the 130) marked with stakeholders and engagement pertained to events and their promotion. Some of these events were online (such as chats or Q&A sessions), while others were physical events (such as conferences or film screenings). Often, these types of tweets contained hyperlinks, hashtags, or other handles for referencing additional information concerning the event(s). A large portion of these 65 tweets was the 40 nearly identical tweets that Ashoka published as a sort of individual invitation to a live chat event (see Figure 4-27).

Figure 4-27. Example of a tweet used by Ashoka as an individual invitation to a live chat event. The tweet also makes use of the hashtag and hyperlink functions.

Celebration. Two tweets engaged followers with finalists and victories for various prizes (see Figure 4-28). Instead of forming its own category, this category could be collapsed easily into *organizational information and announcements* (see below) for future research purposes.

Figure 4-28. Example of a celebratory tweet.

Self-promotion and future. Some tweets appeared to be constructed to promote the endeavors of the organization, creating general awareness about what the organization was doing at present and hoping to accomplish in the future. This category was marked 15 times in the sample. Such tweets possessed a dominant air of "Look what great things we're doing!" (see Figure 4-29).

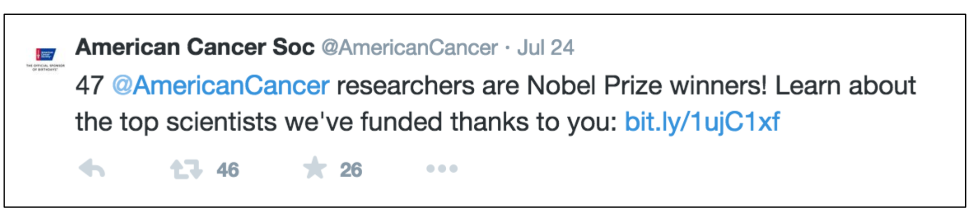

Figure 4-29. Example of a self-promoting tweet.

Employment and opportunity for direct participation. Occasionally, opportunities for employment were mentioned in tweets. Two of these were specifically related to DoSomething.org's internship program (see Figure 4-30) and one was in regard to a grant program offered through Ashoka. These tweets invited followers to invest a very personal stake in what the organization supports by joining as part of their actual workforce.

Figure 4-30. Example of an employment-related tweet.

Partnership mentions or shout-outs. Several tweets (26) make mention of other accounts and/or prop up volunteers in their efforts. In the case of mentioning other accounts, it comes across as somewhat of a partnership between the organizational account and that of the other account(s) mentioned. As is the case in Figure 4-31, sometimes explicit partnership-oriented words such as "join" were useful in determining this subtype of the *stakeholders and engagement* category.

Figure 4-31. Example of a tweet that indicates a partnership with another account.

Primary content types. Each tweet seemed to fit into (with a few exceptions) a single categorical or topical area, which was marked on each individual tweet. These *primary content types* (referred to as *PCTs*) evolved into a complex list of categories which was collapsed into 13 large PCTs, a few requiring sub-categorization. The PCTs attributed to each tweet were examined in light of both language and other conceptual categories to form the basis of much of Section 3: Axial relationships. These categories can be seen at a glance in Table 4-6 and are discussed at length in the following pages.

Table 4-6

Primary Content Types

Type	Incidence
Organizational information and announcements	16
Statistics, facts, and trivia	15
Jokes and humor	9
News	34
Personal stories	19
Resources	27
Inspiration	18
Tips	10
Calls to engagement	63
Other	21

Organizational information and announcements. Of the tweet population, 16 were labeled with a PCT of *organizational information and announcements*. Initially, these made up two separate categories in coding, but as only one tweet was coded specifically as a PCT of *organizational information*, that category was collapsed with *announcements*. All tweets in this category were characterized by a primary function of sharing information about the organization or about a piece of mission-oriented information found within the account profile examined at the beginning of sampling (see Figure 4-32 for an example).

Figure 4-32. Example of a tweet with a PCT of *organizational information and announcements.*

Statistics, facts, and trivia. Tweets that shared information with followers that was not specific to the organization itself, but with the assumed intent to educate followers about a topic tied to the organization were given a PCT of *statistics, facts, and trivia*. This group of 15 tweets (3.7% of the total sample) sometimes contains images (as seen in Figure 4-33), hyperlinks, or other means of extensibility – but their primary purpose appears to be in order to share some small piece of information.

Figure 4-33. Example of a tweet with a PCT of *statistics, facts, and trivia.*

Jokes and humor. While examining DoSomething.org's tweets, the coder quickly recognized a PCT unique to the organization that did not occur elsewhere in the sample: The tweet composers specifically sought to be funny. This was only found in 9 of DoSomething.org's tweets and nowhere else in the sample. Such tweets were understood by the coder to be an attempt by the account to make its followers laugh. Many of these tweets were of a personal nature (using the first person) and referenced well-known items and people (see Figure 4-34 for an example).

Figure 4-34. Example of a tweet with a PCT of *jokes and humor.*

News. Of those PCTs not broken down into subtypes, one of the more common was tweets with *news*. These tweets accounted for 8.4% (or 34) of the captured sample and were found in four of the six accounts studied. Some of these tweets were rooted in organizational news while others were simple references to external news sources (see Section 3: Embedded news summaries and hyperlinks for related content). The primary characteristic of these tweets is that there was some intent to share news with the account's followers, but they also often contained recognizable news source websites and/or handles (see Figure 4-35 for an example).

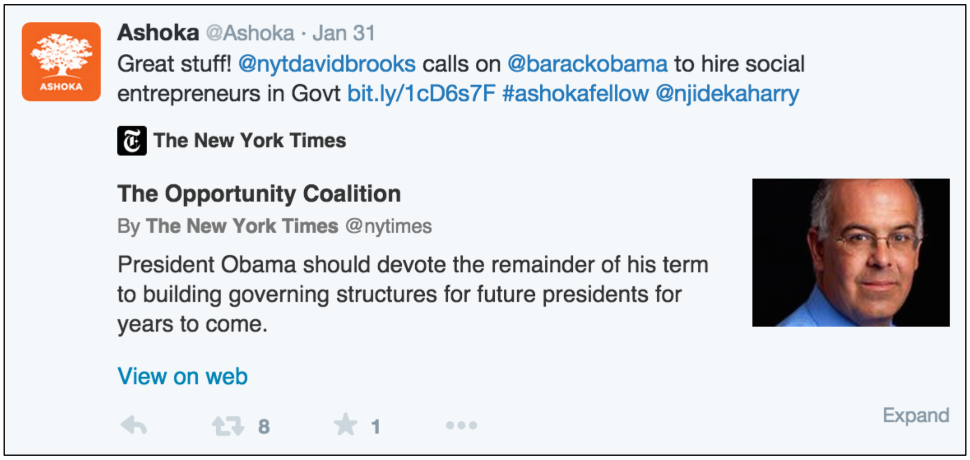

Figure 4-35. Example of a tweet with a PCT of *news.*

Personal stories. All six organizations had at least one tweet marked with a PCT of *personal stories*, resulting in a total of 19 incidents (or 4.7% of the total sample). These tweets often include a condensed version of the story being presented and then some sort of hyperlink for the follower to access the rest (see Figure 4-36). They often mention names of individuals or places where work is being done in line with some aspect of the organization's mission, as examined in the account profiles during the early stages of sampling.

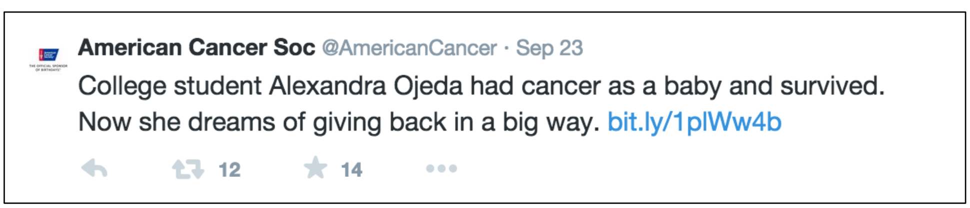

Figure 4-36. Example of a tweet with a PCT of *personal stories.*

Resources. Of the sampled tweets, 27 (or 6.6%) appeared to have the primary function of providing the follower with *resources.* These tweets were characterized by an account referencing information of benefit to those engaged in its cause and the inclusion of a hyperlink to that information. These typically fell into two subtypes: Research and blogs, as discussed below.

Research. This subtype reads similarly to *statistics, facts, and trivia*, but tends to be less specific about the details – pointing to the full findings of a research study or report housed elsewhere online instead of providing the details (see Figure 4-37).

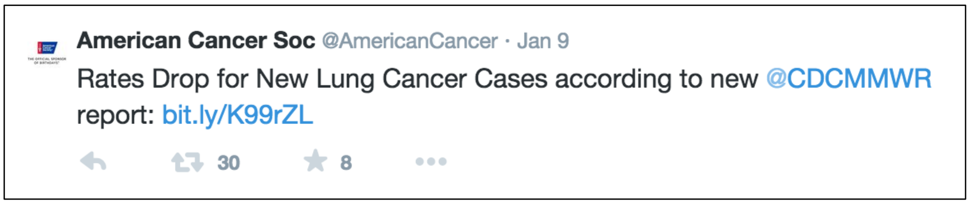

Figure 4-37. Example of a tweet with a PCT of *resources (research).*

Blogs. These resources usually have "blog" somewhere in the text of their tweets, whether up front (as in Figure 4-39), in the flow of the sentence, or as part of the hyperlink. Similar to *personal stories*, this resource subtype is distinguished by a more generalized (and less individual) approach to subject matter.

Figure 4-39. Example of a tweet with a PCT of *resources (blogs).*

Inspiration. Some tweets appeared to have very little purpose other than to inspire or encourage followers, regardless of how the content of the tweet did or did not relate to the mission of the organization. These 18 tweets often included quotations of famous people or inspirational messages concerning breaking news (see Figure 4-39).

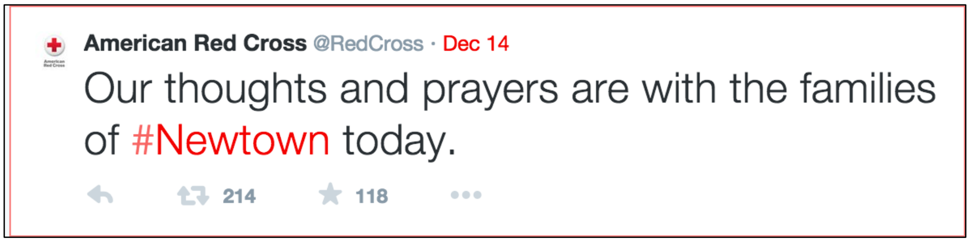

Figure 4-39. Example of a tweet with a PCT of *inspiration*.

Tips. This category's name evolved throughout coding, eventually collapsing together the concepts of encouraging well-being and providing advice – named "tips" after encountering the word in a tweet from the American Red Cross (see Figure 4-40). These 10 tweets often have the feeling of, "I'm going to tell you how to do this" and make use of an outside hyperlink to share additional information.

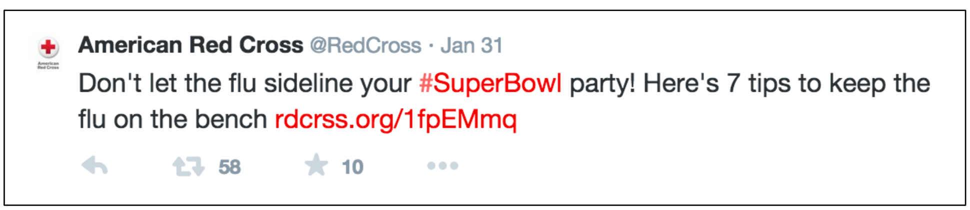

Figure 4-40. Example of a tweet with a PCT of *tips.*

Calls to engagement. When a tweet contained a direct request or command, it was labeled as a *call to engagement*, with a subtype attached. Some of these subtypes are related specifically to Twitter and its functionality as a platform, while others represent a request to engage with what the organization is involved. While unintended, there is considerable overlap between this PCT and the *stakeholders and engagement* category discussed previously; however, these tweets were broken down specifically by the type of request made. The two categories need not be exclusive in future coding endeavors. A variety of subtypes are discussed in the following pages.

Retweet. Four tweets included a "RT" in the main body of the tweet that appeared to indicate a desire for followers to retweet the content. Sometimes, as in Figure 4-41, the placement of "RT" at the beginning of the tweet creates some confusion with copied retweets (discussed above). What particularly distinguishes this example from a copied retweet is the following of the "RT" with an "if" – the text reading as a complete thought, as opposed to how a statement entirely separate from the "RT" of a copied retweet would read.

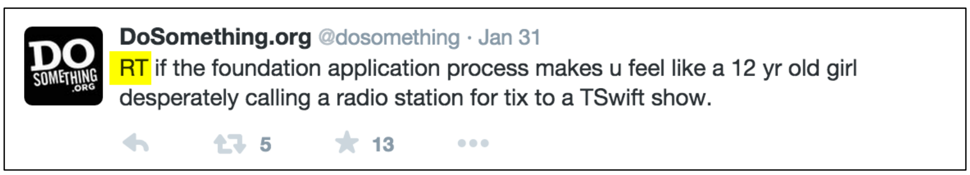

Figure 4-41. Example of a tweet with a PCT of *calls to engagement (retweet)*.

Respond to tweet. Similar to the above *retweet*, five tweets requested responses to their content. It is assumed that the follower would respond using the *reply arrow* button. These requests come in the form of questions asked or assistance sought (see Figure 4-42).

Figure 4-42. Example of a tweet with a PCT of *calls to engagement (respond to tweet)*.

Recommendation. Of the sample, 20 tweets made recommendations. Three of these were tweets that recommended additional accounts to follow or with which to engage (see Figure 4-43). This makes use of a specific function of Twitter, in that the follower can click the account's handle and choose whether or not to add that account to his or her personalized timeline. The remaining 17 tweets recommended a variety of items, from a recipe for pancakes (see Figure 4-44) to the crisis management-oriented tweets which recommend a follower to connect with those who might be able to assist.

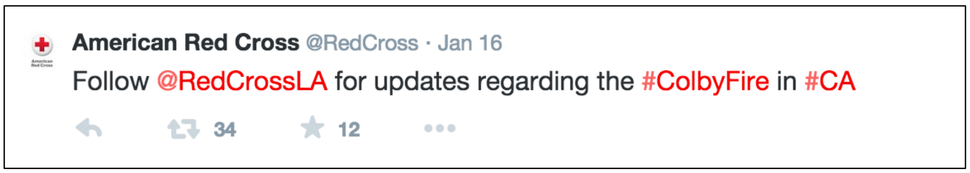

Figure 4-43. Example of a tweet with a PCT of *calls to engagement (recommendation)*.

Figure 4-44. Example of a tweet with a PCT of *calls to engagement (recommendation)*.

Contests. A small portion of tweets (10 of the total sample) pertained to some form of contest or competition. These tweets were labeled for their use of words like "win", "competition", and "enter by (date)" and generally conveyed the opportunity to submit something in exchange for either recognition or a prize (see Figure 4-45). Ashoka often retweeted other accounts' contest announcements within its timeline.

Figure 4-45. Example of a tweet with a PCT of *calls to engagement (contests).*

Donations and fundraising. Only nine tweets dealt explicitly with raising goods or money for the organization through donations or fundraising tactics. These tweets encouraged an account's followers to put their money or extra items toward worthwhile causes. The American Cancer Society's encouraged its followers to donate their used cars, with the proceeds going toward its programs. DoSomething.org's spurred its followers to engage with its Teens for Jeans campaign, where teenagers donate jeans for homeless teenagers in their communities (see Figure 4-46). Unfortunately, the effectiveness of such calls to engage with donation and fundraising efforts cannot be measured by merely looking at the tweets themselves.

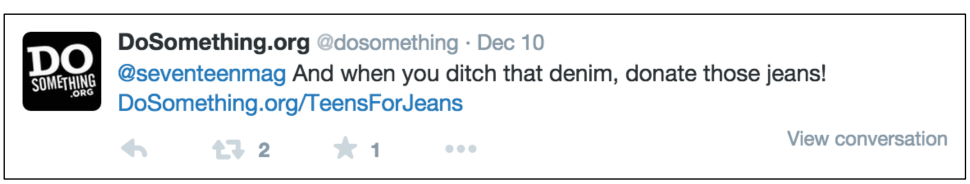

Figure 4-46. Example of a tweet with a PCT of *calls to engagement (donations and fundraising).*

Tie-in applications and platforms. Some organizations use the Twitter platform to promote other products, specifically applications that have been developed for an organization itself. The American Red Cross was responsible for five of the six tweets coded in this way, with Livestrong producing the sixth. These often include the words "app" or "application", some sort of brief descriptor of the application itself, and a hyperlink to wherever the application or platform is located (see Figure 4-47).

Figure 4-47. Example of a tweet with a PCT of *calls to engagement (tie-in applications and platforms).*

Voting in online polls. Three separate organizational accounts had tweets with invitations to vote in online polls. These tweets are characterized by the use of a request for the follower to go and vote online for something related to the organization (see Figure 4-48). These tweets were especially rare, occurring only three times in the entirety of the sample.

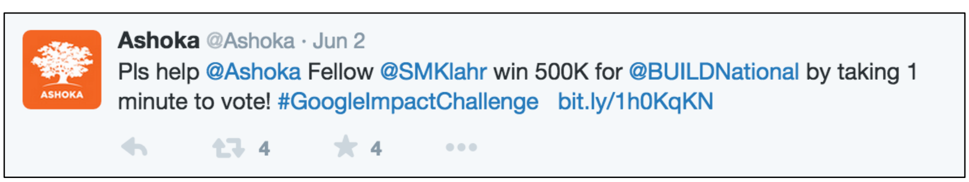

Figure 4-48. Example of a tweet with a PCT of *calls to engagement (voting in online polls).*

RSVP. One tweet expressly requested an RSVP for an organizational event. This tweet should have been coded as a tweet with a PCT of *events and event promotion.*

Miscellaneous. Additionally, a few other items were coded and observed. These items are examined in the following pages.

Retweet chains. Occasionally, a chain of multiple related tweets will be retweeted from other accounts. This is often in connection with a live event, such as Q&A or chat and is discussed further in Section 3: Axial relationships.

Use of capital letters. Out of the sample, 36 tweets (or 8.8%) used capital letters outside of the traditional sentence case. In many cases, it appears that the strings of capital letters and words were used in order to create emphasis on certain parts within the main body of the tweet – much in the way that making words italic or bold would create emphasis, if they were available through the Twitter platform (see Figure 4-49).

Figure 4-49. Example of a tweet with non-sentence-case capital letters.

Errors in platform language usage. Four of the six organizational accounts captured appeared to have at least one error that had not been removed from the timeline. In a few cases, attempts were made to publish a later tweet without error. In other cases, errors were found with regard to the Twitter components themselves: a hashtag cut off by the character limit, a failure to include a space before a handle or hashtag (so as to make it an interactive component), or the inclusion of an "@" symbol in its traditional use as a means of conveying time or location instead of as a mention of another user account (see Figure 4-50).

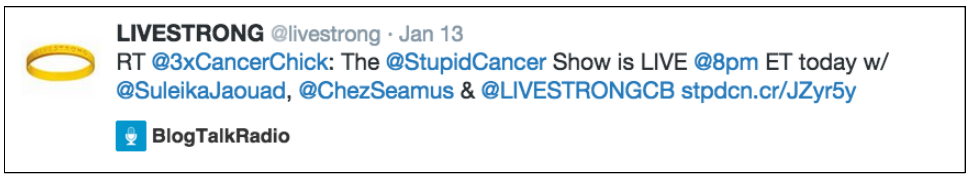

Figure 4-50. Example of a tweet with an error in platform language usage.

Inappropriateness. DoSomething.org, an organization that targets teenagers, had three tweets captured that demonstrated a level of inappropriateness. The coder defined inappropriate as something that would not appear on a popular magazine cover for the target demographic. In the case of DoSomething.org, it appears that the tweets' composer(s) does not remember who the organization's audience was. Two tweets include the word, "shit" (see Figure 4-51), and one invites other account handles to stop by the office "for a beer" – neither of these would be found on the cover of a teenage-aimed publication.

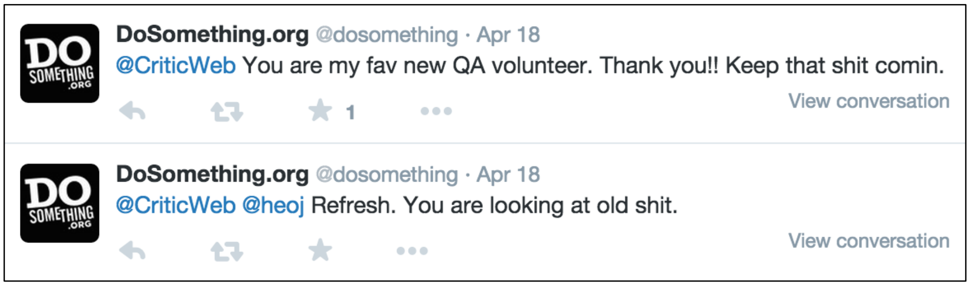

Figure 4-51. Examples of inappropriate tweets.

Section 3: Axial relationships

Primary content type relationships. As mentioned in Section 2: Conceptual categories, every tweet was coded for language and conceptual categories. These coded pieces were compared with the primary content type (PCT) coding to find relationships that might exist between the various categorical components. The primary findings of this comparison of the data are detailed in the following pages.

High retweet incidence. For each organization, the 3–5 tweets with the highest number of retweets were marked and considered in terms of their PCTs. Some interesting patterns emerged, as each account's most retweeted content was often found in the same PCTs. This sub-sample only included retweets of tweets native to the account's TL, particularly excluding the retweet numbers of embedded retweets.

The types of information users are most willing to pass along to other users by placing them into their own timelines varies. Some items are common to the majority of accounts studied, while others seem to be more specific to the individual organizations. The American Cancer Society most often had tweets retweeted that were marked with a PCT of *statistics, facts, and trivia.* The American Red Cross was most often retweeted when their account shared tweets with *tips* or *calls to engagement*. For the remaining four accounts, *inspirational* tweets were among the most retweeted, but only Camfed and Livestrong fell solely into this pattern. In addition to tweets of an inspirational nature, Ashoka's most retweeted PCTs included *news*, *calls to engagement (contests, nominations)*, and *resources*. DoSomething.org also had the highest retweet rate for any tweet in the sample with a *call to engagement (donations and fundraising)* – with more than 9100 retweets on the tweet shown in Figure 4-52.

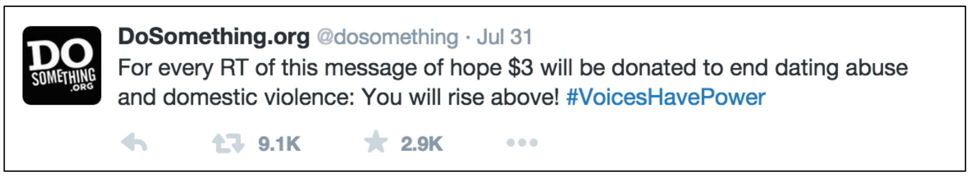

Figure 4-52. DoSomething's most retweeted tweet from sample.

No single PCT appears to have a monopoly on being retweeted the most, which could lend support to the following indications:

- that the most retweeted content is dependent upon the target audience of the account and its own user-based reasoning for following and/or engaging with that account;
- that the most retweeted content is dependent upon the type of content (PCT) and its compliance with the organization's mission and/or values;
- that the most retweeted content is simply an indicator of the target audience;
- that the most retweeted content is simply an indicator that the content was crafted in a way that resonated with the account's followers more than that of other tweets.

Embedded retweets and presence of account handles. In 23 of 58 embedded retweets on account timelines, the organizational account's handle was present within the retweet. This could support the following indications:

- that the account is striving for transparency by directly retweeting content that mentions them from other accounts;
- that the account is actively monitoring all usage of its handle on Twitter;
- that the account utilizes Twitter as a means of self-promotion, even if the original content is not from the organizational account itself.

This examination generated a number of questions concerning the nature of retweets and their use by organizational accounts, including:

- Is this practice similar to a direct quotation, where it should be considered separate from the voice of the organization retweeting the content?
- Does it emphasize good standing with others, who would consider the organization worthy enough to reference it in their own account's tweets?
- Could it reflect common partnerships, such as the handle/hashtag relationship discussed later in this section?
- What does this practice convey about any tweets containing the organizational account handle that are *not* retweeted by the organizational account?

Direct replies and primary content types. Many direct replies were characterized by a sense of conversation between the two accounts. These conversational direct replies were found to fall into a few common PCTs: *stakeholder (gratitude, partnership mentions or shout-outs)*, *calls to engagement*, and *jokes and humor*.

Gratitude and the first person. Within the 17 tweets marked with a conceptual category of *gratitude*, six tweets also used the first person in its collective form and two tweets used the first person in its singular form. The sense of gratitude came across more keenly in these instances, conveying a personal nature to the collective expression of thanks.

Calls to engagement and extensibility. Often, tweets marked with a PCT of *calls to engagement* were observed to be coupled with hyperlinks. This functioned as a way to extend the call to action outside of the platform itself and was labeled *extra-platform extension (EPE)* when coding. This allows any curious followers to obtain more information about something without invading the other followers' timelines with more information than they would like to engage. The most common usages of this are with infographic images, donation requests, and event information.

Twitter tie-ins. Accounts sometimes took advantage of the Twitter platform's extensibility and language, pairing a call to engagement with another piece of the platform. The appeared in the following ways:

- "follow" + @handle, indicating that a user should follow an additional account – an action that is specific to the Twitter platform itself, in the same way that one would "friend" someone on Facebook
- event information within Twitter, which may not include a true EPE but uses a hashtag, handle or both (see Figure 4-53 for an example) – this appears to indicate either (a) further engagement of the topic through the built-in indexing

nature of the hashtag, or (b) further engagement with an account that does not belong to the organization (or is a secondary account for the organization)

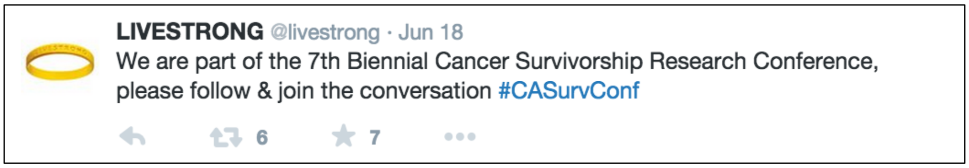

Figure 4-53. Example of a tweet using a hashtag as an EPE to convey event information.

Crisis management. Tweets coded under a PCT of *calls to engagement (recommendation)* that possessed elements of crisis management often provided a more direct means of contact than that which a hyperlink would provide. Often, this manifested itself in the inclusion of an SMS text code or the placement of a related handle in the body of the text (see Figure 4-54). In this, specifically, there appears to be a recognition that the Twitter platform does not contain all of reality and that, in certain cases, it is more practical to point followers to means outside of the platform. DoSomething.org, in particular, makes use of both SMS text messaging and other handles when addressing moments of crisis for their followers – followers who are primarily teenagers. This also recognizes the importance of having an actual person to talk to when it comes to sensitive topics and the need for greater space to discuss than the 140-character limit of Twitter allows.

Figure 4-54. Example of a tweet presenting a direct means of contact.

Stories and hyperlinks. Often, tweets marked with a PCT of *stories* are paired with some type of included hyperlink. The most common hyperlink types are to videos, blog entries, and news articles. This overlaps considerably with other hyperlink-based relationships, but the common tie is worth noting separately: 18 of 19 tweets labeled *story* included some form of hyperlink. It suggests that storytelling is not entirely effective in 140 characters.

Resources and hyperlinks. Every tweet of the 27 marked with a PCT of *resources* also contained a hyperlink within the body of the tweet. This is similar to the EPE noted above, but is characterized as having content not related to a call, action, and/or event. Even if it not explicitly mentioned or referred to as a "resource" within the tweet, there is a common practice of providing followers with resources through the inclusion of hyperlinks. These hyperlinks play to the "pull" nature of Web 2.0 (the dialogic, social web), one of many examples of how hyperlinks are one of the most commonly used pieces of the Twitter language.

Embedded link summaries and news. Of the 34 tweets labeled with a PCT of *news*, 22 contained embedded link summaries. These previews of linked content are embedded within the tweets and do not count toward the character limit. The question naturally arises as to why some of these original sites are supported with embedded link summaries while others are not. There seems to be little pattern to how the hyperlinks are constructed and several of them are assumed to be for obscure sites. This could provide support for the following:

- that there is a process within Twitter for websites to apply for this ability;

- that Twitter allows for embedded summaries when its own interface is used to craft and publish tweets;
- that there are certain third-party Twitter applications (such as HootSuite or TweetDeck) that allow for embedded summaries when their interfaces are used to craft and publish tweets (when, perhaps, Twitter itself may not);
- that there was a certain date when embedded summaries were made available as an option and any tweets published prior to that point simply did not have them.

Events and retweet chains. Tweets marked with a PCT of *stakeholders and engagement (events and event promotions)* sometimes belonged to retweet chains. Often, as seen in Figure 4-55, these tweets will all have the same hashtag and are easily discerned as being related. In particular, with events, it suggests the borrowing of another account's content insofar as it ties with the desired content for tweets put forth by the account doing the retweeting. Due to the quick, subsequent nature of such an event, it can easily take over the account's timeline – and, unless they are interested in the topic being covered by the retweet chain, cause the account to lose the attention of its followers.

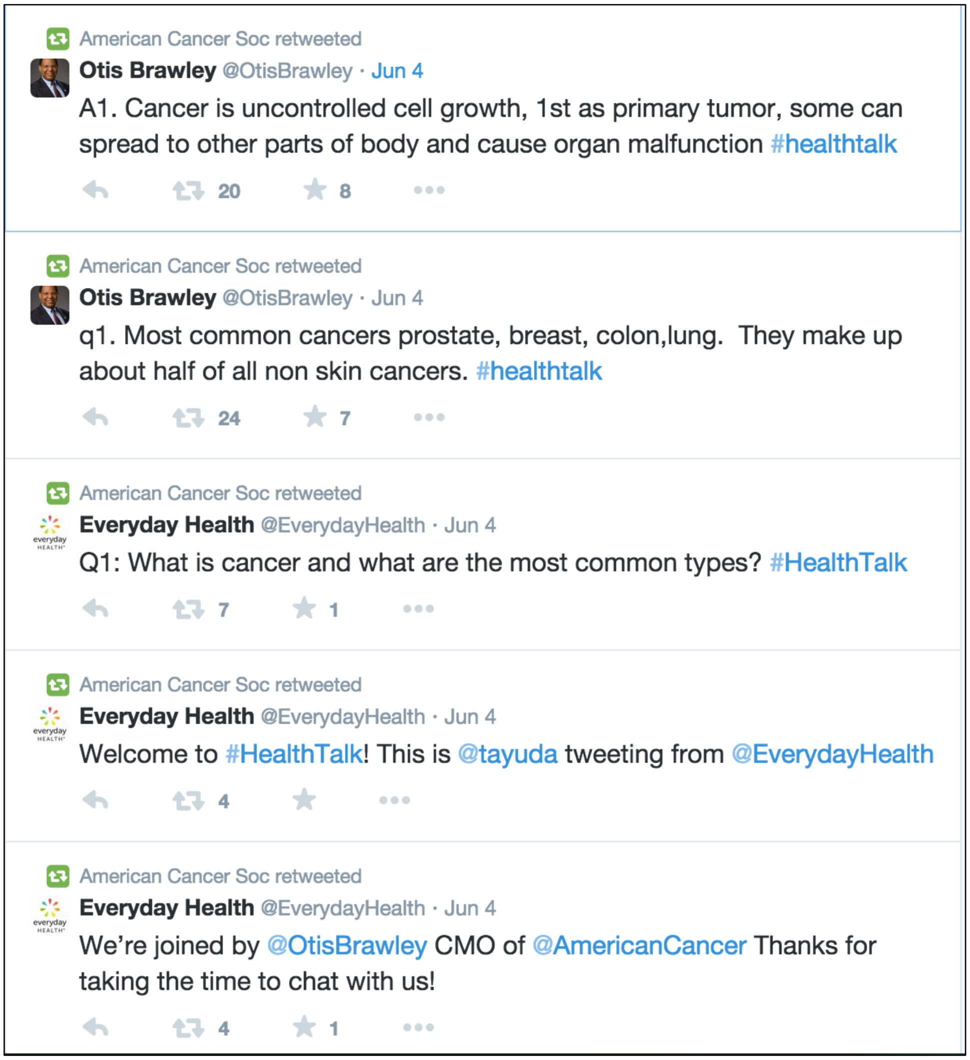

Figure 4-55. Example of a retweet chain based on #healthtalk Q&A event.

News and use of "via". The word "via" is often used in conjunction with a handle to introduce news content in tweets with a PCT of *news*. This usage indicates a level of transparency in attempting to credit the original source of what is being passed along. It is not, however, used in all cases where a PCT is *news* – especially as it is only found in tweets from two of the captured accounts. Even Livestrong, who made use of the via + handle construction the most, was inconsistent in its usage, which suggests that it is not necessarily even an organization-specific standard.

Other relationships. Additional axial relationships between categories were found for categories outside of a tweet's PCT. These relationships are explored below.

Handles and hashtags. Occasionally, multiple tweets contained the same or similar hashtag/handle combinations. These were marked as a unique relationship. For instances where the same hashtag was used in tandem with the same handle(s), it appeared to indicate one or more of the following:

- a partnership with another organization or individual;
- a repetition for the sake of promoting an event;
- a repetition for the sake of promoting a sub-campaign (for a variety of purposes, but rooted in the ability of the hashtag to index or compile tweets);
- a repetition for the sake of monitoring the conversations that occur within Twitter concerning an event or sub-campaign.

At times, the same hashtag is used in conjunction with multiple handles. Livestrong makes a common practice of using the hashtag #livestrong when replying directly to other accounts. This comes across as somewhat of a secret handshake for members of the cancer "family". Ashoka tweeted the same message (hashtags and hyperlink) to multiple handles on April 18, 2014, which functioned as a personal invitation to the organization's live chat event. A different approach than this study has taken would be necessary to determine whether this approach resulted in greater follower participation or if a mass email might have proven more effective.

Some accounts appear to maintain a different approach to hashtags altogether, using the same handle with different hashtags. Ashoka, for instance, used a variety of empathy-oriented hashtags in tandem with the @RootsofEmpathy and @StartEmpathy handles (which appear to be purposed for an organizational sub-campaign). The hashtags used with these handles are inconsistent and scattered. This could suggest a desire to input the organization's message regarding empathy into a variety of hashtag indexes or could also suggest that the hashtag is used as more than an indexing agent. If it is more than an indexing agent, it is possible that the inclusion of hashtags without an intent to index could in fact disrupt the indexing function for other user accounts who make use of them for that purpose. Camfed, too, provides a unique case. In the tweets studied, the account rarely uses the same hashtag twice. This could be a means of contributing to several conversations without necessarily generating the conversation themselves or it could indicate a lack of strategy to make the most out of the hashtag's indexing function.

Infographic images and the presence of organizational logos. Three of the six organizational accounts studied included the presence of an organizational logo in at least one of their infographic images. This could indicate an additional attempt for an account to have its followers identify a tweet's content with the organization itself and not just the Twitter account, building brand identity and engagement.

Limited interactivity. Certain PCTs lend themselves to limited or no interactive elements within their tweets. Often, this includes no handles, no hyperlinks, and no hashtags – but it can also include the presence of a solitary hashtag or, in the case of a direct reply, only a handle.

Same or similar tweet in timeline. Occasionally, a tweet's content was found to have been repeated in another tweet. This appears to serve a variety of purposes. Sometimes, it was a matter of whether a period was placed before the "@" symbol or not, which resulted in one tweet with and one without – assumed to indicate the account's desire for the tweet to the other account to display in the account's main timeline rather than under "Tweets & replies". Ashoka used the same tweet content as individual event invitations in several direct replies to other accounts, as discussed previously. Camfed's tweet similarities seem to be related to errors, the tweets presenting themselves with different hyperlinks or a slightly shortened version of an earlier tweet that exceeded its character limit. On Camfed's timeline, none of the original tweets appearing to contain errors was deleted. This seemed odd to the coder, as Camfed uses a third-party Twitter planning utility to compose tweets (HootSuite, as deduced from the *ow.ly* shortened hyperlinks) and begs the question of why the original tweets would have run out of space or included too lengthy of a hyperlink when third-party Twitter planning utilities (and Twitter itself) display the characters remaining and are often used by organizations to pre-plan tweets for later publication.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Through careful capture and coding of Twitter data using the constant comparative method, this study set out to contribute to a small but growing body of research on this form of social media by providing a more defined knowledge of the platform itself. The examination of nonprofit organizational accounts starts the process of building an understanding of Twitter's own linguistic pieces, as well as how they work together to form patterns and reveal the practices of the organizations that use them. It is hoped that a greater familiarity with the platform will generate additional discussion about how nonprofit organizations are making use of social media as the Web continues to evolve.

This chapter is broken down into four sections: 1) a discussion of the four research questions presented in Chapter 2; 2) the practical implications of what was observed in the sample; 3) limitations of the study; and 4) recommendations and ideas for future research.

Research Questions

Engaging and building relationships with stakeholders. As presented in Chapter 2, the first research question reads:

> Based on this study's examination of six nonprofit organizations, what can be understood about how these organizations attempt to make use of Twitter in order to engage and build relationships with stakeholders?

Chapter 4 presents many types of stakeholder engagement that were uncovered in the sample of tweets captured for this study. These categories unveiled a decided focus on engaging followers with the organization and what it is doing. Utilizing Aragón and Domingo (2014) as a framework, findings can be broken down into four areas: 1) the ability to respond directly and flexibly with the platform; 2) the addition of value by managing the organization-stakeholder relationship through the platform; 3) the improvement of organizational "knowledge" concerning its stakeholders; 4) the engaging of the stakeholder with the organization's "range of goods/services" (p. 560).

Organizational response. A number of stakeholder- and engagement-based categories leant themselves to a direct response using the platform. This study found Twitter used as a means of expressing gratitude for stakeholder support and participation, both financial and otherwise. Several of the platform's *calls to engagement* could provide unique options for enabling organizational response. As long as a request for followers to "respond" to a tweet is monitored by the organization and followed up with (as necessary), the opportunity arises to have live or timely discussions – prime occasions to respond in a direct and flexible way that could aid in engaging stakeholders in an effective and long-lasting manner.

Relational value. The ability to measure relational value is somewhat limited, but it can be indicated by a few categorical ideas. The use of the *reply arrow* button, which results in a direct response to a tweet or can simply be used to start a conversation with another account, can be a particularly interesting way to add relational value to the platform. An organization that makes ready use of this function could possibly put forward the image that it cares about the relationships it maintains with individual stakeholders and discernible partners. It indicates to its followers that the organization does not simply function on its own, but that it recognizes the role each stakeholder plays in spreading information, raising money, and supporting the organization through its partnerships. Whether the practice of using the same tweet with a different (personalized) handle will, in the long run, produce a greater sense of relationship with an organization has yet to be seen – it might make followers feel less connected to the organization.

Organizational knowledge of stakeholders. While not studied in this sample, the option for followers to respond to individual tweets is part of the Twitter framework and could provide a wealth of information about an organization's social media stakeholders. This, however, would require an organization to have an individual (or individuals) dedicated to monitoring such conversations as they emerge in response to the organizational account's tweets.

Stakeholder engagement. There are many stakeholder- and engagement-based categories that enhance stakeholder engagement with the organization. The ability of Twitter to extend beyond itself in order to promote and provide further information for events is one such example. Additionally, it allows the accounts an opportunity for self-promotion in a way that doesn't fully invade their followers' online spaces. Instead, the individual user can choose whether he or she would like to investigate further by clicking an included hyperlink, empowering the stakeholder to choose what pieces of an organization with which to engage. This specifically can be seen in the common incorporation of engagement requests for contests, donations and fundraising, the promotion of tie-in applications and platforms, and calls to vote in online polls.

Social media policies and guidelines. As the sample was evaluated, there emerged some clear patterns in both the individual organizational accounts and across them – the latter indicating more of a "best practices" approach among those composing and posting to these accounts (Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012, p. 288). This fits well in evaluating the second research question put forth at the beginning of this study:

> Based on this study's examination of six nonprofit organizations, what patterns can be discerned from the tweets of these organizations that might indicate the presence or absence of a social media policy or guidelines?

Organizational patterns. Two of the main areas where one can observe organizational differences in their use of Twitter are through their usage of language categories and through their most common primary content types. For instance, each organization retweets differently. While each organization retweeted at least one tweet from another account, accounts either did so by embedding the retweet in their own timelines or they copied the text into their own tweet – but none of the organizations studied retweeted in both ways. Similarly, how many times an account tweeted varied quite largely. Some organizations, such as DoSomething.org and Ashoka, produced larger numbers of tweets for the constructed two weeks captured for this study – while others, such as the American Red Cross, published an average of 1.5 tweets each day.

With regard to primary content types, all six organizational accounts studied published at least one tweet with a PCT of *personal stories* and *statistics, facts, and trivia,* whereas only DoSomething.org seemed to place priority upon incorporating tweets with a PCT of *jokes and humor* into a variety of its tweets. Additionally, only the

American Red Cross did not contain any tweets with a PCT of *resources* and the American Cancer Society was the only organization studied which did not produce a single tweet with a PCT of *inspiration.* Each organization, whether by including or excluding particular types of tweet content, appears to have set its own organizational guidelines for content – either intentionally or merely through organic development. This contradicts Macnamara and Zerfass in their opinion that there is a lack of guidelines for employees making use of social media (2012, pp. 297-299).

Unique policy decisions. In addition to patterns observed surrounding language and conceptual categories, a few tweets reflect distinctive policy decisions. Particularly, the inappropriate tweets on DoSomething.org's timeline and their continued presence (meaning they were not deleted between their date of publication and the date of capture) put forth the image that the organization is not overly concerned with such inappropriate content being associated with its account. This could simply be due to the fact that the organization's target audience is comprised of teenagers and the organization feels that audience will be unphased by the usage of the occasional bad word or invitation for a beer (or might even consider the organizational account all the cooler for having included such things).

Of the American Cancer Society's 53 tweets, nearly two-thirds were comprised of retweeted content – far surpassing the retweet percentages of every other organization studied. This could indicate any number of things concerning the American Cancer Society's policy concerning Twitter, but the most probable is that it values the passing along of information from other accounts more than it does the composition of its own tweets. As their main type of retweeted content is *events and event promotion*, it suggests that either the organization does little promotion for its own events or that it places value on promoting events outside of the organization.

In contrast to the previous section, such examples as discussed above concerning policy decisions do support the idea that organizations lack consistent social media policy for their employees (Macnamara and Zerfass, 2012, pp. 297-299).

"Hyper-publicity" and the over-promotion of organizational image. The understanding of how organizational image is presented through Twitter forms the basis for the third research question:

> Based on this study's examination of six nonprofit organizations, how do the Twitter accounts of these organizations reflect the notion of "hyper-publicity", or an over-promotion of organizational image?

While certain elements of organizational image remain static with each tweet (organizational name, handle, icon), there are two categories where organizational image promotion was observed to supersede this baseline in line with Faina (2012): the use of the organizational handle and presence of the organizational logo within the tweet.

Use of organizational handle within tweet. The most common presence of organizational handles is in retweeted content, where the account handle has been mentioned, but it is not the only place where an organization's own account handle finds a place within the main body of the tweet. This draws additional attention to the organization by referencing its handle when the handle or organizational name is already in place above the body of the tweet. In a limited space such as the character count for a tweet, every use of the organizational handle places the organization's name before its followers. This certainly increases name recognition, possibly encroaching into "hyper-publicity" territory with the unnecessary repetition of the organizational handle.

Presence of organizational logo within tweet. In a similar fashion to the use of an organizational handle within the tweet, the presence of an organizational logo within a tweet – particularly in an image – also increases organizational recognition among followers. Images could easily be used and attributed to the account on their own, but the addition of an organizational logo (either natively or non-natively) provides a reinforcement of the organizational identity. Ideally, the organizational account uses something including or related to its logo as its icon image – and, in this case, it creates a redundant presence that verges on over-promotion of the organizational image.

Trust and transparency. In the discussion of organizational communication, trust and transparency have long been key components. Where nonprofit organizations are concerned, this continues to be an important conversation – as they continue to wrestle with what it looks like to forgo control over their conversations by moving into social media spaces (Livingston, 2007; Morrissey, 2010). These ideas are stated in the fourth research question:

> Based on this study's examination of six nonprofit organizations, how can trust and transparency be measured through the Twitter accounts of these organizations?

While trust did not emerge as a category during coding, the concept of transparency can be traced through a number of categories.

One of these categories is through the relationship between embedded retweets and the presence of account handles. The combination of these two categories could indicate an organizational desire for transparency because it leads to the direct retweeting of content that mentions the organization from another account (without alteration). This promotes the idea that the organization remains in good standing with others, which is validated by the fact it comes from an outside source. It does, however, pose an interesting issue when taking into account that there is assumedly content produced by other accounts that use an organizational handle that does not end up being retweeted. This results in a questioning of just how much transparency this practice can display.

While a small component, another indicator of transparency is the use of "via" when attributing sources. This allows the account to credit sources clearly, integrating such information into its own tweets instead of by retweeting the content.

Although trust and transparency did not emerge organically through the coding process, it does not necessarily indicate that these elements are not present. A closer look at the trust and transparency literature might reveal specific ways in which the concepts present themselves in organizational materials.

Practical Implications

The amount of detail presented in the preceding pages provides a level of comprehension for how these nonprofit organizations are making use of Twitter, but it also enables the construction of a few recommendations for nonprofit organizations and their use of the platform. Five of these are discussed below.

Be strategic. An organizational account should prioritize what it wants from the Twitter platform. This assists the account in effectively engaging stakeholders with the organizational mission or purpose. The tweet composers and schedulers should determine a cadence for posting, whether they want to post once or multiple times a day, every day or only on weekdays. They should also be strategic about whether they want to focus on certain types of content, retweet the content of others, make use of hashtags for events and/or campaigns, or create extensible content specifically to tie into their tweets. This will grant the organization a good idea of how many resources (particularly man-hours) will be required to invest in the platform.

Be consistent. In addition to being strategic, organizational accounts should be consistent in how they present information in tweets. Retweets should be either embedded or copied, but not a mixture of the two. Hashtags should be utilized consistently in tweets that discuss events and/or campaigns (meaning, the same hashtag for a single event and/or campaign used in any tweet pertaining to that event and/or campaign). Always provide a hyperlink to sources in a consistent manner, preferably a shortened hyperlink that either provides or does not provide an embedded preview – making regular practice of one and not mixing the two will result in a consistent appearance for the organization's timeline. Incorporating rules for consistency regarding elements such as these will help create and standardize an organization's policy and guidelines for use of the Twitter platform.

Choose the priority audience. For some organizations, their online audiences of Twitter followers may not be the same as their usual offline audiences. Organizations making use of Twitter should decide who would comprise its priority audience and craft tweets for that audience. DoSomething.org caters specifically to teenagers, which helps the organization set unique policy decisions that value humor and a more informal approach than if it were addressing adults. In times of emergency, the American Red Cross adjusts its priority audience to be anyone who might need information about the affected areas; their non-emergency tweets speak to their more regular donors and volunteers. Each organizational account should set a priority audience, even if it requires more than one for different situations.

Use collective first person. It is recommended that organizational accounts make use of the collective first person, especially when attempting to engage stakeholders in what the organizations are doing (events, fundraising, etc.). This conveys a sense of personhood to an organization that can often be seen as distant or removed from its stakeholders, helping to make it more relatable. An expression of gratitude comes across more strongly when "we" are thankful, rather than when the third person is used to say the same thing. When organizational accounts use the collective first person, it could grant individual followers a sense that they belong to something – that they can be part of something purposeful with that organizational "we".

Delete tweets with errors. While a simple thing with little theoretical context, tweets that contain obvious errors in platform usage and/or interactive elements (hyperlinks, hashtags, etc.) should be corrected with a new tweet and then be deleted. The presence of such tweets in an account's timeline looks sloppy and unprofessional, especially when the assumption is that those constructing tweets are doing so using third-party Twitter scheduling applications such as Hootsuite or TweetDeck.

Limitations

The exploratory nature of the research presented lends itself to several limitations. First, as discussed elsewhere, the methodology prevents the generalizability of any conclusions made concerning the sample to the sample itself – excluding the use of such conclusions with organizational accounts outside of the six nonprofit organizations studied. In a similar vein, the lack of a second coder to generate a measure of intercoder reliability also limits the easy extensibility of the research to other accounts. Additional refinement of the coding instrument by at least one other coder would be needed to help make generalizable any conclusions found within the constraints of this study.

Second, the sample's capture of the main timeline and not of the followers' responses to individual tweets restricts the observations available to only the content chosen for tweets by the account itself. This greatly hinders the researcher's ability to observe the conversations that arise between an account and its followers, skewing the perception of relational value, organizational response to stakeholders, and other key relational tasks. This means of capture, while prudent for the sake of constraining sample size, effectively silences the follower and his or her responses to the organizational account within the sample. A number of key areas posited by the research questions for this study would have benefited greatly from the inclusion of such data in the sample.

Third, the understanding of hashtags presented was limited solely due to unintended observer disregard. Focus was placed upon the physical presentation of the hashtag, with only a cursory discussion of placement and/or construction of the alphanumeric string chosen by the account. As hashtags are one of the more prevalent items that have been examined in the literature, a secondary analysis of the hashtags themselves and the variety of ways in which they are presented for (assumed) strategic purposes was recommended, but unable to be performed due to the researcher's timeframe. This detracts from the ability to discuss hashtags in the manner in which they ought to be discussed, particularly with regard to their being a key strategic language category that is an important part of the Twitter platform.

Fourth, the sampling of accounts from the wefollow.com listing of nonprofit organizations kept the sample focused on the most prominent accounts. This allowed the resulting observations and conclusions to reflect upon nonprofit organizational accounts that had a high number of followers, retweets, and interactions. It did not address the countless smaller organizations that are making use of Twitter, who fell toward the bottom of list or who did not appear on it at all. The organizations selected had a better chance of displaying what might be considered best practices by the industry. Smaller organizations might have been able to display the same acumen or they might have provided additional categories that were not observed within the coded sample. The lack of variety in the account sample prevented the ability to examine such differences.

Last, the constraint of organizational account type (nonprofit versus for-profit) assisted in allowing for a set of conclusions to be formulated around organizational accounts that were similar in nature, but it did not help address any of the concerns that have risen with regard to the organizationally based digital divide. The inclusion of for-profit organizations for sample would have provided insight as to whether this idea holds merit. If such a divide does not have merit, and key differences do not exist between organizational account types, then valuable understanding might have been gleaned from utilizing both organizational account types and might have presented an opportunity for greater generalizability to organizational accounts as a whole.

Recommendations for Future Research

Need for future research. Any form of grounded theory functions as a departure point for further research and this study is no exception. Of the categories coded and explored, many provide a framework for study of a number of different facets of organizational accounts on Twitter. The categories presented here and in the coding instrument (see Appendix C) need further refinement from additional researchers, who will likely see and define categories differently. This coding instrument will need to be tested and refined for reliable use in future projects, both quantitative and qualitative.

Expansion of account sample to include for-profit organizations. In order to examine whether there are notable differences between for-profit and nonprofit organizations, future research could expand the account sample to include both and make use of the same coding instrument with both types of accounts. This would assist in either confirming or rejecting the idea that such organizations should be treated differently, as well as provide a means of examining whether there is merit to the idea of an organizationally based digital divide.

Expansion of account sample to include follower input. A concerted attempt to contact followers of the organization to derive their reasons for following an organizational account (derived through the use of qualitative interview and/or quantitative survey methods), would provide an important avenue for understanding why they follow a particular account, what they enjoy most about seeing the account's tweets in their timelines, and more. This would specifically lend insight to an understanding of relational value between the organization and it stakeholders, as well as allow for a discussion of the follower's sense of trust and transparency concerning the organizational account – areas that were largely unexplored in this study.

Narrowing of account sample to a single organization. An effort could be made to look at a single organization in greater depth – focusing on a continuous collection of tweets for 1-2 full months, rather than a randomized construction of dates. This would provide a better overview of how the individual organization is making use of Twitter, the ability to examine tweets in succession and to track the life cycle of campaigns, and to enable the researcher to garner a deeper understanding of the organization's policy and guidelines concerning Twitter.

Expansion of tweet sample to include responses. To better gauge stakeholder engagement as well as organizational response to those stakeholders, future research could make use of an expanded sample that includes follower responses in addition to the capture of the main account timeline. This would enable researchers to evaluate the conversation being held between account and followers (or organization and stakeholders), as well as to more thoroughly assess the context of the responses that do appear within the organizational account's timeline.

In-depth examination of tweets within primary content types. Tweets could be studied on the basis of their primary content type (PCT), with a focus upon the common elements that are found within each PCT. This could assist in bolstering categorical definitions, lending weight to the idea that specific PCTs possess relationships with certain identifying markers in the form of language categories.

In-depth examination of hashtags within tweets. Due to the wide variety in hashtag construction, their usage warrants future research. Their alphanumeric makeup provides seemingly endless possibilities for their construction, but they are never a random alphanumeric sequence. A study of whether the alphanumeric combinations chosen for a given hashtag are related to the organization, related to an issue supported by the organization, merely simple words in the text of the tweet, or chosen for length could provide understanding of strategy, usage, and construction patterns amongst organizational accounts.

Use of metrics to evaluate efficacy. A cross-referencing of content, particularly any interactive category (such as hyperlinks and/or hashtags), with some sort of metric (Google Analytics, for example) that provides data on how many times that hyperlink has been clicked or how many times that particular hashtag has been used could be useful in the study of the efficacy of these categorical elements. If organizational accounts continue to make wide use of hyperlinks and other such interactive elements, it would be beneficial to know whether followers are actually engaging with these extra-platform extensions or whether the hashtag that has been carefully selected for a campaign is being used to generate conversation about that campaign.

Summary. The ideas delineated above comprise only a few means of continuing this line of research and reflects the wide variety of possible avenues for study. With a more solid understanding of the components that can be found in a tweet, each subsequent research attempt into this area will add to the existent body of knowledge – providing a clearer picture of the scope of Twitter and its organizational uses with every endeavor.

REFERENCES

Anderson, C. (2008). *The long tail: Why the future of business is selling less of more.* New York, NY: Hyperion.

Apparaschivei, P. A. (2011). The use of new media in electoral campaigns: Analysis on the use of blogs, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube in the 2009 Romanian presidential campaign. *Journal of Media Research*, 2(10), 39-60.

Aragón, E. P., & Domingo, D. (2014). Developing public relations 2.0: Practitioners' perceptions on the implementation of interactive communication strategies. *Public Relations Review*, 40, 559-561.

Armstrong, C. L., & Gao, F. (2011). Gender, Twitter and news content. *Journalism studies*, 12(4), 490-505.

Barefoot, D. & Szabo, J. (2010). *Friends with benefits: A social media marketing handbook.* San Francisco, CA: No Starch Press, Inc.

Belew, S. (2014). *The art of social selling: Finding and engaging customers on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other social networks.* New York, NY: American Management Association.

Bough, B. (2010, February 1). Pepsi Refresh project: An insider's view – guest post by Bonin Bough. Retrieved September 15, 2014, from http://beth.typepad.com/beths_blog/2010/02/pepsi-refresh-project-an-insiders-view-guest-post-by-bonin-bough.html

Brake, D. R. (2014). Are we all online content creators now? Web 2.0 and digital divides. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 19, 591-609.

Brenner, J. & Smith, A. (2013, August 5). 72% of online adults are social networking site users. Retrieved from http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/social-networking-sites.aspx

Burgess, J., & Bruns, A. (2012). (Not) the Twitter election: The dynamics of the #ausvotes conversation in relation to the Australian media ecology. *Journalism Practice*, 6(3), 384-402.

Carr, N. (2009). *The big switch: Rewiring the world, from Edison to Google*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis.* London: Sage Publications.

Crain, R. (2010). Why I think Pepsi Refresh needed the Super Bowl. *Advertising Age*, 81(39), 2.

David, P., Kline, S., & Dai, Y. (2005). Corporate social responsibility practices, corporate identity, and purchase intention: A dual-process model. *Public Relations Research*, 17(3), 291-313.

Delo, C. (2014). Facebook fights to take back TV from Twitter. *Advertising Age*, 85(13), 10.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Duggan, M. & Brenner, J. (2013, February 14). The demographics of social media users – 2012. Retrieved from http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Social-media-users.aspx

Duggan, M., Ellison, N. B., Lampe, C., Lenhart, A., & Madden, M. (2015). Social media update 2014. Retrieved March 7, 2015, from http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/01/09/social-media-update-2014/

Eisenberg, E. M., Johnson, Z., & Pieterson, W. (2015). Leveraging social networks for strategic success. *International Journal of Business Communication*, 52(1), 143-154.

Elavsky, C. M., Mislan, C., & Elavsky, S. (2011). When talking less is more: Exploring outcomes of Twitter usage in the large-lecture hall. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 36(3), 215-233.

Faina, J. (2012). Twitter and the new publicity. *ETC*, 55-71.

Fox, Z. (2013, October 7). 78% of Twitter's users are outside the U.S. *Mashable: The social media guide.* Retrieved from http://mashable.com/2013/10/07/twitter-us-international-growth/

Gibbs, S. (2014, November 19). New Twitter search makes every public tweet since 2006 findable; New tool means tweets are no longer gone forever when they drop off users' timelines. *The Guardian.*

Gideon, M. R. (2011, March 15). *Web 2.0 is dead. Long live Web 3.0!* Retrieved February 3, 2015, from http://100gf.wordpress.com/2011/03/15/web-2-0-is-dead-long-live-web-3-0/

Gilbreath, B. (2009, September 16). Building brands, one act at a time. *Adweek.* Retrieved from http://www.adweek.com/fdcp?1266853770345

Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Glassman, M. E., Straus, J. R., & Shogan, C. J. (Year unknown). Social networking and constituent communications: Member use of Twitter during a two-month period in the 111th Congress. *Journal of Communications Research*, 2(2-3), 219-233.

Gregory, S. (2010, February 3). Behind Pepsi's choice to skip this year's Super Bowl. *Time*.

Grunig, J.E., Grunig, L. A., & Toth, E. L. (2007). *The future of excellence in public relations and communication management: Challenges for the next generation*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Gunning, P. (2009, June 8).. Social media reality check: Four ways to avoid the pitfalls of 'techno-ecstasy'. *Adweek.*

Hodge, N. (2010, January 21). Texts, tweets saving Haitians from the rubble. *Wired.* Retrieved from http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2010/01/texts-tweets-saving-haitians-from-the-rubble/

Huberman, B.A., Romero, D. M., & Wu, F. (2009). Social networks that matter: Twitter under the microscope. *First Monday*, 14(1), n.p.

Kanayama, T. (2003). An organizational digital divide: Web adoption and use among nonprofit organizations in Appalachian Ohio. *Conference Papers – International Communication Association*, 1-33. Retrieved October 2, 2009, from Communication & Mass Complete database.

Kanter, B. & Paine, K. D. (2012). *Measuring the networked nonprofit: Using data to change the world.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kenix, L. (2008). The Internet as a tool for democracy? A survey of non-profit Internet decision-makers and Web users. *First Monday*, 13(7), 2.

Koh, Y. (2014, July 30). Twitter results silence naysayers. *The Wall Street Journal.* Retrieved September 15, 2014, from http://online.wsj.com/articles/twitters-user-growth-picks-up-1406664889

Lasorsa, D. (2012). Transparency and other journalistic norms on Twitter: The role of gender. *Journalism Studies*, 13(3), 402-417.

Lasorsa, D. L., Lewis, S. C., & Holton, A. E. (2012). Normalizing Twitter: Journalism practice in an emerging communication space. *Journalism Studies*, 13(1), 19-36.

Lipschultz, J. H. (2013, April 2). Social media trends and your organization. Retrieved March 1, 2015, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jeremy-harris-lipschultz/social-media-trends-and-y_b_2995997.html

Livingston, G. (2007). *Now is gone.* Laurel, MD: Bartleby Press.

Macnamara, J., & Zerfass, A. (2012). Social media communication in organizations: The challenges of balancing openness, strategy, and management. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 6, 287-308.

Many types of nonprofits. (n.d.). Retrieved March 7, 2015, from https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/ctypes

Massey, J. E. (2003). A theory of organizational image management: Antecedents, processes & outcomes. *Conference Papers – International Academy of Business Disciplines*, 1-29. Retrieved January 24, 2014, from Communication & Mass Media Complete database.

McCarthy, N. (2014, October 14). Facebook versus Twitter in numbers [infographic]. Retrieved March 7, 2015, from http://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2014/10/14/facebook-versus-twitter-infographic/

Meister, J. (2014, January 6). 2014: The year social HR matters. Retrieved March 1, 2015, from http://www.forbes.com/sites/jeannemeister/2014/01/06/2014-the-year-social-hr-matters/

Morrisey, B. (2010, February 15). Does social sell?: Brands drive further into social-media arena without money-back guarantees. *Adweek.*

National Archives and Records Administration. (2013, May). White paper on best practices for the capture of social media records.

O'Neill, M. (2009). Public confidence in charitable nonprofits. *Nonprofits and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 38, 237-269.

Obar, J. A. (2014). Canadian advocacy 2.0: An analysis of social media adoption and perceived affordances by advocacy groups looking to advance activism in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 39(2), 211-233.

Parpis, E. (2009, May 31). Using Twitter to do good: How a nonprofit is leveraging social media to raise money. *Adweek*.

Pepsi Refresh from start to finish. (2012). *Advertising Age*, 83(36), 1.

Pew Research Center. (2010, February 18). *Bloggers to content providers: Keep it free or we will flee.* Retrieved from http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1498/bloggers-strongly - oppose-paying-for-content-google-buzz-criticized

Petronzio, M. (2014, February 13). Global mobile data traffic set to explode by 2018. *Mashable: The social media guide.* Retrieved September 15, 2014, from http://mashable.com/2014/02/13/mobile-traffic-forecast/

Rodino-Colocino, M. (2006). Laboring under the digital divide. *New Media & Society*, 8(3), 487-511.

Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Free Press.

Silverman, R. E., & Gellman, L. (2014, September 15). Ice bucket challenge: When success creates problems of its own. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved September 15, 2014, from http://online.wsj.com/articles/ice-bucket-challenge-when-success-creates-problems-of-its-own-1410810931

Siwicki, B. (2013, October 1). It's official: Mobile devices surpass PCs in online retail. *Internet Retailer: Portal to e-commerce intelligence*. Retrieved September 15, 2014, from http://www.internetretailer.com/2013/10/01/its-official-mobile-devices-surpass-pcs-online-retail

Warren, C. (2012, September 5). New Twitter API drops support for RSS, puts limits on third-party clients. *Mashable: The social media guide.* Retrieved January 24, 2014, from http://mashable.com/2012/09/05/twitter-api-rss/

Waters, R., Burnett, E., Lamm, A., & Lucas, J. (2009). Engaging stakeholders through social networking: How nonprofit organizations are using Facebook. *Public Relations Review*, 25(2), 102-106. Doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2009.01.006

Wefollow.com. The prominence score. (2013). Retrieved January 24, 2014, from http://wefollow.com/about/score

Winston, B. (1995). How are media born and developed?. In J. Downing, A. Mohammadi, & A. Sreberny-Mohammadi (Eds.), *Questioning the media: A critical introduction* (pp. 54-74). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Wittke, K. (2008). The state of strategic communication in small advocacy groups: Best practices, challenges, and trends. *Conference Papers – International Communication Association*, 1-24.

Zmuda, N. (2010, February 8). Pass or fail, Pepsi's Refresh will be case for marketing textbooks; Rest of industry eyeing bold social-media experiment. *Advertising Age*, News, 1.

APPENDIX A: AGGREGATION OF CATEGORIES AFTER FIRST CODING PASS

URLs

- often shortened
  - bit.ly (words/random)
  - ow.ly
  - org-specific
- video sharing
- some not shortened
- tie-in to other SM platforms (element of self-promotion)
  - includes the lingo
  - Twitter, FB, Pinterest

Hashtags

- single
- multiple (grouped, split)

Types of Images

- infographic
- photographic
- graphic art
- presence of org logo
- link summary embed
- moving
- Images from outside/unsupported photo platforms (like Instagram)

Re-tweets

- embedded in TL (other account)
- placed w/i tweet ("RT" in tweet)
- MT (emphasized RT)

@Replies/Handles

- Direct conversation with another acct
  - Invitations (individual)
- Mention of another acct
- ".@Handle" (unsure, but not DC)
- occurrence (once, multiple)
- crisis communication/management

Types of Information

- statistics, facts, and trivia
- joke/humor
- news

- stories (personal)
- organizational information and announcements
- resources (includes blogs and research)
- inspiration (includes quotes)
- tips

Stakeholders/Engagement
- gratitude
- event promotion
- celebration
- self-promotion / future
- employment/direct participation
- partnership/shout-out/props
- PR/image management
- use of “we” to share org stance
- mission explanation/exploration

Calls to Action
- RT
- respond to tweet
- follow acct (Twitter-specific)
- recommendations / try “X/Y/Z”
- contest (includes scholarships, challenges)
- donation/fundraising
- tie-in applications/platform
- volunteer
- nominations
- vote (online poll)
- RSVP

Events
- live event (chat or Q&A)
- upcoming
- past

Random
- inappropriate for audience
- use of “I”, “me”, “my” on org acct
- use of capital letters
- use of abbreviations
- errors in usage of platform “language”
- email addresses (very rare)

APPENDIX B: AGGREGATION OF CATEGORIES AFTER SECOND CODING PASS

Relationships

- Retweets and high retweet incidence
- Organizational "we" and PCT of *gratitude*
- Hyperlinks and PCT of *calls to action*
- @Handles and #hashtags
- Retweet chains and PCT of *events*
- Hyperlinks and PCT of *resources*
- Use of "via" + @handle and PCT of *news*
- Twitter tie-ins and PCT of *calls to action*
- Direct conversations and PCT
- Crisis management tweets and means of contact
- Hyperlinks and PCT of *stories*
- Embedded link summaries and PCT of *resources*
- Inappropriateness and common elements
- Embedded retweets and presence of organizational @handle
- Presence of logo in infographic images
- Tweet chains
- Same/similar tweets in timeline
- Limited interactivity and PCT

APPENDIX C: CODING DEFINITIONS

Language Categories

1. *Handle*: This appears as an "@" symbol, followed by an alphanumeric string that does not contain any spaces. If inputted correctly, the handle displays in a different color. Handles can appear in different locations within the tweet, as well as in singular or multiple instances.
    a. If a handle is at the very beginning of a sentence and is not preceded by a (.), it is only visible under the "Tweets & replies" section. This indicates a direct (but still public) engagement between two accounts.
2. *Hashtag*: This appears as a "#" symbol, followed by an alphanumeric string that does not contain any spaces. If inputted correctly, the hashtag displays in a different color. Hashtags can appear in different locations within the tweet, as well as in singular or multiple instances.
3. *Hyperlink*: This appears as a web address, with the function of taking the user outside of the account's main timeline. If inputted correctly, the hyperlink will display in a different color. Hyperlinks can appear in full (often cut off due to length) or shortened (a shortened root address, followed by an alphanumeric string that is often random).
4. *Retweet*: This occurs when an account copies a tweet from another account and inserts the content into its own timeline. This is conveyed in one of three ways.
    a. Embedded: The retweet is a direct copy of the other account's tweet, embedded directly into the timeline. This preserves the original account's authorship of the tweet (icon, name, handle) and places a small green retweet symbol followed by "(name of organization) retweeted" above the tweet.
    b. Copied: The text of the retweeted information is copied into the body of a tweet. This appears as "RT @(handle)" and then the text of the original tweet. This preserves the identity of the retweeting account rather than the original account.
    c. Must-tweet: This presents almost identically to the copied retweet, but has an "MT" in place of the "RT".
5. *Images*: Sometimes, images display just below the text portion of the tweet. There are four common image types.
    a. Infographic: These images use text in combination with some sort of imagery (text that is not native to the image itself, like writing on a shirt).
    b. Photographic: These images reflect the reality of what is captured. Some appear candid while others seem to be staged or from stock photography, but all are created using a camera. None are drawn or painted with a physical or digital medium, such as a canvas or Adobe Illustrator.
    c. Graphic art: These images appear to have been created using a computer, without the inclusion of text that shares additional information (in contrast to an infographic image).

    d. Embedded link summaries: These images typically appear as an image and text preview below the text of the tweet. There is usually a block of text to the left that includes the source and a title, and a small preview image to the right.
6. *Active verbs*: The active or imperative verb tense does not say, "please" – they ask the audience to do something without the presence of a question.
7. *Use of first person*:
    a. Singular: Indicated by the use of "me", "my", and "I".
    b. Collective: Indicated by the use of "we", "us", and "our".
8. *Capital letters*: These tweets have capital letters that are used outside of the traditional sentence case ("TWITTER" vs "Twitter"), perhaps used to emphasize certain words.
9. *Errors in platform-related language*: These tweets appear to have at least one error in the Twitter components themselves, presenting as a hashtag cut off by the character limit, a failure to include a space before a handle or hashtag (which enables either component to become interactive), or the inclusion of an "@" symbol in its traditional use as a means of conveying time or location instead of as a means of mentioning another account.
10. *Inappropriateness*: An inappropriate tweet is considered something that would not appear on a popular magazine cover for the account's target demographic.

Organizational Categories

1. *Organizational handles*: The account handle (or a related account handle) presents itself in the text of the tweet.
2. *Organizational logos*: The organizational logo presents itself as either a native or non-native component of an image.
3. *Organizational names*: The organizational name (or a related name) presents itself in the text of the tweet.

Primary Content Types (PCT) and Subtypes

Many will have a single PCT and others will have multiple (especially when coding stakeholders and engagement, which can be coded in addition to another PCT).

1. *General information and announcements*: These tweets are characterized by a primary function of sharing information about the organization or about a piece of mission-oriented information found within the account profile.
2. *Statistics, facts, and trivia*: These tweets share information that is not specific to the organization itself, but appears intent on educating followers about a topic tied to the organization.
3. *Jokes and humor*: These tweets seek to be funny and appear to be attempts to make followers laugh.
4. *News*: These tweets share news with the account's followers, often containing recognizable news source websites and/or handles.

5. *Personal stories*: These tweets often include a condensed version of the story presented and are then followed by some sort of hyperlink for the follower to access the rest. They often mention names of individuals or places where work is done in line with some aspect of the organization's mission, as seen in the account profile.
6. *Resources*: These tweets are characterized by the account's reference of beneficial information for those engaged in the organization's cause and include a hyperlink to further information.
    a. Research: These read similarly to *statistics, facts, and trivia*, but are less specific about the details. They point instead to the full findings of a research study or a report housed elsewhere online.
    b. Blogs: These tweets usually have "blog" somewhere in the text of their tweets, up front, in the flow of the sentence, or as part of a hyperlink. These are distinguished by a more generalized (and less individual) approach to subject matter.
7. *Inspiration*: These tweets want to inspire or encourage followers, regardless of whether the tweet's content relates to the mission of the organization.
8. *Tips*: These tweets reflect encouragement of well-being and the provision of advice. These have the feeling of, "I'm going to tell you how to do this" and often make use of outside links to share additional information.
9. *Calls to engagement*: These tweets contain direct requests or commands. Many of these subtypes overlap with those of *stakeholders and engagement.*
    a. Retweet: These tweets include "RT" in the main body of the tweet and indicate a desire for followers to retweet the content. Sometimes, this "RT" can come at the beginning of the tweet (which can be confused for a copied retweet), but the context (usually the presence of "if" following the "RT") reveals a full thought.
    b. Respond to tweet: These tweets request response to their content.
    c. Recommendation: These tweets make recommendations, including other accounts to follow or with which to engage, recipes, and crisis-oriented recommendations to connect with those who can provide assistance.
    d. Contests: These tweets pertain to some form of contest or competition. Often make use of words like "win", "competition", and "enter by (date)", and generally conveyed an opportunity to submit something in exchange for either recognition or a prize.
    e. Donations and fundraising: These tweets deal explicitly with raising goods or money for the organization through donations or fundraising. They encourage followers to put their money and extra items toward worthwhile causes.
    f. Tie-in applications and platforms: These tweets use Twitter to promote other products, specifically applications that have been developed for the organization itself.
    g. Voting in online polls: These tweets invite followers to vote in online polls. They are characterized by the presence of a request to go and vote online for something related to the organization.
    h. RSVP: These tweets specifically use the word "RSVP".
10. *Stakeholders and engagement*: These are characterized by an attempt to engage audience with the organization. This appears in many forms.

a. Gratitude: These tweets are characterized by direct use of "thank you" or "thanks", as well as more general expressions of appreciation, thankfulness, and awe at what is accomplished or contributed.
b. Events and event promotion: These tweets deal with details or promotion of a specific event or events, intended to encourage engagement with the event(s).
c. Self-promotion and future: Tweets that appear to promote the endeavors of the organization, creating a general awareness about what the organization is doing at present and hoping to accomplish in the future. Such tweets have a dominant air of "Look what great things we're doing!"
d. Employment and opportunity for direct participation: These tweets invite followers to invest a personal stake in what the organization supports by joining in their efforts – often specifically as an employment opportunity.
e. Partnership mentions or shout-outs: These tweets mention other accounts, conveying some sort of partnership between the two accounts. Sometimes, the word "join" is useful in determining these tweets.