ABSTRACT

Sensemaking and Identity: Traditional Narratives of University Roles and Recognition of Faculty Expertise

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The current study evaluated the narratives that affect faculty and university administrator perceptions of each other and how this understanding influenced opportunities for collaboration. This qualitative study examined how 11 faculty members in academic disciplines of communication made sense of their identities as both professors and consultants and how their sensemaking was understood by nine university administrators at the same institution who were responsible for public-facing, communication initiatives in departments defined broadly as admissions, marketing, and communications. The data were coded and analyzed using grounded theory. Findings revealed participants demonstrated disparate narratives that affected utilization of expertise. Future research should consider understanding the effects that organizational hierarchy and physical distance have on improving collaboration between faculty and administration for public-facing communication opportunities.

Keywords: Sensemaking, organizational identification, identity

Sensemaking and Identity: Traditional Narratives of University Roles
and Recognition of Faculty Expertise

by

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DEDICATION

To my unfailingly supportive and loving husband, Richard, who, for seventeen months, allowed me to move 2,000 miles from home to pursue my further education. To my sons, August and Harrison, who graciously accepted when mom chose to attend their university. I love y’all *more than life itself*.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

American universities and colleges face a turbulent environment complicated by rapidly changing market factors that have contributed to eight consecutive years of declining enrollment (Fain, 2019). Annual tuition tops more than $35,000 (Powell, 2018), while student debt has doubled to $1.5 trillion in the last decade (Cilluffo, 2019). Parents expect students to graduate with a job, not just a degree (Davis, 2016; Dusst & Winthrop, 2019), while some students bypass college all together (Center, 2019). Politicians exert pressure on public universities to tamp down escalating costs of tuition and fees in the face of funding reductions (Davidson, 2018). These factors have contributed to the closure and consolidation of private and public institutions (Marcus, 2019), with dire warnings that up to 25% of colleges and universities will close, merge, or declare bankruptcy in the years ahead (Horn, 2018).

University administrative leaders find themselves in this rapidly changing, dynamic environment, requiring them to use a combination of market-driven research practices, institutional procedures, and agile decision-making. For administrators in departments like admissions, marketing, and communications, developing public-facing communication messages and programs that effectively reach a variety of audiences can be an evolving process. Typically, administrators rely on their own staffs for program and message development but, at times, they hire external consultants/third-party companies to help (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Hanover, 2014; Heifetz & Linsky, 2017).

In the face of this tumultuous external environment, however, university faculty roles have remained largely unchanged (Paris, 2013). Despite the overall reduction in tenured-track positions (AAUP, 2018), faculty members' primary responsibilities remain teaching, research, and service. Often recognized within their fields as published authors, distinguished scholars, or recipients of prestigious research grants, these professors can be highly sought-after consultants in the corporate world, for non-profit organizations or even at other universities (Driscoll & Lynton, 1999).

As the higher-education landscape becomes increasingly competitive and complex, how do administrators responsible for public-facing communication make sense of their resources and utilize all experts available to them, including their faculty members? One way is to engage what Karl Weick (1979) referred to as *sensemaking*, the process by which people give meaning to their collective experiences. Previous studies have demonstrated that individuals use sensemaking to understand their roles, (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005) and that these roles are socially constructed through words and narratives (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). However, historically defined role identities, i.e., administrator or faculty member, may affect expectations and interactions based on socially constructed perceptions (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005) and may enhance or inhibit cooperation (Ashforth & Mael, 1996). For the purpose of this study, faculty members are employees who teach and conduct research on behalf of a university, while administrators are employees who are responsible for the maintenance and supervision of the university and who are distinctly separate from faculty members. Because faculty members and administrators operate within vocational silos, this study evaluated the narratives that affect their perception of each other within the university and how this understanding influences opportunities for collaborative work.

This qualitative study examined: 1) how faculty members in academic disciplines of communication made sense of their identities as consultants inside and outside their university (M. Kramer, 2010; M. Kramer et al., 2017), and 2) how university administrators who work in departments broadly defined as admissions, marketing, and communication perceive these faculty members as potential consultants (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Larson & Pearson, 2012; Schein, 1997).

The goal of this study was to develop a richer understanding of how entrenched identities or roles of faculty members, separate from their external identities as consultants/experts, affect university administrators' perception of them as consultants for university programs, particularly in the rapidly changing landscape of higher education.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Sensemaking and the Role of Faculty Experts in Organizations

Faculty members have long worn multiple hats within the university, anchored to the institution's mission (Ashforth & Mael, 1996) and tied to academic programs of teaching, research and service (Fairweather, 2002; Sands & Smith, 2000; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). While individual institutions place varying emphasis on which faculty roles are considered most important (Birnbaum, 1988), faculty members generally maintain a three-fold role: as teachers, spending most of their time in contact with students; as researchers, placing emphasis on scholarly pursuits of academic publishing; and in doing service, providing committee support for university-wide internal programs. These long-held identities, defined as "the conception of the self reflexively and discursively understood by the self" (Kuhn, 2006, p. 1340), have contributed to a general understanding by others of what faculty do.

Additionally, many faculty members maintain separate identities through their work outside their university in roles defined as consultants, academic experts, management coaches or freelancers. In this capacity, these faculty members may loosely identify themselves with their institution but primarily anchor themselves to another identity that is undergirded by their academic title. Blau et al (Timothy Kuhn, 2006, p. 1340) writes extensively about the effects that juggling roles can have on stress and job satisfaction, but little research exists to explain what happens when individuals in an organization satisfactorily maintain multiple roles which are unrecognized by others in the same institution. We turn to the role that sensemaking plays in this study.

Sensemaking is the process by which people give meaning to their collective experiences (Weick, 1979). It has been defined as "the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing" (Weick et al., 2005, p. 409). Widely considered in organizational studies, sensemaking suggests that individuals simultaneously shape and react to the environments while observing the consequences and accuracy of their perceptions (Thurlow & Helms Mills, 2009). Sensemaking allows an individual to maintain a positive self-concept but becomes social as groups of individuals reach interdependent agreement on the meaning of their experiences.

For example, faculty members at a university make sense of their roles based on socially defined terms and interpretation that have given meaning to what they do, i.e., *I teach students*, or *I conduct scholarly research*. These definitions of faculty are historically understood, based on retrospectively looking back on how the role has been interpreted over time (Weick et al., 2005). As such, the identity of faculty are deeply entrenched within the context of enduring discourses of occupation (Ashcraft, 2005; Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). Within their occupation, faculty answer the questions, *Who am I?* or *Who are we?* (Ashforth et al., 2008). For example, a faculty member might individually identify as being an expert on public speaking (Who am I?) while at the same time identify in a group as a faculty member of a university's school of journalism (Who are we?). Making sense of and having a shared sense of occupational identity is powerful and as Gilmore and Kramer

(2019) suggest, provides stability and security. Yet, how do faculty maintain separate identities for doing a related yet different job? If they do maintain these separate identities, are they perceived positively?

We look for clues from Ashforth and Kreiner (2004) as well as Baxter (1988, 1990) who provide a conceptual framework that explains how people carve out and manage separate identities within an organization. In the case of faculty experts, this retrospective sensemaking implies a particular situation or job can have different interpretations, i.e., *when I work outside the university, I am a consultant, but when I do the same job in the university, I am a faculty member*. Faculty members assign plausible meaning to their role, although it need not be accurate—just acceptable (Weick, 1995). Literature in this case, establishes the means by which faculty identify, understand and accept their roles, yet research lacks in terms of how faculty perceptions are understood by administrators within the university. How do the activities that faculty participate in help to establish identity and how are the roles perceived by others? We turn to the narratives used in sensemaking.

By committing to a particular meaning, a faculty member creates an identity that defines their relationship to those activities (Weick et al., 2005), like being a consultant or being a professor. This is done when faculty members create stories that give meaning to collective experiences (Ashforth et al., 2008; Weick et al., 2005). Stories and narratives create faculty identities through the use of words, categorization and labeling, brought to life by using self-talk or by speaking aloud with others (Eisenberg, 2001; Lammers & Barbour, 2006; Lawler, 2002). For example, a professor who consults externally tells stories about his experiences in working with outside organizations in order to establish credibility with that role. These stories ultimately define an organization or group (Baxter, 2004; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), and based on how members think about their place in an organization, they share these stories in ways that further shape others' perception (Eisenberg, 2001).

Research suggests how individuals maintain a semi-coherent identity when positioning themselves as compared to a group (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004) as with experts or consultants outside of the university who simultaneously maintain their identity as a faculty member inside of their institution. Baxter (2004) explains this by suggesting that people alternate the attention paid to each role or by segmenting their activities to correspond with the two different roles. However, little is known about how faculty describe their separate roles inside and outside the university nor how these roles are perceived by administrators in their university. Using what is known about sensemaking, the following research question is asked:

RQ1: What messages do faculty use to make sense of their roles as academic experts/consultants inside/outside their university?

The Paradox of Faculty/Administrator Collaboration

In his seminal book, Robert Birnbaum suggests that American colleges and universities "are the most paradoxical of organizations, constituting one of the largest industries in the nation while being the least businesslike and [least] well managed of all organizations" (1988, p. 3). Given the challenges that universities currently face, there have been increasing demands from university board members, donors, alumni, politicians and business people that universities run more like businesses and should modernize outdated practices as a result (Bolman & Gallos, 2011). This fails to consider

Birnbaum's definition of universities as "complex organizations that typically lack measurable goals" (1988, p. 5). Unlike businesses, which are profit/loss based and managed against defined goals, universities operate under a model defined by shared governance, a basic tenet of American higher education that creates duality of control between faculty and administrators. This delicate balance is held in tension between organizational silos of faculty and administrators, each pressed firmly into their identities, which can result in an environment of rich discourse and knowledge sharing, anarchical chaos, or an equitable balance between the two (Gallos, 2009; Harrington & Slann, 2011; Olson, 2018; *Shared governance: Changing with the times*, 2017). Faculty members, who hold power within the organization, maintain agendas that can either support, go against or even derail a university's mission. On the other side, administrators are held accountable for the success, solvency and management of the university. These roles presume that each exists within their defined job and that they are separate and autonomous.

As discussed earlier, when the occupation of a faculty member is defined by teaching, research and service, their identity is rooted in how these roles are understood and perceived by others. The more these identity perceptions are widely shared and articulated by members, the stronger the identity (Cole & Bruch, 2006; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). In the case of faculty and administrators (those who develop and coordinate the academic and student programs at a university), these organizational identities are long-standing and deeply entrenched. Because historical member definitions and resources exist within these siloed identities, faculty or administrators may find it challenging to interact differently with one another as a result (T. Kuhn et al., 2008; Scott et al., 1998), particularly if a group like faculty members perceives themselves in a manner that is not shared by others, such as administrators. Members can either use this as an excuse not to interact with each other or to selectively interact based on how they define their role within the organization at a specific point in time (Tompkins & Cheney, 1983).

For example, when a faculty member perceives having a role as an expert consultant outside of the university, and that perception is not shared by an administrator at the same university, it may affect potential collaboration or information exchange, or it could result in members who purposefully disidentify with an organization, as Gossett (2002) learned in her study of temporary workers. She found that temporary workers made conscious decisions to disidentify with the organization to protect themselves from becoming attached or disappointed with the organization for whom they worked. In this case, strong organizational identification was found not to be important for all members or for the organization at large, contrary to existing scholarship. Additional studies suggest organizational disidentification occurs between groups when members are in physically separate locations (Larson & Pearson, 2012) or when they desire to maintain distinctly different occupational identities, like engineers and sales people (Schein, 1997). All of these studies contribute to understanding purposeful disidentification within organizations (Elsbach et al., 1999).

While both administrators and faculty can and should learn from advances and business practices in other sectors (Birnbaum, 1988), historical identities of entrenched faculty and administrator silos affect how each interacts with the other (Scott et al., 1998). As universities respond to significant market pressures, this study will consider how strong member identity affects the collaboration between faculty and administrators. The following research question is asked:

> *RQ2: What administrator perceptions of faculty identity exist that affect administrators' work with faculty experts for public-facing communication opportunities?*

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Pilot Study

In order to test the feasibility of my main study, identify design issues and pretest my interview guide and research questions, I conducted a smaller-sized, pilot study seven months prior to the main study (Prescott et al., 1989). This pilot study served as the first step in developing my research protocol, and it assisted in planning and modification of the main study (In, 2017). For the pilot study, I included only faculty members, as I wanted to explore the extent to which they perceived themselves as having roles as consultants inside and outside of the university as well as to learn how they interacted with university administrators. Participants were from a medium-sized, private university in the south-central United States.

To identify faculty members for the pilot study, I developed inclusion criteria (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Lindlof & Taylor, 2017) requiring a faculty member to have a title of lecturer or higher with demonstrated expertise and/or scholarly research in academic disciplines of communication. To find this information, I reviewed the university's websites for academic disciplines of communication, identifying faculty whose biographies included academic work on such topics as communication, public speaking, journalism, new media, public- or media-relations, or advertising. I also reviewed the 2018-19 course catalog for the university's academic disciplines of communication, seeking professors who were currently teaching classes. Finally, I added potential participants who fit the criteria based on word-of-mouth recommendations (Tuckett, 2004).

My pilot study targeted four potential participants, all of whom agreed to be interviewed. One held the title of professor, two were associate professors and one was a lecturer. All four were female. On average, they had been employed by the university for 12.5 years.

As a result of this pilot study, I honed my interview guide questions to focus on the narratives that faculty used to make sense of their identity as experts both inside and outside of the university. Additionally, the pilot study helped me to develop selection criterion for university administrators in admissions, marketing and communications who were responsible for public-facing communication programs as well as to create an administrative interview guide that explored their perceptions of faculty members as experts for public-facing communication.

The Main Study: Participants

Participants in the main study were faculty members and administrators who worked at the same university as faculty members who participated in the pilot study. These participants had responsibility for or expertise in areas that involved public-facing communication research or programs for the university.

To identify faculty members for the main study, I followed the same inclusion criteria as with pilot-study participants, this time using the 2019-20 course catalog to seek professors who were currently teaching classes. In addition to the four pilot study participants, I identified 12 other potential faculty participants. After being contacted by email, one potential study participant declined for medical reasons; one was interested but too busy; three failed to respond despite two separate attempts to contact. Of those who failed to or declined involvement, four were lecturers and one was an assistant professor. Ultimately, eleven faculty members (four faculty from the pilot study and seven from the final study) were interviewed for this study, resulting in a 68.7% participation rate. Of the 11 participants, three held the title of professor, three were associate or assistant professors and five were lecturers. Average length of employment at the university was 16 years. Four were female and seven were male.

Purposive convenience sampling was also used to select administrators for participation. Since the study focused on administrators responsible for implementing public-facing programs for the university, I reviewed the university's websites for names of administrators who had the title of senior director or higher in the departments of undergraduate admissions, marketing, and communications.

My target administrator list included 11 potential participants. After being contacted by email, one potential study participant declined but suggested another administrator already on my target list. When I determined that interviewing the initial potential participant was still valuable, a second attempt to contact was made but failed to receive a response. One other administrator failed to respond. Of those who failed to or declined involvement, both were vice presidents. Ultimately, nine administrators or 81.8% of those who were initially contacted were interviewed for this study. Of the nine participants, six held positions that included director in the title, and three held positions that included vice president in the title. Average length of employment at the university was 15.1 years. Five were female and four were male.

Procedure

After securing institutional review board approval to conduct human subject research, I selected participants through the use of purposive convenience sampling (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017; Silverman, 2015), a nonprobability sampling method where members of the target population met certain practical criteria who were also easily accessible to me (Sandelowski & Given, 2008). Faculty participants in both the pilot study and main study were contacted via email, asking them to participate in a face-to-face interview. The email message explained the study sought to understand perceptions of their role as an expert in their field of expertise and how/if that expertise was utilized within their university for public-facing opportunities. Once they agreed to take part in the interview, participants were emailed a consent form along with an explanation that the interview would be recorded and that interviews and written transcripts would be kept in a dual-authentication, password-protected, cloud-based storage system with all names and identifiers removed. Consent forms were signed prior to each interview.

Additionally, university administrators in the departments of admissions, marketing and communications were contacted via email. These administrators were also asked to participate in a face-to-face interview and were informed of the interview's purpose to learn how they utilized and chose to use experts (either internal or external) for help with public-facing university opportunities. Similar to faculty participants, once an administrator agreed to take part in an interview, each was given a consent form along with an explanation that the interview would be recorded and that interviews and written transcripts would be kept in a dual-authentication, password-protected, cloud-based storage system with all names and identifiers removed. Consent forms were signed prior to each interview.

After interviewing 11 faculty members and nine administrators, further participant interviews were deemed redundant as data saturation was reached, i.e., no new or additional information or themes were emerging from the interview data. Having obtained satisfactory and consistent results, data collection (interviews) was concluded (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Guest et al., 2006).

Interview Protocols

For the faculty interviews, I developed a structured interview guide (see Appendix A) along with open-ended questions to focus the conversation and to allow for flexibility in responses (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). The guide began with demographic questions (name, title, length of time employed by the university), followed by questions about academic work outside of the university, such as, "Tell me about any industry experience or consulting work that you do outside of your university, using your academic expertise."

Next, questions were included about their current academic role, including areas of scholarly research and whether their university was aware of their academic expertise including, "Have you been published or otherwise recognized as a scholarly expert?" Next, questions of faculty perceptions of how their university recognized their academic expertise were asked, such as, "Does your university know about your area of expertise?" Finally, participants were asked to share whether they had been consulted by their university on public-facing communication opportunities. If they had not been consulted, faculty participants were invited to share why they felt they had not been consulted.

Similarly, a structured interview guide containing open-ended questions for administrator interviews (see Appendix B) was developed. Beginning with demographic questions (name, title, length of time employed by the university), the guide sought to ascertain the administrator's expertise by asking them about their role at the university. Next, the guide contained questions asking whether the administrator used consultants, including, "Are you in a position to work with/hire consultants? or What does a consultant do for you?" The guide went on to explore the administrator's perception of understanding of university resources, including faculty members, for public-facing communication opportunities. Administrators were asked such things as, "What university resources do you use?" and "Have you ever worked with faculty members as consultants?" Finally, the guide included questions as to why or why not the administrator worked with faculty members, including questions like, "What might prevent you from utilizing faculty experts?" or "What do you wish they could do for you?"

Once a potential participant agreed to be interviewed, a face-to-face meeting was scheduled and conducted according to the participant's schedule and location preference. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim using the mobile audio recorder application Temi. Upon completion of each interview, I sent each participant a $5 Starbucks gift card and included a thank you note. The interviews yielded more than 11 hours of audio-recorded data, transcribed into 140, single-spaced, type-written pages.

Analysis

Since individuals construct their identity through language (Cheney, 1991; T. Kuhn & Nelson, 2002; Scott, 1999; Scott et al., 1998), the current study utilized interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) to understand the words and descriptions that faculty members and administrators used as they make *sense* of themselves and each other in their individual roles (Ashforth et al., 2008). According to Reissman, these narratives are laced with "social discourses and power relations," and result in specific language as to how one talks about another (1993, p. 65). A thematic analysis approach of identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meanings, i.e., themes, was used to make sense of the data and to tell a rich and compelling story about what the data means (Braun & Clarke, 2019) and to uncover the narratives faculty members use to make sense of themselves as consultants. Next, the narratives that administrators used to describe the perceptions of their faculty members as experts and consultants were similarly analyzed.

Throughout the process, separate coding for each group—faculty members and administrators—was developed as multiple rounds of coding for each group took place. Lists of verbatim responses were constructed then organized according to thematic similarity and topic saliency, recurrence, repetition and forcefulness (Owen, 1984; Siegert & Stamp, 1994). This process involved axial coding, tying together concepts around a central narrative theme for each participant group (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), which produced a single coding scheme—one for faculty members and one for administrators. The result of this iterative process was the emergence of three themes for faculty members and two themes for administrators, each representing distinct narratives of how consultants are recognized within the university.

First-cycle coding for RQ1, "What messages do faculty use to make sense of their roles as academic experts/consultants inside/outside their university?" yielded 16 primary codes for faculty members. In second-level coding, the primary thematic codes were reduced to three substantive themes to describe vocational identity:

Theme 1: The Hats I Wear

Theme 2: Known Yet Unknown

Theme 3: Happy to Help, As Long As…

Within these three themes, multiple levels of vocational identification and sensemaking emerged in the analysis.

Using the same process, first-cycle coding for RQ2, "What administrator perceptions of faculty exist that affect administrators' work with faculty experts for public-facing communication opportunities?" yielded 12 primary codes for administrators. In second-level coding, the first-cycle thematic codes were reduced to two substantive narratives regarding administrator's perceptions of working with external/internal resources faculty members:

Theme 1: We Use External Expertise When We Lack Internal Resources

Theme 2: Faculty Consultants? We Like to Think We Utilize Our Faculty

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Faculty

In order to better understand faculty sensemaking, the first research question asked, "What messages do faculty use to make sense of their roles as academic experts/consultants inside/outside their university?" Analysis of faculty interviews resulted in three themes: *The Hats I Wear* confirmed that faculty members make sense of their identities based on juggling multiple roles as experts both inside and outside the university. The second theme *Known Yet Unknown* demonstrated that faculty members describe themselves within their various identities while believing that within their own university, their identities as experts remain largely invisible to administrators who have responsibility for public-facing communication opportunities. The third theme, *Happy to Help, As Long As…* described the parameters that faculty members use to guard their identities as they describe their willingness to work with administrators responsible for public-facing communication opportunities.

The Hats I Wear

Faculty members reported wearing many hats as they made sense of their expertise within their communication-related disciplines. Regardless of how faculty members made sense of their identity, none of them suggested any conflict between maintaining different identities; rather, they made sense of what they did based on the audience they served. For example, some faculty members described themselves based on their industry experience prior to entering academics, such as spending 25 years as a public relations practitioner or working in marketing and advertising. "I worked in industry broadcast and community relations," said one participant. Another indicated working as a magazine editor. Others made sense of their identity as academic research scholars, suggesting that they had been in publishing or written books. One participant tied prior experience to present faculty work: "I do research that ties back to what's happening in industry," said the faculty member.

Many faculty participants described their identity based on a specific area of expertise, suggesting high identification as a specialist. Examples included faculty members who described themselves as teaching interviewing skills, visual persuasion, group leadership, or crisis management. Other self-reported descriptions of identity included expertise in advertising, brand management, change management, employer branding, image repair, international journalism, media ethics, negotiation/conflict, public speaking, small-group communication, social media, and strategic communication. This individual identification answers the question of *who am I*? as suggested by Ashforth et al., 2008.

Several faculty members reported scholarly expertise across a broad subject area, like journalism, which included wearing multiple hats simultaneously, i.e., teaching courses that included copywriting, employee communication, content development for websites, newsletters, newspapers or magazines. This demonstrates that within the university, faculty members perceive themselves as wearing many hats as they make sense of their identity within their disciplines. Responses demonstrate that faculty members identify their skills as described across a wide-range of public-facing communication opportunities. This is based on explanations of their areas of expertise, which each of them provided, backed by real-life examples of professional or academic focus. In most cases, faculty members described themselves less by their faculty title, more by their area of expertise.

Wearing "hats" as external consultants. In addition to making sense of their role as faculty members, all faculty participants reported being able to separately describe roles *outside* their university. Using terms such as coach, consultant, editor, expert, freelancer, trainer or writer, participants reported working for a range of organizations, including large corporations, other universities or media outlets. The majority of participants also reported being remunerated for their work. One participant said that he consulted and "got paid for it." Another mentioned that he wrote articles for a publication and charged for writing them. "They'll happily pay," said another faculty member. Those who consulted saw no conflict in being compensated separately from their university faculty role. In fact, for one faculty member who worked extensively as a freelancer, suggested that the compensation was important. "You only get to eat what you kill," the participant said.

Worth noting that as consultants, faculty members demonstrated that they take their academic expertise beyond the traditional classroom, to places like non-profit organizations, i.e., Public Relations Society of America, a local women's job coalition organization, high-school debaters. One participant suggested the importance of combining multiple areas of expertise as a consultant:

> "I did workshops on public speaking training at some organizations on how managers can more effectively create relationships with subordinates, including motivational and conflict management strategies."

Further, a number of faculty members made sense of their roles as consultants for other universities, being called upon to teach a class, advise or do a presentation as an expert in their field, despite the fact that their own university did not call upon them similarly. For example, one person was hired to consult with a small university in the northern United States, guiding them through a leadership and group cohesion workshop. Another was a keynote speaker at a Big 12 conference. As consultants, they reported opportunities to share their knowledge broadly.

Self-limiting factors that impact external consulting. Faculty members were clear in how they made sense of consulting externally as well as factors that limited their consulting. Multiple reasons, including time availability, seniority of title and family considerations played out in their sensemaking that allowed them to decline external consulting opportunities. "I don't mind the bump in pay, yet the tradeoff has to be worth it," said one participant, who went on to say that consulting is "both appealing and exhausting." Several faculty members found it difficult to consult, be a full-time faculty member, travel, and find time to spend with the family. "I just don't want to travel all over and speak," said one participant. As a result, several faculty members who had reached tenure or who had worked at the university for more than ten years, indicated they no longer actively sought external consulting opportunities. This purposeful disidentification follows a line of thought put forth by Kreiner, Ashforth and Sluss (2006) suggesting that individuals undertake cognitive tactics to manage their identity based on their self-applied personal parameters.

Few faculty members proactively work to establish themselves as external consultants. Participants report that they may be tapped as consultants and that typically, they are contacted through a more organic method such as word-of-mouth recommendations; references from colleagues at other universities who are aware of their work; direct calls into their department from people looking for experts on a given topic; blogs that they write; hearing/seeing them in broadcast and/or print media. In this manner, faculty members make sense of themselves as consultants because, "She just read about my work on my blog," or, "He called in to the university, and our department secretary suggested me."

In summary, faculty members wear many hats as they maintain roles and identities outside their vocational identity as "faculty." These identities are crafted based on the audience with whom they are working, as evidenced by how faculty describe themselves based on the organization with which they work. However, regardless of their academic title, faculty members maintain their sense as experts within their communication-related disciplines and this identification or disidentification is personally managed.

Known Yet Unknown

While all faculty participants made sense of their roles as experts inside and outside of their institution, none reported being consulted for their communication expertise by their own university, except by serving on university committees as part of the service requirement associated with most faculty positions. Several participants were members of a university-wide council. In a few cases, participants mentioned writing articles for university publications, although they were quick to point out that they didn't consider writing these articles to be consulting work. These examples of strongly identified vocational identity (Gilmore & Kramer, 2019) suggest that while faculty members share their expertise as members of university councils and committees, rarely do they consider these consultant roles the same as when consulting outside of the university. As Gilmore and Kramer noted, sharing a group identity, like faculty, helps with coping and response to challenging situations, however, in the case of strongly identified faculty members, it may inhibit or prevent expanded identity that allows them to be considered as consultants for their own university. For example, when faculty members were asked whether administrators were aware of their area of expertise as consultants for public-facing communication opportunities, 100% replied, "no." Participants were unequivocal that administrators did not share the same understanding that faculty had of themselves as consultants or experts. Faculty members also suggested that administrators wouldn't know what to ask them to consult on nor did they believe that administrators would ever consider asking. In fact, one participant put it bluntly: "No. They would never ask me. I don't even know who (in administration) would ever ask. I am never going to be asked."

This demonstrates a disconnected identity between a faculty member who consults with one audience and an audience of university administrators whom they believe would never consider consulting with them. Further questions about how an administrator might find out about a faculty member's area of expertise resulted in mixed responses. Some faculty members were familiar with a university database of experts, understanding that administrators published and updated a faculty list that the media could contact for quotes or interviews. Other faculty members were vaguely familiar with the database. “I’m not really sure what my listed areas of expertise are, nor am I familiar with who actually maintains the data.” Others said they didn’t know about a formal database or any other means for keeping track of faculty experts who could consult on a topic benefitting university public-facing communication. This resulting confusion contributes to system design faults, where a structure is unclear and therefore results in a lack of understanding (Agarwal, 2012).

Faculty members responded in a variety of ways when asked why university administrators don’t consult with them. While faculty make sense of themselves as experts, they also reacted strongly to administrators who don’t share their same sensemaking. Some faculty members were blunt in their assessment: “They don’t turn to us,” one participant said, and another responded similarly by saying, “They just don’t think about it,” or “They just have no idea how to perceive my expertise.” This reaction was echoed by multiple faculty members. One faculty member wondered if having a more senior faculty title would spur administrators to ask for consulting help. Others expressed confusion as well as surprise that faculty members weren’t asked:

> “There are communication experts on our faculty, but we are not really being asked, ‘Okay, so what should we do here?’ You know?”

Further, one faculty member described the impact that faculty vocational identity played in preventing administrators from consulting with faculty, believing that their scholar identity limited their consideration beyond academic research:

> “I think one of the reasons why they wouldn’t rely on us is that they want more real world, focus-group tested data as opposed to more in-the-weeds, academic theory…Faculty is swamped with researching and putting out new research, all of which deals with a lot of really interesting ideas and how things work, but it’s not always practical in implementing something useful.

Logistics also was offered as a reason why faculty weren't consulted. A belief that it was too difficult for administrators to keep track of all of the experts on campus or that it would be presumptive to think that an administrator could discern the relevancy of a course title, like corporate advocacy, and translate it into "help with crisis communication." Finally, participants described a perception that both faculty and administrators needed to "stay in their lane" because there isn't a model in place for faculty to consult for administrators. This corroborates that strongly held vocational identity is difficult to change or bend (Ashforth et al., 2008).

> "Administrators are the experts in their areas, and it's just like anything else, they're going to feel like, you know, they should be able to handle it themselves. So, if an administrator is having to go out and get that help from someone else, then they might think that maybe they're not doing their job."

Some faculty members reacted with cynicism and even bitterness in their belief as to why they were not asked to help. One participant suggested that administrator "vanity and ego" and another mentioned "internal politics" as preventing consulting with faculty. Factors like these resulted in ill feelings among some faculty members, particularly faculty whose expertise was not considered, given they felt they had a lot to offer.

> "We have two faculty here who have written and published nationally on image repair. But administrators went out and hired an attack PR firm that spends its time attacking victims. And to ourselves, we kept saying, "no, do not, this. We have all the studies. We will show that the longer you do this, the longer you will be in litigation and the longer it will hurt you." No one asked us. And years later (our university) is still in litigation…and then they had to fire the stupid firm. I dunno, it's like being a prophet without honor in your own town."

Others reacted emotionally, indicating that they were "upset" because faculty members felt that they had much to offer yet were not asked. Another participant voiced that administrators talked about faculty with "disdain." A few made excuses on behalf of administrators by turning to a self-reflective lens that suggested their own vocational faculty identity as "provincial, parochial and siloed" might prevent consulting. Another suggested that universities are "risk averse" and that administrators respond to communication challenges through legal means, rather than turn to public relations experts who are faculty members.

> "Universities in general are so risk averse. They listen to attorneys in risk management, people who have no consideration whatsoever for public relations. At the end of the day, if (the university) doesn't get sued, they go home happy. That's a good day. But they have no consideration for the effect of this on the public image. They just don't think of us faculty as public relations experts."

In addition to language and stories, some faculty members demonstrated negative body language in discussing these perceptions. In fact, one faculty member refused to answer the question of why administrators fail to ask faculty members for help, and instead rapped his knuckles on the desk, indicating his desire to pass on answering. All told, faculty members' emotional responses and non-verbal physical cues suggest frustration that they might be constrained by their highly identified vocation as well as their perceptions of how they believe administrators see them.

Despite this, nearly all faculty participants expressed desire to help administrators with public-facing communication opportunities, demonstrating a willingness to extend the roles that they already played as both external consultants and as academic scholars. For example, faculty members felt that they could help administrators improve connections with external audiences, conduct media coaching, help with challenging communication issues, and improve public speaking skills:

> "I see these presentations (that administrators do) with visuals that are just nightmares. If you just give me an hour, we can change those presentations for the rest of your life and make them more effective and better."

Many went on to focus on how their expertise could have been utilized when the university went through a communication crisis years earlier and would have liked to have the university benefit from their academic research. Some believed that there were people in their departments who could be good sounding boards for crisis communication and that in challenging times, all available resources should be brought to bear to improve a situation which was also referred to as "home." This deep allegiance to the larger, university organization suggests that faculty members in academic departments are highly identified with their university, despite their organizational frustrations.

> "It hurt me daily (to watch what the university was going through and to not be asked to help). I knew that we had people who could probably help the administrators, and I understand that really good people are doing their best, managing that information, trying to figure out strategies. But we could have helped."

Happy to Help, As Long As…

As they had expressed when making a choice to consult externally, faculty members listed limiting factors in making a choice to consult with administrators. They suggested boundaries around their participation—a "Yes…but" set of limitations. In order to consult, they wanted to be valued for their expertise and asked to work on projects with a clear outcome or goal, but they indicated it would require a change in the current communication model to improve both the relationship and exchange of information:

> "We would have to change that model so that people don't feel like somebody is stepping on your toes if they offer you some advice. An administrator would say, 'why are you doing this? I specialize in this. This is my job, and I'm the one who's an expert in this area.' But we have to move away from that. As a professor, if we're okay with bringing in guest lecturers, and going to conferences to learn about training and teaching and curriculum, then administrators can do the same thing. They go to professional development conferences, and they're

> also going to workshops where they learn new things and aren't threatened by it. That's what we need to do."

As part of these discussions, the terms "change," "collaboration," "trust," "credibility," and "communication" were often used. "Look at how you can be creative and work to get the best of both worlds to produce a better product," one faculty member said, which echoed other faculty members who indicated they would love to help administrators with public-facing communication opportunities. Faculty members mentioned that they would look for genuine engagement, suggesting that they wanted to be involved as long as they were listened to and respected for their input. Some felt that this would require a cultural shift between the organizations. Faculty members also suggested that they would need to be sensitive to not appearing critical of their employer when sharing insights, indicating this as a difficulty of "consulting" within their own university.

> "I'd love to help (administrators) by serving as a consultant, if that's what's needed. But I don't want to be the person who's trying to do something that's not, you know, necessarily wanted or, what is the word that people use for that—when you're *stepping out of your lane*?"

However, faculty want to be asked, and they don't want to go knocking on administrator doors. As when they consult externally, faculty members don't proactively solicit others to consult with them. Rather, they want people—like administrators—to come to them. They want to be asked into the conversation, be rewarded for helping, with some saying that they would like to be compensated for their consulting work.

> "Yes, we need to be asked into those conversations. We need permission to get into those conversations rather than us knocking on the door saying, 'can we help?' It's like you kind of need administrators to say, 'we want your help'."

If a faculty member expressed hesitation in consulting with their university, lack of time ("I'm already busy enough) or concern of whether their skills would be appreciated or if they could make a difference were offered as reasons.

In summary, faculty members make sense of their identities as they wear multiple hats inside and outside the university. They can be known as consultants outside of the university yet remain unknown as consultants for their university. Further, they demonstrate willingness to consult with their university while expressing reservations and parameters that encircle their commitment. This confirms that the strength of vocational identity can also be a limiting factor that prevents collaboration with administrators while at the same time allows faculty members to expand understanding of vocational identity to become consultants outside of the university.

Administrators

In order to understand how administrators perceive the expertise of their faculty members, the second research question asked, "What administrator perceptions of faculty identity exist that affect administrators' work with faculty experts for public-facing communication opportunities?" Analysis of administrator interviews resulted in two themes: The first theme, *We Use External Expertise When We Lack Internal Resources* suggested that administrators make sense of hiring external help for their programs based on either capital constraints or the availability of timely industry/higher education expertise, like data collection and target audience. The second theme, *Faculty Consultants? We Like to Think We Utilize Our Faculty* demonstrated that administrators utilize faculty experts within tradition-bound roles on university committees or by publicizing their faculty's research in support of university scholarly pursuits. However, barriers—including physical proximity, a perception that faculty are "too busy," or that faculty research that is not considered current or useful for public-facing communication opportunities—emerged that prevented administrators from engaging with faculty experts.

Theme 1: We Use External Expertise When We Lack Internal Resources

Administrators reported involvement with both people and programs that target public-facing communication initiatives outside of the university. Broadly, one administrator was "responsible for key audiences that we want to have understand and be engaged in the university's life." Another administrator reported having a role of "looking at the big picture of how many students we admit…and doing long-term thinking about enrollment management." More specifically, administrators had responsibilities that included alumni engagement, admissions counseling, faculty research promotion, higher-level university priorities, international teams, magazine writing, marketing, media relations, social media, strategic planning, student recruitment, technology, and undergraduate domestic recruitment. Like their faculty counterparts, this role identification answered the question of *who am I*? suggested by Ashforth et al. (2008).

In describing a variety of terms for the external resources they hire (agencies, consultants, contractors, contract designers, contract script writers, event companies and planners, freelancers, vendors, video production), administrators demonstrated a familiarity in utilizing and working with these resources. Six of the nine administrators hired external resources when they deemed it was more financially prudent for the university to do so or when they needed broader, timely expertise by dedicated companies. One administrator said they'd hired a company because they had "a ridiculously expensive camera that we don't have." Yet another had partnered with a national survey-collecting company that focused on higher education. In most cases, these external resources were used tactically, i.e. a company had equipment or modeling software that the university felt was financially prohibitive to purchase or a company was able to conduct a survey or had access to a target population that the university needed to reach. An outside company has "way more than we're are capable of doing and they are experts in their field on higher education survey collecting," an administrator explained, referring to a survey company. Another administrator explained that the university had hired a PR firm who "works more nationally and has more immediate context and access to the national media." One participant said that they considered an outside consultant as a virtual member of their team, stating:

> "Outside vendors are mostly an extension of our staff. We need people who are out there thinking about what's next. We want them to be fully engulfed and engaged in the university and the university speak."

Other reasons that administrators reported hiring external companies included such things as social media ad tracking for student recruitment, market research, video production, making phone calls, and running advertising. Administrators also reported hiring a media coach for training, stating that "in the past, we hired a media coach who did some training, though now we do the media training ourselves."

While three participants indicated that they had no need to hire outside consultants, some mentioned using an informal network of informal internal and external colleagues within higher education with whom they collaborated. "No, we don't use outside consultants, but we will look outside the university sometimes for more informal guidance," an administrator said. While some participants indicated that they engaged outside consultants for university strategy and bigger-picture thinking, none voluntarily mentioned involving faculty experts in these discussions.

Administrators who work with external resources highlighted the importance of the relationship that they establish with their external companies. Participants indicate that trust, responsiveness and expertise is important in maintaining relationships. At the same time, more than one participant suggested that hiring outside vendors also allows the university to fire that company, if a relationship no longer works or meets their standards. "There's been several vendors who haven't made the cut because they don't have the same standard of excellence that we have," said one participant, who went on to say that they give the vendor an opportunity to improve but when the relationship doesn't work, "we let them go." The implications of this suggest that disengagement might be easier in a vendor-type working relationships, than in a similar relationship with a faculty colleague employed by their same university (R. M. Kramer & Cook, 2004).

> "We find that working with paid vendors, they put us at the top of their list. Sometimes it's worth the money to be that client who can demand perfection and their time at a moment's notice and just excellence. And we can provide harsh feedback without worrying about burning any bridges across the highway. You know, because we need to work with faculty on so many things that sometimes it can get messy if we're also the client, and they're the provider."

In summary, while administrators readily admit working with external vendors and consultants for public-facing programs, they don't consider engaging with faculty experts for programs with which they could use counsel or strategy development. Contributing factors include a need for timely response to market-driven programs that administrators perceive faculty members can't provide, and the need for administrators to be able to hire/fire a vendor or consultant without regard to the impact on a long-term relationship. Foundationally, administrators simply don't think of faculty members as being available to them, essentially not being on the radar screen from the beginning.

Theme 2: Faculty Consultants? We Like to Think We Utilize our Faculty.

Administrators made sense of utilizing faculty members by involving them tangentially through things like traditional committee work and by asking faculty members to represent themselves at university admissions and development events. To administrators, this type of involvement met their definition of utilizing their faculty members for public-facing communication opportunities. Yet this differed significantly from what faculty members felt they could do as experts or consultants with their administrators, since no faculty members equated their university committee work with utilizing their expertise for public- facing initiatives. This dichotomy became pronounced in how administrators described their work with faculty members.

For example, administrators reported working with faculty members in the strict definition of faculty vocational identity, asking them to serve on administrative committees on behalf of marketing and communications programs for the university. Several administrators said that they appreciated having faculty insight when faculty members served on committees, based on their connections to specific areas, like athletics. During a challenging university communications situation, an administrator said that they "had a good number of faculty involved," suggesting that they appreciated faculty participation as committee members. This same administrator said that when they wanted to do an assessment of a marketing project, they might go the department marketing chair and say, "Hey, can you sit on this committee with us?" though it was unclear if they were asking for a faculty member or other department member who came from the academic side of the university:

> “When we hired the agency, we had two or three folks from the academic side—I wouldn't say that they were faculty—but they were folks who are embedded in many of the schools and colleges that have their own communications teams. So, we invited some of those people, since some of the strategies that we were talking about implementing might cross with things that they're doing or enhance what they're doing, and they might want to pick up on some of those things. And so, it was helpful to have their insight into the working relationship that we have with the outside agency.”

Faculty had also been engaged in support of development activities held throughout the country.

> “We have had number of faculty who helped us on the development front as far as events throughout the country. But it's demanding and there's preparation time and time away to go and do the event. So, it's not for everybody and it's just not everybody's strength and it's not something that some people have time to do.”

> “There are several faculty members who over time, I've built rapport with for our on-campus visit program. One (faculty member) met with 132 students in one calendar year. And I've been working with (another faculty member) who says, our program’s revolutionary. He said, “Hey, feel free to reach out any time.” He's a big fan of program.”

Furthermore, two administrators indicated that they looked for—and then reached out to—faculty members who researched topics that might be interesting to a broader university audience and in support of university initiatives to promote their research with the media.

> “We ask faculty who would like to be interested in becoming an expert (for our media relations).”

> “So with our (university) priorities, we sort of know the highest visibility researchers in those areas who are most actively studying, you know, sort of expressions of faith or how students engage with each other through developing that undergraduate connection...we've researched them based on the needs of the university to elevate those priorities.”

Four administrators referenced utilizing faculty members for professional development, including two participants who mentioned a 2018, faculty-led presentation-skills training session where a team in admissions learned how to include personal stories of their favorite university professors when talking with potential students:

> "One summer, we asked a faculty member to help us rewrite all our speeches and train us on public speaking. She kind of like did a "train the trainer" a little and everybody went through it."

While these professional development sessions utilized faculty expertise, they were limited in scope and not repeated. Two other administrators also mentioned that their team had benefitted from a diversity presentation from a faculty member who had recently completed research on the topic of diversity.

> "We had a session with one of the folks in the business school who is researching diversity in the marketplace and how to be sensitive to how your advertising is perceived with diverse populations. We had a session with her where she walked us through what to be aware of and sensitive to things and how they come across and her expertise was invaluable. It was sort of a professional development opportunity."

An administrator also mentioned engaging with the university research department for survey work, referring to them as "in-house resources." The administrator said, "We did a survey of the university's perception within the city, and that was really helpful because those guys (faculty researchers) have a good feel for how to do some more qualitative kinds of conversations with community leaders but also have a quantitative method of collecting from others."

But when administrators were specifically asked if they worked with faculty members as consultants, they offered mixed reactions and responses. One faculty member was curt in response: "That's an area I don't want to discuss." Others were more guarded or measured in their consideration: "I'm not saying I wouldn't, but I think it's just not as convenient to work with faculty and there are just more factors and complications with doing that." Two other administrators offered that working with faculty "might be worth a conversation," but also expressed hesitation because they felt that faculty might not be aware of trends in the market compared to the experience of that of an outside consultant.

Two other administrators indicated that they had worked with a faculty member "a few years ago" or in the past. Two administrators enthusiastically said that they had "reached into the academic side" and had been helped by a faculty member who had dome some professional development work with their team. One of these administrators said that because a few faculty members had previously worked in university admissions, they "got it," implying that the faculty member understood the needs of the admissions department, which supported the relationship between the two.

Perceptions that emerged suggested that while some administrators don't consider working with faculty members, others are more open to the idea if faculty members demonstrated skills and responsiveness that would be necessary for engagement. Fundamentally, administrators made sense of their interaction with faculty only through their vocational identity as "faculty," but when asked to consider these faculty members as experts or consultants for their public-facing programs, they either had little interest ("We don't exactly go to faculty for what are the trends are in the market because they are not exactly positioned for that as well as an agency is"), or they don't know how to identify faculty who are experts, ("I don't know how I would find out about faculty").

Issues affecting administrators from engaging with faculty. Administrators state that they are concerned about access to faculty members, both in terms of perceived busy-ness of and physical access to faculty members. Administrators voiced concerns that faculty members have already-full plates and that by their very job descriptions, they do not have time for consulting. One administrator said that working with faculty was "beneficial," but that coordinating logistics to meet was challenging, particularly with faculty member's class schedules and different goals.

> "Past attempts to work with faculty in admissions is just difficult in managing the schedule differences. Faculty just seem like they are always so busy, and they have sort of have different goals than we do. They're focused on their students, their retention. We're focused on people they haven't even met yet who may or may not come, you know? I think just our priorities are totally different."

In demonstrating sensitivity to faculty workload, administrators also worried that a faculty member might not be able to serve as an advisor in a longer-term capacity. "We know that with their research load plus their class load, they're just not going to be available," said one administrator. Still, another administrator said it would be helpful if they could consult with a faculty member ("pick their brain" for advice), if it could be done quickly and in a timely manner. Administrators demonstrated sensitivity to faculty members' workloads and perceived that, if they engaged with them, it would add to their already-full schedules and commitment. With this perception, administrators did not indicate that they had sought to understand whether this was true or if they had ever asked a potential faculty consultant if they had time to engage with administrators; rather, their responses indicate that they assumed faculty vocational identity does not allow time for consulting.

Additionally, administrative departments of admissions, marketing and communications are in a building physically off campus and separated from the university campus by a freeway. "You're on two different sides of the highway. There's a physical difference…it's not convenient, really," said one administrator, which was echoed by another who said that the highway acted as a "barrier" between faculty and administrators. This prevents casual mixing between faculty and administrators, as each is unable to bump into the other in the hall or pass while walking between buildings, a feeling that was corroborated by faculty members.

Further reasons that affected administrators' engagement with faculty suggested that they felt faculty research might not be relevant, timely or applicable to their work. For example, one participant said, "I think we read some of the faculty work…but I don't think there's enough…immediacy from the top down that you need." "We're sort of looking for things in the moment," one participant said, implying that they didn't understand how faculty research could be useful in their programs. For example, on the subject of social media, one administrator was blunt, saying that he didn't believe that there was relevant research because social media was "so new," which was why they didn't work with consultants at all. Another administrator voiced similar thoughts:

> "There are people who say they're experts, but they mostly come from within the field. I don't know that there are very many experts in the academic world yet on this, the same way there would be a lot (of experts) on other subjects. There are people who have done some research in the area of social media but it's usually a much more specific area—like how people were late on social media or how people's views on race reveal themselves on social media...as opposed to 'how do I do social media better on behalf of my company, client'."

However, a couple administrators did mention that they "kept an eye on faculty research," especially for information that might be interesting to the media.

Participants described relationships they developed with faculty members as they considered how best a faculty member could be utilized with the media or at admissions' event. One administrator mentioned that a particular faculty member was "dynamite on his blog or when he does social media" but hesitated to put him in front of a large crowd. "He's got great analogies and is quotable as all get out," the participant said. "But he kind of clams up when there's a room full of people." One administrator noted that while there are a few professors "whom we really love and think are the best communicators," this participant also perceived that faculty can get intimated speaking in groups of 2,500 or higher. The administrator when on to say that they were also concerned that a faculty member would be able to transition from academic jargon to more simplified information and messages: "A faculty member needs to be able to communicate holistically and not just from their little vantage point of being a Ph.D. scholar," the participant said.

Finally, when asked if they knew how to find out about a faculty member's expertise, some administrators were aware of a faculty experts database that administration managed for use by the media. Administrators in charge of the expert database explained that a faculty member was added once they were personally identified, qualified and then trained to work with the media. When asked how a faculty member got on the list, administrators stated that they sought out new faculty members at faculty orientation sessions; had been given recent published work by a faculty member; had come across a faculty member through word-of-mouth contact; or actively sought out research that was deemed important to advance the initiatives of the university. While the media was the target audience for the database, some administrators knew about the database, while others were unfamiliar with it.

In order to find out about faculty members who could help with admissions, marketing and communications activities, participants reported learning about them "through word of mouth, other relationships or the provost's office." "Sometimes, the only way we know about faculty is when (a faculty member) initiates that they want to help," said an administrator. A few administrators also mentioned the value of the university network, since many administrators had attended the university and knew of faculty members from their undergraduate or graduate school years.

> "Many of us in this office are (this university's) grads and are may be more dialed into the campus community. A lot of the professors we had are still here, whether we graduated 15 or 20 or five years ago. So, I feel like, as an office, we have a pretty good knowledge of faculty."

In summary, administrators make sense of hiring external resources when it is more financially expeditious for the university, when they need a task completed efficiently or when they perceive that they do not have the internal expertise to complete the job. Additionally, some administrators perceive that they utilize faculty experts by asking them to serve as members of university committees and councils or, in a more limited fashion, when they require professional development for their teams. Further, they make sense of faculty roles within their traditional identity as "faculty," and administrators offer reasons that prevent engagement with faculty based on these traditionally understood silos.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

The goal of the current study was to develop a richer understanding of the sensemaking processes faculty members in academic disciplines of communication promote in order to make sense of their identities as consultants inside and outside their university. Findings suggest that faculty members give meaning to their collective experiences as consultants separate from their roles as university professors and that these meanings are socially constructed based on the audience with whom they are interacting. Additionally, a second goal of the study was to garner insight into how university administrators who work in departments of admissions, marketing, and communication perceive these faculty members as potential consultants for public-facing communication collaboration. Findings suggest that some administrators perceive that they work collaboratively with faculty members in a consulting capacity, but their work together is limited to a traditionally understood vocational identity of faculty roles.

Previous studies have demonstrated that individuals use sensemaking to understand their professional identities within organizations; however, historically defined role expectations for both university faculty and administrators may affect expectations and interactions based on socially constructed perceptions (Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). Because faculty members and administrators negotiate powerful discourses emanating from their silos of vocational identity, this study evaluated the narratives that affect their perception of each other and how this understanding influenced opportunities for collaborative work. What is reported here supports the contention that while faculty members are comfortable making sense of their roles as faculty experts inside and outside of the university, the deeply entrenched perceptions held by university administrators of these faculty members as *academics* and not *consultants* affect mutually beneficial collaboration. This has significant implications for universities and their administrators' ability to benefit from the expertise of their faculty, particularly given the dynamic market environment faced by institutions today.

The first implication grounded in the findings of the current study is faculty and administration make sense of each other in ways that that limit collaborative contributions both may make to the larger university system. These perceptions exist within the long-held notion of silos from which stem distinct, yet separate, understanding of identities. Despite the need to integrate and consolidate ideas through coordination of expertise and resources in organizations across multiple levels (Brown, 2018), faculty and administrative identities remain deeply entrenched and separate from each other. As a result, universities might fail to fully benefit from resources within their institution.

Other organizations—most notably, health care/hospital systems—have worked to break down silos in order to establish a more collaborative environment that ultimately provides a more effective and positive outcome for their audience or customers, i.e., patients in the health care system (Rogers & Nunez, 2013). In so doing, departments or experts recognize that sharing of information in a collegial fashion has broad benefits to constituents. Yet, in this study, administrators and faculty members demonstrate a silo mentality that affects each from seeing the value of the other, which may impact the communication with customers, i.e., prospective students, alumni, donors, parents, or media. Part of this narrative conflict seems structured around identities and how they are interpreted and understood. For example, administrators are comfortable hiring external resources, i.e., experts, consultants, freelancers, vendors, yet fail to recognize their faculty members as experts or consultants based on perceptions of faculty silos. Conversely, faculty are comfortable working as external consultants but fail to do so with their own administrators unless asked. Their perception that administrators aren't interested in their work perpetuates this cycle and fails to advance change.

Administrators and faculty perceptions of each perpetuate remain entrenched in silos, and the disconnect suggests that the university may miss out on opportunities to develop programs that are research based or that could otherwise benefit from input from scholarly experts. On the one hand, administrators promote faculty as experts to the media while on the other hand, they fail to use faculty expertise to benefit the university communication programs. More significantly, university administrators are charged with promoting public-facing messages for their institution's acclaimed faculty researchers. However, they fail to utilize these same acclaimed faculty experts for guidance on their own programs, which may run the risk of being perceived as inauthentic. This can have implications for a university that promotes their nationally recognized scholars yet dismisses them for consulting help.

For example, if administrators publicize the academic work of a faculty researcher specializing in image repair or brand management or social media, yet fail to collaborate with these same researchers for university public-facing communication opportunities on the same topic, what are the implications? On a relationship level, this may demonstrate that administrators have a lack of trust and/or understanding with what faculty members are charged with doing, and it may imply that their research doesn't matter. The ramifications for the university imply a "Do as I say, not as I do" mentality, which may appear contradictory. Administrators remain in their silo while forcefully continuing the narrative that keeps faculty in theirs.

On the other hand, if faculty members don't inform their own administrators how the university might benefit from their research, they remain entrenched in their silo and may miss the opportunity to advocate on behalf of their research. For example, when a faculty member's research on communication-related work, i.e., image repair, crisis management, effective public-speaking strategies, is publicly promoted by the university, the faculty member—as an educator—may want to explain how this research might benefit public-facing communication opportunities for the university, extending their role as educators, beyond their students to administrators. If faculty continue to believe that it is up to administrators to ask faculty to share their academic research with them, then faculty members might miss opportunities to advance their research agendas, and the university might miss the opportunity to benefit.

As Weick (1979) explained, people use sensemaking to give meaning to their collective experiences. Individuals do this by responding to their environments while continually receiving feedback on the accuracy of their perceptions. As such, individuals make sense of their identity based on socially constructed responses to such things as societal expectations or vocational norms. In the case of administrators and faculty, this study suggests that there are implications for how each perceives themselves individually and how it affects their perceptions of each other in ways that impact collaboration.

For example, administrators perceive that faculty members are busy enough without expanding their complex job requirements, or they worry about burning bridges if consulting with faculty isn't beneficial or doesn't meet expectations. If consulting with a faculty member doesn't work out, an administrator feels that they cannot fire a faculty member.

Many faculty members, on the other hand, perceive that administrators aren't interested in their research. Faculty members worry about overstepping their bounds with administrators. In fact, some faculty members don't have time/don't want to consult with administrators. Right in the midst of these perceptions come faculty members who report having difficulty in getting their own faculty members to be responsive to them, demonstrating that in some way, the lack of faculty availability and responsiveness perceived by administrators can also be experienced between faculty members themselves. These differing perceptions affect and impact the working relationship between administrators and faculty. Despite both groups working for the same university, they remain in vocational silos and thus, both administrators and faculty members' existing perceptions impact their collaborative work which might benefit their university.

The second implication worth consideration is the influence of physical place or structural barriers that affect faculty and administration communication. For example, the role of place has been noted as creating strong identification among high-tech entrepreneurs who chose to work in a different state than was typical for their vocation. In a study of high-tech entrepreneurs in a city in the Rocky Mountain West of the United States shows that place was significant for framing identity narratives related to occupation (Larson & Pearson, 2012). Specifically, the study showed how place shapes the ways in which people socially construct their identities.

In the case of the current study, physical separation—administrators work in an office building off campus while faculty members work in department buildings on campus—allowed each to become highly identified with their vocational identity. In turn, these vocational siloes affected the ability of faculty and administrators to readily mix together. The more strongly that individuals identify with their location, the greater the impact it has on collaboration, trust and efficiency (Hoegl & Gemuenden, 2001; Hoegl & Proserpio, 2004; Mishra & Mishra, 2009; Sole & Edmondson, 2002a). The current study confirmed previous findings. For example, because faculty members don't bump into administrators in the dining halls, on the sidewalks or in the hallways—or vice versa—this can affect the ability to build relationships between faculty and administrators, which can contribute to a significantly weaker university-as-team identification, more conflict and more coordination problems (O'Leary & Mortensen, 2010). Research suggests that physically separated teams can build trust and understanding by visiting each other's sites and communicating face-to-face (Sole & Edmondson, 2002a, 2002b). Thus, to improve collegiality and collaboration requires effort on the part of both faculty and administrators to overcome this physical barrier.

In addition to the impact caused by physical separation between faculty members and administrators, confusion exists surrounding ways to learn about or access faculty members who have expertise in areas of public-facing communication research. Communication confusion can impact teamwork and collaborative problem solving (Glaser, 1994). The current study found faculty members and administrators had varying understanding of not only who might be on a faculty experts database as well as how to find this database and why the database was created. Developing and strengthening a structured method by which both faculty and administrators have access to an actively maintained database or other repository of faculty experts can break down a perceived barrier of access and improve the ability to collaborate. Poor connectedness or access to information limits awareness of who knows what, which ultimately lowers an administrator's ability to seek help or a faculty member's willingness to participate. In the absence of knowing where to turn for information, individuals tend to contact colleagues like themselves, who in this case, either know a limited pool of faculty members, or fail to know any person who can help (Singh et al., 2010). To search effectively, a one-stop-shop, faculty-as-expert database could be actively maintained. Transparency as to who is in the database, what are the qualifications in order to be in the database, and expectations of being included should be clear to both faculty and administrators. Then, access to the database should be broadly and easily available to both faculty and administrators, in order to improve collaboration and collegiality.

The final implication of this study is that faculty and administration have constructed conflicting definitions of each other that limit a broader understanding of who each group is and what they are allowed to contribute to the larger university system. While administrators are comfortable utilizing external resources and consultants for university programs and do so readily, their narratives suggest they either don't perceive of or make sense of their internal faculty experts or they aren't aware of their consultant role for these same programs.

Faculty members, on the other hand, simultaneously toggle between their well-defined role as university faculty members while at the same time work as consultants, a defined role for which they feel rewarded and recognized. They wish to be consulted by their university, and they have definite, research-based opinions as to how they might contribute to these public-facing communication opportunities. But because faculty members fail to redefine their roles as expert consultants to their university as well as neglect to communicate this with administrators, these limited definitions prevent them from advancing their research-based knowledge for the benefit of the university.

Part of the narrative conflict here is that both sides use different terms and/or definitions, perhaps with intent. The definitions, i.e., consultant vs. faculty member, expert vs. scholarly researcher, or administrator vs. professor, exacerbates this narrative conflict. For example, if a faculty member who is a national expert in his/her discipline is considered by an administrator as a faculty member "from their little vantage point of being a PhD scholar," the intent to define that faculty member—and ultimately all faculty members—into a limited role perpetuates a narrow definition, keeping everyone in their silo, which prevents change. In this case, sensemaking keeps everyone in a traditional framework of vocational identity, preventing administrators from utilizing faculty experts. In so doing, a narrative that faculty members are "just scholars" or "just professors" is maintained. Conversely, when faculty members play the Monday-morning quarterback, casting aspersions on university programs or messages that they perceive negatively because administrators "didn't ask them," perpetuates their expectations that administrators aren't team members nor open to new ideas.

In higher education, a term with a limited definition is *faculty service*, traditionally understood as an expectation that faculty serve on university committees, advisory councils or do community work. Administrators consider that they do work with faculty, which naturally fits within this definition. But without expanding the definition, it prevents administrators from asking these same faculty members for counsel and guidance for public-facing communication programs. For example, administrators readily state that they join with or ask faculty members to serve on committees, which fits the definition of "working together." However, in this limited capacity, administrators miss additional benefits in working with faculty members as consultants to help evaluate public-facing communication messages, strategies, and programs that can be implemented based on proven, academic research. Unless the term "service" is understood to incorporate these activities, faculty members are not considered. As such, administrator sensemaking keeps faculty member siloed identity in place, maintaining perception within traditional vocational structures which blocks change and thus, impacts consideration of expanded roles and opportunities for collaboration.

Conversely, some faculty members loosely define some of their consultant work as part of their service. Faculty members could further enhance this definition by expressing their willingness to help administrators as consultants—whether paid or as part of their faculty role. While faculty members consult outside of the university, which could loosely be defined as paid service, they could work to expand administrators' understanding of their role as faculty experts in providing service to university administrators.

By adhering to limited definitions, both administrators and faculty members remain in their silo or in their lane, and as long as they continue to define each other as X, they don't need to perceive them as Y or Z. Broadening sensemaking requires a significant change by both administrators and faculty members in order for the university to benefit. Faculty and administrators would need to reconsider how they perceive each other's narratives, in order to engender improved trust and collaboration to benefit and public-facing university. Stripping away an antiquated notion of identity expands the applicability of faculty research and may benefit university programs, especially during times of communication turbulence and market change.

Study Limitations and Future Research

This study recognized how entrenched identities or roles of faculty members, separate from their external identities as consultants/exerts, affect university administrators' perception of them as consultants for university programs. Limitations of this study must be considered for future replicability and transferability.

First, this study's sample was limited to a single, mid-sized, private, Christian university in the south-central United States. Researchers should consider replicating the study with a larger sample size at geographically diverse, private and public institutions as well as those without religious affiliation. In addition, researchers could determine if institution size affects the willingness of participants to speak.

A second study limitation relates to the sample size of faculty who were interviewed in the disciplines of communication. While study participants were gender and title balanced, they had been employed by the university for an average of 16 years. Future studies might include faculty members who have been employed by the university for a shorter time to learn if responses are impacted. Additionally, broadening the study to include faculty members in other disciplines like business and marketing, may provide greater insight into faculty perceptions. Care should be taken to include administrators in departments such as public relations, advertising, alumni relations, which may be housed within departments labeled differently from university to university. A wider breadth of administrators within such departments may also provide greater insights into administrator perceptions.

A third study limitation involves how different organizational structures at a university impact the results. For example, this institution had an organizational structure where the department of admissions reported to the Chief Budget Officer while the marketing and communications department reported to the Chief Marketing Officer. Neither department reported into the academic side of the university. Future research should consider universities which have reporting structures that tie admissions, marketing and communications departments into the academic side of the institution and/or through the provost's office which may provide insight into the significance of the perceived divide between faculty and administrators.

A fourth study limitation is to understand if an off-campus, physically disconnected location for administrative departments impacts collaboration and thus, perceptions, for administrators with their faculty colleagues. Replicating this study at a university where faculty and administrators reside together on a physically contiguous campus may offer additional insight into the role that physical distance plays in sensemaking and collaboration between faculty and administrators.

Finally, future research might consider exclusively focusing on the role of academic department chairs, who straddle both identities of administrators and faculty members. For example, these department chairs are administrators in charge of managing academic departments while at the same time, they remain scholarly experts within their discipline. Navigating the tension between being an administrator charged with keeping faculty members in their roles, simultaneously promoting those same faculty members' expertise to administrators while concurrently, managing their own desire to make contributions grounded in their area of scholarly expertise might prove fruitful grounds for further study.

Conclusion

These limitations notwithstanding, the current investigation provides substantial evidence in support of advocating for fundamental changes for entrenched perceptions between faculty and administrators. This requires breaking down silos in order to promote more collaboration between faculty and administrators along with a desire to move past the notion of shared governance and traditional committee structures as the only form of faculty/administration collaboration. This requires a willingness to change and revise restrictive definitions that limit resource potential within a university.

Recognizing that identities of faculty and administration are discursively and historically formed in conjunction with enduring discourses of occupations, the results of this study suggest that identity silos for both faculty and administrators remain deeply entrenched. But, if these identities are socially constructed, they can be socially deconstructed and replaced with a much more functional and collaborative system that benefits everyone—as is being instituted in health care and in complex business environments. Thus, understanding how university administrators can benefit from the expertise of their faculty members remains significant in light of the challenges many institutions of higher education face in the United States. Issues of rapidly rising tuition costs, massive student debt, and the continued assault on the credibility and/or necessity of a college degree, mandate that traditional university models which prevent a university from maximizing all of the resources at its disposal must be changed. Consideration of a newly defined collaborative model may help universities to survive and thrive.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Guide for Faculty

Note: Questions were customized based on areas of expertise.

Demographics:

Participant name, title, length of time employed by university

Professional academic work outside of the university:

Tell me a bit about any "industry" experience that you may have had prior to coming to the university or that you currently do. Do you consult externally? If yes, what do you call it? What do you do? Do you like consulting? How do people find out about you as a consultant?

Perceptions of academic role:

What are your areas of expertise? Have you been published or otherwise recognized in other ways as a scholarly expert?

Perception of your role as a communication expert:

Does your university know about your area of expertise? Can you share with me whether you believe your department members are considered or recognized by those who develop (social media, image repair, diversity, speeches, films, communications programs, etc.) programs for the university?

I read that you consider yourself an (image-repair specialist, social media expert, diversity scholar, etc.) and that you have researched the implications of (new media on traditional image-repair tactics, diversity challenges, Title IX considerations, etc.). Can you tell me how this area of expertise has been utilized by your university administrators?

Are you consulted as an academic "expert" by an outside organization or by your university for situations involving (public affairs, social media, crisis communication, public relations strategy, admissions, speeches, organizational leadership, etc.)?

If you haven't been consulted by an outside company or by your university, why do you think that is? If your university asked, would you consult? Why or why not?

Have you ever wished that your university would ask you to help them on public-facing opportunities?

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide for Administrators

Note: Questions were customized based on areas of expertise.

Demographics:

Participant name, title, length of time employed by university

Professional background:

Tell me what you do at your university? What are your areas of expertise?

Working with consultants:

Are you in a position to work with/hire external consultants? If so, what do you call them?

Tell me why you hire consultants. What do they do for you? How are they paid? Do they have an ongoing relationship with you/your department? What are some of the examples of "consultants" you have hired? What are the reasons you hire them?

If you can't hire a consultant, where do you turn for advice, expert help on your public-facing projects?

Perception of university resources:

If you need internal expertise on a topic that relates to communication (sticky situation, Title IX concerns, speech, attracting males to apply, study abroad, speaker coaching, social media research, etc.), whom would you ask? Are there any university resources to which you could turn?

Do you ever work with faculty as consultants? If yes, how have they been useful? If no, why not?

If you thought about accessing academic experts (faculty) within the university for help with communication issues, would you be interested? What might prevent you from utilizing these experts? What do you wish they could do for you?

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