

**Online Video Content's Impact on the Supportive Relationship
Between Sport Organization and Sports Journalist:
A Case Study of the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club and the
Local Television Sports Journalists Who Cover Them**

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Abstract

Widespread acceptance of the Internet has created an opportunity for sport organizations to become their own online video content creator and publisher. This avenue allows sport organizations to utilize the two-way symmetrical model of public relations (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 15) to participate in a “true” back-and-forth dialogue with their fans that informs current and future content production. However, this new opportunity circumvents the traditional mass media pathways, which may also have the consequence of creating competition between sport organizations and sports journalists. To explore this under-represented research area, this study employed a multimethod design to gain better understanding and answer this study’s lone research question: What impact has the increase in online self-published video content had on the supportive working relationship between sport organizations and the local television sports journalists who cover them on a regular basis? Using the case study of the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club and television sports journalists from the Minneapolis/St. Paul media market, this study identified competition between sport organization and sports journalists, and that competition’s apparent impact on the working relationship between the two parties. This study also finds that local television sports journalists’ denial of competition is a form of boundary-work (Gieryn, 1983) in response to this evolving working relationship.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Journalists and public relations practitioners have worked together since the early days of newspapers, yet the relationship has often been uneasy because of the mistrust each industry has about the other (DeLorme & Fedler, 2003; Macnamara, 2014). However, based on the public relations practitioner's ability to subsidize journalistic content with information, expert sources, and story ideas (Turk, 1985; Turk & Franklin, 1987), journalists have granted public relations practitioners access to their viewers, listeners, or readers by way of story placement (Aronoff, 1975; Harmon & White, 2001). In the early days of professional baseball, newspaper beat writers helped develop player heroism and baseball's iconic status as "America's Pastime" by taking part in a symbiotic relationship that allowed baseball to grow its audience through extensive publicity, while the game's increasing importance also brought celebrity and job security to the beat writers who were so entrenched and connected with the teams they covered (Roessner, 2015). More recently, however, public relations practitioners have accused journalists of distorting the intended messages of these subsidies (Curtin, 1999), and acting as gatekeepers between the organization and audiences (Aronoff, 1976; Lloyd & Toogood, 2015).

Today, the Internet provides public relations practitioners the opportunity to circumvent the traditional mass communication pathways, and provide unaltered messages directly to their intended mass audience (Esrock & Leichty, 2000; Hill & White, 2000; Kent & Taylor, 1998; Park & Reber, 2008). This new-found ability to

deliver a strategic message directly to the target audience is unlike any previous tool public relations practitioners had to accomplish their goals, because it allows them complete control of the medium as well as the message (Filloux & Gasee, 2014; White & Raman, 1999).

The ability to create in-house content that appears quite similar to the professional journalism produced by television stations, employing the familiar packaging techniques of traditional journalism, and often utilizing former journalists themselves who have turned to public relations for employment, is a new hybrid of journalism and promotion often referred to in the literature as corporate journalism (Filloux & Gasee, 2014). Although prevalent within many traditional business organizations, these television news-like content production techniques are commonplace in the sport industry, especially within North America's high profile professional leagues like Major League Baseball (MLB), National Football League (NFL), National Basketball Association (NBA), and the National Hockey League (NHL).

The information dissemination role once played, almost exclusively, by traditional journalists is now part of many organizations' strategic plans in communicating with their target audience (Filloux & Gasee, 2014; McDermott, 2013). Additionally, the Internet's ability to send and receive communication, rather than just broadcasting to these audiences, is practically the definition of the two-way symmetrical model of public relations (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 15). Organizations publish content via the Internet, collect the audience's feedback, and then use that feedback to alter or

validate the organization's online communication strategy. This two-way symmetrical model of public relations has long been the goal of organizations that strive to truly understand their audience, allow the feedback to inform their messaging and decision-making, and has been viewed as one of the most beneficial forms of strategic communication (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 15).

Sport organizations, however, may benefit even more than traditional organizations with the use of the two-way symmetrical model due to their audience's, or fans', interest in becoming more than involved with the organization; they want to get so close to the organization that they become part of the team (Hoye, Nicholson, & Smith, 2008; Smith & Stewart, 2010). Providing fans the ability to communicate directly with their favorite sport organization, and having the ability to respond, sometimes in nearly real-time communication, shows why sport communication and sport management literature considers the two-way symmetrical model the "gold standard" for sport public relations (Cleland, 2009; Shilbury & Rowe, 2012).

Given the ability to take part in a mediated dialogue with their fans, and produce online video content that focuses on the sport organization's intended message, some sport franchises and NCAA athletic programs have implemented policies that limit access provided to outside media (Sherman, 2015), or, in the case of the professional soccer team Swindon Town F.C., ban traditional media from conducting interviews or covering non-game day events all together (Borden, 2015). As the Swindon Town F.C. owner, Lee

Power, put it, ““If I was a head of Man[chester] United or a Liverpool, this is something I’d be pushing to do, absolutely ... it makes too much sense” (Borden, 2015).

Mark Cuban, the owner of the NBA’s Dallas Mavericks, used a personal blog to publish his thoughts on the future of sports journalism and whether these media members should be given the access to cover his, or any other, sport organization.

“I’m not sure I have a need for beat writers from ESPN.com, Yahoo, or any website for that matter to ever be in our locker room before or after a game. I think we have finally reached a point where not only can we communicate any and all factual information from our players and team directly to our fans and customers as effectively as any big sports website, but I think we have also reached a point where our interests are no longer aligned. I think those websites have become the equivalent of paparazzi rather than reporters” (Cuban, 2011).

Cuban’s critique appeared targeted at sports journalists who work exclusively online; however, the boundaries between media have blurred since his blog post and every sports journalist in the locker room before or after games has some online presence, in one form or another. Therefore, Cuban (2011) asks the question, “By competing with them as an information source, can we pre-empt their negativity with information that does a better job of selling the Mav[erick]s?”(Cuban, 2011)- Or when Cuban (2011) proposes limiting access with the intent to reduce negativity, does he suggest moving towards a change in this traditionally supportive working relationship between sport organizations and sport journalists? This echoes the observed power shift in the PR-journalist relationship detailed by Lloyd & Toogood (2015), and plainly described by Swindon Town F.C. owner, Lee Power, ““At the end of the day, the local paper needs the football club more than the football club needs the local paper”” (Borden, 2015).

With that in mind, this study aimed to answer the question of competition concerns created by the ability for sport organizations to create their own online video content, and considered the future of the working relationship between television sports journalist and sport public relations practitioners working on behalf or within sport organizations.

This was accomplished using data collected during a summer-long participant observation of Major League Baseball's (MLB's) Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, combined with eight semi-structured depth interviews conducted with local television sports journalists. This multimethod design (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Cronbach & Meehl, 1955) was chosen with the goal of providing the most support for the validity of findings discovered during this research, and as a way of providing more depth and breadth to this underrepresented area of research.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

The advent of the Internet, combined with affordable and user-friendly video production equipment, has created an opportunity for nearly anyone with an interest in creating their own digital stories and content to do so. In recent history, this role of published content creator or at least gatekeeper of what content became a story, was the domain of trained traditional journalists.

Historically, journalists have relied upon college and university training (Folkerts, 2014), along with codes of ethics, objective standards, and other normative principles established by media organizations and professional societies to differentiate themselves from other newsgatherers (Deuze, 2005; Kaplan, 2009). However, given recent technological advancements, traditional journalists have new peers taking part in Internet content production. The established ethical, moral, objective, and normative self-imposed distinctions (Blaagaard, 2013) may not be enough for an audience to recognize a difference between journalist and non-journalist created content. That kind of credibility has been shown to be difficult for audiences to distinguish, especially when provided in the form of video-based content (Kioussis & Dimitrova, 2006; Lee, Park, Lee, & Cameron, 2010). With this in mind, journalists have expressed competition concerns given the new pathways to publication provided by the Internet (Edgecliffe-Johnson, 2014).

Considering the historically supportive relationship between sports journalists and sport organizations, combined with the advantages of having an outside party present an

organization's message (L'Etang, 2013; Lowden, 2015), and the agenda-setting history of strategic messaging in the mass media that allows organizations to dictate what the media is talking about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Turk & Franklin, 1987; Zimmerman, Clavio, & Lim, 2011), sport organizations appear to have ample reasoning for a continued supportive working relationship with sports journalists.

With a historic perspective, this chapter explores how technological advancements, combined with sociological changes, may have an impact on the working relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists. This chapter also examines sport organization in-house content production and the supportive role sport organizations have assumed as information subsidizer and source provider for sports journalists. Finally, this chapter provides insight into what makes sport organizations and sports fans unique and well-suited for the two-way model of public relations.

Technological & Sociological Changes to the Public Relations-Journalism Relationship

Filloux & Gasse (2014) and Edgecliffe-Johnson (2014) identify the technological and sociological changes that allow for an increase in non-journalism Internet content creation, which may affect the working relationship between public relations practitioners and the journalists covering their organizations. With the ability organizations now have to produce news-like content and publish it on the Internet, this phenomenon may lead to a change in the supportive relationship public relations practitioners have held in supporting journalists in creating stories (Alterman, 2015).

Historically, public relations professionals have often played the role of content provider in their relationship with journalists by delivering the subsidies of story ideas, information, and sources with arguable influence on the final product (Grünberg & Pallas, 2013; Turk, 1985; Turk & Franklin, 1987). However, the direct-to-audience approach afforded by the Internet has allowed public relations specialists a way of connecting their clients and the audience without the need to follow the traditional pathways of mass media (Edgecliffe-Johnson, 2014; Filloux & Gasse, 2014). Given the growing imbalance found in the number of people working in public relations compared to those in journalism, along with the salary disparity between those two careers, public relations, and, by extension, the practice of organizations creating their own in-house content is expected to grow (Williams, 2014). With public relations growing, the number of journalists in newsrooms shrinking, and Internet-based technologies allowing for content creation and dissemination by non-journalists, what does this mean for the future of the working relationship between journalists and public relation practitioners?

In order to understand and evaluate how this phenomenon may be changing this relationship, this section will explore the public relations-journalism relationship during three specific episodes in public relations history: Press Agency, Publicists & Spin Doctors, and Two-Way Symmetrical PR.

Press Agency. Much of the historical public relations literature starts their chronologic journey with Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays, two men often associated with legitimizing the profession (Bivins, 2013; Olasky, 1984; Russell & Bishop, 2009; Zoch,

Supa, & VanTuyll, 2014). These two “fathers of public relations” will be further examined within the Publicists & Spin Doctor section of this chapter, but both are credited with producing some of the first literature on the subject of public relations, providing explanations for certain actions, and examples of best practices (Olasky, 1984; Russell & Bishop, 2009). However, according to Xifra & Collell (2014), history provides examples of public relations within the medieval time period; Lloyd & Toogood (2015, p. 1) view the Bible as the first piece of public relations work, while Grunig & Hunt (1984, p. 15) find examples of the practice in ancient history with “public relations-like activities used by ancient Greeks and Romans” (p. 15). All three pieces suggest the history of public relations likely mirrors that of civilization itself.

While there are differences of the chronology and official beginnings of public relations, there is agreement on the original purpose of profession. Public relations specialists have always sought to create or change opinions, gain attention, and reach the largest audience possible with a mass mediated message (Bivins, 2013, p. 508; Page & Adams, 2014, p. 684). Or put another way, Grunig & Hunt (1984, p. 8) explain that public relations focuses on “the management of communication between an organization and its publics” (p. 8). However, some practitioners like the early press agents, managed that communication with a bit more flash than their predecessors and many of the public relations specialists to follow. That exuberant persona may be one of the reasons so much of the industry’s relationship literature appears to start with this period in public relations history. Although, according to Grunig & Hunt (1984), press agents also represented the

“first formal public relations specialists,” and created many of the legends and stories about larger-than-life characters such as Daniel Boone, Buffalo Bill Cody, and Davy Crockett (p. 27). Never letting the facts stand in the way of a good story, press agents blurred the lines between myth and reality, and this practice led to a mutually-beneficial, yet strained, relationship between press agents and newspaper journalists (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, pp. 27–28). While providing interesting stories for newspaper journalists, and fascinating stories for the newspaper readers, the literature shows the press agent era in the journalism-public relations relationship as one dominated by PR’s need to “trick” journalists into granting them coverage (Russell & Bishop, 2009). Press agents were often associated with manipulation using “gifts and bribes, extravagant language, and stunts and hoaxes” in order to gain free publicity in the pages of the newspaper (Russell & Bishop, 2009, p. 93). While press agents may have dabbled in deception, their help provided much-needed content for newspapers, especially those papers that were printing more than one edition per day.

When defining this mixed relationship between early press agents and newspapers, the literature frequently points to the showmanship and actions of one man, P.T. Barnum, who is often accused of creating spectacle for spectacle sake in an attempt to receive attention from local newspaper journalists (Russell & Bishop, 2009). In the interest of getting his name into the local newspaper, Barnum would write and send stories that might be deemed newsworthy by an editor, although the credibility of those stories was questionable (DeLorme & Fedler, 2003, p. 104; Harris, 1981). These antics

left journalists resenting Barnum for the news-like promotion he helped them produce, while Barnum “said he didn’t care if newspapers attacked him as long as they spelled his name right. ‘There’s no such thing as bad publicity,’ was the credo of the press agent” (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 28). This idea of the magnificent story or spectacle is often mentioned in the literature to represent the grandiose and outlandish nature of press agents, but L’Etang (2014) points out the public relations tactics may have simply been a representation of the time in which those public relations specialists worked and lived. Therefore, we should include the appropriate “socio-cultural and political contexts” when considering how public relations specialists accomplished their work (L’Etang, 2014, p. 659). Similar enthusiasm and preference for the colorful story over a factual story was shared in the “yellow press” of the day (Kobre, 1964). Providing “free” publicity to press agents, rather than concerns about credibility, seemed to create the biggest relationship issues during this episode.

However, despite the practice of press agents, as well as many journalists, fabricating and embellishing stories as was commonplace during the 19th Century (Russell & Bishop, 2009), there were some well-established newspapers (e.g., The New York Times) concerned with trying to maintain influence and credibility developed over time, and capitalize on that authority (Kobre, 1964). Often, those more influential newspapers had larger circulations, and press agents like Ivy Lee were not interested in losing out on those audiences. This may have been one of the reasons that led to Ivy Lee’s interest in rebranding and legitimizing his profession (Hiebert, 1966). Lee started

with a name change, ridding himself of the negative connotations associated with press agent and replacing it with the neutrality of publicist, but wholesale changes and a new approach to relations with the press were soon to follow (Russell & Bishop, 2009).

Publicists & Spin Doctors. Given the overzealous actions of 19th Century press agents, specifically the disregard many in the profession showed for truth and honesty, the expansion of investigative journalism and muckraking threatened the established practices of public relations and their ability to keep certain aspects of a story hidden (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 31). Before becoming a press agent, Ivy Lee was a newspaper journalist, and understood the image problem his new profession had and the stigma journalists associated with those working in the field of public relations (Russell & Bishop, 2009). Lee also understood it was only a matter of time before a good journalist would discover the true story behind the “spin,” so he suggested telling the truth (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 31).

Lee penned the *Declaration of Principles*, a work that attempted to legitimize the public relations profession through transparency and access with a code of ethics and conduct for him and other newly-dubbed publicists to follow (Hiebert, 1966). While Lee’s *Declaration of Principles* is viewed as an important piece of public relations literature, and one of the reasons scholars point to Lee as the creator of what is now considered modern day public relations, there are hints within the literature suggesting this publication may have simply been another attempt by Lee to “spin” a situation (Hallahan, 2002, pp. 301–302). Examples like his handling and fabrication of stories

during the Colorado coal strike of 1913-14 show that Lee did not always follow his own principles (Hallahan, 2002; Pavlik & McIntosh, 2013, p. 363). The *Declaration of Principles* did, however, spell out what publicists of Lee's day should provide journalists (sources and other news subsidies) while offering an explanation for the possibly misunderstood actions of his public relations specialist contemporaries (Russell & Bishop, 2009).

Scholars often connect Lee's *Declaration of Principles* with Bernays' *Doctrine of Public Opinion* as guides to the practical work of public relations specialists (Olasky, 1984; Russell & Bishop, 2009). Neither the doctrine nor the declaration avoids the fact that public relations specialists may not be forthcoming with both sides of the story, but Lee makes certain to point out that all of the information provided to the press by publicists is factual (Russell & Bishop, 2009; Wakefield, 2013; Zoch et al., 2014).

Another man with whom many public relations chronologies start is Edward Bernays, often referred to as the "father of public relations." Bernays' *Doctrine of Public Opinion* provides psychological support, reasoning, and a guideline for public relations specialists of the time (Olasky, 1984). Bernays wrote multiple articles and books on manipulating and controlling public opinion, and fought to remove what he believed to be the unduly associated negative connotations surrounding the word propaganda (Olasky, 1984). In this way, Bernays was completely transparent about the "persuasive purpose" of public relations (McBride, 1989, p. 10). Bernays believed in the science of persuasion and bringing those findings into the marketplace with a new generation of public

relations specialists (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 38). While Lee's background in journalism may have led to his interest in working with reporters and editors to do his work as a publicist, or at least appearing to work with journalists, Bernays saw journalists more like a necessary evil in the process of mediating a strategic message (McBride, 1989).

Another difference between the two major texts of Lee and Bernays is that Lee's *Declaration of Principles* appears to be an attempt at alleviating the mistrust the media had for his profession, and repair the strained relationship between journalism and public relations (Hiebert, 1966; Russell & Bishop, 2009). Alternatively, Bernays' *Doctrine of Public Opinion* argued for a manipulative approach to the relationship with the audience as well as the media in general (Olasky, 1984). Despite this focus on public relations' attempt to influence and control journalism, both understood the power associated with journalism and the dissemination of the message. For example, Lee attempted to gain favor with journalists by providing them with subsidies, sources, and stories to fill their newspapers, while Bernays utilized science and psychological techniques to influence and "manipulate public opinion" (Olasky, 1984). Bernays' beliefs had a strong connection to agenda-setting theory as shown in the opening two sentences of his book *Propaganda*:

"The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country" (Bernays, 1928, p. 37).

From that quote, it is clear Bernays understood the power of the media, but the manipulative nature of his argument does little to establish a better relationship with the journalists who provided access to the public he hoped to influence. The most important factors keeping these two groups together continued to be journalism's (in this case newspaper's) nearly-exclusive access to the mass audiences public relations wanted and needed to reach, while journalism continued to rely heavily on the story, information, and source subsidies provided by public relations specialists (Turk, 1985). Journalists continued to believe they were only getting half the story from public relations specialists, yet the literature provides multiple content analysis-based research studies showing the "knowledge" of that deception didn't stop journalist from utilizing the subsidies and sources provided by public relations; the majority of news content begins with information provided by a public relations specialist (Aronoff, 1976; Macnamara, 2014). In addition, Anderson and Lowrey (2007) find that in many cases, public relations specialists provide the most applicable and influential sources for a story's topic.

However, due to newsprint scarcity and the increase in advertising following World War I, the newspaper industry took a stand against public relations and "spacegrabbers," stories that took up column inches but were merely viewed as providing organizations with free advertising (Lucarelli, 1993). Lucarelli (1993) suggests that this early campaign to rid newspapers of "spacegrabbers" could have added to the challenging and disintegrating relationship between journalism and public relations. In many ways, this issue provided, and may have even forced, public relations to find other avenues and

approaches to accomplishing the goals of the profession. Public relations invested in a more marketing-driven approach to the trade, discovering additional information with explicit data relating to their target audience, rather than utilizing a traditional broad-ranging journalistic medium (e.g., newspaper, radio, and television) to find the largest audience regardless of whether or not they are the intended audience (Strenski, 1991). This research-based approach to public relations, and learning more about the audience, was used by both Lee and Bernays, although both were interested in the data gathered as helping them find a better way to manipulate and influence the audience (Wakefield, 2013, p. 131). Grunig & Hunt (1984, p. 37) call this the two-way asymmetrical model of public relations, asymmetrical because it allows for one-way communication between the public relations specialist and the audience. This, of course, would also alter the relationship between public relations and journalism as power continued to shift away from journalism and towards the public relations specialists. This additional shift in the power relationship between journalism and public relations progressed because of the beginnings of what would come to be known as the two-way symmetrical model of public relations (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, pp. 41–42). The asymmetrical idea of wanting to know more about the audience, and understand the audience, changed how public relations specialists approached their craft, but the addition of actual feedback from that audience (a symmetrical conversation) transformed the way public relations mediated their messages and provided something traditional journalism could not, the possibility of

a two-way conversation and a balanced relationship with the original content creator (Grunig, 1993, p. 128).

Two-Way Symmetrical Model of PR. Grunig & Hunt (1984) credit Scott M. Cutlip and Allen Center's work on public relations in 1952 as the first mention of the two-way symmetrical model, but they note that the first organizations were just starting to utilize this model in the early to mid-1980s (p. 42). The idea, as explained by Grunig & Hunt (1984) is for organizations to rely on public relations specialists to provide an honest and open dialogue between the organization and their audience, providing for give and take (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 42). Pavlik & McIntosh (2013) say the two-way symmetrical model is just as focused on "building mutual understanding and relationships as much as on influencing public opinion" (p. 365). In other words, establishing this mutually-participatory relationship leads to stronger connections between the audience and the organization. Therefore, the audience is more inclined to believe an organizational message, because they feel a connection to the creation of organizational policies (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 43).

While establishing this kind of relationship through the two-way symmetrical model is easier said than done, this approach does provide for a drastic change in the relationship between journalism and public relations based on traditional media's focus on broadcasting to, rather than receiving messages from, the audience. Examples of common two-way symmetrical public relations, or at least investor relations, are apparent in the way publicly traded companies hold "press conferences" for the benefit of their

investors and shareholders (Kelly, Laskin, & Rosenstein, 2010). This is not a perfect example of what Grunig & Hunt (1984, p. 43) described as the two-way symmetrical model of public relations, because these large press conference-like situations often do not allow for the symmetrical exchange between the audience and the organization. However, this model does provide for something quite important to this study, the idea of circumventing the traditional media with a direct-to-audience information push. Even before the Internet, these pseudo press conferences and teleconferences did not require traditional journalists to take part in the dissemination process, and were still quite effective in pushing information to the target audience (Kelly et al., 2010). Although there is some debate about the differences and separation between investor relations from public relations, often focusing on differences in intended audiences (Kelly et al., 2010), both strive to relay a strategic message to a mass audience. This new approach, showed public relations specialists that they did not need to rely on traditional media to accomplish their goals, and set the stage for even more autonomy that would come with the advent of the Internet.

Both Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays made strides towards the practice of the two-way symmetrical model of public relations, although they both were more concerned with gaining information than creating truly symmetrical communication between the organization and the audience (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, pp. 39–40). With an interest in the audience's opinion as well as their demographics, the two-way symmetrical model of public relations seems at odds with the early work of press agents, publicists & spin

doctors. In addition to many advances, the two-way symmetrical model of public relations returns to Lee's ideals and principles of "truth," suggesting no need to hide the facts or "spin" a story, because all information should already be included in the open symmetrical communication. Johnson & Johnson's handling of Tylenol tampering in 1982 provides a perfect example of this openness and honesty leading to a favorable outcome in a difficult situation (Pavlik & McIntosh, 2013, p. 365).

At the same time, the two-way symmetrical model of public relations has its naysayers. Brown (2006) proposed, that the idea of two-way symmetry had a goal of trying to, "distinguish public relations from advertising" (p. 207). While this was a novel idea at the time, recent advances in technology and mass media now allow for two-way communication within advertising (Brown, 2006, p. 207), as well as any other practice interested in communicating via the Internet and social media. Other scholars have argued that the two-way symmetrical model of public relations is a utopian fallacy (Duffy, 2000) or hegemonic strategy (Roper, 2005). That being said, the model does provide scholars an idea of what the future of public relations may look like as specialists continue to find new ways to explore the advantages of symmetrical communication provided by technological advancement (Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008).

Public relation's history has shown an interest in changing to meet the needs of clients, as well as their intended audience. What started as press agency's attempt to do whatever was necessary to get a story in the newspaper, shifted to the publicist's interest

in controlling the message, rather than a focus on disseminating the message, and then prompted an attempt to create a two-way dialogue between organization and audience.

Public Relations, Journalism, and the Internet. The relationship between journalism and public relations has changed once again, and this time the catalyst is recent technological advances, specifically the Internet. The web provides public relations specialists a new pathway to their audience. “The World Wide Web can be considered the first public relations mass medium in that it allows managed communication to flow directly between organizations and mass audiences without the gatekeeping function of other mass media; content is not filtered by journalists and editors” (White & Raman, 1999, p. 406). There is no need for the manipulative tactics employed by Lee and Bernays, or for the extravagant presentations of the press agent; modern day public relations specialists can produce their own content without the need to convince journalists of its newsworthiness or worry about whether or not the journalistic “gatekeepers” will change their intended message for the sake of credibility (Creamer & Parekh, 2009). These changes also allow public relations practitioners to continue their exploration of the two-way symmetrical model within a mediated landscape. The two-way communication provided by the Internet allows for more connection with the target audience and often does so in real-time, which gives public relations specialist a better opportunity to utilize this approach and, once again, without the reliance on traditional media.

Despite journalism's attempt to shadow the success of the two-way symmetrical model within public relations as a feature of the new technologies of communication, the industry has had difficulty giving up the control associated with a true two-way symmetrical model (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, pp. 39–40). Research has shown that, even while attempting to utilize a two-way dialogue combined with the technological advances provided by the Internet to actually achieve symmetry, journalists fall short of accomplishing the goal (Feighery, 2011). Traditional journalists continue to attach themselves to the role of content creator as opposed to collaborating with the audience in order to create content (Feighery, 2011).

Lewis (2012) further explored this struggle in the blurring of boundaries between who controls the content when creation becomes a collaborative process. Understanding this balance is further complicated when one party, professional journalists, have their livelihood at stake in this struggle which leads to the boundary work Carlson & Lewis (2015) describe as taking place in this new era of journalism. How does one define journalism and decide who remains within the boundaries of journalism when everyone has the opportunity to participate in journalism-like activities? Carlson & Lewis (2015) suggest this is done through the act of “boundary-work,” an ongoing public rhetorical battle to define what is and is not “legitimate” journalism.

Abbott (1988) proposes all professionals have an interest in trying to create distinctions between their profession and others by establishing and reestablishing “jurisdictional boundaries” that prove the importance, legitimacy, and exclusivity of their

profession. Creating these distinctions is a way of maintaining what Bourdieu (1986/2011) would call the economic, cultural, and social capital associated with the profession. Maintaining or increasing this capital allows a profession to limit the amount of capital others might build from outside of the profession.

Modern day journalists have a long history of professionalization, starting with the creation of early journalism schools in order to legitimize and distinguish professional journalists from amateur journalists (Folkerts, 2014). Journalists have long relied on professional codes of ethics, and point to the objectivity of their content as a significant distinction from the work of non-journalists (Deuze, 2005; Kaplan, 2009).

The journalism profession is especially tied to the dissemination of information, which makes releasing capital associated with that process, understandably, quite difficult (Deuze, 2005). If journalists aren't the first or the best at providing knowledge, what are they?

While journalists struggle with this idea of symmetry with the audience, public relations specialists seem to be more adept at the process, going so far as to establish ethical standards for the communication process (Pearson, 1989). Considering the opportunity afforded to the public relations industry with the ability to deliver an unmediated message to the target audience, that appears logical. While there still the give and take process outlined by Grunig & Hunt (1984, p. 42), the validity of public relations messages are not determined by the traditional journalistic gatekeepers; instead messages

may be manipulated by a continuous conversation between organization and audience (Pavlik & McIntosh, 2013, p. 365).

Further complicating the relationship between journalists and public relations professionals, news-gathering staffs continue to shrink, while public relations staffs expand; in 2013 there were more than four times as many public relations specialists as there were journalists (Olmstead, Mitchell, Holcomb, & Vogt, 2014). The numbers are so one-sided that it's common for freelance and part-time journalists in Germany to work another job in public relations in order to supplement their income (Koch & Obermaier, 2014). These demographic and economic changes, combined with the public relations practitioner's ability to use the online medium to directly connect with the audience, completely changes the relationship between public relations and journalism. "The most notable observation to emerge from the research done here is the diminution of public relations' dependence on journalism, and the growth of journalism's dependence on PR" (Lloyd & Toogood, 2015, p. vii).

Given the one-sided and journalistically-pessimistic nature of the literature involved with this technological-based power shift, it doesn't seem as though journalists can afford to look down upon their public relations counterparts like they have in the past (DeLorme & Fedler, 2003; Macnamara, 2014). The subsidies from public relations specialists allow news directors and newspaper editors to accomplish their core responsibilities without breaking their shrinking budgets with large newsrooms and expensive news-gathering equipment (Sallot & Johnson, 2006; Turk, 1985). That being

said, given the built-in credibility and broad audience base, it is also quite possible that public relations practitioners may have an incentive to keep traditional journalism afloat with the help of information subsidies. That certainly seems the case within the sport industry, where information subsidies make up a large portion of public relations and media relations department's responsibilities (Hopwood, Skinner, & Kitchin, 2012; L'Etang, 2013).

Sport Communication & Information Subsidies

The working relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners described above is quite apparent in the sport industry. So much so, that much of the literature directly connects the expansion of sport with the increase in sports media (Nicholson, Kerr, & Sherwood, 2015a; Pedersen, 2007). This section will provide a brief history of sport public relations in-house content production, and describe the importance sport public relations practitioners place on information subsidies.

A Brief History of Sport Public Relations In-House Content Production.

While it can be argued that public relations and sport have been connected since the early promotions and spectacles of press agents like P.T. Barnum (Harris, 1981; Russell & Bishop, 2009), most of the sport communication literature points to University of Notre Dame football coach Knute Rockne's use of a team journalist as the first in-house news-like content production in sport (Nicholson, Kerr, & Sherwood, 2015b). Coach Rockne was concerned that his Fighting Irish teams were not getting the press they deserved, nor were the stories written about his teams told in way he believed they should have been

told, so Rockne and the University of Notre Dame hired a former journalists to write on the team's behalf and disseminate those stories to newspapers throughout the country (Nicholson et al., 2015b). These stories still had to find their way through the "gatekeepers" of the time period; however, having been written by a former journalist the papers were less likely to drastically change the material (Nicholson et al., 2015b).

Much like their peers in traditional public relations, PR practitioners for sport organizations later also took part in the creation of video news releases, news-like content intended to provide television stations with the video element lacking in traditional news releases (Owen & Karrh, 1996). As evident in every sports journalist interview conducted by the author for this study, this practice of creating video news releases is still used today. However, the Internet has allowed for widespread and nearly instant dissemination from sport organization to sports journalist via file transfer protocol (FTP) sites.

Along with Zimmerman et al. (2011), a handful of academic studies explore the importance of an organization's ability to create their own content, specifically video, and the success those opportunities provide in the areas of the engagement, public relations messaging, staying relevant in this changing marketplace, and brand management of both individuals and organizations (Cooper, Ross, & Southall, 2011; Dichter, 2014; Pfahl, 2014).

Zimmerman et al. (2011) combine a social media communication research focus with the interest in online video content as they explored the advantages afforded by establishing a YouTube channel for a professional sports league, specifically Major

League Soccer (MLS). Zimmerman et al. (2011) found evidence that well-crafted messages can give organizations and leagues an ability to set their own agenda in the mass mediated marketplace, as well as give leagues with smaller media footprints and traditionally less media exposure a new avenue to a mass audience.

Arai, Ko, & Ross (2014), Cooper, Ross, & Southall (2011), and Pfahl (2014) take a marketing-based approach to explore connections between new technologies and sport management, specifically the branding efforts of different stakeholders within the sport media landscape. Arai et al. (2014) does so from an individual athlete perspective providing the first model for athlete brand image (MABI), supported by an extensive literature review which focused on athlete-based marketing studies, including those promoting an individual's brand through their own mediated methods (i.e. social media sites) as opposed to relying on stories written by sports journalists.

Cooper et al. (2011) reviewed the most common approaches taken by college athletic department administrators to build their programs' brand image, and the study found the method viewed as the "most effective" was that of video broadcasts created within the athletic department and published via the athletic program's website. The study also found some support for an interest in two-way communication between organization and audience, especially within small programs.

Pfahl (2014) contemplated whether or not a new "post-brand" approach to marketing is needed in what he defines as a "post-television" world where wide-spread acceptance of the Internet has pushed the audience away from traditional broadcast

sources and closer to more individualized online content. Pointing to, what he perceives as the audience's interest in moving away from the traditional media like television by choosing more individualized options like online content, Pfahl (2014) urges sport marketers and organizations to take advantage of the new possibilities afforded them by the Internet.

Importance of Information Subsidies. Information subsidies, in the form of video news releases, traditional news releases, interview opportunities, sources, story ideas, etc., are still very much part of the sport management literature, especially within education texts intended for practical application (Hopwood et al., 2012; L'Etang, 2013; Nicholson et al., 2015b; Pedersen, 2007). Their intent with these subsidies is the same as it is outside of sport-centric public relations - to gain as much publicity as possible through the traditional media.

Without naming agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) specifically, Nicholson, et al. (2015b) express the importance media relations professionals place on "setting and shaping the sport media news agenda" (p. 147). Nicholson, et al. (2015b) suggest much of this is done through the use of information subsidies that are provided to members of the media in order to help journalists accomplish their job faster, cheaper, and with fewer resources.

Outside of agenda-setting, much of the sport management literature suggests the publicity received from appearing in or on traditional media channels is exponentially more beneficial than advertising, because the organization doesn't pay for the publicity

and the audience receives the message from an unbiased third party therefore it is often viewed as more credible or genuine than advertising (Nicholson, Kerr, & Sherwood, 2015). Lowden (2015) adds another rationale for sport organizations providing information subsidies to sports journalists, “While it is true that technology and social media have provided an opportunity for athletes and sport organizations to ‘cut out the middle man’ in their conversation with athletes, sport journalists perform an important role for the sport loving public in interpreting, questioning and analysing information” (p. 137). Therefore, despite the technological advances, Lowden (2015) still believes there is a “place” for traditional sport journalists in the sport organization-sport fan relationship.

Specifically in Major League Baseball (MLB), the league negotiates access to players and coaches as part of the MLB collective bargaining agreement, and takes the ideas, opinions, and needs of the Baseball Writers Association of America (BBWAA) into account when making the access and information subsidy decisions (MLB, 2011). That being said, MLB has limited the access provided to sport journalists when comparing the 2007-2011 with the 2012-2016 collective bargaining agreements. The most recent version includes one more page of content than the prior, most of that focused on the access to players, specifically the increased regulation of pre-game and post-game player and coach availabilities, as well as a call for an increased use of “interview rooms” where all journalists conduct a combined interview as opposed to individual interviews needed to produce more “exclusive” content (MLB, 2006, 2011).

Sport, Fans & the Two-Way Symmetrical Model of PR

When considering public relations in sport, it is important to understand the aspects of the industry that set sport apart from other fields. Hoye et al. (2008) and Smith & Stewart (2010) proposed nine and ten aspects, respectively, that they found unique to the sport industry. While some of these aspects can be debated, sport fandom separates this field from others (Hoye et al., 2008; Smith & Stewart, 2010). Hoye et al. (2008), describes the sport identity and specifically consumer behavior that leads to fans becoming “obsessed” with their teams and players, often identifying so strongly that they use “we” when referring to the team. This is an important distinction, because fans crave that close connection with their favorite team, and would be more inclined to search for the kind of direct access described by Nicholson et al. (2015). “There is no doubt that social and digital media channels have also had an impact on the access model in sport media. While fans once relied on traditional media such as television, radio or newspapers to receive news about their favourite team, they can now gain this directly from that team's website, Facebook page or YouTube channel” (Nicholson et al., 2015, p. 153).

By delivering the message directly to the fan, and doing so via an online platform, the organization not only achieves the goal of making fans feel more connected to the team, it also opens up an opportunity for a two-way conversation with its publics. Because of the sport industry’s fandom and consumer behavior distinction noted by Hoye et al. (2008) and Smith & Stewart (2010), the two-way model is viewed as the gold standard and ideal form of public relations in the sport industry (Cleland, 2009; Shilbury

& Rowe, 2012). When sport organizations are able to directly connect with their target audiences, and participate in a true two-way symmetrical model of public relations, organizations can create online advocates and brand ambassadors.

Brand Ambassadors. When one connects this evolution with the more traditional idea of sport communication's attempt to create brand ambassadors out of sports fans and supporters (Hopwood et al., 2012, p. 8), organizations are able to develop even more powerful, marketable, and social media savvy brand ambassadors who represent the sport organizations on a mass mediated and global level, as was evident in Holton & Coddington's (2012) study of the Cleveland Indians' "Social Suite" experiment. The organization turned social media influencers, both fans and naysayers alike, into Cleveland Indian online advocates by providing admission to one of the organization's suites during a game, providing "exclusive" access, and allowing these social influencers to create social media posts about the experience in the "Social Suite" (Holton & Coddington, 2012). The social media influencers included in this study appeared to provide more favorable online posts, which Holton & Coddington (2012) believed to be associated with the organization providing them with an "insider" experience, and feeling "as though they were part of the team itself" (Holton & Coddington, 2012, p. 15).

The Internet has opened the door for more than just social media brand ambassadors, it has also changed the role of public relations practitioners into personalized broadcasters if they choose to become content creators (Hopwood et al.,

2012). “Despite the perhaps lacklustre use of web-based PR tactics and strategy in the past, the arrival of a new web paradigm may be an opportunity for sport PR managers to utilise expertise and knowledge of how the media is evolving to take a leadership role in the development of relationship-based approaches to the stakeholder base for the sporting organization” (Lewis & Kitchin, 2012, p. 201).

“For sport this is both an opportunity and a threat. The sport that manages to master social media to build and sustain relationships with their target audiences (and also mediate their role in the world via the media preferred by their stakeholders) will be better placed to enjoy the trust built up with that community. They will also be at the forefront of interpreting user needs and requirements as they change over time” (Lewis & Kitchin, 2012, p. 203). Digital advances allow sport public relations departments to advance and perform many task they haven’t been able to accomplish in the past (creating self-produced content free from the edits of traditional gatekeepers), while making money on possible sponsorship opportunities and saving money the organization may have traditionally spent on advertising to get these messages to a mass audience.

Summary

This literature review explored the advantages of the new opportunities provided to sport organizations due to technological changes which have established new pathways to mass audiences. It also provided a look at how public relations has changed over its history, highlighting the industry’s willingness and ability to take advantage of those changes. Finally, the literature review showed the specific and distinct aspects of sport

that can be exploited by public relations practitioners working within sport organizations. There is, however, an observed gap in literature related to sport public relations and their supportive relationship with sports journalists, especially since these technological changes have taken place (i.e. the advent of the Internet). This study aims to bridge that gap with a qualitative multi-method approach to this area of research.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

The review of literature produced a large amount of historical academic research on the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners and tangential research materials supporting the digital components of this study. It also exposed a gap in theoretical scholarship on the topic of the working relationship between public relations and journalism since the advent and wide-spread acceptance of the Internet. Therefore, this study attempts to bridge that gap using a qualitative-based multimethod research design created to answer a single research question.

Research Question

What impact has the increase in online self-published video content had on the supportive working relationship between sport organizations and the local television sports journalists assigned to cover these organizations on a regular basis?

This study attempts to answer the research question through the lens of one specific sport organization-sports journalist relationship; Major League Baseball's (MLB's) Minnesota Twins Baseball Club and the Minneapolis/St. Paul television sports media members who cover the team as part of their daily routine.

Research Design

This research study attempts to provide a greater understanding of the phenomenon based on the thorough exploration of this relationship. Based on a multimethod triangulation design (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Cronbach & Meehl, 1955), this study approached the relationship from the viewpoints of both key stakeholders, and

allowed the collected data to direct the research through an inductive and grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2006).

By following this research design, this study was able to address three common shortcomings often associated with underrepresented scholarship. One, the combination of the two methods in a multimethod design provided more support for the validity of findings discovered in the research because of the ability to triangulate those findings (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). Two, the broad scope of research data based on participant observation and semi-structured depth interviews allowed for a more thorough exploration of the underexplored phenomenon (Weerakkody, 2009). And, three, without a large amount of theory-based study on the subject, the grounded theory approach allowed the data collected in this research study to lead the way in furthering established theory and creating new theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2006).

Multimethod Approach

In order to establish greater confidence in the findings of this exploratory research project and produce more valid and reliable themes, this study utilized a multimethod research design. As first presented by Cronbach & Meehl (1955) in addition to Campbell & Fiske (1959), thoroughly exploring a phenomenon through the lenses of multiple methods provides an opportunity for triangulation and the ability to produce greater validity in findings and conclusions when compared to a single method approach.

Therefore, given that the aim of this study was to thoroughly answer the proposed research question and add to the research literature and understanding of an

underrepresented area of scholarship, this study design combines a pair of qualitative methodological approaches in order to take full advantage of the multimethod benefits first posited by Cronbach & Meehl (1955) and Campbell & Fiske (1959) and further explored by multimethod researchers who called for more valid and conclusive findings in academic research (Hammond, 2005; Jaccard & Jacoby, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Method 1: Participant Observation

The first step in this multimethod research design was a participant observation of the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club's digital content production processes and working relationship with the Minneapolis/St. Paul sports media during the 2015 Major League Baseball (MLB) season.

Externship. The participant observation was conducted as part of an externship opportunity provided to the author by the University of Minnesota. In an attempt to provide students with up-to-date and "real world" knowledge of practical fields in the classroom, the University of Minnesota fully funds summer externships for professors, teaching assistants, and other instructors interested in gaining, maintaining, or sharpening their practical understanding of their chosen field. This externship opportunity was afforded to the author with the purpose of attaining three main goals: (1) to gain practical experience and knowledge that would benefit future teaching during the 2015-16 school year, (2) provide professional online video consultation and other benefits to the

Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, and (3) to collect data that would be used in this thesis and future research projects.

Participant Observation Timeline. In an effort to gather data and conduct interviews pertaining to the digital content production processes of the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club and to explore the organization's relationship with local television sports media, the author worked as a full-time (40 hours per week) Digital Productions Extern and Consultant starting on June 1, 2015. The participant observation continued through August 31, 2015 on a full-time basis, and became a part-time (10-15 hours per week) role on September 1, 2015 as the author continued to provide assistance to the Twins and continued conducting interviews with the organization until the team's final game of the regular season on October 4, 2015.

Corporate Communications and Broadcasting Department. The author was placed within the team's Corporate Communications and Broadcasting Department. This department was made up of four full-time employees, one intern, two shared full-time staff members with the Twins Productions Department, and included six freelance personnel who focused mostly on producing radio broadcasts covering the organization's games. This department handled many of the organization's press releases, was the face of the franchise on social media, produced, wrote, and assigned online video production, and stayed in close contact with Major League Baseball's (MLB'S) website and Internet manager, Major League Baseball Advanced Media (MLBAM) to update the team and league website.

Along with the Corporate Communications and Broadcasting Department, the author was given access to multiple departments within the organization's framework, which allowed for observation of everyday practices and the opportunity to conduct interviews with staff members within the team's Front Office, Baseball Operations, Baseball Communications, Community Relations, Marketing, and Twins Productions departments. To the benefit of the Minnesota Twins and the observations of this study, the author also participated in the online content creation process throughout his placement with the team. The externship opportunity concluded with a consultant-style presentation by the author, based on observations, interviews, and participation in the organizations digital video content production departments. An area in which the organization had placed a great deal of focus and increased their resources by adding one staff member specifically assigned to produce videos for online publication via the team's website.

Data Collection. This participant observation gathered data in the form of 14 internal documents, more than 50 pages of notes based on the author's observations during his placement within the organization, and 45 organizational emails relating to online video content production practices and strategies. The data also include digital audio recordings from nine interviews with staff members, two monthly digital content meetings, and the Corporate Communication and Broadcast Department's 2016 strategic planning meeting. These digital audio files were transcribed and converted into Microsoft Word documents by the author for later thematic analysis.

Thematic Analysis. Once all of the data had been collected, a thematic analysis of the participant observation data was conducted in an attempt to isolate similar categories and themes (Mayring, 2000). Then, relying on the categories developed with the use of Mayring's (2000) Step Model of Inductive Category Development, an interview protocol was created in order to further validate the main themes and categories discovered in the participant observation data with the second method of this design; semi-structured depth interviews with television sports journalists from the Minneapolis/St. Paul media market who cover the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club on a regular basis.

Method 2: Semi-Structured Depth Interviews

Interview Sample. Two sports journalists from each of the four major network television stations (NBC affiliate KARE, ABC affiliate KSTP, Fox affiliate KMSP, & CBS affiliate WCCO) were interviewed for this study.

Unlike newspaper journalists who collect their story content by focusing specifically on one or two areas referred to as "beats" (Fishman, 1980), television sports departments are often made up of fewer staff members requiring television sports journalists to split their focus over a larger number of teams. However, television sports departments often designate one or two members of the staff to each team or organization deemed important to their coverage plans. Those sports journalists pay attention to that designated team, but also must provide coverage of and content about multiple organizations. The author found this to be the case in the Minneapolis/St. Paul television

market. To determine who the Twins-focused sports journalists were at each television station, the author asked the Sports Director or Executive Sports Producer which members of their staff had the most contact and produced the most stories related to the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club. These sports journalists were then interviewed for this study.

The initial research design required each journalist to have at least two years of experience covering the organization, including the 2015 Major League Baseball (MLB) season. However, during the process of setting up interviews, the author discovered that each interviewee had worked in the Minneapolis/St. Paul television market and covered the team for at least six years, and all of the journalists had covered at least a portion of the team's 2015 MLB season.

The author attempted to contact each station's Sports Director or Executive Sports Producer via phone. If the author could not get in contact with the Sports Director or Executive Sports Producer, an email was sent to the station's sports department. If that did not lead to a reply, the author then attempted to use sports journalists who had already been interviewed as part of the study to help connect him with Sports Directors or Executive Sports Producers at the other local stations.

This depth interview sample was made up of seven men and one woman, all white, and all between their mid-30s and early 60s. The interviewees had covered the Minnesota Twins for at least six seasons, with four sports journalist having at least two decades of experience covering the team.

Interview Methodology. This method was chosen as appropriate for this research because of the depth needed to comprehend the intricacies of this complex relationship, the lack of previous research to help establish expectations, and the possibility that discussing an important relationship may lead to interviewees “side-stepping” questions (Rubin, 2012, p. 31). With a semi-structured research interview approach “the interviewer has the freedom and flexibility to add other questions or vary the wording or order of the questions posed from the list, if the respondent's unique characteristics or circumstances make it necessary or useful” (Weerakkody, 2009, p. 167). This flexibility allows for more explanation, elaboration, and clarification by the interviewer, as well as the interviewee. While qualitative semi-structured research interviews may lead to differences in the order and number of questions asked of each interviewee, humans vary in their communication abilities. Therefore, it is logical to assume that the interview process should differ from person to person in order to gain the most data from each interview conducted.

The semi-structured depth interviews conducted in this study were intended to provide an in-depth understanding of the perception local television sports journalists who cover the Minnesota Twins’ “beat” have about the current state of the supportive working relationship, information subsidies, and access provided to these sports journalists by the team’s public relations specialists.

The findings from the thematic analysis and Mayring’s (2000) Step Model of Inductive Category Development of the participant observation was used to produce a

semi-structured interview protocol, which included a list of 23 questions asked of every interviewee. However, the interviewer was not limited to the interview protocol questions, or the order in which they were asked. The interviewer also asked follow-up questions for clarification purposes or additional questions that came up based on the answers provided by the interviewee.

The interview protocol was intended to elicit interview results that represent the interviewee's own thoughts, ideas, and opinions. To accomplish this, the interview protocol avoided leading questions that push for a specific answer, loaded questions that included assumptions about the interviewee or their answer, and the interviewer attempted to avoid non-verbal cues that might color responses (Weerakkody, 2009, p. 177).

The interview protocol began with a broad focus that narrowed in scope as the interviewee's answers dictated. This approach was intended to allow the interviewee to make their own connections and associations, rather than respond to connections or associations proposed by the interviewer. In this way, the protocol attempted to avoid the possibility of "priming" the interviewee to discuss a certain topic or answer questions in a way they believe the interviewer wants them to be answered. For instance, the interviewer made every attempt to avoid bringing up the online digital production practices of the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club before the interviewee. So much so, that the interviewees were only told the interview would focus on the relationship between the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club and local television sports journalists.

A small digital audio recorder was used during all semi-structured research interviews. These digital audio files were transcribed and converted into Microsoft Word documents by the author for later thematic analysis.

Semi-structured Interview Protocol. Five main categories and themes were developed from the participant observation conducted with the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club. In order to maintain reliability and validity, these themes were used to inform the interview protocol used during semi-structure depth interviews with local television sports journalists: (1) The Minnesota Twins Baseball Club still wants traditional media coverage, (2) Access to players and story ideas historically covered by traditional television sports journalists is more limited than in the recent past, (3) The Minnesota Twins Baseball Club does not consider the online video content produced by the organization to be journalism, (4) For the most part, the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club does not see themselves as competition for the local sports media, and (5) From the Twins' perspective, if journalist access is perceived to be limited now, it is not due to the Twins trying to stave off possible competition or due to the club's increased focus on video creation and distribution. These themes were rigorously applied in the creation of the semi-structured interview protocol based on the author's extensive experience conducting reliable interviews during a fifteen-year career as a professional journalist.

The interview protocol was pre-tested with a local Minnesota Twins newspaper beat writer, who expressed that the access and experiences of a newspaper beat writer

were quite different from television journalists who have additional restrictions on when and where they are allowed to collect video interviews.

Background

- What is your official title?
- How long have you been a sports journalist?
- How long have you worked in Minneapolis and covered the Twins?

Relationship

- Overall, how would you describe your working-relationship with the Minnesota Twins' public relations, communications, and media relations staff? What aspects of the relationship work the most smoothly, what aspects can be frustrating or challenging?
- Do you think the Twins consider what you do and the content you create as a sports journalist to be important?
- In your opinion, how receptive are the Twins to your story ideas that may require some extra effort or granting you extra access on their part? Have things always been this way?
- How often do the Twins come to you with a tip about something they want to leak or get out to the public? Is this more common, less common, or the same as it has been in recent years?
- Please describe what the working-relationship is like when it comes to covering stories that might get the biggest response from the audience ... stories you know will go over really well.
- In your experiences, have the Twins ever expressed to you that certain areas, people, or topics are "off limits" to your coverage or media coverage in general? If so, what are they?
- Overall, do you feel the Twins provide you with enough access, interview opportunities, information, etc. to do your job? How important are those things to the success you have as a sports journalist who covers the Twins?
- Are there ever times when you've felt you could have gotten a better story if you'd had better access?

Once Interviewee Brings up Twins-Produced Content

- Have you pitched an idea that was shot down by the Twins media relations because they were doing it already? If so, what was it?
- Do you believe there are newsworthy stories that the Twins can do a better job producing internally, when compared to an external media organization, because, as the team, they have the most access and insider knowledge?
- In your experience, do the Twins use those opportunities? What reason, do you believe, might they have in keeping those in-house?

- Looking specifically at the 2015 season as it compares to prior seasons, were there any differences in your working-relationships with the Twins in 2015, good, bad, or neutral compared to previous seasons? What were they?
- Was the access provided to you in 2015 similar, different, or the same as in previous seasons? What changes or differences did you notice? In your opinion, what was the reason for any changes or differences in experiences in 2015?

If Not Addressed by This Time

- Could you speculate as to whether the Twins taking a greater role in producing content might change their relationship with the traditional news organizations?

Content

- What do you think about the Twins online content, specifically the video they produce?
- What benefits, if any, have you found with this content? Do you use it? Info, story ideas, etc?
- Have you found any inaccuracies or misinformation in the content? If so, what?
- Do you see any similarities between content produced by the Twins and your work? If so, what are they?
- From a journalistic perspective, do you see any differences between their content and your own content? If so, what?
- The Twins don't view their content as journalism, do you agree? Why or why not?
- Do you think the Twins' interest in creating their own online digital content has impacted your relationship? If so, what kind of impact?

Triangulation of Findings

A thematic analysis of the data collected during the semi-structured depth interviews was conducted, and the prevalent themes were then compared with the prevalent themes of the participant observation in order to isolate similarities as well as differences between the two initial thematic and categorical findings (Mayring, 2000; Rubin, 2012). Comparing the themes established during the participant observation with the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club and the prevalent themes established during the analysis of semi-structured depth interviews conducted with members of the Minneapolis/St. Paul television sports media was intended to provide a more thorough

exploration of this phenomenon and a better understanding of the relationship based on a multimethod research design (Brewer & Hunter, 1989; Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Cronbach & Meehl, 1955; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

An inductive, grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2006) was then implemented when analyzing and comparing the findings in an attempt to identify connections to current theory, further those theories, and/or attempt to create the foundation for possible new theory building.

CHAPTER 4: Findings

The following findings are based on a thematic analysis and categorization of data collected (Mayring, 2002; Rubin, 2012) during a four-month participant observation of the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club during the summer months of the 2015 Major League Baseball (MLB) season. Those themes and categories were then explored further with additional data collected during eight semi-structured depth interviews conducted with local television sports journalists who cover the Minnesota Twins on a regular basis.

The combination of the findings from both sets of data is listed below. While overall quite specific in nature, the four most common themes fall under four broad categories: (1) The Minnesota Twins Baseball Club still wants traditional media coverage, (2) Outside media are no longer the top priority for the Minnesota Twins, (3) The Minnesota Twins and the local television sports media do not see each other as competition, but their actions may contradict that view, and (4) If traditional media access is limited, it is not due to possible competition concerns on the part of the Minnesota Twins.

Theme 1: The Minnesota Twins Baseball Club Still Wants Traditional Media Coverage

As a whole, the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club still sees an advantage to traditional media coverage. According to the 2015 organization-wide strategic plan, this continued relationship falls under one of the organization's five key strategies. "Re-establish our market leading position by expanding our sphere of influence and impact;

Leverage brand strength to expand the Twins reach, broaden fan affinity and increase preference,” (Minnesota Twins Baseball Club’s 2015 Strategic Plan).

The vast majority of the Twins Informants interviewed during the participant observation supported this idea, and this position was even more apparent while speaking with and observing departments with a strong focus on creating “outward-facing content” because they seemed to understand the media’s role in creating and maintaining the organization’s brand. Most saw the traditional sports media as free promotion for their organization and an opportunity to remind fans that their team is playing well and a way to sell more tickets in the process.

“I want as much coverage as possible from all the TV stations and the radio stations and the print media in the mainstream and then their subsequent social channels, because that’s part of my job is to promote the Twins brand and get in front of as many eyeballs and ears as humanly possible,” said Twins Informant #2.

“You still need the media, there’s still money there,” said Twins Informant #10.

A similar financial rationale for this continued working relationship was also a prevalent theme when exploring the semi-structured depth interviews with local television sports journalists.

“It’s an advertising tool for them, a PR tool. You’re a conduit to the fans, so that’s huge, that’s always going to be that way. So it doesn’t matter how big the website or their own stuff becomes, they still need the media,” said Sports Journalist #8.

Although sports journalists mentioned they did not receive the same support and

access provided by the Minnesota Twins as in the recent past, and they would always like more access, the sports journalists did feel as though the Twins showed interest in the coverage provided by local media because they provide access to players for interviews and other informational subsidies to help sports journalists create their content.

“There’s plenty of time to get the Twins guys, plus they have community days when they’re always out in the community doing something ... and if I just want to call them and say, ‘Hey, can I grab so-and-so for just a couple minutes?’ They’ll almost always say yes. It’s not like I dread calling them to ask for stuff,” Sports Journalist #7.

“They want to help out, it’s in their best interest. They know it, and Dave St. Peter (Team president) in particular knows it,” said Sports Journalist #6.

The local television sports journalists believe the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club understands the importance and impact of the local television sports media, the two sides consider their working relationship to be a good one, and the Minnesota Twins believe an important part in keeping that relationship strong is rationing out scoops to the local television sports journalists.

Sub-Theme 1: The Minnesota Twins realize the importance and impact of local television sports journalists. The Minnesota Twins’ understanding of the power and the importance of the local television sports media is well represented in the following example pulled from the author’s participant observation notes. It shows the organization’s intent to stretch the television sports media lifespan of a specific story in order to get as much publicity as possible from the event.

On July 1, 2015, rumors of Miguel Sano, one of the organization's top prospects, being "called up" from his minor league team to join the Minnesota Twins Major League Baseball (MLB) team started to surface on social media, specifically Twitter. This is an event that occurs with multiple prospects on every MLB team each year, however, there was much more interest in the Miguel Sano promotion given his home run-hitting prowess and sizable signing bonus used by the Minnesota Twins to get the, then, 16-year-old player from the Dominican Republic under contract in 2009; it was the largest such signing bonus ever offered by the Minnesota Twins (Beck, 2009).

Members of the Corporate Communications and Media Relations staffs were aware of Miguel Sano's impending arrival, and both departments were given approval to go forward with press releases and communication with the local media. However, leadership within the Corporate Communications department visited with leadership of the Media Relations department, and the two departments believed that they may be able to get more publicity out of this news event if they were to let it remain a rumor for a day and then confirm the official transaction one day later. That way, the Minnesota Twins could remain an important story in the local media for a few days rather than just one day (Information based on notes taken during a conversation with Twins Informant #1).

The Twins were successful in implementing this plan, as the story of the Miguel Sano call-up "rumor" (KSTP.com, 2015a) on July 1, 2015, was followed by a story about the official confirmation of Miguel Sano's call-up (Cook, 2015) on July 2, 2015 on the majority of TV station websites. A few days later, this story continued with Miguel

Sano's debut at his home stadium (KSTP.com, 2015b).

The Minnesota Twins invest in multiple departments that don't directly generate revenue, but support the media (media relations, corporate communications, etc.), so it appears as though the organization has an interest in becoming part of local television sportscasts on a regular basis. "It would be really cool if one day there was a way to say, 'All of this media you're producing in the outlets, you know, this TV time that [local TV station] is giving you ... 4 minutes. What's the worth in a money standpoint? What's that worth in a sales standpoint? How many people are watching and being reminded that they forgot to buy tickets today at work, so they'll go and buy tickets tomorrow because they watched it tonight on the news or whatever,'" said Twins Informant #10.

"We're here to help, [television sports journalists are t]here to tell the story of baseball, and without the audience that we have, or the popularity of this game, these players wouldn't have these 40,000 seat stadiums filled with fans that really adore them. So, how do we continue to keep people interested in baseball? We tell these unique stories and get their personalities out there," said Twins Informant #9.

In the semi-structured depth interview data, local television sports journalists expressed an understanding of their role in keeping the Minnesota Twins relevant and salient in the minds of local sports fans. Most of the local television sports journalists described their role as nearly essential to the Minnesota Twins keeping their fan base and disseminating information to their target audience. "Yes, yeah they need us still. They need to get the team out there they need to get their players out there. If they don't have

the newspapers writing about them, don't have television stations showing their highlights, that the interest will go away," said Sports Journalist #3.

"Oh yeah, I think the Twins are one of the organizations in town that do a pretty good job of recognizing what we do may end up putting some people in the seats or may end up creating some buzz about a player or the team of some kind ... they may not always love us because we may say something bad, or report on something that happened, but yeah that they appreciate us and think that we're important, yeah, I think so definitely," said Sports Journalist #4.

Sub-Theme 2: The Minnesota Twins and local television journalists consider their relationship to be a good one. The Minnesota Twins believe in having a strong working relationship with local Minneapolis/St. Paul sports journalists, especially the local television media. Relationship building is so important to the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club ownership, the Pohlad Company, that it is one of the company's eight core values (Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, 2015a).

A strong working relationship is imperative when considering the organization's media relations functions. "I have a lot of resources, whether it's the sports reporters, the writers, the beat writers that are here every day are always looking for notes and nuggets. You've got the local news stations that are ... they jump on board when the Twins are going well, and you can dominate the Sunday sports shows if you want, or just the evening news, and it's all about building relationships and keeping those relationships strong," said Twins Informant #9.

Every semi-structured depth interview conducted with local television sports journalists included some mention of having a professional and good relationship with the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club's Twins media relations staff. All of the local television sports journalists believed that working relationship was built on trust, and the experience of working with the organization over an extended period of time. This is understandable considering every sports journalist interviewed had covered the team for at least six seasons and, therefore, had the time to further develop those working relationships. "Oh, they've been good. Their PR staff are good guys and, you know, they understand we have a job to do, and they try to accommodate it. And if it's a guy who's red hot and everybody wants him, well then they have to limit his access that way, but for the most part we haven't been denied access to certain players or certain situations, so they've been good about that," Sports Journalist #3.

"I think that [Twins Informant #9] gets it. I think [Twins Informant #9] understands. [Twins Informant #9] may not always be able to do what I'd like or to make things happen in a timely fashion, but I think [Twins Informant #9]'s always willing to listen, and I think that's a great starting point," said Sports Journalist #5.

However, even some of the local television sports journalists who consider their working relationship with the team to be a good one did express that growing pains have been part of the process.

"I think they've slowly come around to understanding the multimedia aspects of covering a baseball team from what our needs are to, not just the writers but the cable

people and the bloggers and all the rest of it. They've got their hands full ... So, they've had to evolve as much as we have and I think it's still ... for the most part, up until the last couple of years, I still felt kind of a push back at times from getting what I need at times, but I think they've opened up," said Sports Journalist #6.

Sub-Theme 2a: Rationing out "scoops" to the local sports media. The Minnesota Twins Baseball Club's media relations staff believes they make a point to get messages and information out in an attempt to make the sports journalists who cover them happy. As expressed above, they realize the importance and power the local television media has in getting the non-traditional sports fan audience interested and aware of upcoming events. This broadening of the Minnesota Twins' reach was addressed in the team's "customer-centric approach" outlined in the 2015 Strategic Plan, to include both sports fans and non-sports fans alike (Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, 2015a). With that in mind, the Minnesota Twins Corporate Communication & Broadcast department makes story placement part of their own department goals and performance reviews (Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, 2015b).

"Absolutely, you give them something. Or, you know what they'll do is they'll enterprise, believe it or not, they can still enterprise their own ideas ... to a degree. And if we get a reporter, and enterprising reporter who has a story idea and wants to shoot a profile piece on so-and-so, well let's do it. They brought that to our attention and they've thought about it and they want to do it, they want to own it. And I always have thought if a reporter or producer comes to us and wants to own something, I'm apt to give it to

them, because they'll own it," said Twins Informant #2.

However, Twins Informant #9 admits that providing story ideas and "scoops" to local media is not without pushback from the organization, especially in terms of providing an "insider" look at the Minnesota Twins clubhouse. "I mean, I toe the line every day with the players and the GM and the manager and what they want out there, and what the media actually wants. And sometimes they view each other as almost ... not enemies, but you know the necessary evil in the game. But I try to reshape that," said Twins Informant #9.

"In terms of breaking stories, that's a media or baseball communications decision ... because, they have some reporters they sometimes want to try to take care of, 'Hey I'll give the [local newspaper] the scoop on this one. I'll give [local sports journalist] the scoop on this one.' So, I think there's a little bit of gamesmanship where it's like, 'Give me a scoop on something.' They don't necessarily want us to break it, because they want their reporters to feel like they've got the pulse of the team, too," Twins Informant #5.

While the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club's media relations staff believes they do a good job of supporting the local television sports journalist with enough "scoops" and inside information to keep the relationship strong, the local television sports journalists interviewed in this study denied receiving any such support from the media relations staff.

The local television sports journalists all mentioned the Minnesota Twins provide better access than most of the sport organizations in the Minneapolis/St. Paul media

market, but they did not receive insider information and scoops. “I’ve never been tipped like, ‘Oh, we’re making a trade today’ or ‘This guy is going to get called up’ you know like Sano or Buxton (current players), they never have tipped off for stuff like that, so I would say no that doesn’t happen very often or at all,” said Sports Journalist #3.

“Media relations isn’t going to serve up a big story on a plate like that,” Sports Journalist #8.

“I have not really gotten that, at all, that I can remember, but it would also kind of be nice, talking about this off the field idea, if they maybe came and said, ‘Hey, this guy draws pictures of wildlife during the off season, it might be something you’d be interested in.’ Or throwing us a little bone on something like that, because you don’t always get to know these guys all that well,” said Sports Journalist #4.

While the local television sports journalists disagreed with the Minnesota Twins media relations staff in their support of “scoops,” and Sports Journalist #5 mentioned the fact sports journalists shouldn’t expect this kind of treatment from any sport organization, many of the local television sports journalists agreed that the Minnesota Twins granted more access than their sport organization peers in the Minneapolis/St. Paul television market.

Theme 2: Traditional Sports Media is No Longer the Top Priority

Local television sports journalists may have, at one time, been one of the few mediated avenues by which the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club could reach and communicate with their fans, however, the Internet has changed that near exclusivity of

the past. Whether through the team's website, their official social media accounts, in-park video boards and publications, the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club takes advantage of multiple pathways to their fan base and target audiences. "Now we're pitching it to ourselves, to produce it on our own and push our fans to our site rather than traditional media," said Twins Informant #10. However, the Minnesota Twins understand there is a cap to the amount of stories they can cover. "You can't take every idea and go towards our website ... so a lot of the things we do with the different TV stations, you know [member of the media relations staff] and I pitch story ideas to the media because it's something that maybe we don't want to do or we've already done," said Twins Informant #10.

Organization-wide, the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club still sees providing information and story information subsidies to local television sports journalists as an important part of their brand strategy (Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, 2015a), however, with the ability to deliver mediated messages directly to their target audience, the priority has shifted away from the traditional methods of distribution (Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, 2015b). From their support and strategic models, it's clear the Minnesota Twins are still interested in the traditional media avenues of communication, but they are also aware of other beneficial pathways to reach their target audiences.

"We can't own every piece of content in the world, and quite frankly I'd like to get out there in other mediums. It's not just TwinsBaseball.com, it's not just Twins Twitter, it's not just the Facebook site, it's everybody else, too that needs to get their

piece of the pie, so I don't have any problem juggling that kind of stuff. If some station wants to come in and do a profile on our new first round draft pick from the University of Illinois, and we're doing the same thing, I say go ahead, go for it. It's not like some big exclusive that we're gonna keep for ourselves. Now, Opening Day with Kevin Garnett and he meets Tyus Jones in the parking lot before ... yeah ... we'll keep that [and produce it ourselves],” said Twins Informant #2. In other words, providing something to the audience that they just can't get through any of the traditional media outlets.

Local television sports journalists have noticed the organization's attempt to limit access to players and coaches more than they have come to expect from the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club. “There are some things that I would say, now, the purse strings are being held. Like I don't think it's as ... I don't think the door is as wide open. I think it may be more like this (shows narrow gap between hands) with them being in charge of their digital face and footprint,” said Sports Journalist #5.

“We'll call and they'll say, ‘No, the website's going to do that story.’ Or you get that a lot, now. To spend time with the players outside of the clubhouse is much, much more restricted because ... now you see more and more the website kinda takes over those kinds of stories, which is fine. I mean that's just the way it is. It's changed that way, a lot,” said Sports Journalist #8.

The Minnesota Twins Baseball Club no longer considers the local television sports journalists the top priority within the organization, which may lead to providing less access to outside media than in the recent past, more exclusive material produced by

the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, and a struggle over important “feature stories” that the local television sports journalists believe they are losing.

Sub-Theme 1: “Insider” access more regulated than in the past, Minnesota Twins see exclusive opportunities. Much of the pre-game and post-game access provided to local television sports journalists is regulated by Major League Baseball (MLB) rules and policies negotiated between MLB, the MLB Players Association, and the Baseball Writers’ Association of America (BBWAA) as part of the league’s collective bargaining agreement (MLB, 2011, pp. 233-237). For instance, the agreement designates specific windows when sports journalists may speak with players and coaches, and limits television cameras to pre-game on-field interviews during batting practices and post-game availabilities (MLB, 2011, pp. 233–237). However, much of the “insider” access sports journalists consider to be important to a successful story, is not spelled out in this agreement. MLB and the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club understand the value and exclusivity of certain aspects of their video content, which is why they limit television use of game highlights to two minutes within a regular newscast, and do not allow local television station websites to show or host these highlights in any form (Trotta, 2016).

With that in mind, the organization has begun to recognize other exclusive and “insider” aspects of digital video coverage that they believe will lead to increased fan engagement on the website and social media platforms, as well as provide a better in-game ballpark experience for those fans in attendance on game days. “We’re just able to

get more of that behind the scenes video that the other news outlets, and stuff, aren't able to get. I know [w]e did a behind the scenes video for Star Wars night, and [Byron] Buxton's debut, so basically everything leading up to first pitch. Once it's first pitch, anyone can see that. So just kind of showing what goes into behind the scenes of all of that, which people don't see," said Twins Informant #4.

"I think the struggle would be on the sports journalist side of things, because they're trying to cover, from the outside, what we can cover from the inside. So, our content, because it's us and our people shoot it ... we're shooting our own people and doing our own thing. We have a leg up on the outside news media that may be trying to come in and do some of this stuff, but we can say, 'OK, you can come to this door, but behind this door is all ours.' And that's the stuff people want to see, is behind the closed door. So, I think it's great, for us it's awesome. It's entertainment, we're in the entertainment business. So, I'm happy when we can provide a fun, inside look or a different take on something that everybody else is going to be reporting on, but our presentation is different in that we have greater access to the content material that we're producing. That, to me, is exciting," said Twins Informant #2.

While the local television sports journalists interviewed in this study all conceded that gaining "insider" access had always been a difficult proposition, most believe that it has become even more challenging in recent years to convince the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club to provide access outside of the purview of Major League Baseball's (MLB's) rules and regulations. Local television sports journalists mentioned that the

Minnesota Twins are easy to work with, but follow it up by saying the team also seems to keep some of the best stories for themselves. “I think they’re keeping a lot of their behind the scenes stuff, now. I think that they’ve expanded their digital department, so a lot of things that we would have done behind the scenes and those things are more making them part of the team. And I think that’s probably changed in the last five years,” said Sports Journalist #5.

“They do have better access, and if something breaks they’ll have it first. I mean, they can throw it up on their website long before we would even be aware of it,” Sports Journalist #8.

“Yeah, they did that with [Miguel] Sano when he came up, and they followed him around for the day, and they did all of that for their stuff. Um, also when Rod Carew came back for TwinsFest this year, I know they had their video guy with him all day. Where we had him for a half hour and then you could do a quick interview,” said Sports Journalist #4.

Sub-Theme 2: Minnesota Twins are producing “feature stories,” traditionally covered by local television sports journalists. Rather than pitching story ideas to local television sports journalists as they had in the past, the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club has begun internally producing video content, especially content that proves valuable online in terms of engagement, shares, likes, and views. “You’re looking for the big hit when you do it yourself, you’re not just looking for content, you’re looking for that big difference maker that’s going to really push the audience,” said Twins

Informant #10.

During the 2015 Major League Baseball (MLB) season, staff members from four different departments within the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club gathered monthly for digital content meetings to discuss strategies and approaches to increase online engagement. During the second meeting attended by the author, Twins Informants #1, #2 & #11 stressed the importance of producing video focusing on an “insider” look at the team, or content that provided a glimpse of a player’s off-field personality. Both of these approaches were supported by online data collected by Major League Baseball Advanced Media (MLBAM) and referenced in these meetings.

“Getting up-close and personal, humanizing our players is critical. I mean, you go out there and you’re sitting in section 327 and you’re watching your favorite player Brian Dozier from that far away, and that’s cool. But then to go home and run through Twins videos and see a cool piece on Dozier and how he prepares for Spring Training, that we bring you right into his apartment in Fort Myers, and you get to kind of get up-close and personal relationship build. Because, ‘Wow, Dozier’s a nice guy. Oh, he goes on mission trips. Oh, his wife is a Mississippi girl, too. Oh, I love the southern accent.’ You know, I think we can humanize the game more,” said Twins Informant #2.

Twins Informant #4 described the department’s approach to these types of stories during the 2014 Major League Baseball (MLB) season when the fan base was unfamiliar with many of the new players on the team’s roster. “Of course there’s [Joe] Mauer, but there’s a lot of young guys that the fan base didn’t really seem to connect with, so we

were trying to push those players and the prospects just because we were kind of like, ‘Hey the future could be good,’ kind of thing,” said Twins Informant #4.

The majority of local television sports journalists included in this study, felt “feature stories” played an important role in attempting to set their coverage apart from another station’s coverage, because these stories allow for more storytelling opportunities that highlight their skills and expertise.

“Baseball’s the greatest sport when it comes to storytelling, and I love that part of it. I love being surprised. You know, you have your ideas of what you want to do, but these are the stories that, to me, resonate ... Absolutely, I mean I think anytime you can do that, I’m always looking for that type of thing,” said Sports Journalist #6.

“What’s going to set you apart? And that’s my whole view. How can we do something different? What can we do something different with? Like, how can you show someone like Miguel Sano, and what does he do off the field? What does he do? How can we make him more than who he is to people as an outfielder? Everybody knows who he is, but really who is he?” said Sports Journalist #5.

Many of the local television sports journalists included in this study echoed Sports Journalist #5’s perspective. They also expressed that the shift within sport organizations to produce more of their own “feature stories” rather than providing them as story ideas to local television stations is a significant and important change in the historical relationship between local television sports journalists and local sport organizations.

“For us to do features, it’s kind of difficult. Um, they do their best ... but it’s ... now with the Twins having their own website ... they kind of focus more on the best stories go to them first, before anyone else gets a shot at them. So it’s a little ... it’s ... sometimes it’s good, sometimes it’s a little bit more difficult,” said Sports Journalist #8.

“I think it’s harder to do feature-type stories with them. I feel like doing more off the field type feature stories is more difficult. I don’t find that that access is really there,” said Sports Journalist#4. Sports Journalist #4 continued and made the following connection between less access for local television sports journalists and the increase in Minnesota Twins digital content publication. “Also now they have, now they’re launching their own video department, too. So, I’ve seen this with other organizations that have their own video department, where now those types of stories, they kind of hold onto for themselves to produce for the web, or for other entities, too. So, I don’t know what might happen, but I’ve seen it happen elsewhere. (So are you saying they might have an incentive to keep some stories in-house?) Oh, yeah. Absolutely, because if they can do ... especially those feature-type stories and put it on their website, and put it on YouTube, then they can get X amount of hits, you know, those are the ones that they can really take their time and do artfully and really make it look nice and really make it sing and to have that access that maybe only they can have, you know. They could create something pretty cool,” said Sports Journalist #4.

“If they start doing the features that we want to do it would be tougher for us to continue ... You know, we could pitch, but if they’re doing them instead then we’re not

going to try to do them. So, it would be tougher for us to try to do feature stories and pitch feature stories to them, I think, if they continue to do them on their own,” said Sports Journalist #7.

Theme 3: The Minnesota Twins and Local Sports Media Do Not See Each Other as Competition, However, Their Actions May Contradict That View

The Minnesota Twins staff members did not see themselves in competition with traditional television sports journalists, however, there were multiple examples observed during the participant observation with the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club. For instance, the following excerpt from the 2016 Corporate Communications & Broadcasting strategic planning meeting on August 11, 2015:

“Here’s what we’re going to do. We’re going to leverage the website, traditional asset, and social media to illuminate the Twins brand in a saturated marketplace, with an emphasis on being our own news outlet. Right?” said Twins Informant #1.

“I like it!” said Twins Informant #2.

“Why don’t you start with that note? Say that we’ll become our own news outlet as we leverage our blank, blank, and blank,” said Twins Informant #12.

“I like that,” said Twins Informant #3.

“Set it like, ‘Here’s what we’re doing. Get on board or get run over,’” said Twins Informant #12.

“So, I’ve got ‘Focus on being our own news outlet by leveraging website,

traditional assets, and social media to illuminate the Twins brand in a saturated marketplace. And maximize positive stories and mitigate negative ones,” said Twins Informant #1.

Twins Informant #9 brought up a specific example of a feature story that every local television station in the Minneapolis/St. Paul market had requested the opportunity to cover, but the team denied access to all of them. “You know, everybody wants to do a story on, or get inside for the Twins dance parties. You know, if that’s ever, I’m not saying it ever would, but if that is something that we’ll want to open our doors up ... well, then that is something that we would want to shoot, edit, and throw out how we want to throw it out there,” said Twins Informant #9.

Twins Informant #2 suggested that it would be easier for news created by a sport organization to replace traditional sports news because, “unlike a hard news story that might require some vetting and some journalistic investigation and some of the ‘big J’ stuff, fact checking for example, corroborating of sources, all that kind of stuff, sports ... I just want to know what happened in the Twins game, so I need to wait for the 10 o’clock news to tell me? Or, can the Twins just tell me?” Twins Informant #2 continued by saying there was no clear need for a “gatekeeper” because both content providers, the local television sports journalist and the Minnesota Twins, would provide the audience with the facts.

The television sports journalists also make it clear that they did not see the Minnesota Twins online video content as competition. Some of the sports journalists

interviewed in this study found it hard to comprehend how sport organizations, like the Minnesota Twins, who have been the subject of their content throughout their careers, could become competitors. “They want to sell tickets; they want to sell sponsorships. They want eyeballs, and if that’s the way to get ‘em ... but I don’t know if they would ever go traditionally and say, ‘Let’s beat the [local newspaper] on this story.’ Or ‘Let’s beat [local TV station] at this story.’ I can’t see that happening,” said Sports Journalist #1.

“No. I never even think about the context of what they’re doing with their own website as something that would be a substitute ... I mean, obviously, they have the advantage, but I don’t think of it as a deterrent to what we’re trying to do,” said Sports Journalist #6.

“If they did a story at home with so-and-so, player A or player B, you look at it and go, ‘I get it, that’s their ... I’d like to do that same story.’ I might feel bad about it, and you might bring that to their attention and saying, ‘I wish we could bring that to a bigger audience a larger audience,’ said Sports Journalist #6.

Despite these examples of possible competition and the blurred lines of content creator and content subject, both the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club and the local television sports journalists hold fast to their well-defined roles. The Minnesota Twins do not intend to do the work of journalism, and local television sports journalists don’t consider what the Twins produce to be journalism, so the two sides don’t believe they could be competing in that space, because the two have different goals and they are

producing different content. Some local television sports journalists believe they aren't in competition with the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, because the organization is not on television and does not produce a sportscast, therefore the two also have different audiences.

Sub-Theme 1: Minnesota Twins Baseball Club doesn't intend to do journalism, so they aren't in competition with journalists. All of the members of the Minnesota Twins staff and the local television sports media included in this study agreed that the baseball team is not attempting to do the work of journalism. They have no interest in providing the appearance of objectivity and following other normative behaviors traditionally associated with journalism.

“That’s not our bread and butter. That’s not our brand. I don’t have to be that way, and I think in TV news you have to be that way because you have to have credibility and you’ve gotta have journalistic credibility and integrity. Not to say we don’t have that here, but it can be muddied here, because sports has been sponsored since the Roman Olympics, I’m sure there was something. So it’s not that big of a deal,” said Twins Informant #2.

“I mean the news guys are gonna tell the news stories, and it’s a challenge for us to ... I mean we can’t tell every kind of story, so we kind of look through the filter of ‘Is this highlighting our players’ personalities, and how is it helping us achieve our business goals?’ And frankly, a lot of it goes through the filter of the marketing work that we were talking about, the brand strategy. I mean it informs everything that we do. Not

everything, but we try to look at every project through that lens,” said Twins Informant #1. In other words, there is no reason for the Minnesota Twins to strive for objectivity and provide both sides of a story. Understandably, the team is more interested in producing content that benefits the team’s bottom line, financial wellbeing, and overall marketing strategy.

While some of those goals may be shared by local television sports journalists, the local television sports journalists mentioned objectivity, and unbiased reporting as clear differences between journalism and the content being produced by the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club.

“Let’s face it, they’re trying to drive people to their website, they’re trying to control the content. And, you know, you produce your own stories you’re going to put it in a positive light ... I think the teams are smart to do it, why not? There are fans out there that can’t get enough,” said Sports Journalist #1.

“Well, the website’s really just a PR tool ... they’re never going to write anything objective, or negative about the team. It’s always going to be positive, and about how great we are,” said Sports Journalist #8.

“I think what we do is journalism and I say what they do is PR. But, I’m sure that they may feel differently. But if they do, and I think it depends if you’re in corporate or you’re in the baseball department. I think there’s a difference. But as a totality, I’m saying, that organization would be PR. That doesn’t mean there aren’t good journalists there, or at least former journalists who decided to go to the dark side of public relations,”

said Sports Journalist #5.

Sub-Theme 1a: The Minnesota Twins have different goals and create different content than television sports journalists. Neither the Minnesota Twins nor the local television sports journalists consider the online video content production by the Minnesota Twins to be the practice of journalism. Both believe the organization's content has a different goal than traditional journalism. Therefore, the Minnesota Twins and the local television journalists don't believe that two groups, with different goals, who produce different content could be competing with each other.

The Minnesota Twins realize they have the option of producing and publishing in-house content, but they view the purposes, intent, and production of that content as quite different from the traditional journalistic content.

"I would say that our goal with traditional media is still to produce those ticket sales, but it's just in a different ... I mean it's almost in an advertising way, you know? Where it's like a reminder, 'Oh yeah, the Twins are playing tomorrow night.' Not necessarily like, 'Here's the emotional attachment, we need you to be part of our organization and be out at the ballpark,' which is what we're trying to do on our website. So, in the end, obviously the whole goal is to produce ticket sales, but it's just different ways," said Twins Informant #10.

Twins Informant #1 mentioned the opportunity for the Minnesota Twins to create all kinds of content, including some things that were a bit more newsworthy. However, Twins Informant #1 was most proud of what they were able to accomplish from a

marketing perspective. “Frankly, some of the goofy behind the scenes stuff that we’ve done. Like, the ‘Pen Pals thing, and the Scrubs Night video with [Brian] Dozier and [Brian] Duensing. And while it’s a marketing video, it ended up being one of the better videos we’ve ever done, because the content is so interesting and it highlights the players’ personalities so well. I mean that’s the type of stuff that I really want us to focus on,” said Twins Informant #1.

“I think they see it as ... they want to put something that looks good and sounds good out there, but I don’t think that they ... I don’t think it comes across as being journalistic, I think it just comes across as being PR ... a piece of public relations propaganda ... not propaganda, but just a way for them to spin the team or promote the team,” said Sports Journalist #4.

Many members of the Minnesota Twins staff, especially those in the Corporate Communications & Broadcasting department, referenced how creating their own content provided the team with the chance to control the messages included within that content. Other members did not address this specifically, but they did mention the importance of following the team’s brand strategy, which is another way the Minnesota Twins attempt to control the messages about their organizational branding. Both the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club and the local television sports journalists view this process as different from the normative approach to journalism. However, the possibility of this type of content being in competition with traditional sports journalism content may be just as likely as two pieces of journalism content. While certainly not to the same extent, this

self-produced content could be interpreted as propaganda, which has historically been in competition with journalistic normative values (Bennett, 1996; Kaplan, 2009; Park, 1923).

“We’re doing two different things. I think that they’re ... I think we’re more of what was happening and how it was happening and I think they’re more about the team. Like, it’s the team concept and we’re trying to be ... I think there’s a divide, but I don’t know if it’s always totally clear cut. Because I think sometimes we would totally do something similar,” said Sports Journalist #5.

“They are promoting their brand; I am reporting on their brand. That’s the biggest difference to me,” said Sports Journalist #7.

Sub-Theme 2: Television sports journalists don’t see the Minnesota Twins as competition, because the Twins’ content isn’t on television. It’s clear from the data collected during semi-structured depth interviews with local television sports journalists that, as a whole, they do not see themselves as being in competition with the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club. However, it was intriguing to see how television sports journalists at one particular local station were tied to the thought that the Minnesota Twins could not be considered competition, because the team does not produce video content that is aired on the organization’s own local television station during a set news or sportscast.

“I don’t see them ever being in an adversarial or a competitive role against us. Now, like I said, can they get better access? Yes. Can they get video of things we can’t get? Yes. Now, do they have a sportscast on at 10 o’clock at night? No. And until they

have a sportscast that will compete directly with what we do at 10 o'clock at night, I'm not really that worried about it," said Sports Journalist #1. In other words, Sports Journalist #1 believes that since the Minnesota Twins do not own a television station and broadcast a nightly show that airs at a similar time and place, they could not be considered competition.

Therefore, in the view of both sports journalists interviewed at one of the local television station's, until the Minnesota Twins online content has a fixed presentation, that goes head-to-head with the television sports journalists, and the two products are competing in the Nielsen ratings, then the two aren't competing against each other.

Many of the other local television sports journalists in this study held their production processes and television production as something quite separate, and distinct from what the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club can produce. The sports journalists believe their medium, the television, to be somehow more important and more influential than the website where the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club publishes their own content.

"That's great if they decided to do that, but they're not going to get as many hits as we're going to get viewers tonight, you know? I'm sure of that," said Sports Journalist #6.

The local sports journalists also believe the Minnesota Twins haven't been able to produce the high quality video content that the local television stations are known to create. "You've gotta think like a TV station, you can't think like Uncle Bill shooting a wedding. You see that's the difference. I think with the Twins, right now, they're

thinking it's Uncle Bill ... In order to do TV, they better get someone who knows TV," said Sports Journalist #1.

Most of the sports journalists also made a clear distinction between the television content they produce, and the content their station website might use to represent their television work. Some of the sports journalists were removed from the process of updating and producing specific content for their website, which led to responses like that of Sports Journalist #4. "I don't consider them competition, and maybe I should. But, no, at this point I just consider them as a separate ... basically part of their PR department, you know?"

The Minnesota Twins seemed to support the idea that as long as the organization's content stays off the television, they would not be competing with the traditional television sports media. Twins Informants #1 and #9 mentioned a discussion about the possibility of starting a weekly show with a sports anchor style personality and a possible spot on the team's regional cable television partner. However, when exploring the possibility, the two believed it was important to take into consideration whether or not the increase in content control and the possible Twins-specific audience increase from the show would outweigh the opportunity cost of coverage and promotion currently taking place on local television. In other words, they understood how a show like this might be viewed as competition for local television stations, as opposed to the current practices, and they were hesitant about competing against local television journalists who currently work with the Minnesota Twins in multiple ways to promote the team's brand.

Sub-Theme 2a: Different audiences. The Minnesota Twins Baseball Club believes the majority of their website traffic comes from Twins fans, while local television sports journalists believe their newscasts and sportscasts to have a larger and broader appeal to an audience that is interested in more than just the Minnesota Twins. Therefore, the common thought within the data was that the Minnesota Twins and local television sports journalists were not competing for the same audience. In fact, Twins Informant #2, #9, and #10 all mentioned the different audiences found in television as a reason to continue their working relationship with the local television sports journalists. The Informants believed that the local television sports journalists were reaching an audience that is possibly quite different and outside the reach of the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club's social media, website, in-game production, and publication footprint. Twins Informant #10 even mentioned variation in the audiences between local television stations, and how understanding these audiences allows the organization to pitch stories and opportunities that best fit each particular target demographic, along with understanding when the Minnesota Twins should produce a story themselves.

“You’ve seen ‘Pen Pals. That’s something that we only, really only we could do. We can’t say, [local TV station] come do this. They want to do this fake TV show. I mean technically, I guess we could, but that just doesn’t ... it’s more fitting for your fan base through your own website, for you to publish. Because it’s goofy, it’s off the wall, it’s player personality. Whereas, like, a sit down Q & A about Torii Hunter’s birthday and being 40 years old and what it means. Or what Miguel Sano and Trevor Plouffe have

in common. Battling for the same position, wanting the same number that each other have. That might be a better fit for a TV piece rather than producing it on our own,” said Twins Informant #10. This example shows that the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club views their online content audience as one that enjoys personality-driven and funny pieces, while they consider the local television sports audience to be more traditional.

The local television sports journalists see another difference in the audiences, believing the audiences targeted by the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club is more baseball-centered than the audience local television stations are attempting to reach with their sportscasts. “You could almost say they serve a completely different audience than I do, to some degree. There’s some crossover, but ... it’s almost the political analogy of conservative versus progressive. They are serving a conservative audience, huge baseball nuts. That’s not me, that’s not us. I’m much more in the middle between the liberals and the conservatives, I’m trying to get a little bit of both,” said Sports Journalist #7.

“I think it’s a different viewership. I don’t know everybody who watches [local television station] is going to go to TwinsBaseball.com and watch their stuff ... I don’t know if you have the same people, I don’t know if that crossover ... I think if you’re really interested in it, then you go to the website, but I think sometimes you watch it on TV,” said Sports Journalist #5.

“Look, the way people get their news today, get their sports news, obviously, I’m on my iPad all the time, I’m on Twitter, I’m on this and that, it’s not a one source thing. So if they did the same story, I wouldn’t care, because a lot of people who watch us

wouldn't check out the Twins website, maybe the people who check out the Twins website maybe don't watch [local television station]. So, it's not like it's a ... you're getting beat by something, it's just an add on," said Sports Journalist #6.

Theme 4: If Television Sports Media Access is Limited, it is Not Due to Possible Competition Concerns

The data explored earlier in this findings section makes it clear that the local television sports journalists do not enjoy the same level of "insider" access, proposed feature story ideas, and other information subsidies that they were once provided by the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club. However, neither the Minnesota Twins nor the local television sports journalists interviewed in this study believe this perceived change is due to possible concerns about competition between the sports journalists and the sport organization.

The Minnesota Twins are expanding their internal online production possibilities, and have made that increased focus clear in the company-wide 2015 Strategic Plan (Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, 2015a). However, the Twins still have interest in their working relationship with the local television sports journalists, and, according to specific comments made by Twins Informants #1, #2, #9, #10 and #11, they have no intention of replacing these sports journalists. The Minnesota Twins believe the online content they produce to be another way for fans to connect with the team and feel as though they know the players.

Local television sports journalists also agree, with the large majority of those

interviewed stated that they do not view the content produced by the Minnesota Twins as a way to replace them. They believe this content is a way for the team to provide additional coverage to that which they currently receive from the local television sports journalists.

“Until I can give you a specific example of the Twins denied me a specific request and didn’t allow this and didn’t allow that, and then I see that being executed on their end ... until that happens, no,” said Sports Journalist #2.

“I just think that what the Twins are doing makes perfect sense, but I don’t think anybody’s ... I certainly don’t think of getting ‘beat’ by the Twins. I mean it’s not, we’re not in competition with them. You know, it just adds more background information for us, many times. I read their stuff online, and it’s good. It’s created more opportunities for people to get work, perhaps,” said Sports Journalist #6.

“They have such a good relationship with all the television stations, I’d be surprised if they decided to shut us out. Yeah, they there are things they might want to keep to themselves, that’s common. And I’ve seen that before,” said Sports Journalist #7, who added, “I don’t think that they see it as, ‘We’re gonna start beating the media.’ I think this is just another alley for them to get to their fans, and I get that.”

Local television sports journalists don’t believe their perceived decrease in access is due to competition concerns, because they wouldn’t let that happen. However, they do see why this type of behavior might be beneficial to the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club or any other sport organization.

Sub-Theme 1: Local television sports journalists wouldn't stand for access limitations based on competition. When mentioning how unlikely it might be for the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club to limit the access provided to local television sports journalists based on competition, some of the television sports journalists interviewed said the local media wouldn't stand for such treatment, and they wouldn't let it happen. "Let's say, for example, they wouldn't make Joe Mauer available after Joe Mauer comes out with his concussion story, because they wanted him first ... then there are gonna be a lot of people raising hell. A lot of people in the traditional media, a lot of people that cover the Twins on a regular basis, they'd be raising a lot of hell," said Sports Journalist #1.

However, when speaking about the good working relationship they have with the Minnesota Twins, the sports journalists also mentioned the difficulty in working with other local sport organizations who do limit access to gain the exclusivity of "insider" video content. The sports journalists pointed out that the difference between the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club and some of the other sport organizations in the market is that the Twins only use exclusive access in certain areas of their coverage. However, they do understand the competitive advantages available to the Minnesota Twins if they were to decide to limit outside access and increase the "insider" experience.

Sub-Theme 1a: Sports Journalists do believe the Twins could benefit from this behavior. The television sports journalists perceive their access to Minnesota Twins players, coaches, and story ideas to be more limited than in the recent past, but they do

not believe this change is due to the organization's increased focus on online video production or any possible competition concerns connected to that expansion. However, the local television sports journalists included in this study see how limiting outside access in order to increase exclusive content possibilities could benefit the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club or any sport organization.

"You're asking if there's a benefit to doing more stuff internally? (Yes). Yeah, I think there is. If it's a battle over eyeballs, and you want to control your own message, then absolutely," said Sports Journalist #7.

"I can see where it would hurt us, is the video access. You know, Torii Hunter Dance Party, ok? We can't get in the clubhouse for ten minutes. Now, we saw a couple things going out on social media from the players, but let's just say the team had their videographer and it was only available on their website. That would be a competitive advantage that there's not a hell of a lot we could do about it. We couldn't do anything about it," said Sports Journalist #1.

"Oh yeah, I think there is as they expand their digital side, I would think yes there is a chance that that access might continue to decrease, and I've seen it happen with other teams in town when they've added that element to it. It really tightens [access], because anything that is unique or different or that they know they can capitalize on, it kind of dries up for you ... but their kind of tightening the belt on what you have access to at certain points, especially the feature stories, so yeah that's concerning," said Sports Journalist #4.

“I think it hasn’t happened yet, but that day is coming. That day will be here sooner rather than later ... I think they’ll start realizing that they can do more, and they don’t need the outside media. But it’s going to take work, it’s going to take an effort to try to prove to people that they’re objective and that they’re working as an honest evaluator, because if you don’t cover the team objectively, then I think people are smart enough to figure it out that, you know what, this isn’t really where I want to get my content from,” said Sports Journalist #3.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

This multimethod study produced a large amount of data, and the findings identified many themes that shed light on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The findings confirm and add new information to our understanding of the relationship between journalists and public relations specialists. The findings also help us understand how technological changes in communication are affecting both sports journalists and sport organizations. This chapter will discuss three topics: (1) Two-Way Symmetrical Model of Public Relations & Sport, (2) The PR-Sports Journalism Relationship, and (3) Boundary-Work in Sports Journalism.

Two-Way Symmetrical Model of PR & Sport

Chapter 2 reviewed the ways in which sport organizations, like the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club benefit from the use of the two-way symmetrical model of public relations (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 15). More specifically, the chapter explored how this model of PR could be even more effective for a sport organization given the aspects unique to the field of sport (Hoye et al., 2008; Smith & Stewart, 2010). When these unique aspects of fandom are combined with the opportunities created by the Internet to allow sport organizations to take part in true two-way symmetrical public relations (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 15), the result is the ability to truly connect, engage, and motivate your fan base to support the organization, as observed on a social media level in Holton & Coddington's (2012) research on Major League Baseball's (MLB's) Cleveland Indian Social Suite.

The Minnesota Twins Baseball Club has taken notice, and even followed up with their own version of Cleveland's Social Suite called Deckstravaganza, and identified significant social media influencers to participate. However, the most prevalent aspect of the two-way symmetrical model of public relations observed within the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club is the organization's focus on attempting to create meaningful engagements and connections with their fans. In this way, the organization hopes to create online brand ambassadors much like the Cleveland Indians did with their Social Suite (Holton & Coddington, 2012). According to data collected during the organization's monthly content meetings, the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club made it a point to respond to every mention of the organization on the social media platform Twitter, and the success of online video content was based on engagement numbers created by compiling views, shares, and comments posted on the organization's website and social media platforms. The organization would decide to continue or discontinue online content series like *'Pen Pals* or *Joe Mauer Movie Reviews* based on the response received online. The Minnesota Twins Baseball Club also relied on the two-way symmetrical model of public relations to gather data and understanding of their audience in order to provide their fan base with more of what they wanted online and at Target Field.

Taken by itself, the two-way symmetrical model of public relations does not explicitly lead to competition between PR practitioners and journalists. However, it does provide an incentive for sport organizations to forgo the traditional media pathways such

as television and create their own content designed for the direct-to-consumer medium of the Internet. This was observed in the wide-spread understanding within the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club that providing information to the outside media is no longer the top priority.

While much of the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club's media relations and communication staff denied that the organization had any intent to create competition between the team and the local television sports journalists, the organization's own strategic plan (Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, 2015) and at least one member of the organization's front office called for an increased focus on Internet video content production and hiring additional staff to accomplish that objective. Meanwhile, local television sports journalists have long created this very same type of online content as part of their job requirements.

Further evidence for the existence of competition between the online content created by the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club and the local television sports journalists who cover the team exists in this excerpt from the 2016 Corporate Communications & Broadcasting strategic planning meeting held on August 11, 2015:

“Here's what we're going to do. We're going to leverage the website, traditional assets, and social media to illuminate the Twins brand in a saturated marketplace, with an emphasis on being our own news outlet. Right?” said Twins Informant #1.

“I like it!” said Twins Informant #2.

“Why don’t you start with that note? Say that we’ll become our own news outlet as we leverage our blank, blank, and blank,” said Twins Informant #12.

“I like that,” said Twins Informant #3.

“Set it like, ‘Here’s what we’re doing. Get on board or get run over,’” said Twins Informant #12.

Not every idea discussed in strategic planning meetings is eventually approved by the organization; however, the Corporate Communications & Broadcasting department was in complete agreement, and clearly intends to act as their own news entity, which obviously overlaps with the role local television sports journalists attempt to play.

In a previous conversation, Twins Informant #2 suggested that content produced by a sport organization could replace content produced by traditional sports journalists because, “unlike a hard news story that might require some vetting and some journalistic investigation and some of the ‘big J’ stuff, fact checking for example, corroborating of sources, all that kind of stuff, sports ... I just want to know what happened in the Twins game, so I need to wait for the 10 o’clock news to tell me? Or, can the Twins just tell me?”

The Minnesota Twins Baseball Club insists that the organization’s interest in expanding their online video content production presence does not put them in competition with the local television sports media, but the observations, data, and themes established in this study seem to elicit the opposite conclusion. When it comes to online content creation, the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club and television sports journalists

within the Minneapolis/St. Paul media market do appear to be in competition with one another.

While it is clear that the two-way symmetrical model of public relations can be quite beneficial for organizations, especially for sport organizations (Cleland, 2009; Shilbury & Rowe, 2012), the literature does not take into consideration consequences such as the creation of competition between a sport organization and the sports journalists who cover them on a regular basis. While there may be increased engagement and dialogue between a sport organization and its fan base, the organization may also miss out on the publicity provided by local television sports journalists who have traditionally covered those stories.

The PR-Sports Journalism Relationship

Chapter 2 also reviewed the ways in which public relations specialists have provided information subsidies to journalists in the past, and how communication technology changes are affecting that historical relationship. The findings in this study reinforce those themes.

The Minnesota Twins Baseball Club may not have intended to affect the existing supportive relationship between the organization and the local television sports media, nevertheless, it is clear that the competition created by the organization's interest in expanding its online video production capabilities has had an appreciable impact on this relationship. What Knute Rockne could have only dreamed of when establishing the first in-house sports journalist to follow the Notre Dame football team (Nicholson et al.,

2015), has become commonplace within modern day sport organizations. However, rather than creating content in a supportive role for newspapers throughout the United States, this new in-house content goes head-to-head with the content produced by local television sports journalists on the Internet. This competition has caused an observed shift in the working relationship between sports journalists and sport organizations, but nowhere more apparent or significant than in the following two areas; the shift in feature story coverage, and limiting outside media access.

As addressed previously, this study's findings illuminate the importance of feature stories to the success of local television sports journalists. Experienced sports journalists believe their storytelling techniques are highlighted during these character-driven pieces, and those skills help differentiate their television coverage strategies from one another. These feature stories are often well-received by the audience, which has not gone unnoticed by the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club. During the organization's second content meeting, Twins Informants #1, #2, and #11 pushed for the production of more video content focusing on what the team is like off the field, and stories driven by player personalities.

“Getting up-close and personal, humanizing our players is critical. I mean, you go out there and you're sitting in section 327 and you're watching your favorite player Brian Dozier from that far away, and that's cool. But then to go home and run through Twins videos and see a cool piece on Dozier and how he prepares for Spring Training, that we

bring you right into his apartment in Fort Myers, and you get to kind of get up-close and personal,” said Twins Informant #2.

These are common facets of feature stories the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, and many other sport organizations, would have “pitched” to local television sports journalists as feature story ideas in the past. However, the local television sports journalists believe the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club’s increased focus on the production of online video content keeps many of these stories in-house, which has an impact on this working relationship.

“For us to do features, it’s kind of difficult [...] now with the Twins having their own website ... they kind of focus more on the best stories go to them first,” said Sports Journalist #8.

“I think it’s harder to do feature-type stories with them. I feel like doing more off the field type feature stories is more difficult. I don’t find that that access is really there,” said Sports Journalist #4.

Limiting overall team and player access is the second significant impact of increased online video content production by the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club. When asked directly, the organization doesn’t believe they are competing with the local television sports journalists, so they do not see a connection between limiting access and their increased content creation. However, one Twins Informant was quite candid about the amount of access the organization grants to outside media, increasing their own “insider” point of view, and how both of these impact local television sports journalists.

“We have a leg up on the outside news media that may be trying to come in and do some of this stuff, but we can say, ‘OK, you can come to this door, but behind this door is all ours.’ And that’s the stuff people want to see, is behind the closed door. So, I think it’s great, for us it’s awesome. It’s entertainment, we’re in the entertainment business. So, I’m happy when we can provide a fun, inside look or a different take on something that everybody else is going to be reporting on, but our presentation is different in that we have greater access to the content material that we’re producing,” said Twins Informant #2.

Within the past five years, local television sports journalists have noticed an increase in the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club’s attempt to limit access to players and coaches. “There are some things that I would say, now, the purse strings are being held. Like I don’t think it’s as ... I don’t think the door is as wide open. I think it may be more like this (shows narrow gap between hands) with them being in charge of their digital face and footprint,” said Sports Journalist #5.

“We’ll call and they’ll say, ‘No, the website’s going to do that story,’” said Sports Journalist #8.

The Minnesota Twins Baseball Club and the local television sports journalists do not believe they are in competition with one another, however, the two significant areas described in this section show support for a noticeable impact in the working relationship between these two parties, and another shift in the historically supportive public relations-journalists relationship. As Lloyd & Toogod (2015, p. vii) observe in their

research, public relations has become less dependent on journalism, while journalism's dependence on public relations has grown. The data collected in this study support that claim, and show that this may be even more apparent within the sports journalism-sport organization relationship, because sport organizations are now the gatekeepers to the information sports journalists need in order to do their work.

Boundary-Work in Sports Journalism

As shown above, there are multiple ways in which the self-publication opportunities afforded to the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club have affected the organization's working relationship with local television sports journalists.

Most local television sports journalists, however, have chosen denial as their response to their evolving working relationship with sport organizations. They deny the possibility that the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club might limit access to sources and stories in an attempt to increase the exclusivity and therefore value of the online video content created by the team.

One form of denial used by the local television sports journalists is found in the belief that the sports journalism community simply would not stand for such treatment. "Let's say, for example, they wouldn't make Joe Mauer available after Joe Mauer comes out with his concussion story, because they wanted him first ... then there are gonna be a lot of people raising hell. A lot of people in the traditional media, a lot of people that cover the Twins on a regular basis, they'd be raising a lot of hell," said Sports Journalist #1. This response, and others like it, are difficult to understand when you consider that

this same group of sports journalists point to similar access limitations and in-house production processes taking place at other sport organizations that they cover in the Minneapolis/St. Paul media market. Clearly, these local television sports journalists are willing to stand for this type of treatment, at least to some degree.

The most prevalent form of denial expressed during semi-structured depth interviews with local television sports journalists was the attempt to articulate professional boundaries (Abbott, 1988; Gieryn, 1983) between the sports journalists and Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, in order to show how the two parties couldn't possibly be competing with one another.

Some local television sports journalists insisted the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club couldn't be their competition because the organization doesn't produce a television sportscast. "I don't see them ever being in an adversarial or a competitive role against us. Now, like I said, can they get better access? Yes. Can they get video of things we can't get? Yes. Now, do they have a sportscast on at 10 o'clock at night? No. And until they have a sportscast that will compete directly with what we do at 10 o'clock at night, I'm not really that worried about it," said Sports Journalist #1. Local television journalists are so trained to identify their competition as other local television sports journalists that they rarely identify sports journalists working in other media (i.e. newspaper, radio) as competition, let alone sport organizations like the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club.

Much like the early professionalization work done to separate journalists from non-journalist by way of codes of ethics (Deuze, 2005), education (Folkerts, 2014), and

standards of objectivity (Kaplan, 2009), other local television sports journalists base their argument against competition on the fact that the staff members producing this online video content for the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club are not journalists. Therefore, they cannot participate in the act of journalism, and are not in competition with “real” sports journalists. The rationale is, sport journalists can’t compete against non-sports journalists, because they practice and create different things. “I think what we do is journalism and I say what they do is PR [...] I think there’s a difference. But as a totality, I’m saying, that organization would be PR. That doesn’t mean there aren’t good journalists there, or at least former journalists who decided to go to the dark side,” said Sports Journalist #5.

“I don’t think it comes across as being journalistic, I think it just comes across as being PR ... a piece of public relations propaganda ... not propaganda, but just a way for them to spin the team or promote the team,” said Sports Journalist #4.

These examples show that the journalist/non-journalist boundary-work observed and explored by Carlson & Lewis (2015) is also applicable to local television sports journalists when they feel threatened by the encroachment of non-local television sports journalists.

Still other local television sports journalists believe the professional quality of the online video content they produce is enough to separate them from the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club. “You’ve gotta think like a TV station, you can’t think like Uncle Bill shooting a wedding. You see, that’s the difference. I think with the Twins, right now,

they're thinking it's Uncle Bill ... in order to do TV, they better get someone who knows TV," said Sports Journalist #1.

All of these distinctions are ways professional television sports journalists attempt to establish and support boundaries between the work they do and the work of "outsiders" not considered to be professional journalists, at least as defined by these local television sports journalists. This reaction to intrusion on one's field is an extension of Gieryn's (1983) boundary-work, Abbott's (1988) system of professional separation, and the more journalism-specific boundary research of Carlson & Lewis (2015). Professionals participate in this boundary-work with the intent of creating or protecting what Bourdieu (1986/2011) might refer to as capital (i.e. power, financial importance, and social standing). In this study's example of the local television sports journalists and their evolving relationship with the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, the sports journalists are losing economic and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986/2011) as their role of information disseminator is gradually weakening with the sport organization's intent to produce more online video content, and the audience's growing acceptance of web-based content and the greater engagement possibilities created by the Internet (Pfahl, 2014).

Summary

This chapter followed a logical progression with the intent to make clear connections to Chapter 2's review of literature, and answer the study's lone research question; What impact has the increase in online self-published video content had on the

supportive working relationship between sport organizations and the local television sports journalists assigned to cover these organizations on a regular basis?

This multimethod study provides support for past research, uncovers new evidence for better understanding, and suggests a connection between technological communication changes and the evolving relationship between sports journalist and sport public relations practitioner. This study also exposed an observed decrease in access and story subsidies provided by the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club to the local television sports journalists during the 2015 season. While it is possible that there have been other changes not taken into account within this study that have affected this relationship, it is clear that the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club has an interest in acting as their own news entity, keeping stories that provide more opportunity for fan engagement in-house, and limiting outside media's access in an attempt to increase the value of their "insider" look at the team. This study may not be able to prove a direct correlation between Internet production possibilities and these impacts, however, the observed evolution of this supportive working relationship does suggest a correlation.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

The Minnesota Twins Baseball Club and the local television sports journalists in the Minneapolis/St. Paul media market are in competition with one another and that competition has had an observed impact on the working relationship between the two parties.

Competition

Despite the fact neither the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club or the local television sports journalists who cover the organization on a regular basis made any explicit reference to the existence of competition during the semi-structured depth interviews, and both denied the possibility of competition between the two parties on multiple occasions, this study provided evidence to the contrary. Much of that evidence comes from the unanimous support provided in the Corporate Communications & Broadcasting Department's strategic meeting held in August of 2015 to set a 2016 department goal of becoming their "own news outlet." No matter how much the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club may state that there is no competition between the organization and the outside media, when one of the goals identified within the organization is to act as a news gathering and disseminating outlet, there is an intent to compete with outside news gathering and disseminating outlets.

While the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club still believes there is a place for the local television sports journalists who cover the team, the organization's increased focus

on creating in-house video content for their online platforms seems like an early step in removing the sports journalist “middle man” from their strategic communication plans.

Television sports journalists are no longer the exclusive video content providers and have to consider options that distinguish them from other online video content providers. One opportunity, already being considered by Sports Journalists #7, is adding more opinion, commentary, and critique to the television sportscast and playing the role of sports columnist on television. This idea represents a step away from the objective and normative standards that distinguished journalists from non-journalists in the past, however, Sports Journalists #7 suggests that if the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club plans to produce content similar to the content sports journalists are currently creating, then the sports media needs to focus on ways to make their presentation and content unique for their viewers.

Limited Outsider Access

Other observed impacts of this competition between the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club and the local television sports journalists were found in the decreased access provided to sports journalists by the organization, fewer story opportunities afforded to sports journalists, and, as Sports Journalist #8 mentioned, being told the website was doing the story, so Sports Journalist #8 would not be granted the access to do that story. Other than the example provided by Sports Journalist #8, directly connecting the new online opportunities that make for increased competition with the organization’s new approach to the long-standing supportive relationship may be less than causal.

However, enough evidence exists to recognize a correlation between the arrival of new competition and the shift in the working relationship between the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club and the local television sports journalists.

Without the access and support historically provide by sport organizations like the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, local television sports journalists may be forced to change their role in order to remain relevant in the eyes of the audience. Most of the television sports journalists included in this study pointed to the National Football League (NFL) as an example of a professional sport league that has limited the access provided to traditional sports journalists more so than Major League Baseball (MLB) and increased in-house online video content production at the same time, which has led to a shift in how televisions sports journalists cover the NFL and its teams. Some local television sports journalists suggested that this limited access had the side-effect of increasing negative reporting on the league. Without the “rah-rah” stories historically available to the local television sports journalists, coverage shifted to stories focusing on off-the-field issues, concussion and health stories, and stories focusing on prevalent domestic abuse issues within the league. For instance, the NBC Sports website ProFootballTalk.com provides an updated list of legal infractions and names of every NFL player, coach, and administrator on their “Police Blotter” website (Pro Football Talk, 2016). This shift may be one reaction to losing access to sources and stories, however, these in-depth stories often require more resources to produce the final product, therefore few local television

stations can afford the kind of financial and resource burden required to create this content.

While Major League Baseball (MLB) and the National Football League (NFL) are very different entities, this study supports the argument that if the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club was to continue limiting access to sources, stories, and the organization while creating more in-house video content, the result may be a similar shift toward more negative stories by local television sports journalists. Unfortunately, for the health of this once symbiotic working relationship, increasingly negative stories would more than likely lead to less access granted by the sport organization, which would, in turn, lead to the increased production of more negative stories. Eventually the sports journalist-sport organization working relationship could become so fractured that the two sides cease to work with each other.

Denial & Boundaries

Rather than accepting and addressing competition's impact on their supportive working relationship with the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, local television sports journalists have chosen to dig in and attempt to highlight the differences, distinctions, and boundaries established between their traditional role as content creators and the role sport organizations now play in producing their own online video content.

This denial and boundary-work is made easier due to the disconnect between television station Internet producers and the staff members that have traditionally created the on-air television product. While all of the local television sports journalists in this

study understood the importance of having video on their station's website, and all created content that was available on the station's website, most of the sports journalists did not work on the station's website. They did not make content decisions, write the stories, or upload video to the site. Those duties were handled by different members of the news staff who did not participate in the newsgathering process. Therefore, the local television sports journalists found it easier to deny the thought of being in competition with the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, because posting content to the station website wasn't viewed as part of their job.

With this in mind, it's easier to see where the argument of the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club not being competition because they don't have a 10 o'clock sportscast comes from. Those arguments are further supported by the extended tenure and perceived celebrity of the local television sports journalists included in this study.

Regardless of the rationale, this denial does nothing to benefit the local television sports journalists' future position or resilience. The two-way symmetrical model of public relations established between the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club and their fans continues to provide for a true dialogue between the organization and their target audience with no need for traditional media like the television. This new communication pathway will leave local television sports journalists as a forgotten "middle man" if they do not review, react, and reconsider their stance on their evolving relationship with sport organizations like the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club.

Limitations

This research study provides significant breadth of one specific relationship and furthers the understanding of an under researched area of study. However, this study does have its limitations, specifically the three main limitations that follow.

First, as is the case with many studies relying on qualitative methods, the findings are quite specific to one particular situation and, therefore, the generalizability of such findings to a broader population is not recommended without further research on the subject. However, with limited research on this particular relationship between sports journalist and sport organization, this study should be viewed as an early attempt at gathering a wide-range of information with which to better understand the evolving relationship explored within this study. The data and findings discovered in this study may provide support for future studies aimed at testing the theoretical connections uncovered within this data, or to provide further avenues for theory building and theory creation.

Second, a multimethod research design is often employed in an attempt to isolate, corroborate, and/or triangulate a specific finding, or at very least provide the author with more certainty in their conclusions. That was the case with this study, however, many multimethod research designs are also mixed-method designs, meaning they combine both quantitative and qualitative methods. This is done in an attempt to bridge the gaps in research found in any single method. This particular study is one of the first to explore the sports journalist-sport organization relationship with a focus on Internet-based content

competition, therefore, combining two exploratory qualitative methods was deemed more appropriate, albeit unconventional.

Finally, the demographic makeup of the local television sports journalists in the Minneapolis/St. Paul media market differs greatly from the entire population of local television sports journalists across the world. The local television sports journalists sample used in this study skews mostly male, entirely white, and most of the sports journalists had worked in the Minneapolis/St. Paul media market covering the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club for at least a decade. Therefore, the semi-structured depth interview data collected from two local television sports journalists at each of the major network affiliated television stations in the Minneapolis/St. Paul media market is not representative of all local television sports journalists. However, it was the most appropriate sample with which to study this specific working relationship between local television sports journalists and the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club.

Future Research

This research study reinforces the importance of possibilities provided by, and the advantages available to, sport organizations that participate in “true” dialogue with their audience/fans. Sport management literature, much like public relations literature, has pointed to the two-way symmetrical model (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 15) as the “gold standard” for successful communication. Considering the fandom unique to sport (Hoye et al., 2008; Smith & Stewart, 2010) and the ability to turn those fans into online brand ambassadors with the promise of “insider” perks (Holton & Coddington, 2012) it is

clearly a good business decision for modern sport organizations to increase their focus on in-house video production and have an online presence for self-publication. As witnessed in the example of the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, these exclusive insider looks are increasingly valuable and incentivize organizations to create this kind of content in-house and publish it via their own online platforms.

What is deserving of future research, however, is discovering where the advantages provided by a sport organization producing their own content are outweighed by the loss in “free” publicity from the local sports media. That is, of course, assuming that there will come a point where local sports media may no longer provide coverage or be allowed to provide coverage because of access limitations. Discovering this balance point, if there is one, would be beneficial for practical application by sport organizations.

Given the call for sport organizations to increase the amount of self-published in-house content, and an inability for online audiences to differentiate between what is and is not credible journalistic content (Kiouisis & Dimitrova, 2006; Lee et al., 2010), what ethical, moral, and professional standards should be followed when creating and utilizing this type of online video content? What advantages and disadvantages are there to self-regulation such as journalistic codes of ethics?

These are just a few of the future research projects this study brings to the forefront, but, given the infancy of this area of study, there are many other intriguing avenues to follow. This, is one of the primary reasons this research area is such an interesting one to study.

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