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Come Together: Inclusive Leadership and Public Relations Education

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Come Together:

Inclusive Leadership and Public Relations Education

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A Dissertation

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Abstract

Multiple voices from educational and professional arenas have called for change in the way in which public relations undergraduates are prepared to navigate complex communication challenges in the 21st century. Some scholars have advanced leadership as a way to address this change, identifying the undergraduate public relations curriculum as the ideal place to introduce future practitioners to leadership as a way to better prepare them to initiate and participate in positive social change in complex contexts. However, scholars have neither made in-depth connections with leadership theory and practice, nor provided a framework for designing a curriculum for incorporating leadership into public relations undergraduate programs. The purpose of this research was to examine the practice of inclusive leadership and communication in an exemplary organization in order to answer the question: What would an undergraduate public relations leadership (PRL) curriculum look like? Portraiture was used to uncover and illustrate the key ways in which inclusive leadership and communication manifest at a successful Chicago-based interactive technology firm. Findings support the idea that an inclusive leadership and communication culture is created through direction, alignment, and commitment (DAC). Furthermore, the research provides evidence that inclusive leadership and communication skills can be developed through practice and support. An analysis of sample public relations undergraduate programs was used in conjunction with research findings to bridge the gap between inclusive leadership development and public relations undergraduate education. A public relations leadership (PRL) curriculum was created to help public relations undergraduate students better develop leadership, communication, and relational skills. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive, http://aura.antioch.edu/ and Ohiolink ETD Center, https://etd.ohiolink.edu/

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Hyperlinks

Chapter I: Introduction and Contextualization of this Study

Public relations, like art, may be in the eye of the beholder.

To some it serves as the conscience of an organization, its practitioners working behind the scenes to counsel decision makers on ethical matters to ensure socially responsible action. To others it is outright manipulation and suppression of opposing voices through the use of clever communication tactics.

The truth is, as much as professionals and educators would like to be able to define it in simple ways, public relations is a complex amalgamation of understandings and practices created by those who work in the field, teach it, learn about it, and experience its effects. The absence of a universally accepted definition, or metanarrative, of public relations is evidence of its complexity and further pits modernistic efforts to simplify its practice and education for the sake of efficiency and profit against a postmodern need to communicate in ways that recognize a fragmented landscape full of diverse understandings and voices (Rickey, 2012, paragraph 7).

This tension stems from the idea that communication outcomes can be controlled to a certain extent. For all of its existence, public relations has revolved around the idea of influencing how people receive, interpret, and act on messages that represent what organizations do. That communication influence combined with a modernistic need for efficiency for the sake of profit has historically privileged the organization and led to rigid segmentation of intended audiences into rank-ordered homogenous collectives that are not representative of the rich and complex interactions and viewpoints that individuals and groups act on daily, excluding "competing, marginalized, critical, or oppressed voices" (Duffy, 2000, p. 312; Holtzhausen, 2002, 2012; L'Etang, 2005; Tyler, 2005). Further complicating the role of public relations is its historical relegation to a department that lacks representation at the highest levels of an

organization, or its subordination to another department that has a decidedly different purpose. The result is an influential, undervalued, and sometimes distrusted communication practice that has been perceived by some as nothing more than a technical tool to support marketing and advertising, that suffers from a bad ethical reputation, and that is not recognized for the leadership role it can and does play within an organization (Berger, 2005; Heath, 2006; Holtzhausen, 2000).

Public relations education in the United States has experienced its own struggles, trying to balance the need for ethical practitioners who can secure employment upon graduation with institutional constraints of budget, resources, and the need to shepherd students through the major in a four-year time period. Traditionally, public relations courses at the undergraduate level have mirrored the practice, revolving around modernistic themes of efficiency related to profit and organizational privilege (Duffy, 2000). Legitimacy of programs have been developed through location in journalism and business schools, research that has sought an alignment of public relations education with the needs of corporate entities, and customary courses that have been used to secure program accreditation (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2018; L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006; Global Alliance, 2012; Guiniven, 1997; Turk, 2006).

More recent viewpoints in both organization and academic realms suggest that an embrace of relationally complex environments and the diversity of voices therein is the heart of public relations (Berger & Meng, 2014; Demetious, 2013; Edwards, 2010, 2011; Holtzhausen, 2012; Vardeman-Winter & Tindall, 2010; Waymer, 2010). And while multiple scholars have addressed intent, ethics, diversity, legal issues, social responsibility, and effecting positive social change (Coombs & Holladay, 2013; Edwards & Hodges, 2011; Gower, 2018; Luttrell & Ward, 2018; USC Annenberg, 2018; Yang & Taylor, 2013), there is still a gap between undergraduate

education and the needed skills with which students enter the workforce (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2018). It is clear that a new paradigm is needed in order to paint a full portrait of the practice that helps its future practitioners realize its power to aid in a fully functioning society (Heath, 2006).

The following content of this chapter frames the dissertation, providing the rationale for a postmodern approach to public relations that ties relational and inclusive leadership to the practice, the intent to create a conceptual model of a public relations curriculum, and an overview of the research conducted.

Statement of the Problem

Professionals and academics alike have called for curriculum change at the undergraduate level for some time (Cheng & DeGregorio, 2008; Commission on Public Relations Education, 2018; DiStaso, Stacks, & Botan, 2009; Dozier & Lauzen, 2000; Freberg, Redmond, & Keltner-Previs, 2013; Guiniven, 1997; Holtzhausen, 2000; L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006; Paskin, 2013). Historically, the former group was critical of what it perceived as lack of technical savvy among program graduates while the latter stated that too much emphasis on professionalism at the expense of a well-rounded education damaged both the profession and undergraduates' ability to make connections with other information that will make them better able to navigate complex communication environments.

The Commission on Public Relations Education was created in 1973 to address the "unsatisfactory and disparate state of public relations education in the U.S." (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2018, p. 7). Consisting of both professionals and academics, "the Commission seeks to establish benchmarks for teaching public relations that are current, research-based, sensitive to culture and language, and applicable to preparing public relations

students for careers in practice, research, teaching, or a combination of all three" (p. 7). Over the years, its recommendations have been responsible for creating the customary course offerings found in programs throughout the U.S.

The Commission's most recent work identified skills—technical and communication and relational—and knowledge most desired in entry-level public relations practitioners (p. 27). The report also listed 10 recommendations concerning required and recommended undergraduate coursework; continued discussion among the public relations industry, practitioners, and educators; faculty preparation and experience; the need to diversity public relations; enhancing the value of a public relations degree, as well as public relations educational programs and departments; special requirements for online delivery of public relations education; the need for practitioners and educators to keep pace with technological advancement; and the need to increase students' awareness of international public relations opportunities and differences in practice (pp. 20-22). While all of the recommendations should be required reading for practitioners and educators, the ones directly related to entry-level skills and course recommendations have the most bearing on this research endeavor.

Moreover, it is clear that the Commission's promise to "[pursue] an aggressive effort to develop action plans to unite educators and practitioners in addressing [the majority, if not all of] the major recommendations of the report," indicate that professionals and scholars alike have more work to do to embrace complexity and create communication environments that recognize and honor varied viewpoints and ideas (Berger & Meng, 2014; Demetrious, 2013). Accepting complexity creates a need to look outside of the discipline to other fields for inspiration.

Recently some scholars have suggested that leadership should be incorporated into the public relations curriculum and have called for both professionals and educators to lead the way

toward a new approach to undergraduate education (Berger & Meng, 2014; Bronstein & Fitzpatrick, 2015). Yet, missing in the public relations literature are connections between the practice and other forms of leadership, including servant and authentic, and concepts like love (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Keith, 2008; Sinclair, 2007; Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2003). And despite the areas of overlap with leadership and its importance in helping organization development and change initiatives succeed (Kotter, 1995), the role of public relations is often absent from, or downplayed in, discussions about leadership and change.

Inherent in the discussions of transformational leadership in public relations is the postmodern need for practitioners to be able to recognize and work with, and within, complex, dynamic, and fluid internal and external social settings. Therefore, inquiry into how best to develop ethical practitioner-leaders would benefit from postmodern-influenced research that examines leadership as a process of social influence, and as a collective way of learning for the common good.

During the past 18 years, scholars have tried to address the complex nature of public relations through the lenses of postmodernism (Duffy, 2000; Curtin & Gaither, 2005; Gower, 2006; Holtzhausen, 2000, 2002, 2012; Motion & Weaver, 2005; Stroh, 2007; Tyler, 2005; Valentini, Kruckeberg, & Stark, 2012) and critical theory (Coombs & Holladay, 2012; Dozier & Lauren, 2000; Ihlen, van Ruler, & Fredriksson, 2009; L'Etang, 2005). More recently, aspects of leadership ranging from traits, behaviors, and styles (Aldoory & Toth, 2004; Choi & Choi, 2009; Jin, 2010; Lee & Cheng, 2011; Meng, Berger, Gower, & Heyman, 2012; Yeomans, 2007) to a normative theoretical framework (Berger & Meng, 2010) have appeared in the public relations literature.

Sensemaking and strategy in public relations leadership have been addressed in books by Berger and Meng (2014) and Gregory and Willis (2013), respectively. Moreover leadership is the focus at the institutional level at both the University of Alabama's Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations, which exists to "help develop and recognize outstanding diverse public relations leaders, role models and mentors to advance ethical public relations in an evolving, global society" ("Mission," 2015), and symposia of The Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, which is concerned with unity, professional standards, and sharing knowledge in the public relations profession ("About GA," 2015).

Yet, leadership is still a relatively new concept in public relations that requires deeper analysis from varied perspectives. More important, with the increasing research on and calls for leadership education in public relations, there is no framework for integrating leadership into a PR curriculum. For example, the extant research, publications, and associations and centers that discuss the advancement of leadership in public relations primarily represent and serve established practitioners and scholars. This phenomenon, and resultant gap in the literature, ignores undergraduate education, a crucial step in the development of professionals, and demands an approach to cover the topic in higher education.

Purpose Statement and Research Question

Some scholars have posited that the undergraduate public relations curriculum is the ideal place to introduce future practitioners to leadership as a way to address ethical issues in public relations and to better prepare future practitioners to initiate and participate in positive social change in complex contexts (Berger & Meng, 2014; Berger & Reber, 2006; Bronstein & Fitzpatrick, 2015; Ewing, Remund, & Dargay, 2019; Lee & Cheng, 2011, 2012). That argument, however, would mean that a new curriculum would have to be constructed to accommodate

leadership theory and experiential learning. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to examine the postmodern practice of inclusive leadership and communication in an exemplary organization in order to answer the question: What would an undergraduate public relations leadership (PRL) curriculum look like?

Research Approach, Focus, Method, and Design

Research should generate new knowledge that helps the discipline progress. As Daymon and Holloway (2011) pointed out, the value of that knowledge and progress is dependent on a researcher's willingness to "peer into the unknown. . ., to look at things in often unconventional ways or from different vantage points" (p. 4). That means that the focus, method, and design of research that seeks to address the needs of a PRL curriculum necessarily has to complement the need for a new perspective. A cursory overview of these aspects is offered below. A much more detailed discussion is offered in Chapter III.

Research approach. The approach adopted for this dissertation was a qualitative case study. According to Stake (1995), qualitative case study research combines "naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological, and biographic research methods" to capture the complexity of the object of study (Stake, 1995, pp. xi–xii).

As such the research approach was inductive in nature, conducted in stages, instrumental, or constructed to move the researcher's knowledge from participants' specific experiences within an inclusive leadership and communication environment to a more general application in formulating a PRL curriculum (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1995).

Focus. The research in this dissertation focused on uncovering information about inclusive leadership that could inform an undergraduate PRL curriculum. As such, it needed to accommodate the realities of contemporary public relations, namely that meaning making by

both audiences and practitioners themselves happens in a dynamic process that is contextual, complex, and emergent (Booysen, 2014; Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Method. Because "communication relationships are inseparable from the social and historical contexts in which they occur," the method chosen had to complement the postmodern need for complexity and relationality (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p. 6). In order to uncover knowledge that could inform a change in the practice and teaching of public relations, the research needed to be conducted in a setting that celebrates and fosters communication practices that acknowledge co-created meaning. Therefore, the method guiding the research needed to allow the inquirer to examine "how the impressions and understandings held by a community . . . have consequences for broader social and historical locations" (p. 6).

This research is a qualitative narrative case study utilizing portraiture as a method of inquiry. According to Hackmann (2002), portraiture is "a type of auto-ethnography in which the researcher displays her/his own experiences in the field," an approach that allows for collaborative meaning-making between all research participants (pp. 52-53; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). While the method requires the self-reflection and writing associated with auto-ethnography, its emphasis on author transparency and heightened awareness of power dynamics helps to ensure that the voices of all participants are valued (DeLeon, 2010, p. 408). With a framework built upon aesthetics, the good, context, relationships, and voice, portraiture is a highly textured form of narrative analysis created to provide a holistic and contextually bound central story that does not seek to generalize, but rather to "document and illuminate the complexity and detail of a unique experience or place," or case study, so that the "reader will discover resonant universal themes" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 14). As such, it is a

method that produces results meant to inspire others to co-create knowledge that can be applied to their individual realities.

Its appropriateness for public relations leadership research is supported by a number of scholars during the past 18 years who have questioned the emphasis on control and management of organizational communication through the lenses of critical theory (Coombs & Holladay, 2012; Falkheimer, 2007; Holtzhausen, 2000; Ihlen et al., 2009; Pal & Dutta, 2008), communication technology (Valentini et al., 2012), activism (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002) and textual analysis (Duffy, 2000). The ideas advanced by these public relations scholars have much in common with Uhl-Bien's view of relational leadership theory, which "consider(s) *processes* that are not just about the quality of the relationship or even the type of relationship, but rather about the social dynamics by which leadership relationships form and evolve in the workplace" (original emphasis, p. 672). Portraiture allows readers to hear the voices and see the inter-subjective, or shared, relationship of all participants, including the researcher, in the story and to understand the context in which those relationships occur.

Design. As participants in Ewing et al. (2019) exploratory examination of the best leadership practices in public relations undergraduate education stated, "leadership means having a vision of how to help move an organization or industry forward, thinking strategically and providing counsel" (p. 42). The need to study communication dynamics that allow the formation and evolution of leadership that has moved both an organization and industry forward necessitated a location where those processes occur, as well as a design that embraced complexity and diversity, allowed for collaborative meaning making, was contextual and adaptive, and recognized the value of researcher reflexivity (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, pp. 7-10). Additionally, postmodern calls for examining public relations from a new perspective and,

by default, ways in which needed communication and relational leadership skills can be imparted to undergraduates, necessitated a break from traditional studies of public relations practitioners, educators, and students (Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Duffy, 2000; L'Etang & Pieczka, 1996, 2006; Tyler, 2005).

The case organization was Jellyvision, a Chicago-based interactive technology marketing firm that specializes in the creation of computer programs that explain complicated subjects in a conversational way to employees of corporations. A number of elements made Jellyvision an ideal location to identify and present the multiple ways in which the organization manifests an inclusive, boundary-spanning leadership and communication culture:

- The company's clever and humorous external communication practices stem from its founder's background as the creator of the trivia video game *YOU DON'T KNOW JACK* ("Jobs," 2017).

- Its rapid growth rate, from approximately 60 employees to almost 300 in a six-year period, has challenged and shaped the organization's communication culture, requiring the same interpretive and adaptive thought process that is evident in its products.

- It practices inclusive leadership. Inclusive communication and leadership are celebrated, resulting in a culture that its participants fear losing as the company grows.

- The organization has received industry recognition and multiple awards for its workplace culture (Brinson, 2015; Carpenter, 2014; "Chicago Top Workplaces," 2017; Husain, 2016; Swanson, 2014).

- The company's leadership not only practices inclusive leadership, but also recognizes the public relations value of inclusive leadership and an inclusive culture for business and society as illustrated in numerous articles, a constant and high-volume stream of applicants for all job openings, a low employee turnover rate, and employees who serve as ambassadors for the organization (see Jellyvision Portrait, Chapter IV; Elejalde-Ruiz, 2015; Fukumoto, December 2017; Gottlieb, 2015; Griner, 2017; Harkin, 2014; Hines, 2018; Lannert, 2015, 2016; Lew, 2017)

The research design consisted of a three-part process of 20 in-depth interviews, observation of interview participants and their environment, and secondary data collection and analysis.

Part 1: In-depth interviews. Interviews were conducted in two stages, initial and follow-up. Six initial participants were chosen through purposive sampling because of the knowledge they possess and the leadership roles within the organization they play.

Fourteen additional interviews were conducted with other Jellyvision employees who could speak about leadership, inclusivity, culture, and public relations and other communication practices from different perspectives, roles, and levels of responsibility. Follow-up interviews with participants were conducted as needed over a seven-month period.

Part 2: Observation. Participant and environment observation—interactions, interpersonal dynamics, culture, offices, etc.—were made during four visits to the research site over a period of six months. Observation data was recorded in a research notebook and through photographs during each visit.

Part 3: Secondary data collection & analyses. Secondary data collection and analyses of the organization's website, Facebook page, Twitter feed, You-Tube videos, documents, etc. were used to help uncover themes and key components of inclusive leadership and communication practices that are presented in a richly textured narrative case study. The narrative was examined against a collected representative sample of dominant paradigmatic public relations courses to provide insight into creating an undergraduate PRL curriculum.

Significance of the Study

I argue that postmodern concepts of inclusiveness, diversity, and multi-narrative value intertwine with relational (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Uhl-Bien, 2006) and inclusive leadership (Booysen, 2014; Komives & Wagner, 2009) theories, public relations research and practice (Berger, 2005; Demetrious, 2013; Dozier & Lauren, 2000; Ewing et al., 2019; Holtzhausen, 2002, 2007, 2012; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002; Neill, 2014; Stroh, 2007; Tyler, 2005; Werder & Holtzhausen, 2009), and undergraduate public relations education (Erzikova & Berger, 2012; Ewing et al., 2019; McCleneghan, 2005; Meng, 2013; Neff, 2002; Smudde, 2011, 2015; Yeomans, 2007) to lay a foundation for a PRL curriculum that prepares professionals who can lead and communicate in complex and divergent situations and organizations (Berger & Meng, 2014; Gregory & Willis, 2013). However, in order to construct a conceptual PRL curriculum model, an identified gap in research in the public relations leadership literature will have to be filled. To date, the majority of research in public relations leadership concentrates on characteristics of excellent leaders and transactional vs. transformational leadership styles. Little research has explored relational or inclusive leadership and/or the importance of followership as part of leadership as postmodern examples of ways to accommodate complex realities of

organizational environments that consist of dynamic social groups, diverse voices, and power struggles (Hollander, 2009; Hollander, Park, Boyd, Elman, & Ignagni, 2008; Weick, 1995).

Such an exploration needs to allow participants and the researcher to think reflexively about the ways in which their personal and professional attributes and experiences impact the people around them. Reflexivity used in this context is a postmodern recognition of the complex role individuals play in joint meaning making. Consequently, the resulting portrait of Jellyvision provides a highly textured case study of the lived experiences of people who create and maintain inclusive leadership and communication practices from which others can derive insight into how to educate public relations undergraduates to lead in place as entry-level professionals (Stake, 1995, Yin, 2008). The lessons learned during the research and analysis can be used to propose an undergraduate public relations curriculum model that can be applied in flexible and adaptive ways to suit a variety of public relations undergraduate program needs.

Key Concepts

A number of terms are used repeatedly throughout this dissertation in order to explore, through a postmodern lens, different types of leadership and how they inform public relations, and to describe the resulting portrait, or presentation, of the research. Therefore, it is important to provide a definition for each.

Leadership. Leadership has been studied, written, and talked about in numerous ways. Traditionally, leadership was viewed from entity perspective that connected the concept to an individual or specific positions or roles. More recent views on leadership see the practice as collective and relational, extending its practice to everyone in every role in an organization. The recognition of leadership as something that is produced by a collective of people and their processes within a system has further extended the understanding of leadership as an outcome.

For the purpose of this dissertation, leadership is a concept that is non-gendered and non–hierarchical, meaning that it can be enacted by anyone anywhere within or outside of an organization. As such, leadership is a social construct, meaning that it is created by people through dynamic relationships with others and is influenced by all components of an organization, including people, processes, structures, policies, environment, timelines, etc. (Anderson, 2010, p. 74-81). Because individuals contribute to leadership and work together to produce leadership, it is both a process and the outcome of a process that produces direction, alignment, and commitment among a collective of people within an organization (McCauley, 2014; Palus, Horth, & Harrison, 2016).

Postmodernism. Conceptualizations of postmodernism run the gamut from the intent to create total chaos in society through the constant rejection of concept or description as true or truthful to the creation of a way to point out the often paradoxical and privileged ideas behind scientific rationalizations and metanarratives (Alvesson, 2002; Sturken & Cartwright, 2009). Because the research in this dissertation seeks to present reflexive examinations of inclusive leadership and communication practices in a way that allows for a variety of applications in undergraduate public relations education, postmodernism in this document refers to the questioning of historical standards for leadership and public relations practice.

Relational leadership. Relational leadership is a postmodern view of leadership that recognizes the role that complex, varied, and unpredictable social dynamics play in people's concepts of leadership, who can lead, and where leadership occurs. Relational leadership is collaborative, interactive, and dependent on context (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Inclusive leadership. Inclusive leadership is a postmodern, cyclical, collective-learning process that people engage in for the common good. It requires a high degree of self-awareness

at both the individual and organizational levels in order to recognize hidden biases and power and to seek out multiple viewpoints (Booysen, 2014). Inclusive leadership is distinguished from other forms of leadership in that it is concerned with follower-leader inter-subjective relations, recognizing that "'leadership' is granted (or co-created) by followers on a contingent basis with constant reassessment. Leadership is a relationship" (Hantula, 2009, p. 701).

Authentic, authenticity. "Being authentic means being straightforward, genuine, honest, and truthful about one's plans, opinions, and motivations" (Anderson, 2010, p. 43). Authenticity is necessary for the success of collaborative practices.

Power. Power is broadly described as an ability to do something or get something done by others. The concept of power is closely related to influence in that those who occupy a recognized position of power are able to influence others to do something (Berger & Reber, 2006, p. 3). The research in this dissertation examines power from a postmodern perspective and attempts to uncover how it is obtained and used by the participants to create, maintain, and exist within an inclusive organizational culture (Courtright & Smudde, 2007; Holtzhausen, 2012, Smudde & Courtright, 2012).

Power, along with the concepts of intentionality and rationality, is one of three components of agency, or the condition of activity. Case study research recognizes that "human beings at once make their social contexts and are made by them; . . . are actors but also (are) acted upon; . . . (and) in part . . . possess agency and in part . . . lack it" (Hewson, 2010, pp. 5-6). While this view is neither inherently positive nor negative, the case study in this dissertation was constructed to uncover success and positivity in the uses of power (Cope, Jones, & Hendricks, 2015).

Public relations. The definition of public relations as stated by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) is "a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics."

For the purpose of this study, it is helpful to know what public relations is not and/or how it differs from advertising and marketing. In the simplest terms, advertising is limited in scope, purpose, audience type, and use of media primarily, if not exclusively, to inspire economic transactions. And while the boundaries of public relations and marketing seem to overlap, "public relations is concerned with building relationships and generating goodwill for the organization [while] marketing is concerned with customers and selling products and services" (Wilcox & Cameron, 2010, pp. 18-19).

Portraiture. Emerging from phenomenology and borrowing techniques, standards, and goals of ethnography, portraiture is a form of narrative analysis that uses both empirical and aesthetic description and collaborative meaning-making to listen for, observe, and triangulate all data collected in order to document and interpret the perspectives and experiences of the people and culture being studied (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, pp. 13-14). Unlike other ethnographic methods, portraiture's emphasis on collective meaning making and transparency of the author's role in the research and writing process helps ensure that "participants are the subjects, not the objects, of the research" (Hill-Brisbane, 2008, p. 2).

Communication and relational skills. Often referred to as "soft skills," communication and relational skills can be thought of as the "interpersonal, human, people or behavioral skills needed to apply technical skills and knowledge in the workplace" (Weber, Finely, Crawford, & Rivera, as cited in De Villiers, 2010, p. 2). I use the nomenclature "communication and relational skills," because the term "soft skills" has historically been used to imply that these less

tangible types of skills are less valuable than the more tangible technical knowledge and ability, or the so called "hard skills."

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

After looking at the number of ways people can conduct academic inquiry, one can safely say that all research is limited in some way. Ultimately, the usefulness of what people study and the integrity of how they study it lies in the researcher's ability to thoughtfully choose a topic that is timely and to craft a way of uncovering and conveying information that can be used in some form to effect positive change.

Delimitations. This portrait, as a form of inclusive storytelling in a narrative case study, focused on Jellyvision. Data consisted of the stories of Jellyvision employees collected through interviews, researcher observations, and examination of secondary artifacts. Interview data collection was limited to participants who were employees of the company. The purposeful sampling of participants included people who held varying levels of leadership, some of whom were direct reports to others in the study. Other data collection came from observations and secondary sources, including material produced by Jellyvision and news accounts of the organization that were initiated by the company's external public relations firm. The views in this study are a product of boundary-spanning collaborative meaning-making between the participants and researcher.

Limitations. The limitations of using a qualitative method include potential bias on the part of the researcher and participants, and concerns about replication of the research and applicability of the findings in other settings. Daymon and Holloway (2011) acknowledge these criticisms and offer ways to ensure that qualitative public relations research is authentic,

credible, and transferable (pp. 77-95). The specific limitations of this research design are discussed in Chapter III.

Organization of the Study

The following is an overview of the dissertation's chapters:

Chapter I is the introduction of this dissertation. As such it lays the cornerstone for the rationale for the study that states the postmodern needs of the field, the significance and purpose of tying relational and inclusive leadership to the practice, and the intent to create a conceptual model of a public relations curriculum.

Chapter II provides a review of the relevant literature about relational and inclusive leadership, public relations research and practice, and undergraduate public relations. The influence of postmodern concepts—relationality, diversity, mutuality, collaboration, inclusiveness—is described for each area covered.

Chapter III provides a description of, and rationale for, a narrative case study approach employing portraiture as the research method. The design, techniques, ethical considerations, analysis, and limitations of the research study and method, and the positionality of the researcher are included.

Chapter IV contains the portrait of Jellyvision, a detailed composite of interviews, observations, and themes presented as a highly textured narrative case study.

Chapter V presents an analysis of the Jellyvision case study, including the themes, contexts, and occurrences uncovered during research.

Chapter VI is a discussion of implications of the research findings for public relations education based on lessons learned from the research. It includes suggestions for how to incorporate the findings into an undergraduate public relations curriculum.

Chapter II: Literature Review

A strong foundation is essential for any structure, whether physical or conceptual. The construction of a PRL curriculum model rests in part on scholarly work on relational and inclusive leadership, public relations leadership, and undergraduate public relations education. Inherent in the research presented here is the influence of postmodern ideas that recognize, resist, and ultimately reorganize the roles that power, participants, and outcomes play in the complex realities of business and educational organizations. What follows is a review of research on relevant leadership theory, public relations leadership, and public relations education with discussion on the ways in which postmodern thought ties the three together to provide a foundation for undergraduate public relations curriculum change.

What is missing from the review is a comprehensive examination of how leadership is treated in public relations curricula throughout the United States. The reason for this omission is three-fold and derived from a postmodern positionality of the researcher. First, it is impossible to provide for a *definitive* review of all public relations programs, courses, and teaching approaches because of vast variety of where those programs and courses are housed within universities, in the number of the types of courses taught, and in extant accreditation practices and statuses (Wright, 2011). Second, because postmodernism is the lens through which the literature review and the research were conducted, it is important to allow room for the *in situ* use of inclusive leadership and communication practices to guide the possibilities for constructing a PRL curriculum (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 276). Third, formal reports about public relations education have resulted in a collection of articles addressing the teaching of specific topics. Therefore, the literature review on U.S. public relations curricula has been limited to an overview of the construction and critiques of the dominant model. Examples of existing curricula

representing the dominant paradigm have been used as data to provide context for a proposed PRL curriculum in Chapter VI.

Relational and Inclusive Leadership Theories

Historically, leadership has been studied from numerous perspectives, including traits, skills, personality, behavior, transactions, power, transformation, and authenticity, that fall under modern or postmodern ways of viewing the world, making a single definition difficult, if not impossible (see Table 2.1). Northouse (2010) defined leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 3). This interpretation of leadership indicates that leaders can emerge through multidirectional communicative interaction with others over time, which makes theories that examine relational dynamics particularly applicable to public relations leadership inquiry (pp. 3-11).

However, Northouse's definition, and almost all other definitions of leadership and leadership theory, focus on leaders acting on followers, a state of being that Drath et al. (2008) said limits the recognition and application of leadership in inclusive and collaborative environments. Instead, they proposed Direction, Alignment, Commitment (DAC) as an outcomes-based, pragmatic, functionalist ontology that shifts the focus to ways groups produce collective outcomes throughout a whole system. In this way DAC crosses levels of analysis, bridges cultural differences, can be realized in multiple ways, and spans structure and processes, making it a very useful way of understanding and talking about shared/distributed, complexity, and relational leadership theories (p. 635-641).

The leadership framework based on DAC differs from the dominant ontology in that it makes no assumptions about the processes and structures that produce the outcomes of direction, alignment, and commitment, for example, the idea that traditional leadership positions—C-suite

Table 2.1

Modern and Postmodern Leadership Theories

Theory Type & Orientation	Name	Description
Modern (Leader Oriented)	Trait Theory	Belief that leaders are either born with or are taught certain mental, physical, and/or social characteristics.
Modern (Leader Oriented)	Behavioral Theory	Belief that leaders are made through learning. Examples include the Managerial/ Leadership Grid Model and Role Theory.
Modern (Follower/Context Oriented)	Contingency Theory	Belief that every leadership style should be based on specific situations. Examples include Fiedler's Contingency Theory, Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory, Vroom-Yetton-Jago Decsion-Making Model**,** Cognitive Resource Theory**,** and Strategic Contingencies Theory.
Modern (Follower/Context Oriented)	Path-Goal Theory	Belief that employee performance and satisfaction can be enhanced through motivation effected by leader behaviors. Examples include, Directive Leadership, Supportive Leadership, Participative Leadership, and Achievement-Oriented Leadership.
Modern (Leader-Follower Interaction Oriented)	Transactional Leadership Theory	Characterized by a transaction between leader and followers in a mutually beneficial relationship. An example is Leader-member Exchange (LMX).
Postmodern (Leader/Follower Oriented)	Transformational Theory	Establishment of a process of interacting with others to create trust, sense of belonging, and increased motivation. Examples include Burns Transformational Leadership Theory, Bass Transformational Leadership Theory, Servant Leadership, and Authentic Leadership.
Postmodern (Group/Context Oriented)	Relational Leadership Theory	A collaborative, interactive, and contextually dependent process that recognizes leadership in situ. Examples include Relational Leadership and Inclusive Leadership.

Source: Compiled from Northouse, 2010.

jobs and managers—contribute to the effectiveness of organizational policies. Instead, the assumption is that all members of an organization possess leadership beliefs, both individual and collective, about how to produce DAC, and that those beliefs lead to the practices for producing DAC (p. 642). This assumption challenges the idea that leaders are separate from followers, creating a way to think of individuals as independent systems (micro-level) within organizational units (meso-level) that comprise an organizational whole (macro-level) (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009).

Instead of defining leadership, DAC offers a helpful framework for understanding relational and inclusive leadership, because it accommodates 21st century concepts of self-managing teams (shared/distributed leadership), the uncertainty inherent in complex systems (complexity leadership), and the constructionist perspective of meaning-making as created, sustained, and context-bound in fluid relationships (relational leadership) (pp. 640-641).

Relational leadership theory (RLT). As stated above, RLT posits that the concept of leadership is socially constructed within organizations. This view recognizes the inability of a modernistic interpretation of a system, with its assumptions about agreed-upon singular meaning about leader and follower roles, to describe the complex realities, or complex whole-systems, of leadership and organizations (Anderson, 2010, pp. 74-75; Uhl-Bien, 2006)). Furthermore, a social-construct perspective concentrates on the process of sensemaking (Weick, 1995) that people engage in while they negotiate and enact their individual and collective roles (pp. 75-76).

In 2006, Uhl-Bien offered RLT as a way to study leadership that recognized the ways in which social influence and change are constructed, enacted, and produced (p. 654). She examined relational leadership from two perspectives: an *entity*, or interpersonal, perspective and a *relational*, or socially constructed, one (p. 654).

The first represents relational leadership from a modernistic perspective that focuses on interaction of individuals based on their views, actions, traits, thoughts, and assumptions for the purpose of influence (p. 655). This type of transactional relationship is seen in a number of leadership theories and approaches, including Leader-Member Exchange, Transactional, Situational, and Contingency (Northouse, 2010).

The relational perspective is postmodern in nature and recognizes the role that complex, varied, and unpredictable social dynamics play in people's concepts of leadership, who can lead, and where leadership can occur. Leadership viewed from the relational perspective is collaborative, interactive, and dependent on context (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 664). Framed by DAC, relational leadership approaches recognize leadership in situ, separating it from a hierarchical construct of a management-level leader and followers and viewing it as a context-bound, collaborative, interactive process (p. 664).

Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) saw relational leadership not as a theory or model, but as an intersubjective state of being that offers a way to look at the complex experiences that influence how people understand the concept of leader and how leaders work with others. Dialogue is important to relational leaders as they see communication as an inclusive way to mindfully examine possibilities for action as opposed to accepting established practices (p. 1434). According to the authors, relational leadership is conducted with integrity by people who recognize and are responsive to difference and who incorporate both personal values and an ability to make judgments when questionable actions occur (p. 1438). Such leadership relies on practical wisdom gained from sensemaking that happens in real-time problem-solving situations (pp. 1441-1443). In their view, relational leadership can occur wherever there are people who are

highly self-aware, emotionally intelligent, open to diverse voices and views, and flexible in how problems get solved.

Inclusive leadership. Imbedded in Cunliffe and Eriksen's views of relational leadership are the ideas of inclusivity, adaptability, and collaboration, all of which are deemed necessary for the development of the practice and processes of inclusive leadership (Booysen, 2014). Building on the work of relational leadership and leadership as learning, Booysen posited that leadership can be learned and practiced collectively and cyclically in context by people committed to common good (pp. 305-306). She stated that, if leadership development is to be done effectively and inclusively, formal and informal learning mechanisms must be strategically established and used at the micro, meso, and macro levels to ensure an inclusive organizational culture and a climate of respect that creates a safe learning and working environment (pp. 306-310).

Key to Booysen's model of inclusive leadership development are the concepts of self-awareness and learning through assessment, challenge, and support. Self-awareness means leader self-awareness, organizational self-awareness, and organizational learning that is created through a process of internalization, reflection, questioning, and transformation engaged in by all members of an organization. Such learning can only take place if leaders and organizations truly believe in and want to develop and support inclusivity, and presupposes leader and organizational readiness to learn (pp. 314-315).

Unlike leaders in traditional entity-based organizations who focus on human capital and follower-leader exchanges through control and the creation and enforcement of rules and regulations, leaders in Booysen's view of inclusive relational-based leadership have a social capital focus on diversity of people, thoughts, and views (p. 304). They view power and decision-making as distributed, transparent, and participative processes where all have the ability

to make meaning and create opportunities through the questioning of dominant and normative practices (pp. 304-305). It is a constructionist perspective of leadership whereby communicative and organizing processes provide evidence of how people legitimize leadership and its outcomes (Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012, p. xx-xxii). Because inclusive leadership is a collaborative, purposeful, collective, and values-based process, it can result in positive social change through actions that will help institutions and communities function more effectively and humanely (Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella & Osteen, 2005; Komives & Wagner, 2009).

PR Leadership and Change

Public relations shares much in common with Hogan and Kaiser's (2005) assessment of leadership in regards to its dynamic existence, its group-performance characteristics, and its reliance on the personality of the leader to effect positive, ethical change (p. 169). Meng et al. (2012) agreed, finding that public relations practitioners "see leadership in the field as a dynamic activity that encompasses individual traits, attributes, behaviors, values, and context" (p. 34). If, as Hackman and Johnson (2009) note, both leadership and communication are essential components of human existence (p. 5), it can be considered that public relations, as a holistic form of communication that takes place between all stakeholders in the context of an organization, provides leadership where it occurs.

Postmodern views of public relations, leadership development, and organizational change that began to surface in the millennium coalesce into a general call for more collaborative ways of doing business that recognize the relational shortcomings of traditional hierarchical structures and modernistic emphases on short-term profit margins and efficiency. Issues that cross disciplinary boundaries include power dynamics (Berger, 2005; Berger & Reber, 2006; Heath, Motion, & Leitch, 2010; Holtzhausen, 2012; Smudde & Courtright, 2007),

audience/followership (Culbertson, 1991; Thayer, 1986), marginalization (Edwards, 2010;
Gallicano & Stansberry, 2011; Holtzhausen, 2012; Vardeman-Winter & Tindall, 2010), complex
and fluid environments (Gilpin & Murphy, 2010; Gregory & Willis, 2013), and the need for
communication practices to create and foster more inclusive and collaborative relational
dynamics (Hodges & McGrath, 2011; Neill, 2014; Thayer, 1986).

Because examinations of the literature concerning public relations leadership frequently
reference Excellence Theory, an overview and critical analysis of what has become the dominant
paradigm in public relations is helpful in providing context for both a closer look at specific
research in public relations leadership and postmodern examinations of public relations.

Overview of Excellence Theory. Developed after a 15-year qualitative and quantitative
study to determine the best practices in communication management, Excellence Theory
proposed that the effectiveness of public relations is dependent upon the ability of senior public
relations managers to influence organizational goals and determine the strategic importance of
external publics (Austin & Pinkleton, 2001, p. 274; Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). In order to
accomplish this task, public relations practitioners use environmental scanning as a strategic
management tool in order to inform an organization about evolving stakeholders, publics, and
issues (p. 312). According to the study, practitioners of "excellent" public relations should
possess 17 characteristics, including the three most significant in a review of the literature:
involvement in strategic management, use of two-way symmetrical communication, and
membership in the dominant coalition (Grunig & Grunig, 2000; Rodriguez, 2008).

Additionally, Excellence Theory explained "the value of public relations to organizations
and society based on the social responsibility of managerial decisions and the quality of
relationships with stakeholder publics" by identifying five principles of how public relations

should function within an organization (Grunig & Grunig, 2008, p. 1). Excellence in public

relations occurs when its role:

- is involved in strategic management,

- is not sublimated to marketing or other management functions,

- employs a symmetrical system of internal communication (implying a
  participative culture),

- values women practitioners as much as men, and

- includes diversity of race and ethnicity (Grunig & Grunig, 2008, pp. 1-2).

The value of Excellence Theory to the field, according to Holtzhausen (2007), is reflected

in the amount of discussion it has generated, as well as in the theoretical benchmark it has

established, maintaining that critical debate is necessary to foster new ways of thinking about the

practice (p. 363). And it is Holtzhausen's ways of imagining public relations (2000, 2002, 2007,

2012) that have laid the groundwork for a connection to relational, inclusive, and collaborative

leadership.

Critical examinations of Excellence Theory. The theme of activism in light of power

relations pervades a number of critical examinations of Excellence Theory. In her postmodern

look at activism, Holtzhausen (2007) covered the most common critiques of Excellence Theory,

which state that the model favors an organizational power balance, fails to recognize and serve

traditionally marginalized groups, and is too idealistic in its assumptions about communication

style and ethics (pp. 358-363). While she acknowledged the contributions the theory makes to

public relations research, Holtzhausen pointed out that privileging organizational autonomy and

symmetrical communication does not recognize or serve activists as a marginalized group that

wields a lot of power, and does not really exist in practice. She stated that practitioners use

advocacy and symmetrical communication to collaborate with activists in an attempt to serve organizational interests (p. 363).

Berger (2005) also questioned an idealistic assumption behind symmetrical public relations theory, which posits that practitioners who are members of the dominant coalition "will or will try to represent the voices and interests of others and . . . shape an organization's ideology and decisions to benefit the profession, the organization, and greater society" (p. 5). His study of the complex social dynamic of power and the inner workings of the dominant coalition revealed the difficulty practitioners encounter if they want to "do the 'right' thing" (p. 6). Berger argued that not only are professionals, educators, and researchers obligated to resist dismissing the concept of shared power as too idealistic, but that they are also obliged to question organizational norms established by those with power as a means of influencing change (pp. 24-25).

As critical public relations scholars, Coombs and Holladay (2012) built a critique of Excellence Theory on the premise that the value of public relations to spark action in particular ways lies in its persuasive role and not in the outer view of the practice as information (p. 881). The authors argued that the theory, as the dominant paradigm in public relations teaching and research, demonizes the asymmetrical practice of persuasion and privileges the presumed-to-be-ethical two-way symmetrical model as the only legitimate mode of communication (pp. 882-883). They also pointed out that despite later attempts to address the shortcomings of the model, Excellence Theory never acknowledges the concept of marginalized publics (p. 884).

Excellence Theory and its role in stifling voices outside of the dominant coalition has been examined by Demetrious (2013) through the lens of activism and social change. She argued that the pluralistic ideals promoted by two-way symmetrical communication "oversimplify questions of power and access and also promote an attitude towards activism that enables

business to dismiss the consequences of its activities and marginalize it almost completely" (p. 23). According to Demetrious, meaningful change in the practice of public relations can be achieved through a deep understanding of activism (p. 7).

Using critical theory, Dozier and Lauzen (2000) confronted the privilege afforded to the organizational and practitioner perspectives found in much research involving Excellence Theory. They called for new concepts of practice and research, levels of analysis, examinations of the moral and ethical contradictions, and the recognition of activists' legitimacy (pp. 18-19). Their work pushed back against the imbedded assertion that public relations scholarship must serve current practitioners and the organizations that have the resources to hire them, a premise that has limited both theory development and the ability of professionals to confront the paradoxical ideas inherent in the practice (p. 20).

Despite Grunig and Grunig's (1992) discussion of actual use of asymmetrical and symmetrical models of public relations, repeated examinations of the idealistic notion of two-way symmetrical communication through the lens of power relations highlight the need for scholars and practitioners alike to carefully examine and question the assumptions inherent in normative cultural practices within organizations and among practitioners (Curtin & Gaither, 2007, p. 145). As Curtin and Gaither (2007) illustrated in their Circuit of Culture model, sensemaking occurs synergistically through a five-component cyclical process of creation, shaping, modification, and recreation of regulation, production, consumption, representation, and identity (p. 38). As both creators and products of organizational culture, practitioners serve as leaders who would benefit greatly from examining their world in a relational context.

Specific research on PR leadership. Public relations is related to relational leadership practices, and organizational development and change through its influence on communication

practices and the vision of organizational goals, as well as practitioners' need to converse with participative and diverse audiences (Anderson, 2010). Leadership research in public relations primarily has focused on styles, traits, behavior, skills, and abilities, sometimes as they relate to gender.

Gender and leadership. In an attempt to address a lack of leadership discourse, Aldoory and Toth (2004) explored perceptions of gender and leadership in public relations in their examination of transformational and transactional leadership styles (p. 157). The study attempted to discover which of the two styles is perceived as best and most appropriate for public relations; how the sex of respondents affect perceptions of leadership style; and how a gendered nature of leadership in public relations is perceived (p. 158). Respondents—the average of which was a 40-year-old, white married female practitioner who had worked in the field for approximately 13 years—in the mixed-method study favored a transformational leadership style, and both women and men focused on transformational and democratic qualities for leadership, though more women highlighted the relational qualities of leadership (pp. 167-175). Male respondents more often agreed that they considered themselves leaders (p. 175). Both sexes strongly agreed that women or men can be equally capable leaders; however, males more strongly disagreed that women make better leaders (pp. 175-176).

But it is the participants' observations about what constitutes good leadership and who can lead that provide insight into the state of leadership in public relations practice. Focus group comments illustrated a correlation between experience and leadership, as well as shared and gendered themes of support, guidance, decisiveness, flexibility, teamwork, recognition, and barriers (pp. 169-177). For example, while participants agreed that shared decision-making and recognition-as-reward were part of effective leadership, only the women's focus groups included

specific leadership traits of "helping others and looking out for people, . . . good communication skills, good rapport, and . . . the importance of listening" (p. 175). Men, on the other hand, were the only ones who tied "the use of tangible rewards for incentives" to good leadership (p. 175). Such a difference in gendered views of leadership style might explain "the strong evidence for a preference for situation leadership" (p. 157).

Leadership styles and public relations strategy. Werder and Holtzhausen (2009) looked at the role leadership styles and public relations strategy play in transformational and inclusive leadership. Effective transformational leaders were defined as oftentimes charismatic and innovative change agents who use influence as power to achieve idealistic and socially responsible visions for the good of the group and organization (Werder & Holtzhausen, 2009, p. 406). Similar to Aldoory and Toth's findings (2004), Werder and Holtzhausen discovered that the portrayal of inclusive leaders centers on collaborative, shared, and participative practices used in a situational context (2009, p. 407). In addition to indicating situational leadership in public relations, and that practitioner gender, position, and organization type influence perceptions of leadership, the study provided empirical support for the use of inclusive leadership in public relations and suggested that, because of its inherent nature, the direction, alignment, and commitment to inclusive public relations practice produces inclusive leadership (pp. 422-423).

Practitioners' traits, behaviors, and abilities. Other studies have looked at the emotional traits and skills needed for effective public relations (Jin, 2010; Yeomans, 2007); the behavioral dimensions critical to effective organization-wide public relations leadership (Choi & Choi, 2009); characteristics and behavioral dimensions of ethical leadership in the field (Lee & Cheng, 2011); and the abilities, traits, and behavior of excellent public relations leaders (Meng et al.,

2012). Gregory and Willis (2013) examined leadership in the context of dynamic practice, providing insight and a framework that professionals can use to "clearly articulate and demonstrate their own contribution to organizational effectiveness" through demonstration of "essential capabilities [that] they must acquire and exhibit if they are to operate at the highest levels of any organization" (Abstract).

Proposed normative PRL theory. The organizational power and strategic leadership in public relations that Berger (2005) and Meng (2012) have studied respectively have influenced their joint research on leadership in the field. Their foundational work in 2010 consisted of a review of leadership research and indirect studies of leadership in the public relations literature in combination with a meta-analysis of 16 leadership studies initiated or supported by the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations. The findings were used to make four broad observations about leadership in the field, define the construct of excellent leadership in public relations, and propose a normative theory of public relations leadership based on nine principles of excellent leaders.

The authors noted that leadership in public relations is "a complex mix of at least six interrelated dimensions," including "self-dynamics, team collaboration, ethical orientation, relationship building skills, strategic decision-making capability, and communication knowledge and expertise," that provides a foundation for theory development (Berger & Meng, 2010, p. 425). They also found some evidence to support the idea that leaders in public relations differ from those in other professions in that they must possess both an understanding, or vision, of ways in which public relations creates connections within the social constructs of organizations, publics, and society, and "a complex communication skill set and knowledge of media and new technologies and information systems" (p. 426). The research also supported Aldoory and Toth's

(2004) findings that perceptions about excellence in public relations leadership are shared by both women and men in diverse organizations. And, lastly, the authors observed that while organizational culture and structure do influence effectiveness of public relations leadership, leaders can serve as change agents in determining process, participants, and feeling about an organization (p. 427).

While Berger and Meng's (2010) work alludes to the socially constructed and relational components of leadership, it is firmly couched in the traditional ontology of leaders and followers, stating that followers are primarily the ones who define the importance of leaders' qualities and values (p. 428). Their proposed normative framework relies on the events, patterns, and structures of open systems thinking to create an archetype of an excellent practitioner. Originally stated as nine principles of excellent leadership in public relations, the framework can be condensed to the themes of ethics, skills, personal characteristics, strategic employment of leadership style, and purpose that create a vision of a leader who:

- exemplifies and models ethical professional and organizational behavior,
- possesses and uses a complex assortment of communication and rhetorical skills that aid effective and credible strategic decision-making within the organization,
- possesses a desire to lead and clear self-knowledge of personal strengths and weaknesses,
- inspires and encourages others through a demonstrated passion for the work and profession,
- uses transformational and inclusive leadership styles appropriately in contextually sensitive situations, and

- serves as an organizational change agent and creator of a culture for communication. (pp. 428-430)

Missing connections. Missing in the public relations literature are connections between the practice and other forms of leadership and followership, including servant and authentic, and concepts like love (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Hollander, 2009; Keith, 2008; Malakyan, 2014) Sinclair, 2007; Stone et al., 2003). And despite the areas of overlap with leadership and its importance in helping organization development and change initiatives succeed (Kotter, 1995), the role of public relations is often absent from or downplayed in discussions about leadership and change. For example, Hackman and Johnson's (2009) book, *Leadership: A Communication Perspective*, co-authored from organizational communication and management perspectives, relegated public relations to a chapter on "Public Leadership" that defines its role as a series of broad and vague "tasks" that a leader can choose from in order to influence public opinion (pp. 268-269). The authors made no connection between the specific skills, abilities, and education needed by public relations professionals and the strategic, unifying role the practice plays in all communication efforts, including orchestrating, running, and evaluating public speaking and persuasive campaigns, both of which are mentioned in the same chapter (pp. 268-296). Other studies of communication in leadership and organization development and change also make no reference to the ability of public relations to create, institute, manage, and evaluate on a continuing basis the information appropriate for, and delivered through carefully chosen means to, dynamic and diverse populations (see Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Clampitt, 2012; Gilley, Gilley, & McMillan, 2009; Goodman & Truss, 2004; Johansson & Heide, 2008; Proctor & Doukakis, 2003).

Inherent in the discussions of transformational leadership in public relations is the postmodern need for practitioners to be able to recognize and work with, and within, complex, dynamic, and fluid internal and external social settings. Therefore, inquiry into how best to develop ethical practitioner-leaders would benefit from postmodern-influenced research that examines leadership as a process of social influence, and as a collective way of learning for the common good.

Postmodern examinations of public relations. Postmodernism has been defined in myriad ways from a more radical "assault on the belief of rationality and reason" (Alvesson, 2002, p. 178) to a less incendiary "considered response to the failure or natural consequence of the shortcomings of modernism" (Stroh, 2007, p. 204). Agger's (1991, p. 116) discussion of postmodernism as a social theory positions it as an examination of the social world through multiple and varied lenses—class, race, gender, and other identifying group affiliations—that resist metanarratives that have been made to seem natural through their association with scientific rationalism and repetition in dominant practices of communication (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009, pp. 307-345). The roles that discourse, fragmented identities, representation, and power play in postmodernism make it particularly useful in examining relational dynamics in leadership and public relations (Alvesson, 2002, pp. 45-46).

Postmodernism, or postmodern practices, in public relations and leadership has been addressed by a number of scholars (Duffy, 2000; Curtin & Gaither, 2005; Gower, 2006; Leonard, 2003; Holtzhausen, 2000, 2002, 2012; Motion & Weaver, 2005; Rodriguez, 2008; Stroh, 2007; Tyler, 2005; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Valentini et al., 2012) and by the industry in at three world forums (Global Alliance, 2012, 2014; Skoogh, McCormick, & Falconi, 2010). While the individual

academic research covers themes of activism, race, gender, and cultural differences, common to all is a dissatisfaction with Excellence Theory's normative privileging of organizational power.

A paradigm shift. Gower's examination of the state of public relations (2006) is a good starting place for discussion because it establishes research and practice at the crossroads of turning toward postmodernism or continuing with the dominant two-way symmetry model of communication developed and refined by Grunig from 1976 to 2001 that has influenced the majority of American public relations scholarship and practice. Her statement that public relations needs a compelling "basic rationale for . . . all the ways and in all the organizations that [it] is practiced" foreshadowed the issues encountered in the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) attempt to redefine the field six years later (p. 185; "About Public Relations," 2015). Gower presented postmodernism as a way to incorporate other disciplines' theories into the study of public relations as a fluid and complex practice (p. 185). In particular, she highlighted the embrace of postmodern thought in management literature, referring to complexity theory, or the inability of observers to predict or control social outcomes through reductionism, as one example that, like all public relations theories, deals with continuous change, uncertainty, and adaptivity (p. 185).

An activist lens. Gower based much of her insight into the need for a postmodern examination of public relations on the work of Holtzhausen (2000), Duffy (2000), Motion and Weaver (2005), and Curtin and Gaither (2005), all of whom critique the two-way symmetry model through the lens of critical/cultural theory. Of the researchers above, Holtzhausen has published multiple articles that explore postmodern values and theory in public relations (2000, 2002). She also has examined, with Voto (2002), postmodern practitioner displays of organizational activism through ethical decision making, a desire for change, the practice of

dissensus, the use of biopower or management of groups of people to resist dominant power, and a concern for employee representation. Her examinations of postmodern public relations led to a book that positioned the practice as a form of activism (2012).

The theme of activism in public relations has also been addressed by Coombs and Holladay (2012), who presented the idea of critical public relations as a "fringe" practice that significantly differs from Excellence Theory and is poised to provide a platform for researchers to discuss the long-avoided or marginalized topics of persuasion, advocacy, power, and activism (p. 880). Mounting a challenge to Excellence Theory (Dozier et al., 1995) means that researchers must engage in a critical examination of the power that public relations practitioners hold within an organization, and professionals' use of communication to influence the worldview of others (Coombs & Holladay, 2012, p. 881).

An earlier examination of power in public relations by Berger (2005) laid the foundation for a postmodern challenge of the role symmetrical public relations plays in real life organizations and their dominant coalitions. While symmetrical public relations theoretically allows practitioners who are members of the dominant coalition to "help organizations solve problems and become more socially responsible," it never indicates how the power dynamics within a group operate or what those dynamics mean for public relations professionals who are paid by the organization, but ostensibly represent all affected publics (p. 5).

A community lens. Valentini et al. (2012) called for a look at public relations that questions the perceived superiority of some societal power structures—Western democracy and capitalism, accepted public relations paradigms, the concept of mass audience—in light of communication technology changes and a dynamic flow of information. The authors offered community-building theory, drawn from the work of John Dewey and the Chicago School of

Social Thought, as a way to redefine how public relations professionals should think of publics in the digital age as "active players, often unrecognizable leaders of social interactions and of social construction of reality and meanings around reality" (p. 875). In Dewey's work, which fits well within the DAC leadership framework, a public is not organization-centric but, instead, "a group of individuals who together are affected by a particular action or idea. Thus, each issue or problem creates its own public" (Dewey, as cited in Valentini et al., 2012, p. 874). Such a view, the authors posited, places community at the heart of public relations, a reframing of the concept of relationships that requires practitioners to refocus attention on multiple concepts of community, which in turn will require different skills, abilities, and areas of knowledge (Valentini et al., 2012, p. 877).

 Resistance and change. However, not all academics are willing to accept a postmodern public relations episteme, even in the Foucauldian sense presented by Smudde (2007), which demonstrated how Foucault's investigative strategies could "be an effective means for discovering the strengths, weaknesses, and improvement opportunities for any public relations project, campaign, or department" (p. 227). Instead, some have preferred to examine any new knowledge under the dominant, modernistic lens of bottom-line value. Toth (2002) argued that a postmodern perspective of public relations is too philosophical to translate to practical application (p. 243). Her call to use Grunig-developed Excellence criteria as a beginning point to assess the cash value of public relations "in the best interests of democratic society and our desire to respect diversity, cultural influences, and difference" illustrates how easy it is for modern, and primarily Western, views to retain a dominate hold on the practice without explaining how capitalism "respects" difference (p. 248).

Another attempt to pull the postmodern critique of public relations back to the age of modernity can be found in Falkheimer's (2007) application of Anthony Giddens' structuration and late modernity theories to the field to create a "third way perspective." Falkheimer used Giddens' theories because of Giddens' belief that modernity has "radicalized" instead of been usurped via complete transition to the postmodern era (p. 289). While Giddens' questioning of metanarratives, heightened consumerism, and male-dominated workplaces may appear to be postmodernism by another name, his belief that modernity is not dead, but post-traditional, relies on the dominant Western view of the primacy of democracy and capitalism in modern societies (Gauntlett, 2002).

Industry views. It should be noted that the industry has been contemplating "key universal principles" that incorporate more inclusive practices that revolve around the ideas of social purpose, community, "shared narratives, and safe places for dialogue around the social challenges of each society" ("The Madrid Momentum," 2015). The Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, a "confederation of the world's major PR and communication management associations and institutions, representing 160,000 practitioners and academics around the world," held a world forum in Madrid in 2014 to begin a discussion about ways "in which public relations and communication professionals can take on a leadership role, not just to build communicative organizations, but also to contribute to their societies" ("About GA," 2015; "The Madrid Momentum," 2015).

PR Education

Public relations in its most idealized form has been positioned as the conscience of the organization in which it resides, as well as an activist function that can bring transparency to the ways organizations operate and transform institutions into more inclusive environments

(Holtzhausen, 2000, p. 105). In its most practical incarnation, it "should play a central role in helping to clarify the organization's values and mission, as well as monitoring the way it goes about achieving those to determine whether they are acceptable to society generally" (Gregory & Willis, 2013, p. 36). The two states are obviously closely related.

The question has revolved around how to best prepare public relations practitioners to bridge the gap between the practical and ideal in ways that can best serve both academe and the industry (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2018; "The Madrid Momentum," 2015; Toth & Aldoory, 2010; Turk, 2006). While public relations programs throughout the United States offer courses in ethics, case studies, and campaigns as ways to introduce students to the societal implications and everyday limitations of public relations practice, there are very few, if any, classes that are designed to teach undergraduates about the fluid power and interpersonal dynamics that are the realities in the lives of practitioners (Cheng & de Gregorio, 2008).

U.S. curriculum model. Traditionally, public relations in the United States has been taught in a manner consistent with modernistic themes of control and prediction, evident in the most popular textbooks' representation of the practice in positivist language that "offer[s] a totalizing metanarrative of harmony and organizational success using instrumental communication and an evolving and ever-improving body of public relations knowledge and practices" (Duffy, 2000, p. 296). Additionally, research that has sought to align the purpose of public relations education with the desires of corporate entities has created a justification for uniform approaches to curriculum development and program accreditation and reinforced the existing normative practices (L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006). Practitioners have sought credibility through professionalization as a way to clearly separate the practice from propaganda, a trend that is mirrored by educational programs housed in journalism and business schools throughout

the country (L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006, p. 433; Global Alliance, 2012; Guiniven, 1997; Turk, 2006).

  Construction. From the start, public relations degree-granting programs have sought legitimacy in the eyes of both their home institutions and the profession at large (Guiniven, 1997; Wright, 2011). Wright's (2011) summary of the development of public relations education in the U.S. pointed out that little can be verified prior to the establishment of the first degree program— Master's-level only—at Boston University in 1947 (p. 240). The contemporary historical record is no better; the number of universities where public relations is taught is estimated in the literature between 145 and 700, and undergraduate majors in the discipline are thought to number between 25,500 and 35,000 (p. 242). Wright estimates that approximately "8,750 public relations graduates enter the workforce each year in the USA—a number far greater than the number of available jobs" (p. 242).

  Because the majority of public relations pioneers taught their courses in schools or departments of journalism or mass communication, the majority of public relations programs today continue to be housed in such units (p. 240). However, public relations courses are sometimes taught in speech communication in colleges of arts and sciences and in business colleges instead, leading to an even more fragmented identity for the discipline and its graduates (Neff, 2010). Additionally, program contents and requirements vary greatly along a spectrum ranging from technical to more theory-heavy orientations (Berger & Meng, 2014, p. 305).

  Accreditation of programs and association with professional standards through accrediting bodies is fractured as well. A public relations program at the undergraduate and master's levels, programs housed in various academic units, and colleges or universities can seek PRSA Certification for Education in Public Relations (CEPR). CEPR accreditation stems from

reports produced by the Commission on Public Relations Education and is based on a program's ability to meet eight standards, including curriculum; faculty; resources, equipment, and facilities; students; assessment; relationships with the total unit (department and college) and university; and diversity and global perspectives.

However, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC), which uses much broader criteria, is widely considered the premiere accreditation program for public relations in the U.S. Yet, the reality is that AEJMC does not accredit public relations programs or majors within departments. Instead, it requires that entire departments be accredited (Wright, 2011, p. 252). In order to be considered for ACEJMC accreditation, units (colleges, schools, or departments) must meet criteria concerning size, autonomy, budget, content, and professional components ("Policies of Accreditation," 2015). Programs that do not offer professional education in journalism and mass communication or that are housed in other structures, e.g., a school of business, cannot be reviewed. Any program that seeks certification or accreditation must balance the number of hours devoted to the major versus the need for student matriculation in four years.

The link between curriculum and practice has been advocated for by academics who see too much of a split between theory-oriented and applied public relations (Cheng & de Gregorio, 2008, p. 378). As both an applied and theoretical discipline, public relations undergraduate education has to contain practical application of theory through teaching strategies and assignments (Coombs & Rybacki, as cited in Freberg et al., 2013, p. 235). However, disagreement exists in discussions not only about the best ways to teach students application of theoretical concepts, but also about the role practitioners' desires, and by default those of the businesses they represent, should play in shaping future public relations professionals.

Critiques. In the simplest view, criticism of public relations education can be divided into two camps, one of which says that the undergraduate curriculum is not professional enough, and the other that says it is too professional at the expense of addressing a higher societal purpose of both the profession and higher education. Both views are discussed in greater depth below.

The professionalism camp. The majority of public relations education critiques have come from practitioners who have described a disconnect between what students learn and what they need to know to enter the workforce (Cheng & De Gregorio, 2008; Freberg et al., 2013; Paskin, 2013). Guiniven's (1997) research into the vested interest public relations practitioners have in public relations education found that a sample of senior-level practitioners at for-profit organizations who were part of, or close to, the dominant coalition, and who represented an organizational perspective of what is expected from public relations operations and people, thought that fresh college graduates not only "enter[ed] the work place with unrealistic expectations and little understanding of the world of work," but also were "doubly hampered [in the for-profit sector] if they . . . lack[ed] business fundamentals" (p. 49, 55). Writing and thinking skills were highly valued, and great emphasis was placed on a curriculum aligned closely with business realities dictated by the marketplace (p. 55).

DiStaso et al. (2009) found similarities with a 1998 study conducted for the National Communication Association (NCA) Summer Summit on Public Relations Education in regards to the "desired characteristics among job applicants and essential curriculum content" that educators and practitioners agree upon (p. 254). While both groups stated the need for more research, ethics, and strategic planning, professionals and academics disagreed on how and in what form that knowledge should be imparted, as well as how successful public relations programs are at preparing entry level practitioners (p. 257-265).

Most recently, the Commission on Public Relations Education (2018) released a report detailing the need for entry-level practitioners to possess the excellent writing, critical thinking, research, analytical/problem solving skills that have always been in demand, as well as an increased need for ethical knowledge and training.

The higher purpose camp. The emphasis on aligning public relations undergraduate education with the needs of for-profit organizations has resulted in pushback against the professionalization of curricula, and in research from scholars who approach the discipline in ways that question its use in continuing inequitable and harmful business models that privilege existing cultural, racial, gender, and profit-margin biases. As L'Etang and Pieczka (2006) have stated, the effects of professionalization have marginalized discussions about the role of public relations in society, creating a "problem [that] lies in the lack of alternatives, which creates a substantial gap in the literature on the sociology of public relations" (p. 434). But while that privilege has been examined by scholars who have taken postmodern, cultural, feminist, and race-related perspectives in their research (Duffy, 2000; Creedon & Al-Khaja, 2005; Edwards, 2011; Gower, 2006; Holtzhausen, 2000, 2002, 2012; Pompper, 2005; Waymer & Dyson, 2011), the relationship between research, curriculum, and professional practice is still too close for educators who see their role not as trainers, but as experts who should challenge and critique the assumptions of the profession in order to bridge theory and practice and prepare students who can do the same (L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006, p. 438; Dozier & Lauzen, 2000; Holtzhausen, 2000).

Foundation for curriculum change. Whether scholars are in favor of professionalization of, or critical approaches to, undergraduate public relations education, a need to improve the curriculum is part of an on-going discussion that with few exceptions has ignored the need for student matriculation and concentrates instead on ideal content (Berger & Meng,

2014; Bronstein & Fitzpatrick, 2015; DiStaso et al., 2009; Erzikova & Berger, 2012; Friedman, 2012). As public relations has moved from a technical function to one that involves much more strategic planning and research in order to cope with complex and fragmented communication pathways and a need for global awareness, educators and practitioners agree upon clear content areas that include ethics, strategic planning, and credibility (DiStaso et al., 2009, p. 265; Ewing et al., 2019; Global Alliance, 2012). What they disagree on is how to impart that knowledge to undergraduates.

One approach could be through the development of leadership in public relations. Berger and Meng (2014) believe that the qualities, duties, and perceptions of public relations leaders, like those documented in the leadership literature, are the same, stating that,

> . . . [L]eaders play crucial roles in groups, organizations, and nations. Leaders make strategic decisions, allocate key resources, and influence organizational culture. They are key influencers of employee perceptions, attitudes, trust levels, and job- and organization-related outcomes. Leaders are literally and symbolically the organization to many internal and external stakeholders. The performance of leaders good and bad is linked to the success, image, and future of their groups, organizations, and nations. (pp. 3-4)

Bronstein and Fitzpatrick (2015) skirted the issue of matriculation to make the case for the incorporation of leadership education into the mass communication curriculum as a way to not only address the effect of new media platforms on journalism, public relations, and advertising, but also as a way to help students "develop the knowledge and skills to lead dynamic industries and a leadership mind-set oriented to innovation" (p. 75). Berger and Meng (2014) pointed out the need for a way to teach the soft skills—listening, conflict resolution, change management, emotional intelligence—that are required for excellent leadership but that have been sacrificed in favor of technical and analytical ones by most undergraduate programs (pp. 305-306).

If public relations professionals should assume the mantle of social responsibility through the use of dialogue in cultural contexts, and relational understanding in varied dynamics and among multiple audiences, they will have to take a leadership role earlier in their path to practice (Neff, 2010, p. 377; Bronstein & Fitzpatrick, 2015).

Postmodern PR leadership needs. The idea that public relations should help an organization and its leadership broaden its collective vision in ethical and altruistic ways is not just an academic ideal (Berger & Reber, 2006, p. 27; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002; Tyler, 2005). Berger and Reber (2006) stated that, while practitioners' beliefs about who they serve have cycled from a societal view in the early 1990s to an organizational one in the early 2000s, the role of public relations "is to be the servant of multiple masters . . . [and] to help organizations succeed while contributing to society in a positive way" (p. 29). And they pointed out that many companies have paid a high price for practitioners' "blind allegiance to an organization, its leadership circle, or chief executive" (p. 29). Moreover, industry-based analysis of the current and future states of public relations emphasizes the need for ethical public relations leadership (USC Annenberg, 2018

Despite challenges from entities like the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) to focus on leadership as a critical competency (Friedman, 2012), and from the Commission on Public Relations Research (2018; Toth & Aldoory, 2010) to address leadership, diversity, and inclusion, research conducted by Erzikova and Berger (2012) found that a small percentage of undergraduate programs offered a stand-alone leadership course (Bronstein & Fitzpatrick, 2015, p. 77). Part of the reason for the small number of offerings is lack of resources (faculty, classrooms), accreditation, and the pressure to keep major hours to a minimum to

guarantee graduation in four years for the vast majority of majors regardless of when they begin work toward their degree in public relations (Ewing et al., 2019).

Practitioner-scholars like Rodriguez (2008), who have examined the practical applications of postmodern public relations, have posited that the way to improve the image of the profession, the relationship between scholars and practitioners, and the outcomes for organizations is to look at the realities of a current postmodern world (p. 36). Taking a postmodern approach would allow practitioners to assume a leadership role in negotiating inevitable dissensus by making stakeholders reflect on the source of their conflict and encouraging change (Holtzhausen, 2000, p. 108). It accommodates situational public relations practices conducted ethically, and encourages practitioners to become researchers of workplace culture who recognize and empower multiple voices of workers and the organization's publics instead of using what they learn to strengthen the power of those already in control of organizational practices (p. 109).

Holtzhausen (2002) provided more support for a postmodern shift from the dominant functionalist concepts of management and strategy that is drawn from organization theory and organizational communication, stating the modernist focus on strategies ignores relational dynamics and exists solely to "normalize people through elimination of all social and psychological irregularities and the production of useful and docile subjects" (p. 252; p. 255). Viewed through a modern lens, practitioners "legitimate the knowledge of organizational managers" through the use of internal and external communication that presents management strategy as an objective metanarrative (pp. 256-257). In a postmodern context, public relations "becomes a process that legitimates many different and heterogeneous forms of meaning and understanding" (p. 257).

Ideas that influence a PRL curriculum. Berger and Meng (2014) made an assumption that the challenges inherent in the complex and dynamic process of leadership will increase in the future, which will require how leadership is thought about and developed to change, too (p. 10). They saw public relations leadership capacities or capabilities as future assets to be enriched and used in the field (p. 12). Additionally, they proposed that educators "adopt a new mind-set about public relations education, one in which they no longer see their programs responding to marketplace needs, but rather in which *they* lead . . . based on a vision for the future that sees *every student as a potential leader who requires essential leadership skills*" (original emphasis, p. 306).

In order to create an inclusive learning environment that helps students recognize and develop their leadership potential, programs need to recognize skill sets other than technical expertise in writing, planning, and evaluation. The primary area in which educators could lead curriculum reform was identified by the global study of leadership in public relations and communication management as the development of human relations, or soft, skills (p. 305). As Berger and Meng state, it appears that a redesign of the public relations curriculum could benefit from the addition of courses, or, if major check sheets are already full, at least exercises in existing courses that specialize in listening and conflict resolution (p. 306). They also recommend a shift from "a heavy communication knowledge management and media concentration to a more holistic approach that draws in the value of self-reflection, greater cultural sensitivity and awareness, and elements of power and strategic decision making" (p. 306).

Rodriguez (2008) offered a way to span the boundaries of theory and practice through her Postmodern Public Relations (PPR) model, which addressed activism, non-normative ethics, and

pragmatism. Consisting of three steps to guide both thinking and practice, the model requires practitioners to uncover and reflect on power relations, ethical considerations, marginalized groups, and context before strategically planning and constructing messages (pp. 115-123). While it is not wholly inclusive, the model does share some similarities with Booysen's (2014) approach to inclusive leadership and potentially could be re-envisioned to create an Inclusive PPR Leadership model that would serve as a framework for curriculum redevelopment that adds leadership to the crucial mix of research, strategic planning, and ethics identified by both academics and practitioners as essential for undergraduates.

A postmodern view of public relations leadership requires practitioners to "use understanding of context to engage in discourse that is right and just" (Rodriguez, 2008, p. 122). An example of such ethical and transparent communication can be found in Tyler's (2005) work in crisis communication, which focuses on those who are suffering from the crisis as opposed to the organization's response, and which echoes the call of Valentini et al. to (re)focus on community dynamics, which are in constant flux in what are, due to constantly shifting individual and group contexts, essentially uncontrollable situations. Support for a move away from the primacy of dominant-coalition thought and its presumed stability can be found in Berger (2005) and Remund's (2011) qualitative work that illustrate the issues organizational public relations leaders face in balancing competing priorities, many of which place them in complex adaptive roles. Even if program hours are at their limit, a curriculum redesign would need to incorporate multiple opportunities for experiential learning that require students to cope with the instability inherent in collaborative work, different ways of thinking about and valuing leadership in context, and the need to solicit, listen to, and ethically incorporate multiple perspectives in their meaning- and decision-making processes.

Because postmodern public relations requires practitioners to avoid claims of objectivity and acknowledge contradictions and irony in their messages, it can be used to teach students to break down hidden biases and uncover normative communication practices. For example women are often marginalized in public relations leadership (Aldoory & Toth, 2004). Therefore, introducing students to the work of women scholars who have been the most vocal in challenging entity-based, organization- and, by default, male-centric theory and practice brings women's voices to the fore of classroom presentation and discussion (Duffy, 2000; Gower, 2006; Coombs & Holladay, 2012; Holström, 2005; Holtzhausen, 2000, 2002; 2012; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002; L'Etang, 2005; Pieczka, 2007; Tyler, 2005; Valentini et al., 2012; Werder & Holtzhausen, 2009).

Chapter Summary and Proposed Direction for Research

The first decade-and-a-half of the millennium has seen an increase in globalization, calls for organizational transparency, heightened awareness and discussion of social inequity and marginalized audiences, and the continuing need to embrace rapid change brought about by new technology. If the potential of public relations as a positive change agent is to be realized, its scholars and practitioners will need to lead changes in how the field is researched, practiced, and taught in a postmodern society with postmodern needs and demands (Berger & Meng, 2014; Berger & Reber, 2006; Bronstein & Fitzpatrick, 2015; Ewing et al., 2019; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002; Rodriquez, 2008; Tyler, 2005).

An examination of the public relations literature demonstrates that historically the field has resisted scholars' and practitioners' efforts to universally and uniformly define its purpose, its effect on organizational and public well-being, how it is practiced, and to whom it owes its allegiance. In order to establish its legitimacy, scholars and practitioners have attempted to create

historical and professional narratives that serve to distance the practice from its less savory uses (propaganda, manipulation, hype), as well as to imbue it with traditional, hierarchical, managerial aspects that both mirror established organizational power structures from the age of Modernity and empower practitioners to make communication decisions. The result of such an approach ultimately has been to marginalize the voices of both the practitioners and the publics they ostensibly represent through a series of illusions, including an emphasis on facticity (the hidden efforts and gender of public relations people), strategy (scientific process and control of outcomes), and dominant coalition status (Berger, 2005; Gower, 2006; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002; L'Etang, 2005; Pieczka, 2007; Remund, 2011; Tyler, 2005).

As Gower (2006) noted, public relations research arrived at the crossroads in the early to mid-2000s, when a number of scholars began to challenge the idea of power behind, and emphasis on the organization of, Grunig's two-way symmetrical model of public relations and Excellence Theory (1995). At the same time, Uhl-Bien (2006) was making her distinction between entity based leadership and relational leadership in order to "allow [scholars] to consider *processes* that are not just about the quality of the relationship or even the type of relationship, but rather about the social dynamics by which leadership relationships form and evolve in the workplace" (original emphasis, p. 672).

While contemporary public relations scholars have not yet made the connection specifically with Uhl-Bien's work, they have advanced similar thoughts in articles that address the field from a postmodern perspective. Discussions of critical public relations (Coombs & Holladay, 2012; Falkheimer, 2007; Holtzhausen, 2000; Ihlen et al., 2009; L'Etang & Pieczka, 1996; Pal & Dutta, 2008), the effect of communication technology and social media on traditional public relations (Valentini et al., 2012; Breakenridge, 2012), and of professionals as

organizational activists (Demetrious, 2013; Holtzhausen, 2007, 2012; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002) all question the emphasis on control within a practice that was narrowly defined for more than two decades as organizational communication management (Holtzhausen, 2000). Attention has been called to public relations textbooks and pedagogy that have been frozen in a modernist paradigm that excludes competing, dissenting, marginalized, critical, or oppressed voices (Duffy, 2000). Scholarship that most closely resembles Uhl-Bien's view of RLT as a "process theory" concerning social dynamics in which communication occurs in the workplace includes examinations of public relations from anthropological, sociological, and philosophical points of view (Holmström, 2005; Leichty, 2003; Smudde, 2004), and, in the case of Zompetti and Moffitt (2008), how to better design public relations communication practices for audiences who are seen as engaged in multiple discourses and social roles.

The need for postmodern public relations curricula and practice can again be found in Uhl-Bien's (2006) relational leadership article, which stresses that "the locus of leadership [is] not in the top managers and the compliance of followers but, rather, in the *interactions* that constitute the social structure" (original emphasis, p. 671). Such an approach in public relations would recognize that "human discourse creates and recreates human reality, including that for organizations," (Smudde, 2007, p. 207) and shift discussions away from the technical communication aspects of public relations work toward more participatory methods that "allow [stakeholders] to cooperate in generating mutually defined projects [understandings] that are accomplished through the interactions between researchers [practitioners] and subjects [publics]" (Heron, as quoted in Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 671). An inclusive leadership approach could "uncover the invisible assumptions that generate social structures," thereby helping to create the reflexivity or interactivity needed for all parties to engage in meaningful dialogue to create a mindful and

ethical community (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, as cited in Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 672; Kent & Taylor, 2002; Wines & Hamilton, 2009; Valentini et al., 2012; Yang & Lim, 2009). Support for inclusive and transformational leadership practices in public relations is supported by the industry as well ("The Madrid Momentum," 2015).

The literature indicates that while the dominant paradigm of Excellence Theory, with its two-way symmetrical communication construct, has tried to address issues of marginalization through a best-practices approach, it remains entrenched in the hierarchical structure of the Modern age, failing to adapt to changing organizational spaces, audiences, and technology. Postmodern views of current public relations not only point out the complexities involved in 21st century communication, but also point to those same complexities as starting places for a re-envisioned and relational style of public relations that truly represents the diverse and fluid publics found throughout the world ("The Madrid Momentum," 2015).

Proposed direction for public relations leadership research. Because relational-based public relations needs to be inclusive, it shares characteristics with a DAC ontology and leadership styles (authentic, adaptive, shared transformational, complexity) that "shift our thinking from individual-follower (entity-based) leadership to outcomes of relational leadership as an organizing process" (Booysen, 2013, slide 11). As such, it *should* be relational/inclusive. Shifting the allegiance and power of public relations to its publics and away from an organization or individual opens new ways in which the profession can contribute to the overall health and social responsibility of organizations through social capital. Evidence indicates that researchers should continue to explore inclusive leadership styles and their relationships to public relations practice in complex, adaptive environments, and incorporate that knowledge into practical curriculum redesign that seeks to create students who leave the classroom not only with

knowledge about, and technical and communication and relational skills needed in, their field, but also with a foundation of inclusive leadership experiences upon which they can build (Ewing et al., 2019).

In order to accomplish this task, public relations needs to be thought of in less modernistic ways that refer to people as segmented publics and decision-making as strategy that privileges organizations and selective audiences. Instead, I propose a postmodern interpretation and research direction that reframes public relations as an inclusive, socially responsible communication process that builds relationships among community members for the common good of themselves and their organizations. It is an approach that requires a boundary-spanning inquiry that recognizes the value of all voices, the stories they have to tell, the inter-subjective nature of relationships, and the lessons they can impart for the common good of public relations undergraduate education and the society in which it exists.

Chapter III: Methodology, Research Question, and Research Design

Transformation is at the heart of inquiry. Simply put, we ask questions and look for answers because we want to change something—a situation, an outcome, ourselves—in order to make progress toward a state of being that is considered better. The question of how best to accomplish transformation is philosophical and practical in nature, and the answers, for there can always be more than one, are almost always complex.

This chapter summarizes the research rationale, explores the guiding premise of interpretivist inquiry, and details the research question, research design, and the collaborative method of portraiture, a form of narrative case study, that guides the research.

Research Purpose, Research Question and Scope

The review of literature clearly indicates a need for education about leadership in public relations that should begin at the undergraduate level. Therefore, this research endeavor answered the general call and provided evidence for a re-envisioned, postmodern public relations leadership curriculum that serves both the scholar and practitioner realms. Specifically, it was constructed to answer the question: What would a public relations leadership (PRL) curriculum look like?

In order to fully answer that question, this research undertaking considered:

- the clearly identified needs of public relations and leadership in the 21st century, including inclusivity, collaboration, communication and relational skills, multiple narratives, complexity, adaptability, and flexibility;

- the realities of the public relations profession, including the need for expertise in writing, editing, strategic thinking, technology, and leadership; and

- the general construct and administrative context of leadership in the dominant

  public relations curriculum model.

In other words, the research examined both the identified needs and contextual

practicalities of implementation of effective PRL in relevant organizational settings. The result

was an inherently interpretive narrative case study that provided a portrait, or thick description,

of the inclusive and collaborative leadership and communication of an exemplary organization.

Conducted in a three-part process of 1) 20 in-depth interviews, 2) observation of interview

participants and their environment, and 3) secondary data collection and analysis, the lessons

learned were used to recommend an appropriate PRL curriculum for undergraduates.

The philosophical and practical underpinnings that support the research approach, choice

of method, place of research, techniques for data collection, and advantages and disadvantages of

the study are explained below.

Establishing a Research Worldview

As Guba and Lincoln (2005) pointed out, a postmodern turn of the social sciences has

given rise to alternative worldviews that borrow from and are intertwined with other disciplines

and perspectives (pp. 191-192). An example would be a sociological examination of public

relations from a feminist perspective. These worldviews strive to make sense of complex human

experience through individual phenomena in context and, as such, are grouped together into what

Denzin and Lincoln (2005a) called the "field" of qualitative inquiry (original emphasis, pp. xi-

xii).

Because public relations is taught, learned, and enacted by people in relationship with

others, qualitative inquiry appears to be the best option for gaining insight into the construction

of a PRL curriculum. Indeed, public relations scholars have pointed out the importance of using

qualitative methods of inquiry because they facilitate an in-depth study of complex phenomena and dynamic processes in contexts that recognize all participants' voices and needs (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002; Holtzhausen & Werder, 2009; L'Etang, 2005). The choice of a qualitative method of research is important in the examination of relational and inclusive leadership as well, because those concepts also deal with contextual, cyclical, complex, subjective, everyday experiences (Booysen, 2014; Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Uhl-Bien, 2006). Qualitative research takes place in a natural setting in order to help researchers "interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them . . . [through] the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials . . . that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b, pp. 3-4). This type of research "produce[s] texts that refuse to be read in simplistic, linear, incontrovertible terms," seeking alternative interpretations of the world as it appears at the time the exploration occurs (p. 3). As such, it is well suited to document how public relations and leadership function in a contemporary organization with an inclusive culture, as well as provide insight into what elements need to be addressed in a PRL curriculum.

An interpretivist paradigm. Because qualitative inquiry can take many forms, an understanding of the worldview that creates a research framework is critical to the success of a study's design and implementation. The interpretivist paradigm was developed as an alternative to positivism, a modernistic belief that the only true or valid knowledge is that which is gained through objective (primarily quantitative) means that support or disprove a hypothesis in the social sciences (Schwandt, 1994). Postmodern and relativist in nature, interpretive research acknowledges that objectivity, reality, and validity are constructed through interactions with people and language located in historical and cultural contexts. Therefore, researchers "are expected to be able to communicate with individuals and groups, to participate in appropriate

cultural processes and practices, and to interact in a dialogic manner with the research participants" (Bishop, 2005, p. 120). Furthermore, they are expected to be able to contextually convey, or thickly describe, their findings through ongoing interpretation that occurs during data collection, analysis, and presentation (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2008, p. 2; Schwandt, 2007, p. 296).

Because public relations is based on the use of language in interactions with others in organizational settings, the most appropriate paradigm choice requires a worldview that acknowledges and seeks to uncover multiple truths that stem from the realities of organizational life, including issues of marginalization, collaborative meaning making, power dynamics, communication values and practices, leadership values and practices, environment, and diversity. An interpretivist paradigm is inherently postmodern because the interpretation of what is discovered during research is negotiated through dialogue and deep reflection, resulting in multiple knowledge claims (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005c, p. 184; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, pp. 29-31; Ponterotto, 2005, p. 129).

Positionality of the researcher. Because the researcher plays a crucial role in every step of knowledge production, it is necessary to understand her influences and motivations in order to account for her voice in the resulting text. A self-reflexive positionality statement is designed to ensure that the research meets the authenticity criteria of fairness—a balance of perspectives— and tactical knowledge—empowering participants to take action (Schwandt, 2007, pp. 14-15).

I approach the research in this dissertation as a female public relations scholar, practitioner, and educator. My life experience in the worlds of both profit and nonprofit organizations and as a contingent faculty member, as well as a doctoral student in leadership and change, has influenced my views of public relations, leadership, and higher education.

The result is that I am a person who approaches research with an inquisitive and creative mind, with experience as a member of marginalized audiences and with a postmodern world view that constantly questions privilege, celebrates individual stories and identity, and attempts to make sense of the paradoxical nature of life through deep reflection. As such, it is important to me to engage in mindful inquiry, a recognition of and openness to the unplanned that moves beyond a narrow understanding of the ethical ramifications of social research on participants to include the effects on the researcher as a creative, co-creator of meaning (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, pp. 54-56). Because it requires a researcher "not only to discover or to record what is there, but [also] to allow what is there to manifest itself in a new way," mindful inquiry helps a scholar to uncover the potential of both herself and the study's participants (p. 54). It is this approach to inquiry that lays the foundation for my choice of research topic and method.

Choosing Portraiture as an Appropriate Research Method

Because both public relations and leadership are experiential actions in joint meaning making about the organizations in which they exist, I posit that an interpretivist inquiry paradigm is most appropriate for research that seeks to establish a PRL curriculum. The paradigm's emphasis on collaboration, equality, openness, transparency, and acceptance of multiple voices complements the DAC ontology of inclusive leadership and calls for postmodern public relations practice, as well as embodies the identified needs of public relations and leadership in the 21st century (Berger & Meng, 2014; Booysen, 2014; Bronstein & Fitzpatrick, 2015; Cheng & de Gregorio, 2008; Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Demetirous, 2013; Drath et al., 2008; Gregory & Willis, 2013; Holthausen, 2000; L'Etang, 2005; Neff, 2010; Tyler, 2005; Uhl-Bien, 2006).

The method chosen must allow co-researchers *and* those who will view the results of the research to produce meaning that is relevant to each person's reality. Additionally, the method

should reflect the holistic human experience as conveyed through language and art in ways that seek to touch on universal concepts and not establish a metanarrative. To that end, I propose the use of portraiture, a form of instrumental case study, as a boundary spanning, inclusive, co-created method of data-collection and analysis (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Stake, 1995) that shares characteristics with the practice of inclusive leadership and public relations, both of which acknowledge that skill, knowledge, and ability span boundaries and are products of collaborative meaning making.

Portraiture history and detail. In 1983, Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot published *The Good High School*, a book about six high schools located in the United States that illustrated each institution's "good" culture through a documented mix of characteristics (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 5). In her quest to holistically "capture the complexity and aesthetic of human experience," Lawrence-Lightfoot developed portraiture as a research method that allowed her to record the reality, often messy and illogical, of the world she was observing (pp. 5-6). Her need to bridge the gap between the value of art and scientific discovery, theory and practice, research and action in ways that captured and supported the richness and texture of the human experience in context (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, pp. 6-7, 11) resulted in the creation of a combined empirical and aesthetic-description method of narrative analysis with aspects of public discourse and social transformation that authentically co-creates meaning between participant(s), researcher, and audience (pp. 13-14).

The result of portraiture research is a highly textured case study, or picture of a real-life, complex phenomenon in a particular time and place where the researcher has little control over what is being studied. This instrumental type of case study is ideal for research seeking answers

for how or why questions, the study of context-bound phenomena, and when multiple sources (voices) are desirable (Schwant, 2007, pp. 27-28; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2008).

Lawrence-Lightfoot defined the roles that context, voice, relationship-building, pattern recognition, thematic construction, convergence recognition, and story shaping play in creating the portrait of the complex dynamic studied. Through these descriptions the author makes a case for portraiture as a method that can resonate with academics who feel that trying to control for the variables of life and problematizing research to determine cause and effect diminishes both the value and importance of the human experience in situ.

One intriguing aspect of portraiture is its boundary spanning ability to let the audience arrive at the general through the delivery of the specific. For example, in discussing the role paradox plays in portraiture, Lawrence-Lightfoot acknowledged, in keeping with postmodernism and cultural theory, the ability of the reader to make meaning in multiple dynamic and complex contexts through narrator transparency and engagement (2005, pp. 10-11). Also related to key concepts of postmodernism is portraiture's acknowledgment of the researcher as part of the meaning-making process, a cycle that is reciprocally influenced by the research data and participants. The inter-subjective and relational aspects of portraiture and the rigor with which the researcher must acknowledge herself in all phases of the research honor the concept of fluidity, as well as the need to deconstruct potential biases through the construction, or careful analysis and choosing of detail, of the story that unfolds. These key concepts of transparency, engagement, and reciprocal relationships not only represent the tenets of participative inquiry, but also span the boundary of a methodological discussion to public relations theory and practice.

An ethical case for portraiture as a public relations narrative case study method. An examination of the literature (Gower, 2006; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002; L'Etang, 2005; L'Etang, Hodges, & Pieczka, 2012; Remund, 2011; Werder & Holtzhausen, 2009; Zompetti & Moffitt, 2008) uncovers ways in which portraiture could serve as a postmodern case study method for studying public relations as a positive change agent through the examination of complex dynamic relationships, including context, voice, pattern recognition, thematic construction, convergence recognition, and storytelling. Because much public relations research is concerned with the views of practitioners, organizational privilege, and dominant-coalition legitimacy, the voices of internal and external audience members are excluded from the meaning-making process. Portraiture's boundary-spanning ability combined with its emphasis on co-created meaning answers many of the critiques of current public relations research, including narrow understandings of public relations culture as "limited to strategic functional understandings of 'corporate culture,' or . . . as an ethno-centric concept to be conceptualized into variables that can be quantified to facilitate cross-cultural comparisons between apparently homogenous cultures" (L'Etang et al., 2012, p. 519).

Varied perspectives, co-created meaning, reflexivity, and power shifts. Multiple authors have called for more qualitative interviewing to help foster a deeper understanding of the realities/dynamics of the practice of public relations from multiple cultural perspectives (Gower, 2006; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002; L'Etang, 2005; Remund, 2011; Werder & Holtzhausen, 2009; Zompetti & Moffitt, 2008). The value of more qualitative public relations interviewing and observation *in situ* is supported from a relational leadership perspective. Uhl-Bien (2006) stresses that the essence of leadership is not located in managerial decision-making and follower compliance, but in the interactions among all members of an organization (p. 671). Such an

approach in public relations could provide a way to shift emphasis "from the technical communication aspects of public relations work toward more participatory methods that 'allow participants to cooperate in generating mutually defined projects [understandings] that are accomplished through the interactions between researchers [practitioners] and subjects [publics]'" (Heron, as quoted in Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 671; Preston, 2013, p. 42). Furthermore, "[q]ualitative approaches could 'uncover the invisible assumptions that generate social structures,'" thereby helping to create the reflexivity or interactivity needed for all parties to engage in meaningful dialogue to create a mindful and ethical community (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, as cited in Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 672; Kent & Taylor, 2002; Wines & Hamilton, 2009; Valentini et al., 2012; Yang & Lim, 2009).

Shifting the allegiance and power of public relations to its varied community members and away from an organization or individual practitioners opens new ways in which the profession can contribute to the overall health and social responsibility of organizations through the people who have direct influence on how well the system operates (Preston, 2013). Embracing complexity in public relations will require a methodology that allows researchers to "engage in the acts (implicit and explicit) of social transformation" and to undertake "work that instigates positive social change" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 12). Portraiture's "goal of . . . linking inquiry to public discourse and social transformation" authentically in co-created meaning between participant(s), researcher, and audience (pp. 13-14) makes it well-suited to research the perception of, and knowledge about, public relations from community members' points of view.

Calls for different research methods. Further bolstering a rationale for the use of portraiture are calls for ethnographic and autoethnographic research in public relations that

appeared in force in a 2012 issue of *Public Relations Review* (Hodges & Denegri-Knott, 2012; James, 2012; Johnston & Everett, 2012; L'Etang et al., 2012). According to the editors of the special issue devoted to public relations as a cultural practice, "[a]nthropology, and its methodological approach—ethnography—seem natural bedfellows for public relations scholarship and practice, given the connections to culture, discourse and symbolism" (L'Etang et al., 2012, p. 519). The use of ethnography as a research approach to public relations as a cultural practice has "the capacity to generate deep understanding into the ways in which public relations work negotiates complex relationships within and between multiple shifting organizational, socio-political, ethnic cultures in a globalized context" (p. 520). As a method that starts with opportunities instead of problems, as well as with a view of context as a framework for meaning making replete with "cues about how the actors or subjects negotiate and understand their experience," portraiture appears to be well-suited to provide a thick description in a narrative case study of public relations culture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 12).

Portraiture is a form of ethnographic research that emerged from what Denzin and Lincoln (2005b) called the fourth movement, or crisis of representation, of qualitative inquiry (pp. 18-19). Unlike classic ethnography, which is shrouded in the positivist cloak of assumed objectivity, portraiture blends the written account and collaborative fieldwork into a mutually informing loop that presents "careful description of good ethnography with the evocative resonance of fine literature" in order to reveal the essence and authority of all participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 6; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b, pp. 18-19). It seeks to represent the beauty of the emergent human story in context, including one in which the researcher plays a role much like that of a public relations professional.

What undoubtedly makes ethnography appealing to some public relations scholars is the researcher's role in listening to a story in context. I posit that portraiture offers a deeper and more nuanced way of looking and describing, because, as Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) pointed out, the method contrasts with ethnography through the degree to which the researcher engages in "listening *for* a story" (original emphasis, p. 11). Because the researcher "participates in identifying and selecting the story and helps to shape the story's coherence and aesthetic," her role, "perspective, values, tastes, and style" have to be considered at every step in as transparent a way as possible. This postmodern reflexivity not only requires the researcher to constantly question her own positionality, but also that of other powerful actors in the story who are often automatically imbued with authority because of rank or job. Because of its autoethnographic-like characteristics, portraiture also "is imbued with a sense of anti-hierarchical politics, subverting traditional notions of scholarship" and traditional power dynamics in organizational contexts (DeLeon, 2010, p. 408).

The cultural value of storytelling. The storytelling nature of portraiture complements both the practice of public relations in creating organizational stories and the need for public relations to be able to tell its own story in ways that accommodate a multitude of perspectives. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) spoke of the need of the portraitist to "document the specifics, the nuance, the detailed description of a thing, a gesture, a voice, an attitude as a way of illuminating more universal patterns" (p. 12). One might say that all public relations storytelling practices, like the portraitist's paradoxical need to discover the universal after examining a particular dynamic, arise from a single moment in time or a place populated by unique actors. Because the researcher/practitioner "seeks to synthesize 'disparate observations to create a holistic construct of "culture" or "society"'" (Stewart, as cited in Everett & Johnston, 2012, p. 524), portraiture, as

a form of ethnographic research, can "serve as necessary and sufficient methodological 'glue' to bind the various parts of a research design" (Everett & Johnston, p. 524).

Gabriel (2000) offered more support for the ability of stories to provide a number of different lenses—emotional, political, symbolic—through which researchers can examine the lives of organizations (p. 2). His appeal for the distinction of stories as facts-as-experience from description as facts-as-information provides a foundation for re-imagining the practice of public relations from a humanist standpoint instead of a privileged-organization one. The part of his work dealing specifically with culture offers connections with themes of complexity, inclusiveness, ethics, resistance, and control found in Uhl-Bien's (2006) thoughts on relational leadership theory, and Berger (2005), Holtzhausen and Voto (2002), Gower (2006), and L'Etang's (2005) critical examinations of public relation's dominant paradigm.

Furthermore, Gabriel's work provides support for the use of portraiture as a method that can honor the nature of story as fact-as-experience for both teller and reader (p. 27). The finished portrait/narrative invites the reader to engage with the story's meaning in a way that "neither denies the factual basis of stories, nor reduces [them] to elaborations of facts" (p. 31). Such an approach recognizes the call for public relations research to move beyond its technical applications and interpretations, as well as acknowledge the role the reader plays in meaning construction.

The value of appreciation. Portraiture considers not only the perspective of the researcher, the study's participants, and the potential audience who will see the results, but it also recognizes the good that occurs in organizations (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). In doing so, it shares characteristics with appreciative inquiry (AI), a way of looking that can be defined in the broadest sense as an action-research philosophy that seeks to

examine, describe, and understand the positive aspects, motives, products, potential, and spirit of people and the organizations that they create (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001, p. 3). Like portraiture, AI is participatory and collaborative and uses common qualitative techniques such as interviews, observation, and focus groups to gather data to build on existing positive individual and group strengths, achievements, skills, values, histories, insights, and opportunities to lead the planning and implementation of organizational change and development (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001).

Communication is key to the concept of appreciation in portraiture, AI, public relations, and leadership. In AI, "knowledge is seen as an appreciation of the creative nature of organizational life, and it becomes known through a process of inquiry [that] captures personal stories and insights, which uses communication as a process of shared discovery and reasoning" (Pieczka, 2011, p. 116). In this sense, a collaborative examination of positive communication and leadership practices, achievements, skills, values, histories, insights, and opportunities could inform the creation of a PRL curriculum.

Method appropriateness summary. Portraiture, because of its boundary spanning and inclusive intent, its storytelling presentation, its creation of space for counter-narratives, and its embrace of the complex and often messy inter-subjective dynamics of relationships, is well-suited to examining public relations work and effects in context. Furthermore, the creative, co-creational aspects of portraiture highlight the ethical, inclusive, trust-building characteristics of the method in ways that speak to an examination of public relations as a positive change agent. In an examination of the intersection between creativity and leadership of positive social change, Forest (2009) stated that "[c]reative thinking, fluent communication skills, and engagement in the creative process are core competencies for both the art of storytelling and the art of leading

change" (p. 75), maintaining that "[t]elling and listening to stories can contribute to the development of empathy," which in turn can "inspire inventive thoughts and can motivate social action" (p. 76).

It is almost certain that many public relations practitioners and scholars would recognize themselves as both creative and possessing fluent communication skills. However, they may not see themselves as leaders of positive social change because they do not often engage in co-creation of meaning and application in ways that necessarily need to be inclusive, transparent, and empathetic. That type of practice requires the "[linking of] private, intimate storytelling, which is at the center of portraiture, with the public discourse that it hopes to affect" (Featherstone as cited Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 11). In creating portraits, public relations scholars have the ability to "deepen and broaden the audience [not only through] acts of analysis and solidarity," but also through "acts of intervention" that are "implicit[ly] and explicit[ly] [acts] of social transformation" (p. 12).

Because communication with both internal and external audiences is the heart of public relations, the practice may be uniquely situated to initiate and sustain positive change in a relationally inclusive manner. However, an exploration of that premise cannot take the traditional path of identifying and trying to control public relations "problems" as if all applications and sites of public relations practice are the same. Instead, it requires a complementary method that is inclusive, relational, and structured to look for and appreciate "the good," in this case positive and sustainable leadership and communication aspects, in a fluid environment.

Research Scope, Design, and Analysis

The literature clearly indicates the need for public relations research that 1) advances connections with leadership, 2) includes voices other than public relations practitioners, 3)

represents concepts of collaboration, diversity, and distributed power, and 4) considers new ways of educating undergraduates that move the curriculum from the dominant managerial paradigm to one that incorporates postmodern styles of leadership that recognize and celebrate inclusivity, diversity, and fluid relationships. A review of the public relations literature shows that what is missing from extant narratives is a clear and consistent reframing of the practice as a positive change agent and the perspectives of people who are affected by public relations practices.

Scope. This study examines and describes a culture and ways of practicing inclusive and collaborative leadership and communication through an in-depth and in situ narrative case study, or portrait, of the culture, people, and public relations endeavors of a successful organization. The insights and information gained from the research were used to propose a PRL curriculum.

The proposed PRL curriculum also is based in part on literature-informed assumptions about the current state of public relations education in the United States. However, this study is not an in-depth review of current public relations programs. Because of the fractured nature of public relations program locations and course offerings within universities, inconsistencies in accreditation, and the unknown number of course offerings nationwide, a comprehensive listing of the types of courses taught and the consistency or differences between programs is well beyond the scope of the research herein.

Instead, a representation of the dominant paradigmatic course offerings referred to in the literature is offered in Chapter VI. The sample of courses from accredited programs highlights the ways in which public relations programs are housed, accredited, and taught, as well as provide context for a proposed PRL curriculum. This representation has been combined with exploratory research into the best practices for leadership development in public relations education and my personal experiences derived from 22 years in the classroom and 32 years of

scholar-practitioner experience to inform a PRL curriculum model that is not intended to tell people how to teach, but rather to reframe the standard curriculum environment in ways that foster inclusive leadership and public relations awareness, skills, abilities, and mindset (Ewing et al., 2019).

Research design. The research in this dissertation was conducted to provide a new lens through which to examine inclusive leadership and inclusive public relations practices in order to gain insight into ways communication and relational leadership skills can be developed in public relations undergraduates (Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Ewing et al., 2019). As such it falls in the interpretivist paradigm, follows a qualitative approach, and is inductive and exploratory in nature. It is a case study of an exemplary organization conducted in a three-part overlapping process of 1) in-depth interviews, 2) observation of interview participants and their environment, and 3) secondary data collection and analysis to paint a portrait of how the organization manifests an inclusive, boundary spanning leadership and communication culture, as well as how postmodern leadership is experienced by those interviewed. Additional secondary research provided the representative sample of public relations courses used for context in proposing a PRL curriculum (see Figure 3.1). Detailed information about the organization, research participants, and the three-part process is included below.

Case Study Organization. Jellyvision is an exemplary, Chicago-based, growing, interactive technology firm that has found a way to digitally help customers' employees choose "the best plan for their needs, and their wallets" through "online experiences that simulate a conversation with a real person that asks questions, remembers answers, and offers personalized guidance with a bit of personality" ("About Us," 2018).

20 Interviews

6 Initial
October 15, 2015

14 in Round 2
March 11, 14 & 15, 2016

Follow-up
4 total April to October 2016

Observation

Jellyvision Site Visits
October 15, 2015
March 11, 14 & 15, 2016

Chicago Ideas Week Event
October 16, 2015

Secondary Data Collection

Jellyvision email, Website, videos, social media, news coverage

Representative PR Course Offerings
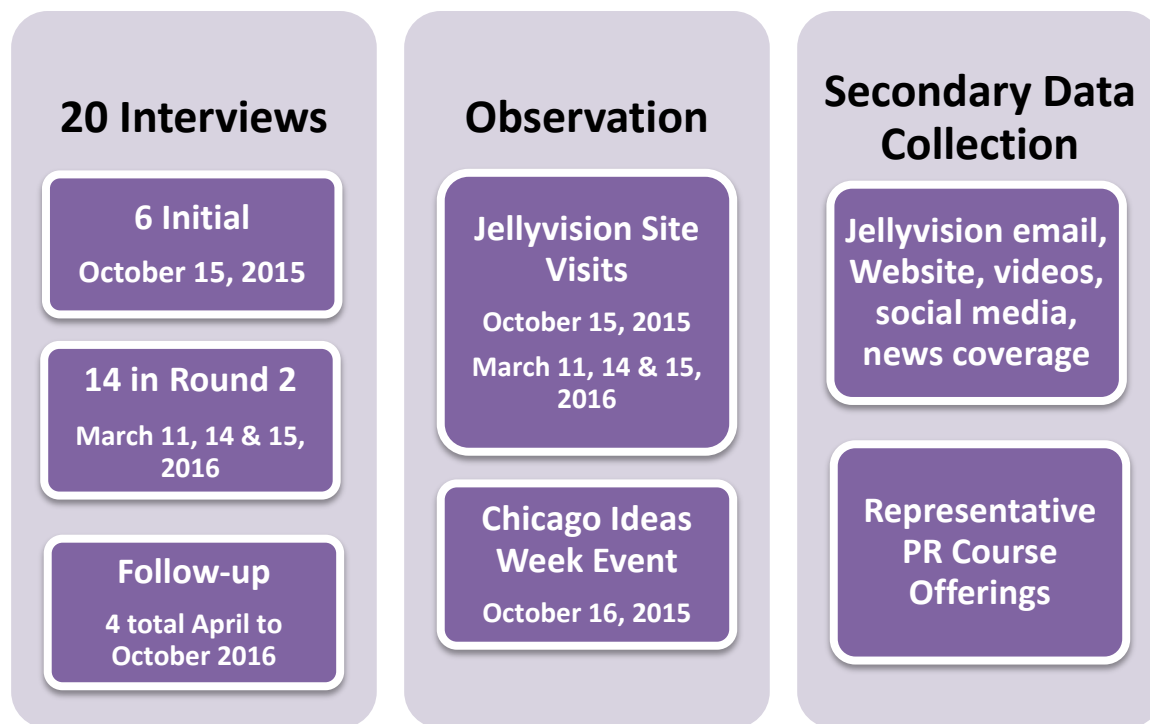
Figure 3.1. Three-part research process of Jellyvision case study. Research at Jellyvision was conducted in a three-part overlapping process in order to construct a case study that provided insight into inclusive leadership and communication practices.

A multiple award-winner as one of Chicago's "Best Places to Work," Jellyvision was chosen because it is emblematic of strategic use of inclusive and collaborative internal and external communication to create an organizational culture that has benefitted both the company and the technology industry in Chicago (Brinson, 2015; "Chicago Top Workplaces," 2017; Kang, 2015; Chicago Tribune Graphics, 2014; "The Complete 2018 Project," 2018; Swanson, 2014).

Although the company does not have a traditional public relations department and outsources its media relations to a Chicago-based public relations firm, it engages in internal and external communication practices—website copy generation, social media content creation and management, employee communication, environmental scanning, community relations events— that traditionally fall under the scope of public relations practice. In a more contemporary sense,

the internal and external communication produced by employees at the company is a marriage of integrated marketing communication, itself part public relations, and traditional human resource communication. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, in true inclusive leadership style, all employees at Jellyvision are recognized and enabled to serve as powerful public relations ambassadors who represent the company and contribute to its organizational storytelling internally and externally among those they come into contact on a daily basis (Dreher, 2014; Kent & Taylor, 2002; Mazzei, 2014).

The company also was in the process of doubling the number of employees, and was worried about maintaining its successful culture. The founder of the organization agreed in November 2014 to allow research to be conducted and briefly discussed a beginning list of participants and procedures to follow, including introducing me and my work to all employees via a company meeting, making sure that the people selected for interviews were comfortable with the process, and the need for me to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) and agree to a review of findings prior to publication.

Participants. Twenty total participants were invited to share their stories with me during two interview rounds.

Round one. Six participants were chosen for initial in-depth interviews through purposive sampling that was the result of discussion between Jellyvision's founder, vice president of people (human resources), and me. The participants were either executive or management level, varying in responsibility and authority in order to provide an opportunity to examine the culture through different lenses or levels of leadership focus. The founder of the company and the vice president of people suggested the following six employees as a good starting point for conducting interviews because of their intimate knowledge of the organization and the roles they play (H. N.

Gottlieb, personal communication, November 4, 2014; M. B. Wynn, personal communication, August 17, 2015; see Appendix A for links to available employee-written biographies):

- Harry Gottlieb, Founder. Harry is the architect of Jellyvision's inclusive culture;

- Mary Beth Wynn, Vice President of People. Mary Beth was hired in 2011 to help minimize Jellyvision's growing pains;

- Bryn Michelich, Senior Vice President of Operations. Hired in 2008, Bryn was the first project manager to keep Jellyvision's creative types on task. She is now a senior vice president of operations;

- Sam Raue Hebert, Director of Content Production. Sam leads a team of production specialists and assistants to create client-specific versions of ALEX, Jellyvision's Benefits Counselor software;

- Travis Mandrell, Vice President of Design. Travis is a self-described creative team leader that builds software product experiences through team building and leadership; and

- Melanie Chapman, Marketing Manager. Melanie is Jellyvision's manager of email communication and automation.

Cole and Knowles (2001) state that how, which, and how many participants are invited should reflect "principles of relationality, mutuality, empathy, care, sensitivity, respect, and authenticity" (p. 65). They address the positivist concerns of sample size and generalizability by accepting that the complex "subjective and intersubjective nature of human experience and meaning-making, the dynamic, multidimensional, and contextual nature of knowledge, and the related unpredictability of the human condition" make large numbers of participants unwieldy at best, and can lead to "very partial and sketchy understandings" (p. 65, p. 67). Therefore, other

participants from varied positions in the company who were willing to share their insights were invited and found through research, conversation, observation, and respectful ways consistent with the inclusive and collaborative nature of portraiture in order to get a range of perspectives on how leadership and communication are practiced and thought about in Jellyvision's culture.

Round two. Fourteen additional participants who could speak about leadership, inclusivity, culture, and public relations and other communication practices in Jellyvision from different perspectives, roles, and levels of responsibility were identified and recruited collaboratively through discussions with the initial participants and with the organization's management team. The process resulted in a participant pool that emphasized depth over breadth in order to accommodate the study's foundation of diversity and inclusion, as well as respect the strain on-site interviews could place on participant's time during a work day (see Appendix A for links to available employee-written biographies):

- David Daskal, Director of Business Development. Dave is a self-described salesperson who was hired with no sales experience, and a business development director who says he's not qualified to be a leader;

- Melanie Tercha, Flowchart Manager. Melanie is the manager who's not a manager, unless you count flowchart data as people;

- Nicki Halenza, Production Specialist. Nicki works with other Jellyvision staff on fun internal tech-y stuff, including customizing, debugging, and improving customers' experiences with the company's benefits software;

- Becki Schneider, Production Apprentice. Becki is a production specialist newbie, learning to do what Nicki does;

- Rudra Banerji, Senior Creative & Media Producer. Rudra produces and directs videos and physical production for products, projects, marketing collateral, and sales demos;

- Linda Dao, Senior Account Executive, Enterprise West. Linda Dao is a self-described connector and a builder of relationships;

- Danny Coleman, Business Support Manager. Danny is the person who helps Jellyvision communicate internally;

- Jenny Fukumoto, Digital Marketing Manager. As a self-described Mexicanese marketer, Jenny generates leads for the sales team and maintain the social media presence for both Jellyvision and ALEX;

- Katie Knotts, People Apprentice. Katie was responsible for recruiting new hires and external communication to hires on behalf of the company;

- Simone Snook, Office Manager. Simone is the office manager for a very small administrative team. She oversees the offices, buildings, and day-to-day needs for Jellyvision's employees;

- Jason Knox, Media Producer & Audio Manager. Jason makes sure the voice over and music and sound effects for Jellyvision's projects sound good;

- Bob Armour, Chief Marketing Officer. Bob guides a team of seven marketers as they work to ensure that Jellyvision's sales team has an ample supply of leads;

- Lisa Rosselli-McDermott, Scrum Master. Lisa acts as a steward, guiding the developers on her team within an agile framework composed of work phases, assessment, and adaptation; and

- Courtney Flannery, Hiring & Training Manager. Courtney recruits, hires, and trains sales staff at Jellyvision.

Data Collection Techniques. Types of qualitative data that can be collected are extremely varied but can be placed into three main categories: in-depth interviews, direct observation recorded in a research notebook, and artifacts consisting of written, visual, and audio documents. Because creating a portrait requires the researcher to "know" her or his subject, it is important to "try to get as close as possible to apprehending, understanding, and rendering elements of a life [or culture] as it is influenced by and intersects with pervasive and subtle forces or influences of context" (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 71). The process is an iterative one in which the researcher is continuously processing data and using it to inform the next step, decision, request, and/or question (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 188). That means that the researcher and data collection processes must be flexible enough to allow for unexpected and unpredictable scenarios, material, and lines of thought and questioning to occur as she or he "seek(s) to document social processes and relationships" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 189, pp. 61-66, 187-188; Cole & Knowles, 2001, pp. 70-92).

Interviews. A total of 24 interviews were conducted; in-depth interviews were conducted with six individuals purposefully chosen for their ability to speak about inclusive leadership, culture, and communication practices at Jellyvision, and with 14 further participants to reach saturation point. While the in-depth interviews were conducted during four site visits (October 15, 2015, and March 11, 14, & 15, 2016), follow-up interviews with four participants took place during a seven-month time period, from April to October 2016. One follow-up interview occurred during a subsequent visit to Chicago May 20, 2016, one via a combination of telephone and email, and two via email.

Interview questions (see Appendix B) were loosely structured to start an informal conversation with participants in order to uncover their respective views on inclusivity, leadership, and communication in general, Jellyvision's culture, understanding of public relations, how each sees her or his role as a leader, and how each perceives her or his fit in the overall culture of the organization. The goal was to engage in a guided conversation that was itself relational (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 72).

Initial interviews lasted no more than one hour each and took place at Jellyvision's office space in Chicago. Each was recorded in the form of field notes and, if participants agreed, in digital audio form. All interviews were also transcribed, and member checked and validated by participants.

While I created a framework of IRB-approved questions (see Appendix B), I also collaborated with participants to create "areas to explore by clarifying purposes (of the research) . . . and helping them to see that the telling of their lives is important" (p. 72). The framework of questions were based on guiding principles that include "reflexivity, relationality, mutuality, care, sensitivity, and respect" (p. 73).

Observation. Culture is created in context. Therefore, to understand context a researcher must see and experience numerous contextual elements, including participants' nonverbals, a site's location, and context "cultural nuances or ethos of an institutional setting, aesthetic arrangement of a space, dynamics of an occupational work group or the relationships among colleagues, . . . and activities that take place" (p. 82).

Observation of participants' interactions with the researcher and each other, as well as Jellyvision's environment and culture were recorded in the form of field notes in a research notebook, and augmented with photographs. Notes generally took the form of a travelogue, or

daily account of who I encountered, what I saw and experienced, items of interest, and my feelings about what I saw, heard, and did. I made two trips to Chicago in a five-month window to visit Jellyvision's offices for extended periods of time on two consecutive days in October 2015 and three consecutive days in March 2016 in order to conduct interviews, observe the environment of both Jellyvision office buildings, participate in a creative communication workshop with a Jellyvision writer and artist, and collect artifacts. I also met with one participant to discuss interview detail during a subsequent trip to Chicago in May 2016 (see Table 3.1 for timetable of Jellyvision-related trips).

Despite an invitation from the founder to observe as many meetings as possible while at Jellyvision, I was not permitted by the organization's legal counsel to attend business meetings during the times I was there. Instead, I was invited to attend a Jellyvision-sponsored creative process workshop that was held as part of Chicago Ideas Week during the second day of my October visit. During the workshop I worked collaboratively with other attendees and a Jellyvision writer-artist team to gain insight into how the company uses humor and creativity to communicate complex concepts in easy-to-understand ways. Observation of Jellyvision's culture—workspaces, interactions among employees, work attire, building layouts and décor— was also observed during tours of both the main Jellyvision location and its new annex during my visits in October and March, respectively.

Secondary data collection. An organization's produced objects—email and other written correspondence, brochures, company policy and procedure manuals, logos, videos, newsletters, memos, etc.—provide insight into its culture (Schwandt, 2007, p. 9). Lightfoot-Lawrence and Davis (1997) speak of the importance of pre-site research of available secondary data that can suggest emergent themes and help "prepare the portraitist for the on-site activity of *listening for*"

Table 3.1

Timetable of Jellyvision Trips and Data Collection Types

Month(s) and Year	Day(s)	Data Collection Type
October 2015	1-14	Collection and review of digitally published information by and about Jellyvision. *(Secondary data collection)*
	15	Conducted six initial on-site interviews consecutively during a 6.5-hour session. *(Interviews and Observations)*
		Toured Jellyvision headquarters at 848 W. Eastman Street, Chicago *(Observations)*
	16	Participated in Jellyvision's Confusion Destruct-a-Thon & Communication Kumbaya, a 3.5-hour Chicago Ideas Week workshop held at Jellyvision headquarters. *(Observation, Data Collection, and Participation)*
March 2016	11	Conducted five on-site interviews over a 6.5-hour time span. *(Interviews and Observations)*
	14	Conducted four on-site interviews over a 5.5-hour time span. *(Interviews and Observations)*
		Toured Jellyvision's second office approximately one block away from the main building for approximately one hour. *(Observations)*
	15	Conducted six interviews over a 6.5-hour time span *(Interviews and Observations)*
May 2016	20	Met with one participant to discuss interview detail. *(Follow-up interview)*
April-October 2016	Multiple Days	Telephone/e-mail communication with one participant and e-mail communication with two participants to clarify transcripts *(Follow-up)*

thematic development during research (original emphasis, p. 217). Because Jellyvision does not

have formal policies, the company does not print and distribute manuals. Furthermore,

communication within the company is digital and proprietary and, therefore, inaccessible. The

only artifacts I collected during site visits were associated with the Chicago Ideas Week event and included a Jellyvision logo card and company-branded kazoo.

Thus, the vast majority of secondary data collection took place during pre- and post-site visits. Pre-site research was conducted through an examination of Jellyvision's digitally published material—employee biographies, job descriptions, language use—on its website, Facebook page, and YouTube channel, as well as of Jellyvision-related content on industry award, blog, and news sites (see Appendix F for a list of secondary sources organized by subject matter and dates of collection). The insight garnered during this part of the research process has been incorporated into the portrait in Chapter IV and analysis in Chapter V to provide a more textured picture of inclusive leadership and communication practices. Post-site research was conducted in the same fashion in order to update material in the time elapsed between interviews and the writing of chapters IV and V.

Because the purpose of the research was to offer a PRL curriculum, a representation of dominant paradigmatic public relations course offerings was needed to provide context in Chapter VI. To that end, courses were chosen from a representative sample of public relations programs accredited by both PRSA and ACEJMC at institutions of varying size. Because of the role that accreditation plays in the creation of a dominant paradigm, only accredited programs were examined.

Analysis. In keeping with the collaborative nature of participatory research and portrait construction, I analyzed interviews, observations, and collected secondary data in a series of self-reflective loops that occurred before, during, and after each step of the design process (Heron & Reason, 1997; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Additionally, participants were involved with the meaning making of their collective portrait through the reading and discussion of

transcripts and the portrait I created. Although only four participants—Harry Gottlieb, Mary Beth Wynn, Sam Hebert, and Katie Knotts—engaged in post-interview meaning making, all 20 had the opportunity to help clarify thoughts, concepts and interpretations of her or his respective transcript through edits made jointly with me through either a second face-to-face meeting or through telephone conversations and email correspondence.

All interviews, observation of participants and environment, and collection and analysis of secondary data were examined for emergent themes and insights and used to construct the portrait of Jellyvision's inclusive leadership and public relations practices and culture in Chapter IV and in the discussion of findings in Chapter V. They, in conjunction with participant co-constructed understanding, also provided data triangulation, revealing points of validation and differences in my interpretation of the information collected.

The representative sample of dominant paradigmatic course offerings were examined in Chapter VI for differences and commonalities with, and adaptability to, the lessons learned from the Jellyvision portrait. Ultimately, all insights garnered from the research were combined through a reflexive process with information from the literature review and the review of representative public relations curricula to ultimately inform construction of a PRL curriculum model in Chapter VI (Schwandt, 2007, p. 298).

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), described in-depth the ways in which portraitists analyze the data collected through an iterative and generative process that is flexible enough to allow for identification of emergent themes (pp. 187-189). During this portraiture endeavor, I immersed myself in the research experience that ranged from observing and recording all stimuli and impressions to the more purposeful collecting of information through interviews and secondary data (p. 187). At the end of each day I documented my reflections in an

Impressionistic Record, "a ruminative, thoughtful piece that identifies emerging hypotheses, suggests interpretations, describes shifts in perspective, points to puzzles and dilemmas (methodological, conceptual, ethical) that need attention, and develops a plan of action for the next visit" (p. 188). In the authors' collective view, the process is similar to the qualitative methods of coding and constant comparison, both of which are dialectical in nature and allow the researcher to map what is happening and why (pp. 188-189; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Glaser & Straus, 1965).

Portraiture research makes use of pattern, descriptive, and interpretive codes in order to honor the tension between the need to organize information for sensemaking purposes and to maintain "the rich complexity of human experience" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 192). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) underscored the value of this tension as a way to alert a researcher to the value of divergent, or deviant, voices that bring normative practices into question (p. 192-193).

The emergent themes in the portrait of Jellyvision were illuminated and constructed using five modes of synthesis, convergence, and contrast evidenced through 1) repetitive refrains that indicate commonly held views, 2) resonant metaphors that reveal participants' realities through poetic and symbolic expression, 3) themes of organizational continuity expressed through rituals, 4) triangulation of data from a variety of sources, and 5) the illustration of themes as revealed by patterns among perspectives (p. 193). Because interviews were structured to elicit participants' views on culture, leadership, and communication, transcripts, observations, and secondary data were analyzed for commonalities in the ways in which those three elements are discussed. Key words, phrases, concepts, and rituals were recorded (see Figure 3.2) and combined with context,

voice, and relationship to create the aesthetic whole, or case, of Jellyvision (pp. 243-260) that is presented and discussed in Chapters IV and V, respectively.

Empowering	Inclusive
trust, autonomy, guidance, feedback, support, boundary-spanning communication and roles, responsibility, leadership, self-motivated, development, expectations, honest-but-kind communication	accepting, open, collaboration, accessibility, helpful, humble, self-reflection, critical thinking/thinkers, respectful, best self, good person, do the right thing, citizenship, communication

Culture, Leadership, Communication

Transparent	Delightful
open, necessary, do the right thing, expectations, ethical, accountability, overwhelming communication	fun, quirky, expectations, community, kind, enthusiastic, communication

Figure 3.2. Key Words, phrases, concepts and rituals from Jellyvision data collection. Thematic information presented in this figure illustrate the common ways in which participants spoke about culture, leadership, and communication.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Research Approach, Method and Data Collection Techniques

All research approaches, methods and techniques have advantages and disadvantages. The usefulness of each lies in the researcher's ability to thoughtfully determine a design that is most complementary to the philosophy behind, and in this case the practice of, the chosen topic.

Advantages. The advantages of using portraiture as a form of inclusive storytelling in a narrative case study of Jellyvision is that it mirrors a collaborative communication style that is valued by the organization and is recognized and expected by its participants. It also honors the ideals of both inclusive leadership and public relations as a positive change agent, recognizing the voice and power of all members of the organization's publics. Because its purpose is to look for the "good" in context, portraiture reframes a research approach in an appreciative way to look for opportunities instead of problems, making it ideal for applying lessons learned to the conceptualization of a PRL curriculum model. Because it is boundary spanning and relational, requiring the ethically transparent participation of many voices in the construction of the final portrait, portraiture complements a postmodern practice of public relations. Lastly, because the portrait, or case study, is borne of a vital collective sensemaking "process of connecting the sequence of events into plot intersection, including several possible and interacting influences, and capturing meanings, especially for things that have already happened," it honors complex social dynamics and privileges all stories equally (Browning & Morris, 2012, p. xi).

Disadvantages. The disadvantages of using a qualitative method stem from the practical, the political, and the generalizable. From a practical perspective, qualitative data collection and analysis is time consuming, its benefit may be limited to the few people in the study, and its methods may make it more difficult for researchers to test hypotheses and theories (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 20). From a political perspective, concerns about qualitative research revolve around issues of objectivity and "truthfulness" of the findings that arise from a positivist scientific viewpoint that assumes that a singular truth can be derived from practices that "can transcend opinion and personal bias" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b, p. 9). However, many

qualitative and quantitative researchers agree that observation, no matter how it is conducted, "is not perfect [or provides] a direct window into 'reality'" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 16).

      Disadvantages of case study and data collection techniques. The most problematic disadvantage lies in the continuing concern that qualitative research cannot be generalized and therefore is not meaningful beyond a single case study. It should be noted that research that strives for generalizability relies on the concepts of researcher control and clear boundaries. Case study research of an organization is made possible through permission granted by a number of people, some of whom participate in the generation and interpretation of research data and some, like corporate lawyers, who do not. Furthermore, inclusive leadership and public relations practices by nature are boundary spanning. Therefore, the most appropriate research method would be one that could accommodate lack of researcher control of participants, time, and access; a boundary spanning real-life phenomenon like inclusivity; and an inquiry that uses multiple sources of evidence to answer how, why, or, in the case of this research, what something looks like (Yin, 2008).

      It is true that case study research does not seek to offer a highly generalized application of findings. But that does not mean that it is without value or the ability to provide insight that is applicable in many situations. Case study allows researchers to offer readers a thick description, or a way to make them "feel as if they have been there with you in your research, seen what you have seen and concluded what you have concluded" (Geertz, as cited in Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p. 124). The result is an extendable case, or portrait, that offers "some conclusions (that) may resonate with readers in such a way that they can apply your findings to other situations with which they are familiar" (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p. 124). The ability of others to apply findings in their respective contexts makes the lessons learned from the portrait transferable.

Disadvantages of data collection techniques. The disadvantages of qualitative data collection stem from the complexity of the case and are resource based. "Documenting the unusual and the ordinary takes lots of time" and sometimes money (Stake, 2005, p. 453). Initial and follow-up interviews take time in the face-to-face, transcription, member checking, and analysis phases. It takes many hours to collect and analyze each item of secondary data. One must travel, and pay the associated costs, to be present where the study takes place.

The time investment is necessary not only to provide thick description, but also to allow triangulation of the different data collection methods and multiple data points to examine what is uncovered from multiple viewpoints in order to ensure the validity of the researcher's conclusions. Triangulation allows the researcher to expose and examine the importance of both meaning convergence and difference that arise.

Ethical Considerations and Procedures

Ethical research cannot be conducted unless the researcher recognizes that "ethics, epistemology, and politics are intertwined" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 90). The choice of portraiture as a research method required that I thought of myself as a facilitator, helping participants to engage in self-observation and -reflection of their lived experience as employees at Jellyvision (Cole & Knowles, 2001). The chosen method also required that I thought of the participants in the study as collaborators who would help me co-create research opportunities and meaning.

Additionally, because I engaged in personal and dynamic exchanges with participants, I had to anticipate potential ethical dilemmas while remaining responsive to the changing needs of the people I interviewed and the scenarios that I witnessed. Schwandt (2007) describes this type of ethical orientation as less a contract and more like a covenant between researcher and participant, "signal[ling] the particularly weighty moral responsibility entailed in qualitative

studies, the need for moral/ethical awareness [of] . . . circumstances that demand attention, and the ever present need to be prepared . . . to address such circumstances in morally responsible ways" (p. 92).

I engaged in an ethical procedure that was both contractual and covenantal. Before I conducted the research I filed an IRB application with an attached introductory letter to participants and an interview consent form. The consent form (see Appendix C) is my contract with each person I interviewed. The introductory letter (see Appendix D), while not used by Jellyvision due to time constraints prior to my arrival, was intended for distribution to all employees of in order to establish my intent to study the organization's culture, to introduce a bit of my personality in absentia, and to lay the foundation for creating an ethical research approach. It is included to give the reader more insight into the way I approached the research. All interviews were conducted after consent forms were presented, discussed, and signed. Individual interview transcriptions were furnished to the appropriate participant for discussion and approval (member checking) before I used them to construct the portrait of Jellyvision's culture. All participants had the option to revise statements, discuss feelings of vulnerability, help me understand the nuances of their statements, and to ultimately withdraw from participation if they so desired.

Furthermore, while the administrative team at Jellyvision did not ask that I sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) that covered proprietary information, they did reserve the option to review and discuss the finished portrait before publication, a request in keeping with the spirit of collaboration and co-created meaning in portraiture research (H. N. Gottlieb, personal communication, November 4, 2014).

Data management and storage. In keeping with the IRB-approved consent form, interview recordings were stored on a flash drive that was kept with interview notes in a secure filing cabinet in my home office. Additionally, all material collected for the purpose of the study was destroyed once the dissertation was submitted and approved by the committee.

Summary

To inquire is to ask questions as a way to effect change. In broad strokes, the purpose of this research endeavor was to discover information about inclusive leadership and communication practices that would inform a change in the way that undergraduate public relations students are educated. To that end, I engaged in postmodern, intersubjective, interpretivist research to construct a case study, or portrait, of an organization in Chicago that is known and desired for its inclusive culture.

A portrait by any other name is still an image of people, places, and things of a particular moment in time, painted in the words of its participants. An image of Jellyvision, created through the words, actions, and meanings shared by the people who work there and the person who immersed herself in the company's culture as often and as deeply as she could, is presented in Chapter IV.

Chapter IV: A Portrait of Jellyvision

Nestled in a low, brown brick building just north and west, respectively, of Chicago's Cabrini-Green and Old Town neighborhoods is a suite of offices that can best be described as a combination of industrial chic and college dorm room. Bare brick walls, exposed duct work, and natural light accent a hodgepodge of meeting rooms with names like The Ballroom and Thing 1 spread over three floors, rows of computers, a cantilevered galley kitchen, open office space, a room full of couches, and a reception area complete with a British-style telephone box. All of this is decorated on any given day with an even more eclectic mix of handmade and store bought art, streamers, balloons, and the occasional stuffed animal and inflatable dinosaur.

The people who work there are no less colorful, sometimes dressing in their pajamas, wearing fake or hand-drawn moustaches, or appearing as their favorite movie character. Employees can be found typing away on laptops while watching one of the original Star Wars trilogies in a meeting-cum-dining area, or delivering candy in a shark costume during the company's annual Spirit Week. They practice honest-but-kind communication and benefit from unwritten policies with names like Unlimited Leave and Graceful Leaving.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is Jellyvision.

A magical land of not-your-average-corporation, Jellyvision is an interactive software company that creates products that help organizations explain complicated and often confusing benefits packages to employees. Or in Jellyspeak, the company "talks people through big life decisions, like selecting a health insurance plan, saving for retirement, managing finances, and navigating a career. Our recipe: behavioral science, cutting-edge tech, great writing, purposeful humor, original animation, and oregano" (Myers, 2017).

To say that Jellyvision is successful at what it does and how it does it is to put it mildly. It and its leadership have won multiple tech industry awards, including Best Place To Work and CEO of the Year (see Table 4.1). The company also has had to grow rapidly in a four-year timeframe in order to keep up with demand for its services, increasing employees from approximately 30 in 2008 to almost 300 in 2016. It was expected to hire 100 more employees during 2017.

So what makes Jellyvision so special? According to 20 of its employees, whose voices and stories are included below, the answer is inclusive communication and company culture.

The Company

In order to understand Jellyvision's organizational culture, a short introduction to its founder and history lesson on its evolution are in order. Jellyculture was instilled by company founder Harry Gottlieb, now in his early 50s with close cut dark brown hair and a salt-and-pepper beard and mustache. When his hair was longer and curlier, Gottlieb got his start in interactive technology with the creation of Learn Television in 1989 (Voight, 2012). Originally an educational video company, Learn Television produced comedic, educational, feature-length and shorter videos, and interactive quizzes for children and young adults. Its most successful interactive product, *That's A Fact, Jack!*, was a precursor of the irreverent and snarky quiz show party game *YOU DON'T KNOW JACK*.

JACK, according to an online AD Week article, was

[a] trivia game invented by people who hated trivia games . . . [that] used the emerging potential of CD-ROM gaming to create a truly interactive experience that made you feel like you were literally on the set of a gameshow from the comfort of your living room. (Griner, 2017, para. 3)

The game was a hit. As of 2012, *YOU DON'T KNOW JACK* had sold approximately 5 million copies, worth $100 million in sales (Gottlieb in Remington, 2011; Voight, 2012). And Gottlieb had hit on a winning formula of interactive communication that used humor to teach the

Table 4.1

Jellyvision's Tech Industry Awards

Year	Award Type	Award Name
2018	Workplace Culture	Crain's Chicago Business Best Places to Work (No. 82/100)
	CEO	The Rotary Club of Chicago's 2018 Rotary Club of Chicago Woman of the Year Honoree
2017	Workplace Culture	Chicago Tribune Top Workplaces (No. 7, Midsize)
		Tech In Motion Timmy Award for Best Tech Workplace for Diversity
		Chicago Inno's 10 Coolest Companies Award winner
2016	Workplace Culture	Chicago Tribune Top Workplaces (No. 27, Small)
	CEO	Illinois Technology Association (ITA) CityLights Industry Champion Award
		Built in Chicago's Moxie Award for Top Woman in Tech
2015	Workplace Culture	Crain's Chicago Business Best Place to Work for GenXers (No. 2) & Millennials (No. 3)
		Chicago Tribune Top Workplaces (No. 27, Small)
		Built in Chicago's Moxie Award for Best Company Culture
	CEO	Built in Chicago's Moxie Award for CEO of the Year
	Software Company	Illinois Technology Association (ITA) CityLights Lighthouse Award
		Built in Chicago's Moxie Award for Best Software Company
	Recruiting	Society for Talent Acquisition and Recruitment (STAR) Chicago Talent Acquisition Specialist of the Year (Mary Beth Wynn)
2014	Workplace Culture	Crain's Chicago Business Best Place to Work for Millennials (No. 1)
		Chicago Tribune Top Workplaces (No. 8, Small)
	CEO	Built in Chicago's Moxie Award for CEO of the Year

Note. **Sources include Brinson, 2015; Carpenter, 2014; "Chicago Top Workplaces," 2017; Chicago Tribune Graphics, 2014; Dewey, 2015; Elahi, 2016; Fukumoto, 2015, 2017; Harkin, 2014, 2017; Husain, 2016; Kang, 2015; Rader, 2016; Rotary Club of Chicago, 2018; Swanson, 2014; "The Complete 2018 Project," 2018.**

person on the other end. That comedic communication ultimately evolved into what Gottlieb describes on his LinkedIn profile as "interactive experiences for corporations that make boring, complex subjects...interesting, simple and delightful" in order to help employees make sense of medical, benefits, financial, and "other topics of interest to human resource departments" ("Harry Nathan Gottlieb," 2017). The company today is an amalgamation of Jellyvision, the arm that continues to use its proprietary software to create interactive programs for clients, and ALEX, the arm that designs, sells, and services interactive benefits communication software for more than 1,000 companies throughout the U.S.

It's obvious from the company's history where Jellyvision's quirky external communication style and atmosphere come from. What's not so evident is how inclusivity, collaboration, internal communication, and leadership combine to create an organization that can attract 1,100 applicants for a receptionist position in 2014 (S. R. Forsyth, personal communication, September 12, 2014). Insight into those concepts begin with Gottlieb.

The Founder

Gottlieb, who shared his business philosophy on a chilly mid-October day in Chicago, was on the phone with me warning that, absent some direction, he is "world class at blabbering on for two hours." He was running late, because another morning meeting off site had run over. I was in The Ballroom, a high-ceilinged conference room with tall windows that is located just behind the reception desk in the company's main building, ineloquently trying to pose questions that might provide insight into Jellyvision's brand of organizational culture.

"You know that the culture you have here is not the typical representation of a corporate culture?" I queried.

"You know, I don't know that for a fact," Gottlieb replied.

It turns out that Gottlieb has only worked at his own companies—Learn Television, Jackbox Games, Jellyvision—during his adult life. Therefore, the only experience he's had with the disconnect employees often feel between their work and personal selves comes from stories he's heard from some of Jellyvision's clients. In Gottlieb's case two early life experiences influenced his ideas about what a workplace culture should and could be.

As a child, Gottlieb attended North Star Camp each summer, where he learned valuable lessons about rewards, kindness, and community. While the camp culture wasn't always perfect, Gottlieb said that people were accepted for who they were and that those in charge helped the attendees find activities that fit their strengths so that they could excel.

> It [had] room for people to find their way, and kids would be acknowledged for whatever it was they were good at. . . .It really showed me—of course I didn't think so at the time, because I was between 10 and 15, 16 years old—but it was really a microcosm of how the world could be. That it is possible to be in a community where people care for each other, where people who do good have it come back to them . . . .

By the time Gottlieb was 20, he was being paid to produce a series of training videos for Sunset Foods, a Chicago grocery store chain. The owner wanted "something that was fun and engaging that would teach new employees [how to be] successful in the business," and gave Gottlieb and his partner permission to shoot unsupervised at night when the store was closed during the summer. Gottlieb felt trusted.

But trust wasn't the only idea the owner imparted. He also taught Gottlieb a lasting lesson on the lifelong value of employee experiences.

> [H]e said to us, "I want you to know that the people who are going to be watching these videos are mostly 15- and 16-year-olds, and very few of them are going to be Sunset Foods employees long term. But what is important is that it's their first job, and it's going to have a huge impact on them for the rest of their working careers. . . .[T]hey're going to learn about what it means to have a strong work ethic, . . . to serve the customer, . . . to take pride in your work and treat your coworkers with respect."

Gottlieb said that the owner "totally ennobled his entire profession, not because of what he [did] to sell groceries, but in how he [did] it."

While these positive experiences in how to create and maintain a community found their way into Gottlieb's vision for Jellyvision, a negative workplace moment as a bus boy on the first day of his first job also influenced the company's internal business and communication practices. The 15-year-old Gottlieb was rewarded for an eight-hour shift with a disappointing $1 tip from the owner of the business. "It was insulting," Gottlieb said. "I really thought it would've been better to say, 'Great job! I think you did really good work,' and give me nothing." Years later, he translated that experience into an organizational culture that recognizes that all employees, no matter their rank or time at the company, contribute value and have a voice.

Another communication result of Gottlieb's early exposure to both positive and not-so-positive life experiences is the company's "honest-but-kind" modus operandi. Deceptively simple, the phrase is an eloquent summary of Gottlieb's view on how he and others should communicate with each other. It is an expectation based on respect and an openness to critique that helps create a more considerate and inclusive community by providing guidance for engaging in difficult conversations—performance feedback, firing—that are part of every workplace. According to Gottlieb, the honest-but-kind philosophy encourages people to be their best self and hold each other accountable. He called it a "schmutz pact."

> So you know how when you go out with somebody and you're having a meal and they get a little cheese dripping down the side of their mouth? Schmutz is like the piece of cheese. The schmutz pact is that you're going to tell them that they've got a little cheese running down their mouth."

Gottlieb's schmutz pact is expected of all employees and has the potential to stop what could be damaging behavior by anyone, himself included, because the pact bucks traditional communication pathways related to job hierarchy. For example, Gottlieb insists that others in the

company hold him accountable for his actions. To illustrate his point, he shared a story about a company-wide email that he sent concerning the nomination of Jelly Vision's CEO as CEO of the Year for heads of digital companies in Chicago.

> You were supposed to vote once a day, but you could vote on three different browsers. Then I realized somebody told me that if you just use incognito browsing you can vote all day. And I thought, "We're in Chicago." And I didn't take it seriously. "It's a popularity contest. Let's stuff the ballot box." So I sent a thing, kind of like, "Let have a Stuff the Ballot Box Party!"

The ethics of Gottlieb's idea were called into question by two people at Jellyvision who asked if the company would be breaking the rules and if their CEO could get into trouble. Their queries caused the founder to reflect on his actions, call off the party, and stand up at the next company meeting to present his views about accountability all employees.

> I'm, like, "How many of you, when you saw the email, [knew] that it wasn't the right thing to do?" And 35 people raised their hands. "I just want you to know that, really, everyone should've told me I had schmutz. Tell me I'm not perfect. The fact that I own the company shouldn't matter. I'm only going to be thankful to you."

Gottlieb's willingness to accept criticism acknowledges that all people make mistakes and that others have an obligation to point out transgressions in an honest-but-kind way instead of talking about that person and what has happened behind her or his back. As he pointed out, the message can be delivered in "a nice way, like, 'You maybe didn't consider this, Harry, but I'm wondering if . . . ?'"

The stuff-the-ballot-box incident shows not only how transparent and inclusive communication can help an organization, but also how dependent the culture is on everyone's willingness and ability to participate. Gottlieb acknowledged that Jellyvision employees sometimes struggle with difficult conversations despite the company's relatively flat hierarchy and accompanying communication practices. "Our problem around here leans more toward not

that people have difficulty with being kind, [but that they] have a difficulty with being honest," because they're afraid they might upset the recipient.

The traditional way to address the uncomfortable nature of difficult conversations is to rely on written policies that state procedures that are to be followed in a particular order when an action has been deemed inappropriate. In other words, an employee is expected to always perform in the best possible ways, otherwise blame is assigned by a higher ranking individual and a sanction of some sort is meted out following protocol. Jellyvision's approach tempers the power dynamic of traditional hierarchal communication by making it the responsibility of everyone to lead a conversation that is structured to help each person be the best possible version of her or himself. As Gottlieb stated,

> "[I]f this person is doing something that's annoying, interpersonal or whatever, and nobody tells them that it's a problem, who's wrong? Are they wrong, because they don't know? But you do and you're withholding information from them." So I think there's a real moral obligation to say something on top of the fact that, if you do say something, there's a really good chance that it's going to get better.

The policies at Jellyvision are, by and large, unwritten and flexible. From hiring, to taking time off, to leaving the company, policies are conceived as flexible guidelines that are themselves governed by collaboration and the Golden Rule. "We don't box ourselves in and be, like, 'No matter what the problem is, we go through this process.'" For example, Gottlieb explained that the company's hiring procedure has evolved from a consensus-based approach when the staff was small to relying on the hiring manager to make the final decision. However, he thinks that the current method retains the spirit of the first in that "we do listen very closely to the people that do the interview," taking into account each participant's feelings about the candidate in question.

The interviewing process at Jellyvision is approached as a collaborative effort among all who come into contact with the applicant, as well as among the interviewees. "I think most people would say that it felt like a very collaborative thing, that a lot of people were collaborating in the process of figuring out if they were the right fit." Not only is the joint effort important to Gottlieb, but he also is adamant that "people get treated really, really well in the process." He recognizes and is appreciative of the amount of time people spend on trying to get a job at the company.

> [T]hey have to write a custom letter, just for us, put together a resume, and send it in. So now they have spent time with zero guarantee of any compensation so that we have the benefit of deciding whether they will come on and help us. To me, we're not doing anybody a favor. If they get hired, it's like, "[A]ren't we lucky they applied?"
> The appreciative and kind approach has a public relations benefit as well:
> So I feel like it's really backwards that employers are not falling over themselves even for the people who [they] say "No" to, because it might be "No" now, but it might be "Yes" later. And even if it's "No" now and it's "No" forever, they'll talk about you. So even if you're not doing it because it's the right thing to do, [do it] because that karma exists in the world.

Gottlieb's insistence that the company do the right thing extends to its vacation policy, which relies on each employee to determine how much time she or he needs in consultation with managers and human resources, and to its Graceful Leaving Policy, which outlines the treatment a person can expect if she or he is asked to leave by the company or chooses to leave for another job. Gottlieb said such policies "seem so utterly normal to me, [but] I keep hearing 'Oh, my god, this is so weird.'" Again, he sees this type of corporate policy as both the right thing to do and good business practice for the bottom line.

> We don't expect anybody to be here forever. You've come in and you've helped us. We owe you nothing but support. You, not "you as you are a worker at Jellyvision," but personally you. And if you want to leave, we're going to support you in that process.

Support includes providing a reference and time off to search for a job and go to interviews, as well as paying a pro rata bonus for the time the person has spent at Jellyvision. In

order to receive the support, the person leaving needs to tell the company when she or he begins looking for a new job and help her or his team transition. In return, Jellyvision promises the aforementioned support and a guarantee that there will be no ramifications at the company as long as the person leaving is performing well.

Gottlieb said that helping an employee transition makes good business sense because it also allows time for the company to transition, whether that means correcting an internal issue or having time to cover and eventually hire for the vacated position:

> What's the alternative? If you're leaving for a reason, of course we'd like to try to solve for that. [And] if you think of how people are like, "I can't tell anybody because, if they know I'm searching, stuff's going to change . . . ." The company is now guaranteed that they are going to have at best two weeks' notice that suddenly this role is going to be left open.

The offered support is available not only to those who voluntarily leave the company, but also to those who are asked to leave. The Graceful Leaving policy mandates that all employees who experience difficulty in their respective jobs should be notified about the problem and have ample opportunity to address the issue. This is not to say that the company has never fired anyone outright.

> I mean, sometimes there's no addressing the problem. Sometimes it's just like, "We're just going to fire you, because you did something that is not ok." But normally, if [it's] just a normal performance issue, [it's] "Here's what you've got to do, here's the time frame, and, if you do it, great." And we've had plenty of people who've gone through this process and [said], "Oh, my god! I had no idea." They just didn't know . . ., because nobody had told them.

Gottlieb said that even if an employee goes through the process but is unable to correct the issue, she or he receives severance, "because, at least so far, there's never been a time when we've written somebody a check where I've ever felt bad about it later." He stated that the company operates the way it does not solely for humanist reasons or business purposes, but that

the two work together to influence the culture of the organization. "Treating people the way you would want to be treated happens to coincide beautifully with a better organization."

While Gottlieb has influenced Jellyvision's culture to a great extent, he said that removing himself from the day-to-day operation of the company is what allowed it to mature into the organization it is today, a decision that was arrived at because he felt he was too hands-on on a day-to-day basis. Gottlieb said that, despite starting his own businesses, he never really thought of himself as an entrepreneur until someone described him as one about ten years ago. He sees a difference between people who start a company to provide a "solution to something in the marketplace" while they make money and those who are creative and start "a company in order to do the stuff that [they want] to do." Gottlieb described himself as the latter.

> I was like "I've gotta create a vision. And I want to be able to pursue this greater vision. And a company seems like a prerequisite for doing it, so that's what I'm going to do." And it was never about making money. I simply want[ed] to surround myself with people who can help my vision become reality.

Starting and running a film business in 1989 and creating products that were timed in seconds required him to be a more hands-on creative director that made him "necessarily like a micro-manager." Gottlieb was heavily involved in all stages of the creation, production, and success of material, a situation that created a culture quite different than what exists now.

> I directed. I oversaw art. I was the conceiver. Very, very, very hands on. And I drove people bananas. I mean, if you talk to the people who have been around me the longest, they'd be like, "Oh my god. He used to drive us nuts." But then they'd forgive me. They'd forgive me. And I got used to [the idea that] this is what it takes to make something great, which I don't actually believe anymore . . . .

Gottlieb's leadership views began to change as he and the company matured and weathered some setbacks, including rapid growth and less than ideal management practices. Following the success of *YOU DON'T KNOW JACK*, the company expanded from 12 employees in 1995 to 70 in less than four years before, in Gottlieb's words, "things started to fall apart." He

said that the company did a poor job evaluating performance, providing feedback, and tracking

improvement, as well as taking too long to fire people who were not a good fit. The processes

that the company now uses are a result of that period of learning.

Gottlieb's views on leadership also underwent a transformation:

When you're small, you care so much. [The business is] literally almost everything you think of all day long. You wake up thinking about it. You go to sleep thinking about it. You're in the shower thinking about it. You're driving and you are thinking about it. You're always thinking about it. [But] in order to give room for other people to care more, you do have to care a little bit less.

He attributed his ability to shift his thinking to the birth of his son:

So when I had [my son] it totally changed me, because suddenly I had another thing that I really cared about as much. And it gave more room, I think, for other people to do more in my life. But the transformation was not without worry.

As Jellyvision began to grow and he began to back away from the business, Gottlieb was

concerned about losing the better aspects—closeness of colleagues, fun, the honest-but-kind

philosophy—of the company's culture. However, his interactions with employees who are newer

to the company have surprised him and helped him refine his ideas about leadership and culture.

I always thought that once people didn't know really well the kind of core people that started it, that things would start to fall apart. And what's amazing is [that] I keep meeting with these [new] people and it seems to be getting better. It's different. There are aspects of when we were smaller that can't be recreated, but it seems in many respects that it's getting better. . . . It's totally sustaining. And it's helped me realize that culture does not come down from the founders. [T]he stage is set and it's very, very important that those kind of leadership people live the values that they want to see in others. They have to live them.

Gottlieb's concerns about, and observations of, Jellyvision's changing culture are shared

by both new and longer-term employees at various levels throughout the company. While some

of those people work closely together, others do not. In order to demonstrate team relationships,

but also to authentically represent Jellyvision's quasi-flat hierarchy and appreciation of

individuals, interviews have been organized according to divisions within the company. Each

division begins with the person who has the most authority and ends with individuals who have the least. A visual representation of the interview participant groupings is offered in Figure 4.1. I chose to begin with Jellyvision's equivalent to human resources, because the organization and the research contained within this dissertation would not exist without the people who create and maintain the company's culture. Emergent themes in the interviews and their subsequent implications for a PRL curriculum are discussed in Chapter V.

Human Resources

Mary Beth Wynn, Vice President of People. Mary Beth Wynn might have the best title ever for a head of human resources. As vice president of people, she is in charge of recruiting and hiring the individuals who make Jellyvision's products and organizational culture successful. She's so good at what she does, she won the 2015 Talent Acquisition Specialist of the Year award from STAR (Society of Talent Acquisition & Recruitment) Chicago.

An attorney in a previous life, Wynn came to Jellyvision in 2011 via experiences in litigation, and law school admissions and career services. Litigation, with its heavy workload of research and writing, left her craving human interaction. Law school admissions, with its emphasis on LSAT scores, "was far too bound by metrics." Career services, on the other hand, was what Wynn called "a Goldilocks."

> There's a specific thing that you're trying to help people with, but you can meet people wherever they are and help them. So it's not the problem you have with admissions where you just can't help [if people don't have high enough scores]. I could be helpful to everybody I was meeting with. . . . [I] could help everybody where they were, so I really loved that.

After the 2007 recession hit and her position shifted during the following years to helping students manage the cost of education versus starting job wages, Wynn began to look for a recruitment position that would feed her need to help others. She discovered through research

Jellyvision

Harry Gottlieb
Founder

CEO

Mary Beth Wynn
VP of People
(Human Resources)

Simone Snook
Office Manager

Katie Knotts
People Apprentice

Brynn Michelich
SVP of Operations

Sam Hebert
Director of Production

Nicki Halenza
Production Specialist

Melanie Tercha
Flowchart Manager

Becki Schneider
Production
Apprentice

Danny Coleman
Business Support
Manager

Bob Armour
CMO

Jenny Fukumoto
Digital Marketing
Manager

Melanie Chapman
Marketing Associate

VP of Sales

Director of Enterprise
Sales

Linda Dao
Senior Account
Executive, Enterprise
West

David Daskal
Director of Business
Development

Director of Business
Development
Representatives

Courtney Flannery
Hiring & Training
Manager

ALEX

Head of
Engineering

Head of Product

Lisa Rosselli-
McDermott
Scrum Master

Jellyvision Design

Travis Mandrell
VP of Design

Director of Media
Production

Jason Knox
Media Producer &
Audio Manager

Rudra Banerji
Senior Creative
Producer & Senior
Media Producer

Figure 4.1. Jellyvision 2015 & 2016 interview participant groupings by flow chart. In addition to listing the participants interviewed, the flow chart illustrates the management structure of Jellyvision at the time of research.

that the technology industry was engaging in progressive hiring practices where people's skills were more meaningful than their credentials and that, serendipitously, Jellyvision was hiring for a recruiter.

If the company's multiple Best Place to Work awards are any indication, Jellyvision might have the most progressive recruitment process in the technology industry. The ubiquitous cover letter, a coding skills test, and one or more interviews are nothing out of the ordinary. However, how Jellyvision uses those standard instruments and processes to select employees is a large part of the company's success story.

As with all jobs Jellyvision applicants must submit a cover letter. And, as the company website states, Jellyvision places a lot of importance on cover letters:

> A cover letter that highlights three reasons you think you'd be great for the gig, focusing on how your past experience has prepared you for this kind of position. Writing is key to all we do, and we weigh cover letters heavily. We love a cover letter that really shows us your personality (check out our company bios to see the wide range of personalities we've already got in house), but don't stress if you're not a comedian. You don't have to be funny. Just be yourself. We're mostly interested in learning who you are, what you love to do, and why you'd love to do it here with us.

As Wynn said, the ability to demonstrate that the candidate "gets" the company, isn't too bound by cover letter norms, and is reflective and smart is crucial to making the first cut.

> We basically won't interview people who send us a form cover letter, three paragraph, blah blah blah. "Did you read our job posting?" Our job postings are unique. Our website is unique. If you can't from our job posting and our website get that you need to do a different cover letter, you aren't the kind of dot connector that we kind of need anyway. You can't read tone. You, you're too bounded by "That's not what's done," and that, you're probably not going to be a good fit here if you're following the rules instead of reading a situation and responding appropriately. How thoughtful and smart is your cover letter? How enthusiastic are you about the job?

Jellyvision's adaptation of the standard coding test is another innovation in recruitment. As Wynn explained, many people in technology have to be able to demonstrate that they can code, whether they gained that skill through their formal education or through life experiences.

At Jellyvision, every applicant—coders, writers, receptionists, etc.—whose cover letter catapults them into round two of the review process must pass an audition to move on to interviews. Like the cover letter, an audition reveals a lot about a potential employee's technical and communication and relational skills.

> I think from a hard skill perspective the audition really gives us the opportunity to evaluate people's work and use that instead of proxies [credentials on a resume] for "can you do the work?" But then there is a lot that we look for beyond "Do you have skills for the role?" And a lot of that is attitude, and some of it is smarts, just general smarts, and appropriateness. . . . You see people's approach to work. You also see detail orientation, and do people meet the deadline that we've given them for getting it back in, and do they ask thoughtful questions? Do they ask too many questions? Are they the kind of person who can't take a task and run with it? So, you see a lot just with every audition. And the audition itself is really trying to address the skills that we need in the role.

Wynn said that finding the right fit between employee and position might be a bit more complicated at Jellyvision. Because the company's culture is well-known in the Chicago technology industry, it attracts many people who apply for jobs just to get in the door. That means that Wynn and others at Jellyvision spend a lot of time and energy determining not only if an applicant is skilled, but also if that person is passionate about the available job. The hiring team also looks for other characteristics that are hallmarks of Jellyvision's culture.

> Ego does not work well here. People who come in impressed by themselves are just not going to function, very well in our culture, so we really look for humility, kindness, a dual concern with excellent work, but also [with] being an excellent colleague. And, you know, there is a brand of Jellyvision delight. We try to delight our clients. We try to have our products be delightful. We try to delight each other at work.

Delighting each other at work has included filling the reception area phone booth full of inflatable Santas one year, but it has never been a directive from the CEO or head of people. It is very much part of Jellyvision's genetic makeup. The company was staffed with creative people first and that culture has continued to be celebrated with the addition of business people and more creative types, some with Second City comedy credentials. For employees like Wynn, a

self-proclaimed non-visual and -funny person, the culture is fun to experience, but also can be

nerve wracking, particularly when one has to give a presentation.

> First of all, [there are] people who have these visually gorgeous presentations and I'm not
> a visual person. "Here's my black and white PowerPoint slides." And second of all, just
> the pressure to be funny, because just some of the most hysterical people are around and
> a lot of [them are] performers. . . . But you don't have to have that level of skill, but I do
> think you have to have a level of intent to delight, to make it fun for people, to have it not
> be boring, to the best of your ability. And I think we really share that and we look for
> people who kind of bring that kind of sparkle to what they're doing.

Wynn said that the people at Jellyvision have to have a lot of communication and

relational skills and drive. The latter is very important, because the company has very few

written policies. Therefore, people who are self-motivated and self-managed are key to the

success of policies like Flexible Time Off, which allows employees to determine the amount of

time to take off and when that should happen.

> You're hired because we think you're great. We trust your judgment. We trust you as a
> person. So, [with] our Flexible Time Off Policy, you take the time that you need. Just
> work it out with your manager. We trust you to know what you need and we trust you to
> tell us what you need.

The policy is very different than standard annual accrued-time leave plans of two or three

weeks that can't accommodate additional unexpected needs like the death of a family member or

health issue. Jellyvision hires don't have to negotiate extra time for plans they made before they

were hired.

> You can be here for a month and take a week's vacation and that's cool because you're a
> human being and you had a vacation scheduled. To have that kind of trust, we have to
> believe that everybody here is going to be highly motivated to do a great job and deserves
> that trust. We don't need to tell you to be at your desk from 9 to 5 in order to get a good
> day's work out of you. You know what you need to get done and if you are the kind of
> self-motivated person who just wants to do everything that they do to the best of their
> ability, you're going to give Jellyvision everything it needs.

Self-management is also crucial to succeeding in Jellyvision's creative environment.

Wynn said that the lack of process is difficult for people who need constant direction. "Some

people really prefer process, and answers in black and white, and 'Tell me what I need to do.

Tell me if I'm doing it right. Tell me.' You know? We're not a great company for those folks."

The process that does exist at Jellyvision is based on communication between team

members and their managers. Wynn said that when the company was smaller and everyone knew

each other, it was easier to know how each person's preferred communication style. Jellyvision's

growth and subsequent need to hire more employees at every level means that communication is

simultaneously more important and difficult than ever.

> I do think we maybe have more managers who are newer, who aren't as steeped in things, who may have different styles. And I don't know if everyone is in a position where they're like, "Ok. I know the communication style of everyone on my team and I'm adjusting my management style accordingly."

Wynn said that that's when the company's honest-but-kind communication philosophy

comes into play.

> I do think the core principle of like, "Hey. Pay attention. Listen to what people have to say considerately, thoughtfully, but give honest-but-kind feedback on what you're hearing," um, I think that gets around a lot of communication differences.

Wynn also said that the company looks for managers who are open to diverse viewpoints

and who are trying to get away from hierarchical communication styles, people who say,

> "I was really bound by all this process and I'm looking for a way to allow me to work with my team." . . .[W]e need managers who are very good at activating the best in the people under them and letting them grow.

She said that listening carefully to managerial applicants helps to separate out those are

focused on hierarchy and promotions from those who believe in building a good team that runs

on its own. To that end, Wynn said that Jellyvison looks for someone whose management style is

"I need great people and I need to be able to give them the resources that they need, and then

they do amazing things that I can't possible take credit for."

Simone Snook, Office Manager. Imagine being hired to be the office manager for approximately 40 people and arriving at your new job to find out that the company has had a strategic change of heart and you're now responsible for the management of facilities for a cast of 180.

That's what happened when Simone Snook joined Jellyvision in May 2015. Originally slated to be the office manager for the Jellyvision Lab, Snook arrived at 848 W. Eastman Street to find that the company had decided to revamp her position to include the much larger ALEX workforce. At the time of our interview 10 months after she began, Jellyvision had added an entire building and at least 90 people to the organizational roster.

That amount of growth requires adaptability. As Snook said, "one of the things that working at Jellyvision has taught is that you just have to be flexible. Things change."

One of the larger changes has been the addition of a second building to house what was formerly known as the Jellyvision Lab and the creative team responsible for Jellyvision and ALEX's delightful interactive products. Known as 811 (pronounced Eight Eleven), it is a newly refurbished open and airy space full of natural light and common work areas that can be used by all employees in both buildings. However, despite the newer amenities, the move required employees to accept a lot of change, particularly those who had worked in Jellyvision's 848 (pronounced Eight Forty-eight) office for a long time. To ease the transition, Snook, who was responsible for overseeing the completion of the new space, wanted to make the move as painless as possible.

> I didn't want them to have to move into sort of a half-finished space, so they had their desks, their chairs, their files. All the meeting rooms were set up. The kitchen, you know, we [had] the coffee and the water and everything that would be [available in the 848 kitchen] for the most part, except for groceries. I think that had to come a little bit later. But, yeah, fully stocked in supplies. . . . And it honestly went very, very smoothly.

While the move occurred with relative ease, it wasn't completely worry free. Snook said that company is still working on making sure that Jellyvision still feels like one company even though it is housed in two buildings. She said that one step is to encourage employees in the more crowded 848 space to walk less than five minutes away to use one of the seven meeting rooms, the private telephone booths and smaller work spaces, or the voice and video recording studio.

> You can tell certain people are resistant to that. Others are like, "Yeah! That's great! You get out[side]." . . .In general, you know, I think people are starting to slowly get there, but [there are] people at this point who're are like, "Oh, yeah. I haven't seen the new building." And I'm like, "How've you not seen the new building? Just walk over there." So we're still working on that.

> Snook said that another strategy to ensure that the employees who had to move don't feel isolated from their colleagues in the original office is to host company events like the weekly catered lunch and yoga in the new building on a monthly schedule. "We're doing those at the other building to kind of proportion-wise make it work out a little more evenly in that way, so certain people don't feel like they're always coming here to do, to do things," Snook said.

While some of Jellyvision's efforts center on creating joint experiences for the employees in both buildings, some business communication needs require a separation. "So everyone at [811] is on the [main] Jellystaff email. They also have, like, an 811 staff email, which certainly makes some communications, especially things related to just that building, make a lot of sense."

Snook said that she's found "constant communication, even if my answer is 'I don't know the answer yet, but I will let you know as soon as I do,'" to be very helpful in smoothing out the wrinkles in her space planning role, particularly with people who have had to change desks multiple times since she arrived at the company. Whether it concerns trying to accommodate the needs of Jellyvision's more introverted employees, or rethinking unisex restroom signage for the

organization's one transgendered worker, Snook welcomes the emphasis the company places on

open, inclusive, and honest-but-kind communication.

> I got little signs for all the restrooms that had . . . the little male and female silhouettes on them, and the wheelchair access. And then it was brought up to me by an employee who is transgendered, who [said], "I really appreciate these signs, but here's the issue I have with the signs themselves." . . .[H]e was very honest and very kind, and it was a big learning moment for me. And also it's one of those things that, you know I think of myself as a very thoughtful, considerate person. And I was like "Oh, it really didn't occur to me that there are going to be people who don't identify with either of those. And it was a very simple fix. I took them down. We got little signs that said restroom. And that was that. But it does make me think.

According to Snook, part of what makes the Jellyvision's inclusive culture work is that

the communication is allowed to move freely across what little hierarchy exists. "There's never a

sense of 'Oh, you're in that position? Then you can't talk to so and so.'" She said that the

hierarchy is so informal that the company had been trying to decide what to call the leadership

team instead of referring to them as ADRs, or Amanda's Direct Reports, in reference to CEO

Amanda Lannert. Snook said part of the problem in identifying a title comes from the Lannert's

insistence that it not be so much about her. But as the company has grown, it has found a need to

adjust the nomenclature to accommodate a way to speak about the quickly increasing pool of

managers—50 at the time of our interview—separately from what would be a traditional

executive leadership team.

And while Snook admitted that not everything is perfect at Jellyvision in terms of

leadership and diversity, she stated that the company's commitment to organizational

development is key to creating a worthwhile workplace.

> My favorite thing about Jellyvision is just our ability to recognize "This is something we need to do better at. This is an area where we can grow." And feeling like ideas can come from any person. And that everyone's ideas matter. This idea of the communication both up and down the chain and talking to people directly. It never feels like we are stagnant or we are satisfied with the status quo, which is great. It feels like, I think I said this in my end-of-year-review, we do these self- and company reviews that it feels like a real,

like a living, breathing organism that is always constantly changing and growing. Which for some people is hard, but I think for the most part people embrace that. At least here.

Katie Knotts, People Apprentice. Katie Knotts and I have a history. She is one of two of my former students who has worked at Jellyvision. When we spoke in March 2016, Knotts, who started at the company as a customer production apprentice, was working her second position as a people apprentice. As such, she was in charge of scheduling all of the interviews I conducted over a three-day period.

In her two roles at Jellyvision, Knotts gained experience with the company's interactive benefits software ALEX, recruiting new hires, and external communication on behalf of the company. The responsibility she was given in each position was a testament to Jellyvision's trust in, and empowerment of, its employees at every level. She said that in her first role she handled approximately $350,000 of ALEX product for Open Enrollment, while in her second job she served as the point of candidate contact for the interview process.

> I do a lot of candidate correspondence, so it's very cool in that sense. I get to be the voice of Jellyvision and it's just really neat because you have these people coming in and, you know, you teach PR, you can totally understand, people need to be spoken to by an individual. And so I have to be an individual, and be Katie, and I also have to be totally representing Jellyvision to this person who is thinking they might like to come and be a part of what we're doing here. So there's a lot of candidate correspondence. A lot of scheduling them for interviews. Just kind of guiding them in and making sure that's a graceful process, because that's their first contact with the company in many cases.

Because she was a public relations major, Knotts was well-suited to provide insight into the ways her college degree, and particularly her major, prepared her for people apprentice job.

> It's been very interesting to see that a lot of what you do use is just what you learn in college, it's not necessarily from the degree itself. But as far as, you know, like, learning the importance of storytelling, narrative in communication with any person, like, you know that conversation turns into a story. And so going in with the ability to grasp that has been important. And then again, that idea of having individual contact with somebody. And just from all of our social media classes, just from everything that was saying people want to be spoken to by a person.

Knotts said that her focus on rhetoric in conjunction with the classes in her major appealed to her learning style and helped teach her to think abstractly and communicate the results conversationally.

> [The rhetoric classes] were fantastic. . . . A lot of what we did was having to connect points that don't seem connected and then explain it in a way that someone who is not [an] insider can understand. And that principle, I think, is really important.

She also said that her detail- and deadline-oriented production classes in public relations were very helpful in preparing her for Jellyvision's work environment.

> [T]hat's how open enrollment worked, is that each client has a six-day cycle of a release. And so you get the information and then you put the information in, you check it, you send it to QA, and then you send it to the customer. And they each get several of those releases, so just having that absolutely internalized as being, "Okay. I'm doing this today and this is what's happening tomorrow and this is what's happening the day after that."

Knotts said that the skills—communication, diplomacy, organization—she learned and enjoyed in school are ones that are suitable for a variety of jobs both within and outside of Jellyvision. And while she recognized the specifics of what she learned while still in school, it wasn't until later that she was able to make the connection between them and their general application.

> What I'm doing an HR specifically is talking to candidates and scheduling interviews. But in a more general sense what I'm doing is I'm representing the company. I am giving an individual voice. I am providing clarity and support for someone outside of the company. I am keeping track with 18,000 processes all at once. And I'm keeping myself organized. And so, like, that skill set can apply to so many things. It could go into sales if someone else wanted to do that with that skill set. It could go into any kind of client-facing, like our implementation kind of role, it would work for that. . . . I don't think I identified them as such until I graduated. It just works differently, because what you're doing in school it's so much easier to say, "Oh, well I write papers and I research and I do these specific things." And then later on you can say, "Oh, I learned to do these general things while I was learning to do the specific things."

While skills are very important in Jellyvision's recruitment profile, personality traits also play a crucial role in identifying who would be an excellent cultural fit. Knotts said that

helpfulness, enthusiasm, and initiative are hallmarks of each Jellyvision employee and, once new

hires are onboard, their contribution to the very inclusive culture both reflects the behavior of

their peers and sets the expectation for people hired later. According to her, entitlement and

toxicity don't exist, because neither would be tolerated by anyone at any level.

> It's kind of like, because we have this culture of really cool people, I don't think anybody's going to come in here and be the one person who's an asshole. Like, you know even if it's someone who in a different setting might do that, which I don't really think is the case, but, if it was, I don't think that one person is going to come in and be like, "Oh yeah, that's fine for me to just be rude," because people aren't rude to each other here. And so having that expectation . . . breeds the results also.

Knotts attributes the company's inclusiveness to open communication, employees critical

thinking and self-reflective abilities, and an organizational emphasis on personal development.

> I think it's [inclusive] because as a group of people, we are critical thinkers. Because, you know, that's what it takes. Right? Like, you're raised in a way and you get to a point [where you say], "I believe this, but I want to look at why I believe it. I don't want it to just be because I was raised this way." And I think it's that attitude. I think every single person here has that attitude of saying, "Well this is what I believe, but let me just keep checking in to make sure I still believe this for the right reasons." I'm not entirely sure how we screen for that in applicants, because I think it's something that goes along with being humble and honest and kind. So I know that for example, in my interview here Sam Hebert asked me what was something I was working on myself.

And although Knotts was able to identify many of the reasons why Jellyvision's culture is

successful, she said that employees can't always explain how it's created and maintained. "It's a

lot of things that manifest and release specifically as 'How did we do that?'"

Despite the many ways Jellyvision is inclusive, including gender and sexual-orientation

representation, Knotts pointed out that its workforce is not ethnically diverse. However, she said

that it is something that the human resources team is trying to address. "It's been really

interesting to be in the HR meetings talking about how do we make sure that our job application

or our job descriptions are showing [a desire to increase ethnic representation]."

Knotts also pointed out that the company's growth has affected communication within teams, prompting a need to restructure what used to be more flexible reporting processes.

> I think things do get lost sometimes. And that kind of varies from team to team. You know, like my team is a little bit smaller. There are six of us, so it's way easier for us to communicate with one another versus a team that has, like, two direct reports to Amanda, and managers within the team. And so, maybe things get lost a little bit more. There are things where, say one person is the manager of a certain group in production, but there are also other managers working on like the hiring. So it's kind of hard. Like, it can be hard to know who has final say on this, and when it is ok to say when we can use these managers instead of [another] one. So that can be a little bit confusing.

She also said that the company recognizes that the physical space requirements to accommodate more employees could potentially affect their sense of belonging and dedication to maintaining Jellyvision's culture. In October 2015, the company moved the creative team and services division, formerly known as the Jellyvision Lab, a block away to a newly redesigned space referred to by its 811 address. Because the Lab is responsible for making one-off and recurring products other than ALEX, Knotts said that it made sense to move that part of the company to the new building.

And while the people at 811 frequently visit the original office to partake of the monthly company catered lunch, yoga sessions, and ping pong and foosball equipment, Knotts said that she could see how employees in the new space could feel isolated despite efforts to host activities there.

> I think there could be a feeling of isolation just in that like our events are here, and yoga is here, and catered lunch is here. And I know there is a conscientious effort to have catered lunch hosted over there on some weeks, and have yoga hosted over there on some weeks. I'm just not entirely sure the breakdown of that makes sense, to maybe to do it over there once a month, because there are so many fewer people in that building. But it seems like once a month is still going to make them feel like "Oh, we're the different ones. We're the outliers."

Knotts said that she sees no evidence that the move has affected communication, in part because of the implementation of Slack, the official description of which is a cloud-based set of

proprietary team collaboration tools and services. Slack allows communication to take place synchronously or asynchronously in any number of public or private channels that can be as inclusive or exclusive as a team needs. Knotts said that the program's social channel is available to everyone and has helped communication span the physical divide. "It doesn't matter where you are. One of my co-workers who's really into board games, he works at 811 now, I think. I'm not even sure where he works, because I interact with him [on Slack] and I never see him," she said, attesting to the program's ability to foster conversation.

Business Operations

Brynn Michelich, Senior Vice President of Business Operations. When Brynn Michelich began at Jellyvision in 2008, she described her job as "herding cats." Eight years and three job positions/title changes later, she still described her job that way.

> I started as a project manager. So when you read my bio, that's pretty much, I think, the last time I updated it. Since then, as we've grown, there's just been opportunities to grow with it. So, my current title technically SVP of Business Operations. But it's all in that same vein . . . , which is organizing our people and our process. Just helping people get whatever they need to do their job as efficiently as possible. So, [despite the changes], it's all part of that same thing of just herding cats.

What's missing in that description is that Jellyvision hires a specific type of cat. Employees are self-starters who are entrusted with a lot of responsibility and given autonomy to make the best product they can. Staff with those characteristics are generally independent. But that doesn't mean that they never need help. And that's where Michelich comes in.

A business major with an emphasis in human resources and marketing, Michelich originally intended to become a doctor before chemistry made her say, "never mind." It was an internship in human resources at a Detroit engine plant that made her realize she could still help others.

So it was very eye opening to be in an engine plant working on, ah you know, stuff with

the UAW, labor relations. [I] did a lot of stuff with family medical leave and absenteeism and that sort of thing. I loved it. And loved working with the people. But what it made me learn was that I love working with all sorts of different types of people and find it very invigorating to help people do their jobs.

After graduation, Michelich worked at a compact disc music distribution company in Michigan as part of the organization's management training program. Required to work a year in each department, she completed successful stints in human resources, marketing, product, and business development, despite a less-than-ideal workplace atmosphere.

I thought, "Oh good. This will give me a good view of how a business operates," you know, "what my options are." So the program was great; I did learn a lot. When it was completed I ended up in a role in HR doing recruiting, so I did all of the college recruiting and managed all of their interns. But the company was, well ,first of all, it was going under because they distributed CDs, so they didn't see the writing on the wall like the rest of us did. So it was a very toxic place to be because they were doing lots of layoffs, and all of that kind of stuff.

That's when Michelich began a job search and discovered Jellyvision.

So I saw this project management job on Craigslist for Jellyvision. I went, "I can probably do that. It's basically what I've been doing," because the role was kind of a combination of client service, internal management, you know, all of the things I had been doing that were ok.

At first, she only managed projects—10 to 15 at a time—and not people. Because the company only had approximately 30 employees, Michelich said that she worked with every single person. As the company grew, it hired a project coordinator to help her with the workload. One coordinator turned into two, the original coordinator turned into the director of production, and Michelich shifted up the organizational chart to her current position where approximately 100 people report to her. As she said, that is a very different workplace than in 2008 when "the whole company was smaller than one of my departments."

The one constant has been communication. According to Michelich, "the astonishing thing about Jellyvision is communication has always been as inclusive as possible for everyone

in the company. Always." And that inclusivity has had both positive and negative impacts.

Michelich elaborated:

> Sometimes that's to our detriment. We try to tell our employees everything. And sometimes that causes what I think people would call whiplash, because if we tell them one thing and then we change our minds, it's like people feel whiplashed. But we choose that over what so many companies do, which is "don't say anything until it's all figured out," because we really believe that we're all family and it's hard to do what we're doing. It's hard to grow the way that we're growing, but the best way to do that is to get the trust of everybody to know that we'll be honest and that we're not hiding anything from them.

She said that occasionally the inclusivity and transparency is frustrating for all involved, and it is a topic that she and others have discussed. In the end, the process remains the same because Michelich and her management peers believe that the value it adds to the organization's culture is too great.

> So, yeah sometimes it's frustrating and sometimes we get—you know, we just did a big survey with managers and sometimes it's like you get feedback that's like, "Sometimes it seems like we're doing one thing and we're doing another thing." And it's like "Yeah, because we're exposing the inner workings of how we're figuring this out," and sometimes that is problematic. We've talked about a lot, like, "Should we stop communicating things as we find them out then communicate what we know for sure?" And then we're like "No we shouldn't. We should be honest with people so that they see what we're going through." So that hasn't changed at all.

Michelich said that Jellyvision's inclusive and transparent approach to communication not only creates trust among employees, but also allows people to contribute in ways that cannot be predicted.

> Good ideas come from anywhere. So if we're trying to think through something or we're thinking about doing this new product, or this is probably the next thing we're going to focus on, or something like that, then you get people who come out of the woodwork and go "I actuallyhave experience with that." Or, "My brother did a Ph.D. thing on that." And we're like, "Oh, amazing!" But if we hadn't told people, we wouldn't have gotten that expertise.

And while the philosophy of transparent communication hasn't changed, Jellyvision's growth has meant that everyone must try harder to make sure that the meaning of messages is

understood consistently. Michelich said that logistics and expense have necessitated a more

interpersonal approach than one might find at a large corporation. Informative and impersonal

company-wide email and expensive, hard to organize, company-wide meetings are eschewed in

favor of personal, collaborative meaning-making approaches.

> So that's what's changed, is making sure that everyone understands what we're trying to say and why. That, I think, just comes down to making sure, as we're explaining it to people, like, you know, if there's something I'm explaining to Sam, "This is what we're doing, do you know *why* we're doing it?" So that when she turns around and tells her department and she gets questions, she can explain it.

Michelich said that Jellyvision certainly doesn't take the path of least resistance in its

communication practices, and that she understands why other companies rely on traditional

company meetings or formal, informational methods like all-staff email missives.

> It is so hard to be transparent, and honest, and kind, and collaborative, particularly with the growth that we've had. . . . It's risky. It's exhausting. It's hard. But to us it's important, because it's the right way to do it. But it's not without challenge.

Michelich acknowledged that although the company doesn't offer communication

training, it probably should. But that training itself offers some challenges.

> How're you going to train somebody to be compassionate and thoughtful, and, to hear people? That's not, to me, something you can make a PowerPoint presentation about. So, I'm on the fence about it. I think that . . . it is something very important for us, and we are sort of beefing up management training in general. I think it's very important to us to make sure that we have transparency, but also that we arm people with the confidence and the training and whatever that they need to deal with people when they have really tough questions and when they have, you know, they don't like some of the things we're being so transparent about. Like what do we do then? How, how do you have a one-on-one conversation with somebody who's upset by some news they've just learned? And that's the hard stuff that I think having more training would be helpful, because . . . . I don't know if that's role playing, or scenario-based, or whatever, but sometimes it is hard to try to be collaborative with somebody when it's not always so positive.

Echoing Gottlieb's assessment that employees struggle with the company's honest-but-

kind feedback policy, Michelich said that everyone must have the ability and desire to work

through difficult conversations. She said that Jellyvision's success boils down to recruiting

people who have the communication and relational skills to thrive in the organization's fast-

paced, less structured environment.

> It is absolutely a recruiting thing. . . . To us it's far more important that you have the DNA to be here than you have the resume to be here. We have people that come from all sorts of backgrounds doing all sorts of jobs, because we can train you on a software program or that kind of thing. But what we can't train you on is being an honest and kind human that really wants to be part of the team, and is out for the team and not out for themselves, and wants to be in this mildly controlled chaos that we have. So if we can find those folks, that's really when we're like, you know, we immediately feel better.

Michelich acknowledged that finding people who have the Jellyvision DNA fit isn't easy

and that the company is willing to hire "diamonds in the rough," because it's seeking a complex

combination of human, technical, and creative skills. She said that she's both mystified and

surprised that the director of human resources finds the people she does.

> I don't understand how Mary Beth does her job. I don't understand how we have the people here that we have. I really don't. But that's what it is. It's like you can find, you know, good people here that have extensive master's degrees that support the job that they have. We have people here who were bartenders before they got here, you know? It just . . . it can be anybody.

Part of Michelich's wonderment is influenced by her own early experiences in business:

> It was cutthroat. And I went to school with other people that became venture capitalists and went into the finance sector in New York City and, I mean, that is dog-eat-dog. . . . [E]ven the way they graded us was on a bell curve, so, by logic of bell curve, most of us failed. And so, in order to be on the top side of that curve, you had to do whatever you had to do for yourself. And I think, honestly, a lot of it is my upbringing, because, you know, the thing that bothered me about my school was that mentality. It was the dog-eat-dog mentality. I don't want to work somewhere where I have to, like, claw up the backs of other people to get somewhere where I can do great work and that can be recognized. But logically, I should've come out of that and been a really aggressive non-team player. . . . I think it's shocking that you can find people that—everyone here, honest to God, wants Jellyvision to be the best that it can be. And they want to be a great part of that, but they're not like "I want my career to grow blah, blah, blah, blah at the expense of anything else," they care about themselves, but they care about for the company. That's weird. That's not something you find the way the system goes.

Another aspect of Jellyvision that bucks the norm of corporate structure is the prevalence

of women who are in traditional leadership positions. While Michelich acknowledged that the

company's environment is transformational, she was hesitant to recognize it as a result of female leadership, crediting Gottlieb with creating a company culture that fosters civility, inclusivity, collaboration, and, ultimately, success.

> [Harry's] the one that defined this entire culture, and, bless his heart, the man feels this way because it's just the way he feels as a human. And he built the company around the way he feels as a human. And most owners don't run their company that way. So I don't ever want him to change because that's perfect, but, you know, and he and I joke about it all the time. I'm like, "You need to go work somewhere else and see what it's like out there," because he fundamentally doesn't understand why you wouldn't treat your employees with the respect and the kindness and the trust. And it's wonderful! But it's so weird. It's so weird. Um, but so I don't necessarily think that it's particularly feministic. I think it's just humanistic. It's just like how do you want to be treated, in your social interactions how do you want to be treated. When you wake up in the morning, how do you want to be in your actions? How do you want to be treated? And bring that to work. And that's it. It doesn't have to be one style or another style.

Michelich said that the approximately 50/50 female-to-male leadership split is completely unintentional and that Jellyvision wants "to hire the best people for every job, whatever that means. Whoever they are, great! We want them in the job."

Sam Hebert, Director of Production. Sam Hebert is one of Brynn Michelich's direct reports. As director of production, she is in charge of the production team for ALEX, which includes production managers, coordinators, and specialists who "do whatever it takes to get the guts of the ALEX conversation correct for our many awesome customers." The team's efforts include a combination of writing and editing, fixing program glitches that are discovered by Jellyvision's quality assurance team or customers, managing and producing customizations needed by clients, and building core content via a proprietary software that lets the team build the vast majority of features for each program without complete reliance on the company's software engineers.

A psychology major who completed English and rhetoric coursework in college, Hebert came to Jellyvision from a communication background, serving primarily as an editor,

production editor, and writer for material ranging from education to health care to real estate. In 2012 she was hired as a flow chart manager to oversee the production flow and customization of software content. Her arrival at the company coincided with Jellyvision's most recent growth spurt, which, because of internal restructuring to accommodate business growth and the development of ALEX, put her in a position to become the company's first production director for the benefits software approximately a year-and-a-half after she started work.

> When I took leadership of the team, I had four production specialists and one production coordinator. Now we have 13 apprentices . . . [and] 26 fulltimers. . . . It went from three of us in 2012, to six of us in 2013, [to] 20 in 2014 [to] 40 in 2015. It's just insane growth.

Hebert's rapid promotion into a newly created position is representative of Jellyvision's flexible and appreciative culture that rewards hard work and initiative through support and recognition. It is a culture that also encourages collaboration and equality among employees. Hebert, who "hate[s] talking about hierarchy because it just feels so icky," elaborated on the company's ethos:

> [W]e need structure, we need to make sure everybody is feeling supported, but I'm not keen on, like, "If you are a production specialist for X number of years, you then become the production [manager]." It just doesn't make sense. And we're growing so fast all the time that you never know what we're going to be like in a couple of years and how many production manager slots there might be. But what we don't want to do is to create a culture where people say, "In a year there's going to be two of these slots open, so I'm going to go compete for that with my other seven peers." . . . I was like thanking [Brynn] for my job, because I love it, [so] I said, "Thank you and Amanda for putting me in this role," and she's like, "You put yourself in this role. You did it before it was your job. We just put you in the right place on the org chart."

The flexibility of support and company structure requires employees who can cope with change and ambiguity. According to Hebert, the rapid increase of employees to serve more customers, and to create and maintain an intricate product like ALEX, requires teams of individuals who can cross boundaries, synthesize information, and communicate with a variety

of people. She spoke about six-day window in which the team gets ALEX customized and running for each client:

> It's pretty intricate to get ALEX up and running. There's a lot of different files to grab, and places to put them, and version control type aspects, and grabbing, you know, this piece of information from your account manager and this from your expert, and making sure that you read this email from last week about what to do if your customer has this kind of benefit. So there's a lot of information management and there's a lot of steps to actually get that information compiled into a version in front of the customer. And we do it all in a really short timeline.

Because the process is intense, Hebert said that structure is in place to help employees succeed in streamlining each build. But as the product gets closer to implementation, something unexpected is likely to pop up. So she says that team members need to be able to follow the process, but flexible enough to cope with the inevitable setback that must be quickly fixed. In her view, the company's lack of bureaucracy and its culture of transparent and inclusive communication is key to keeping projects on track.

> From the minute you come in, your opinions are treated just as strongly as everybody else's. We respect everybody. And there's no bureaucracy for bureaucracy's sake. It's just like, "Hey. Got an idea? Say it. Out loud with your face." There's no channels. There's no "fill out this form." It's just like, "Talk to each other and make stuff happen. Try it out."

In Hebert's view, it's an approach that many in corporate American might not recognize. "It sounds so sad that that [culture] is so novel, but it's really so novel," she said, attributing the open communication to a relatively flat leadership structure despite company growth and the introduction of more direct reports.

That is not to say that the growth of the company and the number of management-level positions doesn't affect communication. New employees require different types of communication than those who have been at the company longer. Some jobs require more information from multiple parties than others. And the company's commitment to transparent

communication can sometimes cause confusion. Hebert elaborated on the "knowledge work" and

critical thinking involved in communicating with her team:

> For example, it's 12 hours before we need to take someone live and find that they've got a piece of information that they didn't give us, so we want to do whatever we can to get them live. We want to not make any mistakes. We want to keep them happy. We want to not murder our employees by having crazy long hours. . . .So we try to strike a balance between setting out very broad, like, "you can or can't do this," "here are the grey areas," and trying to get folks to come up with their own solutions when we do have a serious situation. "What do you think you should do?" is something we say all the time. But, like, last week we actually had a little bit of a communication failure, because we told people about a potential problem a little bit too early, and then so people were like, "Is that thing happening? Is that thing happening?" And we were kind of like, "Calm down. Sorry. Sorry that we freaked you out. It's not happening. It's fine. Calm down, it's not happening." And then a couple of days after that, a specific customer did have a problem, but the person on that account from my team didn't interpret it as a problem, because she said, "Oh, you kept saying to calm down and that we were worrying too much about stuff, so I didn't worry about this thing." "Aaahhh! But this is a thing you should worry about!" So there's a lot of knowledge work and critical thinking that goes into it. And our team is so, so, so smart, but there are so many possible combinations of customer need, employee need, specific thing that needs to happen, which is just a very complicated set of factors.

Hebert also noted that, while many people enjoy understanding the reasons behind what

they are asked to do, others might be less comfortable with the amount of communication

transparency and the adaptability it requires to do the work they do. She also stated that

sometimes she just needs team members to do what's asked first, then question the process later.

"So I just want to be like, 'I promise we can talk about this at some point, but just go [and do

what needs to be done].' But that happens very rarely, so that's good."

Despite the time it takes to be transparent, and the confusion transparency sometimes can

create, Hebert is willing to find a balance because she believes that it is necessary for the job.

> It does really relate back to the transparency for me, because that's where my soul is. I want to tell people as soon as I know something. But I do hold back a little bit more [now] than I would've when my team was smaller, because if I phrase something the wrong way, or give partial information, because I want to give information early, the confusion that happens when you're [a team] of 40 people instead of 4, it's just so different.

While she said that she would never give false information to her team, she occasionally delays telling the entire team in order to prepare for the array of questions they might ask.

> It's all about anticipating questions, especially when you move as fast as we do during implementation season. So I'm always trying to think "Ok so what are the top questions that people are going to have about this?" [I] try to have that as part of the initial information. And obviously we always invite questions, too, because almost everything we do is new to some degree, right? There aren't people in the world who have implemented this software before, so everybody who comes in is new to the whole process. . . .So I try to balance getting information out at the time it's needed, but also getting [out] the clearest, most comforting and straightforward version of that information.

Nicki Halenza, Production Specialist. Production specialist Nicki Halenza showed up to our interview in a T-shirt with "No Comment" displayed prominently on the front. Luckily for me, Halenza had plenty to say about Jellyvision's communication and leadership culture.

Jellyvision is Halenza's first full-time job experience after graduating from the University of Illinois in 2015. She began as a customer production apprentice in June of that year, and spent six months in a full-time, paid position collaborating with production specialists, implementation experts, quality assurance staff, project managers, the engineering team, and fellow apprentices to customize, debug, and improve customers' experiences with the company's benefits software. She was hired as a production specialist at the end of that experience to continue "all that fun internal tech-y stuff."

She said that the amount of responsibility she was given fresh out of college both surprised her and made her feel valued.

> My apprenticeship was my first thing I did out of college and I really thought I was already in a full-time job. They tell you from the get-go that "We're not going to give you just time-waster work. We're not going to have you just file things [or] go get coffee for boss.". . .I felt treated as a full-timer in the sense that I had work that I was responsible for. I was the main [contact person] for each customer. They're assigned to a production person, so . . . I was their main point of contact for production as any fulltime production specialist would be for their own customers.

Because she transitioned from production apprentice to specialist, Halenza was able to

provide insight into Jellyvision's relatively flat leadership structure. She said that, at Jellyvision,

everyone is seen as a potential leader whether or not they hold a managerial position.

> So we had a meeting with a production team, with Amanda and also Brynn, and they told us basically [that] the difference between management and leadership is that there's not always a management role, [but] . . . there are plenty of opportunities for leadership, or [for people] to step up into leadership-type positions varying from project to project.

Halenza, who described herself as "someone who has leadership qualities," said that the

company view of leadership jibes with her own in that,

> managers are, to me, the ones who are best at the big picture kind of view, and know what all needs to get done, and know how to delegate, how to do it, and set up those timelines. And the leaders, to me, are the ones who actually kind of do it or help implement that actual process.

In that light, Jellyvision's manager-leaders lead by example. Halenza said that the

production meeting delineating the difference between management and leadership was held

because there was a need to develop roles within Production where employees are defined as

either a manager or a content production specialist.

According to Halenza, Jellyvision is very conscious of areas within the company that

need diversity, whether it is in available jobs or the people hired to do them, and that proactive

steps are being taken to hire a more racially diverse workforce.

> In terms of other diversity, especially racial diversity, I know that's something we struggle with here now and we've been talking about it and working on it. . . . In recruiting, we're all conscious of it, and I've been helping with the production hiring, so we're conscious of it, too. So I know that is something that we as a company need to improve is just more racial and ethnic diversity.

One of the areas Jellyvision excels in is gender diversity at the management and

traditional leadership levels. Halenza, whose chain of command includes a female director of

production, senior vice president of operations, and CEO, has enjoyed a culture where women

leaders are the norm. And although she has had positive experiences with male leadership in the past, she's found that she relates better to female managers.

> All of my bosses have been female thus far, which has been a really cool experience. So, in terms of gender diversity, that been really awesome. I think what it adds, there's just sort of a comfort factor for me being a female, and . . . there is that sense of relatability when, you know, you're talking one woman to another woman. . . . I feel more comfortable approaching a manager just because I feel like there's this relatability factor that is not always there with a male leader, which is not to say that male leadership I've had in the past hasn't been totally great and, you know, a positive relationship. I just like, for me personally, I have a better comfort level reporting to a female.

Halenza credits Jellyvision's approach to communication overall as the reason why she and others find the company such a good place to work. While she said that the organization's use of humor is what draws many to the company, it's how she's been treated within that makes her envision herself at Jellyvision five or 10 years in the future.

> I've just been treated so well. My manager has always asked me for input, and how I feel, and what I think we should do. And I feel listened to. So I think that's another great thing that makes this place very attractive to the people that are here, and makes a lot of us want to stay.

Melanie Tercha, Production Specialist. When is a manager not a manager of people? It's when you're Melanie Tercha and what you manage is the flow of the components of interactive employee benefits software.

> So [Flow Chart Manager] was the name of my position when I first started. It's now called a Production Specialist, but it's still that I'm working on a flow chart for a good part of the day. We make the Alex product that describes employee benefits. And the flow chart is what makes the voice come when it does and the art come when it does and what makes the conversation interactive so that when you hit a button saying that you have three kids the response is different than if you said you had no kids or something like that.

Tercha, who described herself as someone who prefers not to be a manager, said that sees leadership as something that exists separate from titles and hierarchies. She sees it manifest in smaller, everyday actions like sharing knowledge with colleagues.

So there's leadership that comes with [working the same job for three years], but, it's more in the form of just having worked with the tool longer, being able to offer help to somebody who's new, or in the way that you do the job.

Leading by example is an expectation at Jellyvision. Tercha said that she sees the same helpfulness as well as an ability to inspire in her manager Sam Hebert.

She's somebody who's like, "This is what I see as your strength and here's where I think you should start moving," so it is more . . . like a guide, somebody who lights the fire under you. That's how I think about my manager. I don't think about my manager as somebody who I'm afraid [of], you know, or who I feel is looking to put constraints on me. I see her as somebody who is looking to remove constraints from me, or push me to do the thing I might be a little nervous about doing.

Tercha's description of her weekly one-on-one meetings with Hebert recognize that the person and the job are inseparable and that the conversations encourage personal development and growth.

[The meeting] always seems like it starts in the place of like "Where are you as a person at? How are you doing this week? How are you feeling about the job? How are you feeling overall?" . . . So I feel like it starts from the fact that my manager knows me very well as a person, and then knows me very well as an employee, so that she's able to say, "Hey I want you to try something and I know that you might be hesitant to try this, because I know that in the past you felt this about some other thing, but [it's] something that I think you would really do well in." Or, "There's this new project coming and I think it would be a good fit for you." So it comes from a place of the manager first knowing you really well, so that they're able to sort of, like, help steer you in a direction where you can do your best.

Her first experience with a supportive manager occurred at a game company that had a very different demographic than Jellyvision. Tercha said that she was fortunate that her manager, a male in a mostly male populated workplace, was "not only somebody who was managing me, but [also] . . . a mentor and somebody who was looking out for me and could realize my potential . . . ." That experience made her hesitant to describe transformational management as a predominately female approach. Instead, she attributed the mindset of her managers in part to

personal characteristics and, in the case of Jellyvision, having a large pool of diverse people within a supportive culture to choose from.

> I don't think that Sam or Brynn or Amanda are managers because they're female . . . There are people who are really cut out to be managers. . . . I do think there's a benefit to having a breath of people in the company in the first place so that when people are rising into management positions there was a larger pool in the first place for those people that come out of. But I wouldn't want to say anything that would imply that any of those people are great managers because they're female, or that they earned those positions in part because of gender.

Tercha said that, in her experience, it is the culture that sets the expectations for how people are treated in the workplace, and that those expectations to some extent transcend what might be attributed to gender differences.

> [At Jellyvision,] everyone could have a good idea. I mean, the first week you have a meeting where you're told you work for this company and you owe it to the company to be a good and kind and decent person, to be honest with the people around you, to disagree if you don't like the way something looks or you think that it might not be the best that we can do. So I feel like if I had a frustration in a previous job that maybe felt like it could have been about gender, it was like, you know, when you're the youngest person and the person with the least experience and a female in a room where you're the only female and you say something and it's dismissed. That wouldn't happen here, because I'm not ever going to be the only woman in a room. But it also would just never happen here because it would just never happen here.

She said that at her previous job the male engineers would use jargon in conversations that made her feel as if they weren't interesting in wanting others to understand or join in. At Jellyvision, however, Tercha said that the expectation is that "somebody who's an engineer or developer is expected to talk to you conversationally about what they're doing."

Expectations about how employees are treated and should treat others are not delivered in a one-time message at Jellyvision. Exposure to company culture starts before people are hired, is re-emphasized during onboarding, and continues in daily interactions with each other. The themes include individuality, balance, honesty, helpfulness, and belonging.

Right from the interview process when I first started coming here, I felt like I was an

individual and I felt like the things that were uniquely my own, or the things that uniquely make me me, is what Jellyvision wanted and expected out of me. In that same meeting, Harry said something about the amount of time that you spend at work, and how much of your life it is, and that we all have this commitment to not making that a bad experience. You want to do something that you believe in and feel good about. It just, I know that when I talk about Jellyvision it sometimes sounds cult-y. But it's just, it's like it's not just like they want you to subscribe to these beliefs. It's like they have taken the time to see you, to see you to understand you. First, I got the job offer and then it came with real mail in the mailbox. Like a handwritten note, a t-shirt and Jellyvision cup, and, like, "We're so excited to see you." And the first day, you know, people were just really enthusiastic and greeting you in the kitchen, like "Do you know how to make coffee yet?" It's like a, it's like being taken into a family sort of.

Tercha's way of explaining Jellyvision's successful culture was to describe the quintessential Jellyvision type of person that recruiting tries so hard to identify:

I think the things that the culture expects you to abide by are the simple things that a person like me wanted in a job anyway. You know, like kindness and empathy, and being open to other people? So, I don't feel, it's not like I have to subscribe to something when I got here. It's like I fit here because I already subscribe to those things.

While character traits and expectations comprised most of what Tercha identified as positive cultural experiences at Jellyvision, she also discussed the importance of the company's belief in transparent internal communication, usually delivered in a face-to-face company-wide meeting, in creating a workplace receptive to change.

I think the other thing that I would say about Jellyvision and why it's easier to feel loyal to them is the feeling of transparency that I have. Like, if a decision is going to be made, we will get such early warning about it, even just like "We're thinking about doing this thing," in a large group meeting with everybody there. I read it as wanting everybody to be in the same place together with information, and so, for me, I only see that as positive. I would rather have, like, "We think we might do this thing and then a month later we decided not to do that thing and this is why," than have something sneak up on you. And I think that's the intent. When those meetings are called together to let everybody know something, it's to ward off the possibility that anybody would ever have the rug pulled out from under them.

She said that such communication practices make the logistics involved in rapid company growth easier to understand and plan for.

Becki Schneider, Production Apprentice. Becki Schneider's favorite phrase could very well be "Third time's a charm," particularly when it involves trying to get a job at Jellyvision. She applied for a production specialist position when she moved to Chicago in 2013, followed by an application for an opening as an implementation expert. It wasn't until 2015 that Schneider applied for, and was hired as, a production apprentice that she achieved her goal.

Schneider, who has a background in post-production, broadcast and radio, and office management for a start-up, said that she found Jellyvision through a Google search for "good place to work in Chicago." She thought the company was enticing because of its high Crain's List rankings for organizational culture and long-term potential for job stability, things that she wasn't entirely satisfied with in past jobs that tried to separate the work from the individual completing it.

> I enjoy deadline-driven, challenging work, and that is definitely a big part of what happens in my department. But in previous experiences where I've been in that environment, where that was kind of like the highest priority or focus, it definitely felt like the work came first and we [were] agents for that. [At Jellyvision] I think there's more of an acknowledgment of, like, "You are the person who's actually doing what we need you to do."

That concern about employees as individuals with rich and varied lives that they bring to work manifests in multiple ways at Jellyvision, including during meetings with management, while providing feedback on team members, and in day-to-day interactions with leadership that is at least 50 percent female. Schneider stated that she had previously worked in heavily male-dominated workplaces, and commented that she often felt as if emotions were "supposed to be kept private and partitioned off from, and separate from, your work." She also indicated that she felt isolated in those jobs because of her gender identity.

> Even though I've had tons of positive experiences in [previous] jobs, I've never had any sort of, like, management or boss ask me how I feel until I've come here. Another great thing [is] where everybody gives direct personal feedback about everyone they work

with. . . . In several other environments there would be times when I would be the only woman in the room. . . . That definitely colored and motivated a lot of the way in which I was treated, and what was expected from me, and how I was expected to act or not act. But I've never felt that way here. I've never had a female manager before, so I was just like, "I can talk to you and you can talk to me!"

Schneider said that the overarching benefit to working at Jellyvision is how she is acknowledged as a person as opposed to an employee solely serving organizational interests. The former culture has allowed her to be vulnerable and open herself up to new experiences at work, while the latter created a cautious and self-protective mindset. She made connections between strong leadership at all levels of the company and the collaborative culture it can create. And she described how disconnected philosophies at the management and leadership levels can create an environment of fear and unhappiness.

> I have been in environments where I felt like I had very strong management, but very weak leadership. I keep referencing my post-production experience, because that's what I have the most experience with, and that was, like, a very special and complex time for me. In [a previous job] we brought on a new post-production manager to this post-production ad team, who was a woman who was just amazing at getting things completed and organizationally keeping track of an unbelievable amount of things, invoicing, going above and beyond, and just making sure that the puzzle was complete. But the people who were in charge of setting the agenda were understandably in many ways completely absent. And when they were present, they were very antagonistic. It was definitely, even though we were all working together, in many ways like an us vs. them kind of thing.

Schneider said that, because the work itself was liked by all of the production staff, she and the rest of the team should've been happy to work with each other. However, the capricious nature of the company's leadership, as well as the lack of clearly defined expectations, made employees fearful when unexpected and personally uncontrollable events occurred. Furthermore, Schneider said that the uncertainty combined with a highly transactional environment "definitely create[d] a partition between everybody who should [have been] working together towards the same thing."

Danny Coleman, Business Support Manager. Danny Coleman is the person who helps Jellyvision communicate internally. As business support manager, Coleman administers three separate communication systems that keep the people at Jellyvision in touch with the products they produce, provide a way for them to document process and policies, and allows them to exchange knowledge without being overwhelmed by information and technology.

Not bad for someone with a made-up title.

> I made it up, honestly. They asked me what I wanted to be called and I said, "Business Support Manager." So I administer a lot of the tools we use to get work done internally, and I also do a lot of, I guess consultation would be the best word for new work flows, or how to improve existing work flows. . . . My goal is to help our employees work better and happier, more efficient in any way they can.

Coleman gave an overview of the three programs—JIRA, Confluence, and Slack—he administers, and explained how they help Jellyvision's internal communication. In short, JIRA, is a ticketing system that allows the organization to track anything that needs to be implemented and followed up on.

> So we use it in a lot of different ways. The most traditional way that a lot of companies use it is, like, bug reporting, meaning, like, you know, if something's broken in our product, we create a ticket for it and then we use that ticket to track the process of fixing it and deploying that change. We use it for not only that, but we also use it to track implementing the, our product to our customers. We use it to track our invoicing. We use it internally for our IT help desk, as well as all office management things like "We're out of paper towels in the kitchen. Can we get some more? Something's broken upstairs."

The second tool Coleman manages is Confluence, which is an internal wiki system that Jellyvision employees use to create documentation and internal team pages. He said that the program allows everyone to make edits as needed and is very useful because it's "very indexable, very searchable."

The third tool is Slack, an internal communication software that allows any number of people to communicate on public and private channels. According to Coleman, Slack resolves a

number of communication issues, including scalability, security, and access, that couldn't be

handled by the previous system used by the organization. The company tested a number of other

programs that were either too confusing, lacked a particular feature, or wasn't aesthetically

pleasing enough to be looked at multiple times a day for many hours a week. And, as Coleman

said, "Slack very much is. It is both functional and delightful, which matters."

Slack also is more in keeping with the Jellyvision ethos of accessible communication.

Coleman said that he thinks the software was designed for transparency because of its public

channels. He said that he's vigorously encouraged everyone to make as many channels as

reasonable public. "The idea being anything that's a public channel is available via the public

channel list that every employee can see. And you don't know what someone wants to know

necessarily." He gave an example of how almost 300 people might need to be involved in

bringing an idea to fruition:

> [I]f we're building a new product for Jellyvision, it's going to start as an idea that one person has. Maybe it's Amanda. Or maybe it's Bob Armour in Marketing. Or maybe it, it could be anyone. We have an idea for a product. Then it expands out. We do research. Is the product viable? Then we expand out a little more. Ok, can we, let's reach out to customers and figure out what will they pay for this product? Will they pay for this product? The sphere continues to expand as we develop the product. It starts small and it gets much bigger. And at the end, jumping all the way to the finish line, most of the company is now involved in one way with this product, whether it means building it, giving it to our customers, selling it, marketing it. . . . So the idea of having that knowledge freely available, having the transparency of knowing who is working on any given thing, and being able to get answers on it is new and, in my opinion, it's very valuable.

Marketing

Bob Armour, Chief Marketing Officer. As Jellyvision's Chief Marketing Officer, Bob

Armour is well-suited to talk about leadership. From his perspective, leadership is a group effort

and his role is to empower and guide his marketing team. "My view on leadership is more

around like the group and who you surround yourself with, and enabling them to kind of like do the things that we've set out to do."

And what marketing does is to make sure that Jellyvision's sales team has an ample supply of viable leads. Amour said that everything his team does should be dedicated to helping sales reach its goals. However, he said that that sole purpose is often challenged by a busy workplace culture that places great value on helpfulness.

> Everybody gets pulled in 87 different directions depending on whatever it is, like projects that come in, or ideas that people have, and Jellyvision's culture is very helpful, willing to help, willing to step out [your specific role] and do stuff. And that's a massive strength for the company, because it's very easy to know what you're supposed to do. You're supposed to be helpful to clients. You're supposed to be helpful to your co-workers. You're supposed to be helpful to prospects that are looking to join the company. All that stuff. So that's super easy. When that openness to be helpful in all places starts to impact the ability for an individual to achieve the business goals, there are times when I have to just say, "Look. You only have so much time to do your thing. And if you can do your thing and do 87 other things, great. I have no issue. But . . . your first job is to be helpful to sales. And if you're not that, then you have to figure out how to gracefully say no to the other things that are going to be pulling your time, whether it's like social activities at the company, or volunteer activities, or whatever.

Armour said that he relies on experience to help the team learn how to balance serving sales efficiently with exploring ideas that might benefit the company in other ways.

> That's one good thing about being older, is that you can see the patterns. And when you have a team of really good people that have really good talent and all they're really missing is maybe the easiest structure to get stuff done with and being able to have the pattern recognition that, again, just comes with time.

According to Armour, collaboration, capitalizing on individuals' strengths, an open attitude, and transparency in assessment of effort is key to creating a successful team.

> To me it really comes down to do you have people that can do the job really well, and do you have people that are very willing to open themselves up . . . to mentoring and coaching and input, and open themselves up to the broader team about how to work together and how to come together to make it all happen. So it's like confidence, openness, and willingness to be a team player. If we're able to do that, then my job [as a leader] is just helping them become as good as they can possibly be.

In Armour's view, leadership should always foster an environment that emphasizes trust instead of trying to control employees' behavior, particularly in a technologically driven world where "everybody is like one click away from like doing bad things." He said that the right combination of recruiting people with strong communication and relational skills, clearly establishing expectations, and ultimately trusting that people with do the right thing is always "better than trying to control it with all sorts of rules, because the rules get outdated as soon as they're published."

Jenny Fukumoto, Digital Marketing Manager. As a self-described Mexicanese—her mother is Mexican and her father is Japanese—marketer, Jenny Fukumoto celebrates her heritage and love of marketing. In our interview, she celebrated her position as Jellyvision's digital marketing manager at the beginning of our interview.

> I've worked for four different companies and this is the one that is sticking because of so many reasons that we can go into, but just the organization, the culture, the autonomy you get on day one. You know, Jellyvision trusts you, gives you the keys and then gets out of your way so that you can do what you do best, which is your job. And you know you want to be part of the magic that is here at Jellyvision, so I feel really empowered.

And while the company is the largest she's worked for, her seven-member team is one of the smallest in the organization. "We're just the small little marketing engine that could." Fukumoto, who has written the company's press releases for distribution on its website, attributed that can-do attitude to the support that Jellyvision gives employees before they've walked through the door. She described the comprehensive on-boarding process as rich in internal communication and self-reflection.

> So, I got an email . . . the week before I started with a "Here's your week one itinerary. You're going to obviously talk to your manager, talk to your team. You're going to have those one-on-one conversations, and then at the end of day one you're going to talk to [the chief marketing officer] and just regroup, just talk about the day, how it went, any questions you have, fears, concerns, etc." And then, after week one, I had a check in with [the CMO] and . . . I said, "This is the most prepared I've ever felt coming into a role in

my first week. I feel like I know what's expected of me. I know what my contributions can be. I know what opportunities there are. And I know who to go to when I need help, because I will need help in the first, however many weeks or months it takes for me to kind of get my bearings. And so I complimented him and Jellyvision then, because I knew that I have a great, I have a way better sense of what is expected of me on day three than I did, you know, in three months at former jobs.

Fukumoto said that the way in which Jellyvision empowers its employees, in part due to its flat leadership structure, allows "anyone to step up and be a leader." It's an environment that was new to her.

At smaller companies I've worked at, it's been very hierarchical. You know, these people are VPs. These people have offices. You do not have an office, you have a cube, so you're just kind of lower on the totem pole. And here, I mean our chief marketing officer elected not to get an office, because he wanted to have a desk with us. He wanted to see what we saw. Hear what we were hearing. And he just didn't want to define our relationship like that.

Fukumoto said that CMO Bob Armour "is a huge inspiration" not only because of his personality, but also because of his development of the marketing team. She said that he was hired as part of the CEO's development of an executive-level, or senior leadership, team to guide the company on a day-to-day basis so that she could focus on business strategy.

So he was part of that effort, and he came in and just, like, fit right in. He created a plan. . . . Prior to Bob, the marketing team consisted of three people and they were kind of, firefighters is what I like to call them. You know, we've all been in that situation where you're just a firefighter. Every day there's level-three alarm, you can't really focus on strategy. You can't really focus on improving your core work, because you're just putting out fires all day. So he came in, created a plan, and hired on additional team members internally. You know, folks who kind of raised their hand and said, "Hey, I want to be part of this marketing team you're developing."

Jellyvision's willingness to recruit marketing team members who may not have a background or experience in the field speaks to the company's belief knowledge and expertise manifests and can be harnessed in a variety of ways. To that end, employees are encouraged to develop all aspects of their lives. Fukumoto said that concept is not the norm in her experience.

There are some leaders at some organizations who really aren't interested in you as a person furthering your own development. They just want you to fit into their mold. . . . But it's interesting to kind of put that next to the mentoring, fostering environment here that's like, "Hey, if you want to take acting classes, go for it. If you need to leave work early because you're, you've got this thing you do on the side that you love and is your passion, go for it." I'm never going to hear a "no." I'm never going to be discouraged from wanting to further myself, because it's not in the best interest of the organization.

In Fukumoto's view, Jellyvision welcomes diversity in many forms, including gender, race, expertise, and outside interests. As someone who identifies as a minority female who "grew up in a very rich, white suburban neighborhood," she said that she has never felt like an outsider at the company.

It's hard for some folks, you know, with diverse backgrounds to come into a company and identify immediately with the group, but I've never felt that way, especially here. This is such a, this is the most welcoming organization of all backgrounds, you know? It doesn't matter what color your skin is, what your gender is, what you, what your hobbies are, because I feel that plays a part of your identity, too. And I think that what I love about Jellyvision is that everyone here can talk about their outside hobbies and their relationships and, like, there's nothing that you wouldn't talk about at work just because you're at work, if that makes sense. I have a lot of friends who work for very buttoned up corporations that can't talk about cool beer they drank on Saturday because then that would stigmatize them as being, you know, someone who likes to drink. Here, we have an entire Slack channel devoted to cool beers.

Again, her experience at Jellyvision has not been the norm for Fukumoto.

The difference for me is I feel like . . . having gone through that in my childhood and knowing what it's like to be the outsider, I never would want somebody to feel like that professionally or outside of this company. And I don't feel like anyone here would ever make anybody feel like that. Although I can't say the same for past organizations I've worked for, which is scary. It's the scary truth that, you know, people are discriminated against for various reasons.

Unlike some people at Jellyvision, Fukumoto's previous work experiences prepared her for the marketing job she was hired for. However, her path as an undergraduate at Northwestern University was in broadcast journalism. She said she started her path to "the dark side of marketing and PR" by taking one public relations class and a lot of marketing classes. In her

view, the skills that transferred over included storytelling, good writing, the importance of

accuracy and detail, teamwork, and a strong work ethic.

> Storytelling is the heart of journalism and it's also the heart of marketing. You've got tell your brand's story. And you've got to tell it in a way that it cuts through the clutter, because we're getting however many thousands of messages per day. You've got to be the message that sticks. And a good story is that sticky message.

She said that her broadcast education and training taught her valuable lessons about

working with people who are different in order to produce a quality product.

> [W]orking in the newsroom you really had to put aside your differences. When you run the newsroom you had to just get the job done. And I think that transfers beautifully over to the real world to any job, because you really have to be on for those, whether it's three hours for the build-up time for a live show, or it's eight hours in your work day. You've got to just put aside your differences, because personalities are so fickle, you know? And I think that an open and honest, an honest-but-kind philosophy really is how to deal with different personalities.

Fukumoto also said that those communication and relational skills apply to public

relations. She said that PR professionals can't forget that they "have to be a human talking to

another human" when they craft their "sticky" messages.

> You can't just, what do they call it, spray and pray? You can do that anymore. You can't just issue press releases and expect, you know, your message to be heard. You've really got to connect with the person. You've got to find that angle, find the pitch, but in a non-scummy way, you know? You got to be real and true and, because people see through the bullshit.

Melanie Chapman, Email and Automation Marketing Manager. Melanie Chapman is

well-suited to speak about communication practices at Jellyvision. As the email and automation

marketing manager, at the time of our interview she was responsible for the automation of client-

facing communication tools, including email, ebooks, and the ALEX newsletter "Starting the

Conversation." Chapman sees her job and the tools as firmly situated in the realm of marketing,

although some of those tools fall into the realm of public relations at other organizations.

Her view stems in part from the use of an external public relations firm to handle

Jellyvision's media relations. Internal communication is handled through email to the company

from either a member of the administration, or "A Team," as well as the company's human

resources team. Otherwise, communication at Jellyvision occurs through the use of programs like

Slack or through interpersonal interactions, the latter of which Chapman said is most highly

valued at the organization.

> Yeah, there's a lot of different forms of communication. But I really do appreciate that
> Jellyvision does seem to put a premium on, like, talking to someone still. It still has that
> small-company vibe, like, "get up out of your chair and have a conversation with
> someone." And we're frequently running out of meeting room space, and I think that is
> because people like to be able to get together.

> The emphasis on face-to-face communication is evident in the open office design and

choices made by employees, particularly the head of marketing. Chapman says the result breaks

down hierarchical barriers, facilitates brainstorming sessions, and fosters a collaborative,

conversational environment that helps to develop inclusive communication and relational skills.

"I like that our department all sits up here, and Bob, who's our CMO, sits out with us, which I

think really breaks down barriers in communication that way."

Despite the many tools and opportunities to make sure information is clear and easy to

understand, even the experts sometimes have need to revise their communication practices.

Chapman said that her team had recently made a concerted effort to improve how it talks with

and informs the sales team about marketing initiatives so that sales could better respond to

clients who had questions about e-messages sent on their behalf.

> So we did make a real effort this year to say, "Ok. We're going to share everything with
> you multiple ways. Like, we'll tell you about it in the meeting." We have, as part of sales
> force, there's, like, a file sharing thing and we'll post things on there so they can find it.
> We'll send them emails as reminders when we're conducting a webinar. We tend to get a
> lot of new leads the next day that they follow up with, so even though it's the same way
> every time, we're, like, "This is happening again. You have this many. Here's the kind of

content they [the leads] saw," so they're not having awkward phone conversations. And, um, there's been a lot less, like, panic, "What's going on? And why did they get this message?" I think that's been really good.

Chapman said the Jellyvision's open communication is found at all levels of the organization, including at the highest leadership levels. She stated that unlike at other companies, where leadership may intentionally withhold information in certain situations, the people in charge of Jellyvision's biggest decisions deliver messages that are not only what employees need to know, but also are as clear and thorough as possible to limit misinterpretation.

> I think Jellyvision not only will be open about things, but [also] . . . will go out of their way to make sure that people have all of the information. For example, we were supposed to have a company meeting this month, and it got cancelled at kind of the last minute. And if we just cancelled it, . . . or not said anything, it's just like taking a meeting off your calendar. But I think there was an extra level of thought. Like, "People may read something into this, have some concern about this meeting at the last minute going away." Like, "Is everything ok?" So they took that extra minute of thought and, I think it was Amanda who sent out an email that said, "Look, we really still want to have the meeting, but there's a couple of things still up in the air. We don't want to waste anyone's time and not give you valuable information, so we're going to reschedule this for a few weeks out. No big deal. Enjoy the two hours back in your day." Which is great. So I think that's an extra level of transparency and openness with everyone.

Chapman's appreciation for excellent communication comes in part from her background in copywriting and her undergraduate degree in advertising. She was hired by Jellyvision in 2013 as an Inbound Content Marketer, or, in non-Jellyspeak, as a writer. In that role, she began using automated marketing technology and found that she really liked it. After two years the company realized it needed a fulltime person to handle automated communication, so Chapman applied for the job.

> So I, like, raised my hand and [said] "I've applied to do that and I think I would be really good at it. I need some training. This isn't my specialty, but I can still use my writing skills and the email facet of it, and I think I could get up to speed really quickly on automation." And I did switch teams, so there was this discussion to make sure everyone was ok with it. And then they let me do it, which I don't think you'd get the opportunity to do a lot of places. Like, there's nothing on my resume that would say that I could do that.

According to Chapman, the faith the company had in her, and the opportunity and support it gave her in the form of training and empowerment created greater excitement about her job. She said that while she certainly benefitted from the change, the company did as well,

> because instead of looking for a marketing automation person and having to make sure that they're the right cultural fit, which is always the hard part, you have this person who passed the culture test so let's see what they can do.

In other words, the time and money investment in training Chapman to fill a new role within Jellyvision is less expensive than trying to recruit people with the right combination of personal characteristics and communication and relational skills needed to flourish in the organization's culture. Chapman said that company "tends to look for people who have an innate sense of curiosity, are kind, who are pretty humble about themselves," and that the expectation is that everyone will model a best version of their professional, intellectual, and emotional attributes in order to keep up the culture, particularly as it grows rapidly.

> We're now at this point where we have, like, 300 people and I may not know everyone, but we still say hi in the kitchen and it's nice. Like different people every day are unloading the dishwasher. . . . It's never like "I need someone to carry this heavy box" and someone isn't stepping up to do it. So I think just through mirroring you can, I think everyone here has some version of those skills, or at least a capacity, but then it does really bring that out in you. Like, "I'm going to be helpful. I'm going to communicate in a way that's clear and understandable. I'm going to be kind when I give feedback but still tell people the things that they need to hear."

While Chapman doesn't think of herself as a leader, she said that the company's trust in, and support of employees creates an atmosphere where she feels "empowered to tackle the stuff [she] needs to get done." In her view the lack of "unnecessary hand holding" fosters "leadership in the sense that this is my responsibility and I'm the person who's in charge of that, and I don't have to overly check in for anything. Like, I am trusted as an expert in those things."

Sales

Linda Dao, Senior Account Executive, Enterprise West. In a company full of professional storytellers, Linda Dao can more than hold her own. Whether it's about her childhood as a member of an immigrant Vietnamese family in an Arkansas refugee camp, or about the time in college she played poker to pay for room and board, each tale is as entertaining as it is informative.

Two months into her job at Jellyvision, Dao shared her thoughts on diversity, leadership, and communication first thing in the morning on a windy mid-March day. She jumped into her experiences with diversity by explaining how she spent her first seven years in Little Rock, Arkansas, a situation and place that she described as "not a lot of diversity there." That experience was followed three years in the much more diverse Patterson, New Jersey, where she encountered "a lot of Cubans, a lot of Puerto Ricans, [and] a lot of Hispanics. Around age 10, Dao moved with her family to Southern California, which she described as the place she grew up with almost exclusively Caucasian friends. It wasn't until she went to college that she began to make a variety of Asian friends, "from Korean to Chinese to Filipino."

Dao, who was a communication major in college, has experience in agency and entertainment public relations and advertising. She started a successful advertising firm when she was 25, but the venture screeched to a halt two years later when her business partner sold all of the company's physical assets and stole all of its money while Dao was on vacation. Dao decided to move on and took a job as membership director for a private business club in Columbus, Ohio. That career decision eventually resulted in her move to Chicago where, through a series of jobs and a lot of networking within the technology and digital media industries, she was recruited by Jellyvision's vice president of sales.

Needless to say, Dao's experiences had exposed her to a number of different work environments and leadership styles. She offered examples of what she described as great leadership characteristics that included open and inclusive communication, availability of leaders, collaborative decision making, self-improvement, and camaraderie.

> So Amanda Lannert is a great leader. And the reason why she's a great leader is because when she says she has an open door policy, she really does have an open door policy. . . . [N]ot only are you comfortable going to her, [but] she [also] encourages you and, if anything, she'll tell you you're an idiot for not coming to her. . . . She encourages, she's open to being better.

Dao said that hallmarks of great leadership include trust and respect. She said that Josh Fosburg, her vice president of sales, wants feedback from his department.

> So it's not like this mentality of "Oh, I'm high and mighty. I'm your VP or I'm your Director of Sales, so I know what's good for you." It's "I'm going to go through a handful of candidates. I'm going to narrow it down to three. And you, as my team, you're going to have the opportunity to give me honest feedback on whether or not you think this person is a good addition to the team. And I'm going to respect your opinion." [Leaders] also, you know, they're never going to tell you to do something they would not be willing to do.

She also said that great leaders strengthen an organization, because "across the board everyone's asking "How can we do better?"

Unlike other Jellyvision employees, Dao attributes the characteristics of great leadership to females. When she owned her own business she preferred to hire women because she found them to have "a great work ethic" and to be better at making sales, partially because people underestimated them. In Dao's view, "women are better leaders. They're smarter. They hire better people. They're more collaborative." She also indicated that they can be more supportive and understanding of other women's realities in the workplace.

> I had breakfast with [Amanda] and I told her I had great news for her, and she automatically asked me if I was pregnant. I said, "No, I'm not pregnant." I shared with her that I just bought a house and so forth. And then we started talking about pregnancy, and I was, of course, me coming from working, you know, for a lot of other companies

and working for male presidents and CEOs, I am automatically conscious of "Well, you know, I've just started working here." Candidly, yeah, I've been wanting to get pregnant, but I told her, I said, "Amanda, I just got here. Like, I just started working here the middle of January." Knowing, or in my head thinking, you know, every other company would be, like, "Please, please Linda, don't get pregnant, don't get pregnant." But, no. Amanda says, "This is like the perfect place to get pregnant. You should not wait." I mean, what CEO [encourages female employees to become pregnant]?

David Daskal, Director of Business Development. David Daskal is a salesperson who was hired with no sales experience, and a business development director who says he's not qualified to be a leader. He acquiesced to being a cultural leader at Jellyvision, mainly because he, at 55 at the time of our interview, was the oldest person at the company. That, and his Mustache Day sartorial sense was so well-respected that his outfit ended up in a company video, as well as displayed on a mannequin at Jellyvision's expansion space around the block.

> I guess I culturally I kind of am a leader. But as far as the business side, in my job I'm definitely not a leader and don't have any interest in being a leader. And, honestly, am not very qualified to be a leader, either, so, yeah, I'm perfectly happy to do what I'm doing.

Daskal's role on the company flow chart is nestled three levels into the area of sales; he reports to the Director of Enterprise Sales, who reports to the Vice President of Sales, who in turn reports to Jellyvision's CEO. His view of leadership is very much in line with a traditional business structure.

> I define sales leadership as being sort of directly responsible for certain growth of new ideas; to working directly with Amanda, which is our CEO; to, you know, being sort of the point person for being responsible for hitting our goals. How are we going to [hit those goals], the strategy, the longterm planning, the hiring, the tools that we use, um, that kind of thing. That to me is leadership. Business leadership, basically.

Part of business leadership is hiring the correct person for each and every job. As with many things at Jellyvision, hiring is approached a bit differently. Cover letters, interviews, and an audition take precedence over resumes that list traditional markers of aptitude like degrees and past experience. It's how Daskal, who had never worked in sales got his job, and it's proven

to be a very successful strategy that he attributes to CEO Amanda Lannert's inclusiveness and

ability to recognize that employee value isn't necessarily indicated by one's credentials.

> I think that one of the reasons that the company has been so successful is Amanda in particular, her genius for hiring. And I think part of that is her willingness, her openness, to anyone of any background who is smart and interesting and kind of grounded in a way, mature in a way.

Lannert, who has been at Jellyvision since its founding in 2001, was instrumental in

hiring when the company was smaller. Although Jellyvision is too large for her to participate in

the process now, her influence is still felt, and her practices are still very much part of the

company's process.

> So, to me, part of the tremendous success of the company is her ability . . . to hire people from very different backgrounds, people who have no [experience]—I had no experience as a salesperson when I was hired for sales. I had never ever worked in any business ever, yet, I was hired and I'm still here and have done a good job in sales. There are many people like me around the company, who are doing things that they have not done before, but Amanda saw they were smart and could learn and were kind of good people, and she hired them.

Daskal's employment at Jellyvision isn't the first time he was hired to do something he

had no experience in. He came to the company with a law degree and experience serving as the

director of correspondence for the mayor of Chicago for 10 years in what was essentially a

public relations job. Originally hired in the Mayor's Office to create policy, Daskal said he was

encouraged by the chief of staff to take the communication-related position where he screened

the mayor's personal mail to identify and address issues that arose, and was responsible for

everything that left the office with the mayor's signature on it. It was a position that was much

more personal than the majority of those held by the city's 36,000 other employees.

Daskal indicated that communication is personal for everyone at Jellyvision, a culture

that is facilitated by a shallow management structure and a policy of hiring from within.

> [The structure is] very flat. And it's not just that it's flat, but [it's] that people are really

encouraged to speak up. And everyone, I think there's a feeling even with the people who are theoretically, you know, the lowest level, everyone knows that they have other things in their life, that just because they are in a particular level in the organization doesn't mean they aren't likely just as smart as whoever is two levels above them. There's real desire to have people speak up and, you know, if they see something that they think needs changing, people really do listen. And we also do, we really do this especially because we're growing so quickly, we hire a lot from within. We fill new management positions, that kind of thing. We really do reward people. It's not baloney. Like, people who work, do really well, will off and get promoted. Our interns, who we bring in here, there is a good chance that an intern is going to get a job here unlike any other place I've ever worked as far as interns go. We hire, we've hired a ton of our interns.

Additionally, Daskal attributes the existence of an open and honest communication culture to hiring people who are, or have the capacity to be, self-reflective and honest with themselves.

> I think it involves personal self-understanding and personal growth in a way. I mean, the people who, if there's a single thread to me that makes a successful Jellyvision employee, it's that these are people who are true to themselves.

He also indicated that sustaining Jellvision's culture also means that the company must allow employees to remain true to themselves and exercise their best judgment.

> There really is a culture of we don't care what you do, where you work, when you work, as long as you get your work done. . . . If you're sick, stay home. If you want to work from home, work from home. If you want to work from midnight 'til eight in the morning, do that. There's really a feeling of, know to a great extent that there is very little micromanaging. There's like, "Here's your duties. I know you're smart. Go do them. And I expect you will do them."

But Daskal admits that there is sometimes a darker side to too much flexibility and freedom.

> I think if we have one area where we sometimes fall a little short is we're too much, . . . we're too hands-off. There are times when we probably should be a little better about providing a little more structure or training instead of just throwing people in. I think . . . the way we do it is definitely better ultimately, but that is an area where we occasionally fall a little bit short.

He said that the company's growth has meant that each department has had to work on providing more structure in the form of guides and hands-on training. However, creating more

formal policies isn't something that people necessarily want to do, but is needed when a

workforce is large enough to prevent everyone from knowing each other well enough to prevent

misunderstandings.

> Nobody wants to go to that place. Nobody wants to and, yet, when you get bigger, it just
> is harder. And at [a smaller] size you really know everyone. You know if they have, if
> they're single or have a spouse. You know where they like to go on the weekends. You
> really know them in a way that's impossible now. It's just impossible. And when you
> really know someone, you don't need policies, because you know that this guy, who
> occasionally says some weird things, you know him. You know? You understand the
> entire context of his life and the weird things that he says.

While it may be impossible for everyone to know each employee now that the workforce

can be counted in the hundreds and may be housed in a second building or work remotely,

Jellyvision tries to provide opportunities for people to meet by bringing in remote employees to

every company event. Daskal said that that effort combined with the open communication

philosophy and an acknowledgement that cultural ownership belongs to everyone helps people

take responsibility for their own, and other's actions.

"Amanda talks about how the culture here, we are each responsible for maintaining the

culture that we want here, and I take that really seriously."

Courtney Flannery, Hiring and Training Manager. "It's awesome!" Courtney

Flannery said, describing the amount of female leadership at Jellyvision. And as a female hiring

and training manager in Sales, she sees herself as one of those leaders.

A self-described idea person and planner, Flannery said that she likes to lead people. "I'm

very Type A, which most people at Jellyvision are not. So I've always been very much like a go-

getter and a leader and manager. That's what I like to do."

Unhappy making calls as a member of the inside sales team, she identified a need for

sales training and developed a program based on her experience at the company. Flannery was

rewarded for her effort with a promotion to a newly created Hiring and Training Manager position four months after she started at Jellyvision. In addition to training and coaching new hires, and assisting the Business Development Representatives director, Flannery recruits sales people who show an aptitude for the job and have a desire "to do good work for the company. I'll phone screen anybody as long as their cover letter is strong and their resume seems like they are interested in sales."

That mindset has led to the recent hiring of "a bunch of really awesome women," a practice that is in keeping with Jellyvision's gender-diverse workplace. And while Flannery admits that the influx of women in what has been historically a male-dominated field has caused some friction among long-term employees who "are definitely members of the Old Boys Club," she said that the amount of new ideas and energy has been a positive experience.

According to Flannery, what hasn't been as good has been communication in the sales department as a whole. "Oh, my god. I could write a book about communication issues with the sales team," she said. She attributed the discord to multiple circumstances, including rapid growth in the department, the division of the sales team because of office space constraints, a lack of recognition that sales is very different from the rest of the company, and, ultimately, lack of leadership.

When Flannery and I met, she had hired eight new inside sales representatives and seven account executives in four months, increasing the overall size of the team from 25 to 40 people. That growth exceeded the office area that Jellyvision could devote to one team, necessitating splitting the department into what Flannery described as two silos. She said that the division caused a "little bit of a disconnect now that they don't all sit together."

However, she said that the team's communication issues were well-entrenched before the team was split. Flannery, who said that she noticed problems when she arrived in May 2015, attributed the majority of problems to a lack of leadership.

> Since I've started we've had communication issues. The inside sales team actually didn't have a direct manager. There was one person managing everybody for a very long time. They hired somebody from within to be the manager because they wanted us to get more meetings [and] be more successful. . . . So they brought in somebody from a different department to be the manager and he was absolutely not the right [fit], like just didn't listen, didn't take people's feelings into account. We had three people quit because of him.

Flannery said that a consulting group had been brought in to help increase the department's performance. However, she said that from her perspective the group's approach didn't take into consideration Jellyvision's hiring profile or the effect of its honest-but-kind communication philosophy. She said that the changes, including adding an inside sales manager, that were made compounded existing communication issues.

> [The consulting group are] suits. They're very much corporate. The manager they had put in place for the inside sales was very focused on numbers but didn't do anything to help with the practice of it. And then they have a guy working with the account executive team so that even created, like our inside sales team and our AEs were cut off from each other communication-wise.

She said that because the group doesn't understand Jellyvision's culture, mistakes in communication that might be remediated, like a conflict in scheduling a call block, turn into confusion that is resolved with an email from the vice president, whose solution is based on efficiency instead of efficacy.

Flannery said that the result is the creation of a lot of tension that is not resolved by Jellyvision's honest-but-kind communication philosophy and structure that expects conflicts to be worked out among the affected individuals. She said that it's difficult to feel empowered

when it appears that the people you should report to are either unavailable or don't want to hear what you have to say.

> I think just because people are so kind here, there's a lot of "I don't want to upset somebody." So rather than upset them, they just change things and then hope that it's ok. So we lose a lot of that transparency of "this is what's wrong, can we fix it?" in the weeds of we can't be honest, [and] that's critical.

Flannery stated that the missing honest critique of someone's performance or a broken process creates a spiral of silence that impedes change.

> [T]hey just don't say anything and then problems build up and stack and stack and stack. And then, sometimes when you come with a, because Jess and I are very bullish, and you come with a problem, they are dismissive. And they say, "Well, it's going to be fine. It'll be ok." And nothing ever happens. Nothing changes. It takes a lot of pushback to get things to change.

Overarching the issues of proximity, outside influence, and leadership, is the purpose of sales, which separates the department from the rest of the company in a significant way.

> Sales is a very different animal. . . . There were some who felt, especially early on when I was here, that we were not a part of the company. And that wasn't by anybody's fault. It was just our goals are so different. The way we talk and think about things, the tools we use are just so different.

Flannery pointed out that, while most company employees receive salaries, the majority of the sales teams' paychecks are linked to their direct performance. They must make quotas. And the ability of team members to set successful meetings with customers brings in the revenue that pays everybody. Flannery said that the result is a lot of pressure that affects how the people in sales identify with the company's culture.

> I think we don't have as much freedom to be like that happy-go-lucky, like goofy, because we can still be true to Jellyvision, we can still be authentic, we can still care about our company, but there is just so much, because at the end of the day, everybody's job in this company relies on us making sales.

Jellyvision Design Group

      Travis Mandrell, Vice President of Design. At the time of our interview, Travis

Mandrell was a relative newcomer to Jellyvision. Hired as director of user experience and design

to manage the creative team for ALEX, Mandrell had been on the job for a year and was less

than a month away from a promotion to vice president of design. He said his background and

managerial experience in graphic design, User Experience (UX), and software design for a

variety of dot-coms and software enterprise companies is what brought him to Jellyvision.

> So I've built a lot of software, and I've, over the years, kind of grown into a manager. . . .
> Jellyvision, I think, was looking for someone to lead their UX practice in more of an
> official capacity. . . . I think that Jellyvision had been doing user experience work for a
> long time, but never in a really structured capacity, so I think they looked at the skills I
> had and the experience I had in sort of leading teams and installing process in a creative
> group to get higher quality software out of it.

      In true Jellyvision fashion, Mandrell was entrusted with a lot of responsibility, but given

an equal amount of flexibility to craft the position. Initially hired to manage the creative team for

ALEX, his role was affected by the merger of the creative teams of ALEX and the Jellyvision

Lab.

> [I] didn't really have a whole lot of definition around the role when I joined. [I] just knew
> that they potentially wanted me to carve out my own role in the position, which was
> interesting. And that was just for the Alex side of the business when I came on. And now
> we've sort of shifted where the Jellyvision Lab, more our services, organization, and the
> product department of Alex have kind of been merged together, so . . . now all of the
> creatives I kind of manage under one roof, kind of sharing things back and forth a lot. So
> the role has grown a lot from when I started and basically I'm at, you know, under my
> own direction [in terms of] where I wanted to take, and how I wanted to shape, the role.
> So there's a lot of freedom in how I want to implement process and career development
> and getting people excited about their jobs vs. getting things done.

      Unlike some organizational restructuring initiatives, the hiring of Mandrell and the

ultimate merger of the teams had buy-in from ALEX UX part of the company before he arrived.

> I mean I was hired because the team was advocating for somebody to come in and
> manage. They were talking specifically about the UX practice and not the art and design

process, [but] I just sort of gravitated over to that because I just saw that as the squeaky wheel and being, like, "we need more process there." Ah, but I don't think that anybody has been resistant.

Mandrell attributes the acceptance in part to his management style.

My style though is not come and say, "Well, here's the model that I used at the last place I worked and here's what we're gonna do now. So, let's just start doing that." It's, you know, I'm asking questions more than I'm dictating. For the first six months I'm talking about, I'm asking everybody "What should we do? What do we need to do here? What do we need to focus on? Like, what do you need me to do specifically?"

That collaborative approach to building the change process revealed the need to establish clear job descriptions and reporting systems in order to deal with the communication and productivity needs of a rapidly growing organization. The process Mandrell has implemented has helped guide Jellyvision into an organization that is led more by the business value of efficient productivity than the company's historical creative focus.

Jellyvision has always been a creative-led organization where we say however much we spend on the project or the product is entirely dependent on the idea itself and the creative deliverable, and it is only finished when that creativity is sort of fully realized in the product. I think we're shifting that. Over the last year, we've definitely been shifting it. The value proposition is to the business itself, and if the value proposition doesn't match the level of effort, we've got a problem. We need to scale things so they're the right solution for the thing we're trying to build. So, the good—you know, we have product management who is kind of responsible for looking out for the value of the business and saying like, "This is all great, but it's not valuable. This is not the marketplace for this content, or this idea, so we're going to focus somewhere else."

A switch from creativity to efficiency may seem mutually exclusive, particularly in an organization known for its quirky, creative, and fun culture. However, Mandrell said that the focus provided by a more efficient process is akin to the structure a canvas gives an artist. "We need that framework to work within to be able to target the idea," he said, describing how too much flexibility is problematic for creative people who revel in the possibilities of ideas.

Mandrell said the process is typically a collaboration between 10 to 12 people on a team that includes one or two artists a couple of senior leadership members. The creative aspect of

every project is still very important, but because a timeline and effective use of resources is

important, Mandrell makes a distinction between art and design when it comes to deciding what

needs to be done.

> Part of the idea is the definition of the difference between art and design. Art is sort of there to be interpreted; it is never finished. We can always make the thing different, but we need to lock down the scope of the ideation process. We need to say, like, "this is a finished deliverable. It's doing what we set out to do. We can make it different, yes, but it's not necessarily going to be better or valuable, more valuable to the business or the end user.

The creation of a more valuable experience, or "doing the right things," is a theme that

Mandrell revisited when he spoke of his team's leadership and communication experiences

within the company.

> I'm constantly asking the people on my team, "Are you doing the right things? Regardless of what that means to you, do you feel like you're doing the right things?" . . .If they don't feel like they're spending their time doing the right things, then that probably means I'm not doing the right things to get them the information they need to do their jobs. But that tells me a lot about the leadership and how the communication channel works, and how the communication process filters down to people. Like, are they getting what they need to kind of run and do their jobs.

His concern for his team members extends to making sure they recognize the need for a

balance between their work and their respective lives. Mandrell pointed out the darker side of a

dedicated work force in a culture with flexible work schedules and vacation time.

> I think the people here really care and they really want to do great work. So, there's a lot of whatever-it-takes mentality. I don't think it's very fair for the business to take advantage of that and sort of rely on it to get things done. I think we should do our best to have things happen between the hours of 9 and 5. . . .I don't want people coming in on their days off, and I don't want people working late, and affecting their home life. Those are things we just need to protect. . . .I mean, we've got an open vacation [Flexible Time Off] policy. The problem tends to be that people are so passionate about what they're doing they don't take the days off. . . . I had a guy go out of the office, ask if he could take three days off for his wedding. He was like, "I'm going to try—I have to get my project," and I was, like, "Seriously? Take more than three days off for your wedding." Like, he hasn't taken a day off this year, you know?

Jason Knox, Media Producer and Audio Manager. Whether he's making sure that the audio for Jellyvision products sounds good, playing in a band, or working in theatre, Jason Knox's world is filled with sound. Therefore it should come as no surprise that the context for his views on leadership is live music.

> Your job in [band] leadership is to present a vision, provide some sort of clarity. But [it's] also [to] ensure that everybody who's on the team or in the group feels invested. I'm a firm believer in having a fairly clear hierarchy, creatively especially because if there's not . . . a clear hierarchy and understanding of who's in charge, it's going to lead to a situation where it's just more chaotic and less productive.

Knox, who jokingly classified himself as a benevolent dictator when he was the musical director of Jellyvision's in-house band, said that it is essential that a leader balance letting followers feel that they have a voice in a group with the need for efficient decision making. It's a style that he has employed in this four-month-old role as a manager at the company.

> My direct report is a guy named George, and he's fantastic. We hired him last year and he's got all kinds of ideas. And some of them are great and some of them are things we've tried in the past that he's maybe not aware of, and they're not worth investigating again. But it's a balance between letting him pursue ideas that could be great for the company and for him personally, because that's important to all of us, [and making] sure that ideas aren't getting out of control and getting in the way of the work that needs to be done.

While he's been a leader in bands many times, Knox said that he was still trying to adjust to his new role at Jellyvision.

> And so like trying to overcome, or just coming to grips with the idea that it's okay to give solid direction to somebody who you feel is essentially a creative equal. That's why I feel like sometimes the idea and the word management insinuates some sort of level of superiority, which pretty much a fallacy. Just because somebody's a manager doesn't mean necessarily that they're better at something. They may have more seniority, they may have more experience. Perhaps they're just better at actually managing things. And honestly, that's something that I'm still for myself trying to assess whether or not I am a manager type in that way.

Knox surmised that he wasn't the only person who has had to navigate new managerial waters. He said that, because of Jellyvision's rapid growth, people who started work at the

company one or two years previously have become managers. "There's a lot of finding your way in terms of being responsible for other people."

Part of finding that way for managers who come from within the company is negotiating existing relationships. Promoting one peer into a leadership position changes the power dynamic between people, that Knox said "can't help but change the way the relationship works."

According to Knox, the addition of managers and subsequent need for directors has created a much more vertical leadership structure that also has changed communication within the organization.

> When I first started five years ago, it was very horizontal. There wasn't even, I think you had a sense of a manager, but it was very loose and you didn't really meet them in the context of a manager role that we do now. Currently, we try to have one-on-ones with our direct reports once a week. And our approach to the one-on-ones that we've been encouraged to take, and I also agree with, is deal with the tactical stuff you have to deal with, which is what's on our plate this week or in the near future that we have figure out how to get done. But then there's the bigger picture stuff of how are you feeling about your contributions? Do you have any bigger ideas for the company?

The result in Knox's view is a changed culture. "It can't be the same culture that it was. I mean it wasn't the same culture when I started that had been a few years prior." Knox said that the company is wrestling with of how to maintain the core values of honesty, kindness, and openness along with "a sense of fun and spontaneity and just sort of goofiness" with the addition of many different people who do not have the same institutional knowledge as longer-term employees. He said that in particular, the use of humor, a cornerstone of both Jellyvision's products and organizational culture, has changed as the company has grown.

> [A] certain sense of humor that might've worked five years ago, now we have just naturally introduced more political correctness into our system. I know that for a fact. There have been jokes that've been made that would've flown five years ago that then people will have to apologize for after the fact.

Knox acknowledged that passage of time alone is enough to change culture. Some of the company's early humor, which he described as "intelligent adolescent," has been minimized as its creators have grown older and societal tolerance has changed. But what has remained has been the organization's dedication to creating a sense of fun through spontaneous and planned events.

Overall, Knox, whose experiences with leadership prior to Jellyvision were in the male-dominated worlds of football and music, said that he is "very grateful to work in an environment where compassion and openness is the norm." But he doesn't attribute the culture to the fact that the company has a female CEO. "I don't really frame it in that way, because I just, I think of her as my smart and funny, and very focused CEO." Knox said that he doesn't think of the contributions of any of Jellyvision's leaders as male- or female-specific. "I just admire them as people and as leaders and I'm happy to have smart people in charge."

Rudra Banerji, Senior Creative Producer and Senior Media Producer. "We did crazy stuff. We lit a helicopter on fire and rolled it down LaSalle Street," Rudra Banerji said as he described an experience he had as a former production assistant in the film industry. At Jellyvision, Banerji "gets to make new stuff." But as far as I could tell, he hadn't lit any of it on fire and rolled it down a Chicago street prior to our interview.

When Banerji and I met in March 2016, he recently had added a second title of senior creative producer to his senior media producer status at the company. It was a move that formalized a couple of tasks he was already completing, as well as a way of getting his department to think about creating video components for the software Jellyvision customers buy. "The idea was to make a stepping stone, because we didn't yet know how we wanted to do video

as a department. But it was a way to kind of like open it up and start the company thinking about

that we would want to do video in the future."

According to Banerji, an ever-changing internal structure to facilitate company growth

has been a theme at Jellyvision since he started as a flowmaster and media producer in 2009. But

with growth comes a darker component of uncertainty. "I definitely had a period of time here

where I was really unhappy, where I couldn't figure out what I was doing here. I couldn't figure

out what my next step was," Banerji said. He attributed part of his unhappiness to the

establishment of more hierarchy, even though the overall structure of the company remained

fairly flat. It was the commitment of leadership to remain accessible that helped Banerji

overcome the confusion.

> The best way to describe it was like if you have, like Harry and Amanda here and you
> have this increasingly flat organization. Visually it's like, well it's not like everyone's
> equidistant from those two people. And it wasn't that I needed to be heard, or I need to
> have any kind of, like, facetime with those people. I've actually never cared about that.
> But if you have an idea and you're not sure how to get it up to those people, that becomes,
> it becomes scary to send an email or to ask for time. And the couple times I did, I felt that
> the thing that made this place very different was . . . I remember I had a meeting with
> Amanda and I said, "I'm so sorry. Thank you so much for the time." And she goes, "I
> accepted the meeting. There is no need for an apology." And I don't know that there
> could be a more inclusive thing than to say that.

Banerji said that he credits CEO Amanda Lannert with open communication and hiring

nice people early on who feel empowered to do their jobs and represent the company well.

> I think Amanda has awesome vision. And she even laid it out in that first interview. Like,
> you read about interviews as being two-way streets. But I'd never actually been in an
> interview which was such a two-way street. Because she just said, "Listen, you seem
> nice. I have no idea whether you could do this job. So I'm asking if you can do an
> audition. And it was just like the weirdest [situation]. All my PA auditions and all my
> assistant director interviews before that were working off a previous relationship where
> someone knew me and was like, "Rudra does good work. He's organized. He can do the
> work." And so you're working off a previous knowledge of effectiveness. And in this
> case, she was just like, "I need to know whether you are, like, a decent person. Ok, let's
> find out if you can do the work." And I feel like that's still how we judge people here at
> Jellyvision.

Banerji expressed some concern that "judgment always sound like it's a negative." However, he said that the way it's used at Jellyvision is to demonstrate care for, and trust among, the people who work together at the company. According to Banerji, finding employees who are caring and who can step forward to cover for someone who needs time off is as important as hiring someone with a specific skill set that the company needs.

> We hire people we like. We hire people who we think could do the job. And the job sometimes is really specific, and it's getting increasingly where we're like "We need a front-end developer can write amazing front-end code." But I think that the idea is that it's like "Okay, I want you to be able to write front-end code, but also if you were to become a manager, or to be covering for your manager and someone on the team got sick, you would send a basket from Jellyvision." That's really key. That is really unlike anything I've seen in other companies, or my friends who work at large organizations.

The result is a selection process that in other companies has led to a workforce that lacks diversity in any sense. As Banerji said, that when people talk about a non-diverse environment, what they are often saying is that "You hire people who look like you." And while the company does struggle with racial diversity—Banerji said that he might have been the only person of color when he started—it is inclusive and diverse in other ways, because "perhaps Jellyvision is really good at hiring people we like and who we want to have relationships with. And then we are unsurprisingly creating relationships with them."

Banerji, who grew up in a white suburb of Chicago, acknowledged that part of the problem with recruiting racially diverse employees is that the technology community itself is primarily white. "Nobody doubts that there's lots and lots of talent out there. The problem is we just tend to know only white guys." He said that in the case of his own family, it is his parents who are involved with the Indian community in the western suburbs of Chicago and that he didn't grow up with the children there.

[M]ost of my friends are white . . . So it's very weird. Like, I probably still have to be careful, because I think my views are mostly, like, you know, I don't stare at the mirror all day. And I'm actually very light skinned, so I actually get a pass. People think that I'm like, I get, I don't know, on vacation people think that I'm Latino or Italian or I get different things.

Part of what hinders Jellyvision's quest to add racial diversity is its strong belief in hiring

from within. As Banerji pointed out, the practice is very positive because it recognizes "that

people are already filling those gaps," and it includes support for continuing education when

needed. But Banerji said that the company is also dedicated to "recognizing that sometimes you

need to hire from without." He said that empowerment and open, honest communication create

an inclusive environment that welcomes change, particularly when it comes to creating more

roles and hierarchy.

[A]nytime someone who comes in, we're, like, "Please tell us what we're missing. What are we missing?" That again, empowerment. Telling people that that's a key part of their job is to tell us what we're missing because we've been here too long. "What's the thing that we just got used to doing?" And I think the, for the hierarchy stuff, it's been a really good mix of, like, bring up people from within and also, and also hiring so we have good ideas in terms of what that hierarchy needs to be and what it needs to be in the future. We're still building out departments. I mean, it's kind of amazing. The sales department has shifted and changed, and I think that comes from our leadership team trusting that people will be able to figure it out. But also recognizing that they don't have to figure it out this year, so they'll be some opportunity for changing.

Banerji said that the process has been interesting to watch, but that the most energizing

moment in his view was when Lannert announced that, after many discussions, that the company

had chosen not to subscribe to the standard that every company needed a mission statement. As

he described it, Lannert said, "Forget it. I've talked to a lot of people. People like mantras. Let's

try to be helpful." Banerji said that the moment was electric.

I [felt] the hair on the back of my neck go up, because I've been here so long. I've worked on stuff that I loved, that I'm super proud of. That moment I saw people's phones go up to take a picture of her standing in front of just the words "Be Helpful." She was explicit: "Be helpful is not just to our customers. It is also to each other." And that is, like, I know we can change. I know you feel like you can conquer anything if that's what

you've got going on inside. So, like, when it comes to this idea of handling things like hierarchy change, I just feel like change feels very manageable when the idea is to help one another.

ALEX Engineering

Lisa Rosselli-McDermott, Scrum Master. Of all of Jellyvision's employees, Lisa Rosselli-McDermott's job requires a knowledge of at least one form of leadership theory and practice. As Scrum Master, Rosselli-McDermott acts as a steward, guiding the developers on her team within an agile framework composed of work phases, assessment, and adaptation. It's a leadership style and structure that recognizes the value of facilitation over control.

> As the liaison and the facilitator between the product owners, or business stakeholders, and the team, we really have no authority. Not really. We try to nudge teams or product owners in the right direction should we see a need for it, but really it's not up to us.

Rosselli-McDermott got into development via graphic design and web technology. She said that her transition from team member to manager has not been as smooth as she expected.

> It's easy and it feels natural to manage the smaller day-to-day activities of developers, having been a developer. [But] without proper reading or studying or training or expertise it's hard to understand how to manage up, or sideways, or to impart business values down to developers. It's kind of hard to step out and above the developer role into a more management atmosphere.

She said that her servant leader role jibes with her belief of what leadership should be, which includes an ability to manage transparently and work with her team to implement the decisions that come from higher up the administrative chain. In her view, that works only if you hire skilled people who are an organizational fit. "You have to find the right fit first for your core values and what the organization is, and kind of stick to your guns and talk about what you really want in a hire. And then nurture the heck out of them."

Rosselli-McDermott said that Jellyvision's multi-step, time intensive hiring process is unique in her experience.

We go through an audition process, and for developers it's a straight up, like you have to write code, you have to submit it. We look at it. We critique it. . . . We really come at from like "Ok. Does this person know enough to be here, and are they looking in the direction that we're looking in when it comes to writing code?" And then they interview with like 15 people. Like 15 people. That's ridiculous. And then we all get together and we talk about it. . . . I mean, I've worked at a number of places and I've never come across anything like that.

Another component of the hiring process that Rosselli-McDermott finds interesting is the

value of each committee member's voice.

I almost feel like if any one person gave [the potential hire] a thumbs down and could actually articulate why, they would not be hired. I mean, even if it were not the hiring manager, or not a senior manager. . . . [I]f there was one person who was staunchly like, "This person said this, and this is not what we stand for. You didn't hear it, but I did." That would be that.

The hiring process is but one facet of the company that Rosselli-McDermott is intrigued

by. Jellyvision wasn't a company she initially considered when she was looking for a job. She

knew about ALEX and a little bit about what the product does, but she was "very com si, com

sa" about the organization. It was positive press about CEO Amanda Lannert's achievements in

the industry that piqued her interest.

Amanda Lannert in the news was just getting such high praise for being a good leader, cultivating this culture, and really taking this company through some Interesting times in terms of shaping it and shifting it so that it could actually be a profitable thing. And that's not easy. It's also interesting to see such across-the-board praise for female leader without having the other side of that praise where it's like, we like to tear people apart.

Rosselli-McDermott also discussed the novelty of Jellyvision's job creation and

promotion processes. In the former case, the company recognizes the ability of their highly

vetted employees to identify aspects of a role that, with time and effort, could become a new

position. The company also recognizes that an otherwise valuable employee my need to move to

a different department within the company in order to flourish.

There have been times when people have come from different departments into Quality Assurance for engineering. A few sales folks have come from sales to QA. We've just

found that they didn't like sales. Maybe found that they weren't good at it. And because this company's vetted them so hard they're like, "Well, we'd like not to lose you, so let's try to find a place for you." And that's unheard of. I mean, usually like at a different company, it would be like, "Well, you can't cut the mustard. There's the door."

In the case promotions, Jellyvision's expectation is that employees who would like to be promoted need to take on responsibility for the job they want before receiving recognition in the form of a title and pay raise. In Rosselli-McDermott's view, "there's a lot of citizenship here. You have to sort of reach out really wide and grab onto anything that you feel is an issue and try to fix it and become the owner of that thing. And you'll eventually get recognized for it."

She agreed that the company expects everyone to act as an everyday leader and cross over boundaries when necessary.

> I came [to Jellyvision] from pharmaceutical advertising. And that was very much like "Whatever the situation might be, like this isn't my job." And that was ok to say. Like here that is not ok to say that. There's nothing that really isn't your job. It was just the other week that I had my hand in the tank of a toilet with [the receptionist], and we were trying to fix the mechanism.

That attitude of helpfulness is a company hallmark, just like the importance Jellyvision places on communication. According to Rosselli-McDermott, the company is designed to facilitate face-to-face communication, particularly between employees housed in one of the business' two buildings and its remote workforce. "We're encouraged to talk face-to-face whenever possible. We're wired for remote people to work properly. . . . The company is wired to talk with and see each other openly in almost every room."

She said that the encouragement to talk to each other extends to interpersonal issues that at other places might involve chain-of-command communication.

> An interesting HR policy is that if we are having an interpersonal issue with someone, we're encouraged to go and honestly and openly talk to them. Managers are actually encouraged to stay out of it. You are supposed to encourage your direct report and to say, "Hey you're having a problem with so and so. I highly suggest you go talk to this person."

As committed as Jellyvision is to open communication, Rosselli-McDermott said that she feels like employees are sometimes kept in the dark too long about potential business decisions that may affect team workloads. "I think where the communication falters a bit is there's a lot happening up top. . . . And I think we don't hear about it until it's 'here's the work. Do it.'"

However, she also acknowledges that too much transparency can have a similar effect. She said that at a recent meeting the mention of potential products that might be developed sent her team into a panic.

> They're like "Oh my god. There's too much work." So that's an example of like, "probably too early to tell them, because now they're freaking out." [The leadership] is trying to be transparent and show us something they're really excited about, and in turn the developers get really nervous.

Summary

If there is one thing that Jellyvision is known for it is its culture. From its organizational policies to its products to the design and decoration of its office spaces, the company relishes all things transparent, inclusive, and quirky. As VP of People Mary Beth Wynn told Crain's Chicago Business, "We're proud to have a culture where you can be quirky and funny and creative," ("Best Places to Work 2016," 2017). In short, it has created an environment that balances the realities of a multi-million-dollar, rapidly growing business with a drive to delight.

Jellyvision's cultural cornerstone can be attributed to founder Harry Gottlieb's early business and life experiences, which taught him the value of trust, inclusiveness, organizational fit, and kindness. He passed those ideals to CEO Amanda Lannert, who is credited by her colleagues and tech industry peers and media with cultivating the hiring strategies and organizational policies that make Jellyvision a perennial award winner for leadership and workplace culture.

It is clear from the interviews that company has been able to maintain its culture despite rapid growth, instilling its core values in the people it hires and charging them with the responsibility to protect what makes the organization special. It is also clear that inclusive leadership and communication play key roles in sustaining the essence of Jellyvision.

A synthesis and analysis of participants' thoughts about the way Jellyvision creates and maintains its inclusive leadership and communication culture is offered in Chapter V. The implications of those findings are discussed in Chapter VI.

Chapter V: Analysis of Jellyvision Case Study

The purpose of the research in this dissertation was to explore inclusive leadership practices at an exemplary organization in order to answer the question, what would a public relations (PRL) curriculum look like?

To answer that question, I engaged in in-depth interviews with 20 members of Jellyvision, a technology company in Chicago recognized throughout the industry for its inclusive culture. The interviews were influenced by a need to reconcile the requirements of 21st century public relations and leadership—inclusivity, collaboration, communication and relational skills, complexity, adaptability, flexibility, vision—with the realities of both the public relations profession and the teaching of public relations at the undergraduate level. Interview content was also influenced by a process that included five visits to Jellyvision, where I was able to observe the behavior of employees and the company's physical environment, and an examination of the company's artifacts as well as media produced about Jellyvision by third parties.

The result of that research was a portrait, or a case study, presented in Chapter IV that described the company through the words of its members and my interpretation of their views in relation to all of the other data that was collected. Its construction was based on a strategy that focused on the connection between inclusive culture and the leadership and communication practices therein. That process required an examination of repetitive refrains, resonant metaphors, and the expression of cultural and organizational rituals important to the community that were compared and contrasted with data from multiple sources in order to "construct themes and reveal patterns among perspectives" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 193).

In this chapter, I revisit those steps of listening, observing, and triangulation in order to present the themes that emerged from the portrait and its supporting data, and show how they

manifest in leadership and communication practices within an inclusive culture. The chapter is organized in four sections. In section one, a thematic analysis of Jellyvision's culture, I present and discuss the emergent themes and related sub-themes. Sections two and three repeat the discussion of emergent themes and sub-themes in the contexts of leadership and communication, respectively. Section four contains a summary of the lessons learned.

Thematic Analysis of Jellyvision's Culture

"We care a lot about culture," Harry Gottlieb said in an email invitation when I requested permission to research Jellyvision (H. N. Gottlieb, personal communication, November 4, 2014).

The truth of his statement is evident in the transcripts, secondary sources—the organization's website, blog entries, social media, and digital newsletters and marketing material; online interviews and keynote presentations; news articles—and my observations made during site visits. Not only did participants discuss the importance of culture, but Jellyvision's digitally published work from job openings listed on the company's website to YouTube and social media posts also contain consistent messages about the shared values and beliefs of employees (Jellyvision Lab, 2017; "Join Our Team," 2018). The message is so consistent that it appears in news articles about the company found in third party publications like an article on Jellyvision's Pajama Day in the Chicago Tribune (Elejalde-Ruiz, 2015).

An analysis of all sources revealed a number of key words, concepts, phrases, and rituals related to the company's culture, leadership, and communication. Presented in Figure 5.1, they add up to themes of empowerment, inclusivity, transparency, and delightfulness that appear in several layers of Jellyvision's open culture and directly affect the expectations (norms) and patterns (artifacts) of behavior (Anderson, 2010, p. 64; Schein, cited in Hogan & Coote, 2013, p.

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┌─────────────────────────────┬─────────────────────────────┐
│         Inclusivity         │         Empowerment         │
│                             │                             │
│  accepting, open,           │  trust, autonomy, guidance, │
│  collaboration, accessible, │  feedback, support,         │
│  helpful, humble, self-     │  boundary-spanning          │
│  reflection, critical       │  communication and roles,   │
│  thinking/thinkers,         │  responsibility, leadership,│
│  respectful, best self,     │  self-motivated,            │
│  good person, do the right  │  development, expectations, │
│  thing, citizenship,        │  honest-but-kind            │
│  catered lunch, company     │  communication              │
│  meetings, ping pong,       │                             │
│  foosball, yoga,            │                             │
│  communication              │                             │
├─────────────────────────────┼─────────────────────────────┤
│        Transparency         │        Delightfulness       │
│                             │                             │
│  open, necessary, do the    │  fun, quirky, delightful,   │
│  right thing, expectations, │  humorous expectations,     │
│  ethical, accountability,   │  community, kind,           │
│  overwhelming communication │  enthusiastic, mustache     │
│                             │  day, pajama day,           │
│                             │  communication              │
└─────────────────────────────┴─────────────────────────────┘
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Culture, Leadership, Communication

Figure 5.1. Key words, phrases, concepts and rituals from Jellyvision data collection grouped by theme. Analysis of the data collected from all sources revealed four themes related to Jellyvision's culture.

1610). Evidence of each theme and how it manifests in the core concepts of culture, leadership, and communication are offered in the rest of this chapter.

An inclusive culture. Jellyvision not only says it is an inclusive organization, but it also backs up that statement with a shelf chock full of industry awards and two buildings full of people who will attest to the ways the company expects and supports inclusion. However, the culture, while always open and inclusive, was not always the center of organization's existence. Harry Gottlieb discussed his "personal why" behind starting the company and how it has

changed over the years to become the open and inclusive culture it is today in a [video interview](#)

with Advisor TV (advisor.TV Videos, 2016, 3:10).

An analysis of the transcripts and secondary material, as well as observations made

during multiple trips to Jellyvision reveal ample data that the company's culture is inclusive,

where "all people from diverse backgrounds . . . feel valued, respected, and recognized" as they

participate in and negotiate a series of practices within the organization (Booysen, 2014, p. 299;

Sturken & Cartwright, 2009, p. 7). Seven employees at varying levels from production

apprentice to vice president of design discussed the company as one where individuals are

simultaneously and seen, valued, and accepted by, and are open to, others, functioning as leaders

who motivate and help each other to grow. These sub-themes are analyzed below.

On being seen. Whether employees are vying for the best costume during its annual

Mustache Day, or are the new kids on the block and bit unsure about their place in the

organization, Jellyvision sees them and appreciates them. Becki Schneider, who was the newest

hire that I spoke with, said, "Here it's like, I think there's more of an acknowledgment of, like,

'You are the person who's actually doing what we need you to do.'"

Melanie Chapman said that the company's respect for each individual is evident even

before a person is hired. "It was like, right from the interview process when I first started coming

here, I felt like I was an individual and I felt like the things that were uniquely my own, or the

things that uniquely make me me, is what Jellyvision wanted and expected out of me."

On being valued and accepted. Jellyvsion encourages its employees to be themselves,

because its founder and CEO recognize the human and financial benefits of valuing

individualism. As Amanda Lannert said in an online article for LinkedIn's Pulse, "being able to

'bring your full self to work' – not just your age, race, creed, gender identity, and sexual

orientation, but also your hobbies, interests, and passions— . . . makes for a richer community

(and better product and customer experiences, believe it or not)" (Lannert, 2016). Her views

echo research by Ferdman and Roberts (2014) who state that "knowing about and engaging with

one's full self (and its various components) is vital both to tapping into all of one's potential as

well as to maximizing one's contributions in diverse groups and organizations" (p. 96).

On openness. Acceptance at Jellyvision was attributed to how open both the people and

the company culture are. In this instance, openness is thought of as a product of curiosity, open-

mindedness, and a tolerance of ambiguity in people (Bennett, 2014, p. 159), and as a space

designed to facilitate face-to-face communication and collaboration (Ferri-Reed, 2014, p. 14). As

such, openness is a key component in creating a safe work environments where people can be

their best selves, do their best work, and learn to lead (Booysen, 2014; Ferdman, 2014; Ferdman

& Roberts, 2014).

David Daskal said that the human aspect of Jellyvision's open culture can be partially

attributed to its CEO's views on diversity: "I think part of that is [Amanda Lannert's]

willingness, her openness, to anyone of any background who is smart and interesting and kind of

grounded in a way, mature in a way."

Melanie Tercha discussed the types of employee characteristics found in the company's

cultural expectations:

> I think the things that the culture expects you to abide by are like the simple things that a
> person like me wanted in a job anyway. You know, like kindness and empathy, and being
> open to other people?

Views about the culture ranged from openness about one's passions, or as Katie Knotts

said, "what they're nerdy about," to appreciation. "I'm very grateful to work in an environment

where compassion and openness is the norm," Jason Knotts said. Moreover, the effect of

openness extends to face-to-face, group communication in meetings that Travis Mandrell has with his direct reports. "It's so open that not any one person would hold anything back in that meeting because of anyone else sitting in the room."

If the rest of Jellyvision's office space is any indication, Mandrell's meetings are held in a room with an open design. While there are breakout rooms to allow for individual and small group workspaces, the floor plan in both of its buildings is by and large open. Common spaces—the kitchens, a room full of couches known as Couch World, reception—and gaming areas containing ping pong and foosball tables contribute to the overall collegial vibe and create social spaces that encourage communication and collaboration. The organization's company-wide activities and events such as a weekly catered lunch, band competitions, retirement ceremonies, Spirit Week, and Mustache Day—one of four annual parties that Jellyvision shuts down for—not only add to its quirky reputation and décor, but also foster interaction among all employees (Elejalde-Ruiz, 2015; Ferri-Reed, 2014; see Appendix E for links to images of Jellyvision's physical environment).

An empowered culture. It's clear that Jellyvision's culture is well-established, in part because it is something that its people want, relish and willingly take responsibility for, as evidenced in the more than 7,600 applications the company gets each year (Gottlieb, 2015). Founder Harry Gottlieb "crack[ed] the vault on the super-secret, proprietary, three-step Jellyvision formula (read: common sense guidelines) for attracting and retaining Millennials—and everyone else" in a thought piece written for Inc.com (para. 6), attributing the company's success to:

- employees who feel trusted and believe in the organization's values and who pass that feeling on to potential new hires;

- providing meaningful work, "colleagues they will like and laugh with," and

  managers who help employees grow through respect and trust; and

- building a scalable recruiting and retention system that treats people as

  individuals.

Analysis of secondary sources and transcripts revealed multiple references to a three-part process of hiring, onboarding, and reinforcement that works to ensure that employees are compatible with the existing culture and empowered to sustain it. Of the three parts, hiring came up the most, finding its way into published interviews with the company's CEO and into 17 of the 20 conversations about the company's culture. The CEO and research participants primarily discussed the characteristics of Jellyvision hires, using descriptors like rock star, smart, curious, enthusiastic, adaptable, kind, critical-thinker, humble, self-reflective, and self-motivated.

Hiring. Employees who had been at the company prior to 2011, when VP of People Mary Beth Wynn was hired, rightfully credited CEO Amanda Lannert with finding "good" people who had a combination of communication and relational and technical skills that allowed them to learn and grow with the company while maintaining its inclusive, transparent, and fun atmosphere. In fact, hiring is such an important topic to Lannert that she said it is the top item she wishes she had trusted her instincts about early in her leadership career. To Lannert, cultural DNA is more important as an indicator of business success than what is on an applicant's resume. "Every single one of my big hiring mistakes, every single one of the painful non-fits, has been where I weighted the resume, the past perspective, over the DNA, the future potential perspective" (Lew, 2017, para. 10).

The thorough, multi-step, collaborative vetting process that Jellyvision uses today has evolved under the leadership of Wynn, but still retains its early focus on identifying people who

are professionally talented, can adapt to change, are respectful, honest, and kind, and who

demonstrate what Wynn called a "brand of Jellyvision delight." The company places a high

priority and devotes considerable resources to recruiting and retaining employees directly related

to its business mission (it outsources cleaning), and its success is demonstrated by a low 5

percent voluntary turnover rate, a number that is far below both the 2017 national average of

13.5 percent and the average in the Midwest region of 13. 7 percent calculated using survey

results from more than 30,000 U.S. organizations (Compdata Surveys & Consulting, 2017, pp. 4-

5). The company's perennial listing on both The Chicago Tribune and Crain's Chicago "Best

Places To Work" lists helps Jellyvision find and retain the best talent and fit (Hayles, 2014, p.

78).

Lisa Rosselli-McDermott described the importance of the vetting process that includes

multiple steps for prospective hires and multiple interview levels with the hiring team:

> You have to find the right fit first for your core values and what the organization is, and
> kind of stick to your guns and talk about what you really want in a hire. And then nurture
> the heck out of them. And I think that's what Jellyvision really does. They vet people
> really hard when they hire.

Onboarding. Jellyvision's nurturing, or empowerment, begins with onboarding. An

eBook the company produces and distributes as part of its public relations and marketing

communication for ALEX highlights "simple steps [that companies] can take to ensure . . . new

hires feel taken care of and excited about their new positions" (The Jellyvision Lab, 2016, p. 3).

Advice on everything, from the language in the offer letter to creating personal and work-related

first-day events for the new hire, that is provided mirrors Jellyvision's own onboarding process,

including the use of humor (pp. 10-19). The result is an employee who immediately feels like an

empowered and valued member of the company, and who understands the role she or he plays in

maintaining the culture.

Each person at Jellyvision who makes it through the time-consuming, rigorous hiring process goes through an onboarding procedure that establishes clear expectations about work and behavior, as well as a responsibility to hold themselves and their colleagues accountable for being good citizens. New hires meet with Harry, their team members, and the individuals they report to and have regular feedback sessions with. As Mary Beth Wynn said, establishing the "important cultural stuff . . . is just establishing expectations [that] people of all personalities and skill sets can meet . . . ."

Reinforcement. Reinforcement of expected work performance and behavior occurs through on-going 360-degree feedback sessions at the team and team management levels, and through messages delivered during company-wide events (see Gottlieb and Banerji interviews in Chapter IV). Feedback sessions occur throughout the year to allow employees to enjoy and continue their successes and address any perceived shortcomings should they occur. Key words associated with participant's discussion about feedback included empower, feel/feelings, honest, kind, guidance, support, and helpful.

A transparent culture. Jellyvision's philosophy about transparency can be traced back to the early 2000s when an earlier version of the company that produced game CD-Roms such as Who Wants To Be A Millionaire was on the verge of going under because consumers were shifting from software purchases to Internet gaming. At that time the company was unable to find a way to monetize and scale what it had been very successful at, and it was in such dire straits that it had to lay off 80 percent of its workforce in one day. However, according to Amanda Lannert, who had to lay herself off but was rehired four months later after founder Gottlieb secured funding to restart Jellyvision, "we did a few things right, we were incredibly transparent, very proactive, managed to not run out of money, everyone got severance and long

transitions. And we were able to, in fact, keep a core—the skeleton crew—alive," which allowed Jellyvision to be reborn (Tapp, 2015, para. 9; Wong, 2012, para. 24).

Transparency creates trust and goodwill by providing information that employees need to understand expectations, collaborate, and make decisions (Anderson, 2010, p. 43). While reviews of the company's transparency by former employees on the recruiting site Glassdoor are mixed, the participants in the research study overwhelmingly spoke well of leadership and communication transparency. Those views and my observations are covered in the Leadership and Communication sections that follow.

A delightful culture. Jellyvision brands itself as a company that, well, delights in being delightful, as Amanda Lannert indicated in a March 2017 statement announcing $20 million in growth capital it received from Updata when she said, "Jellyvision is a 100-year-old tech company, give or take 85 years, and we are often recognized for our culture and insanely great people" (Myers, 2017, para. 2).

The business' delightfulness is truly a way of being, as I discovered when I attended a Jellyvision-hosted "[Confusion Destruct-a-thon & Communication Kumbaya](#)" for Chicago Ideas Week in October 2015. During the session, [participants worked with Jellyvision writers and artists](#) in small teams to create a storyline that described and illustrated a complex subject (Fukumoto, 2015). At the end of the design period, all gathered in Couch World where teams presented their stories to each other. Our reward was insight into what the company does and how it does it, and branded kazoo.

Additional evidence of the organization's delightfulness can be found on the company's website—"the promise of doing funny, meaningful, helpful work is what gets us out of our beds in the morning" ("Join Our Team," 2018)—to articles about Jellyvision's entertainment game

heritage (Griner, 2017; Rekdal, 2017; Wong, 2012), to its physical workspace. For example, restroom décor in the company's 848 building included an IKEA-esque "stinky" canvas (see Figure 5.2).
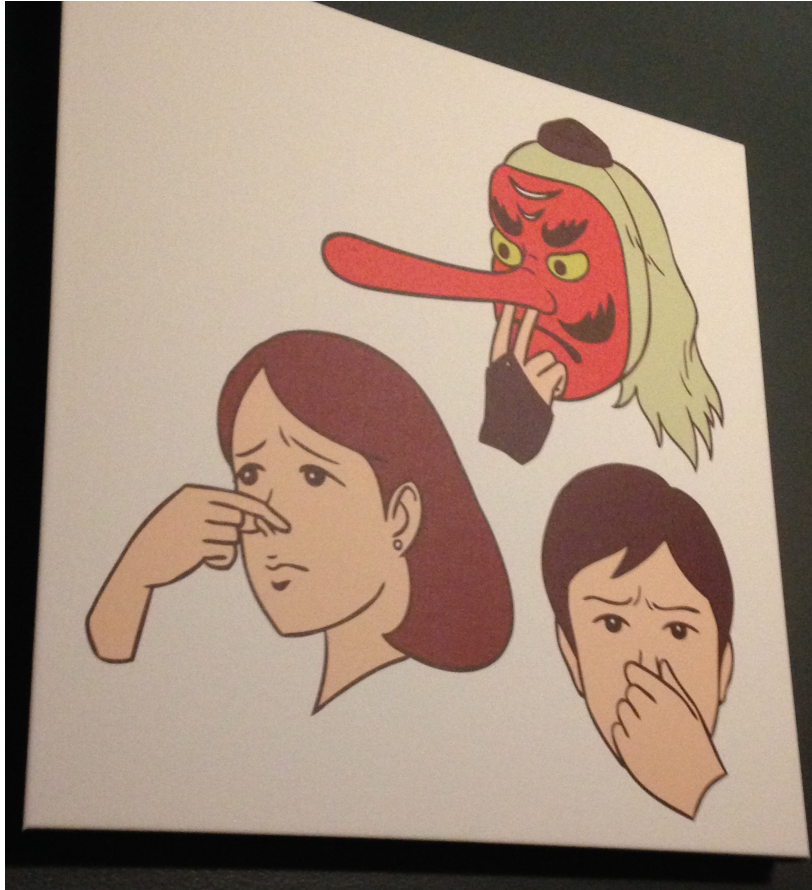
Figure 5.2. An example of Jellyvision bathroom décor. Jellyvision's humor is found not only in its products, but also in the spaces employees inhabit. Image taken by the author during research on location.

Proof also can be found in interviews with participants from Jason Knox, who described Amanda Lannert as his "smart and funny and very focused CEO," to Nicki Halenza, who came to her interview wearing a "No Comment" T-shirt. As Mary Beth Wynn said about delight at Jellyvision, "We try to delight our clients. We try to have our products be delightful. We try to delight each other at work."

However, as with any social norm, the pressure to conform sometimes can be disconcerting. Wynn also stated that for people like her, who do not consider themselves particularly funny or creative, presentations to the company can be nerve wracking. But she was quick to add that not everyone at the company needed to be a Second City veteran to fit in:

> You don't have to have that level of skill, but I do think you have to have a level of intent to delight, to make it fun for people, to have it not be boring to the best of your ability. And I think we really, we share that and we look for people who kind of bring that kind of sparkle to what they're doing.

Thematic Analysis of Jellyvision's Leadership

Gallegos posited that leadership must be inclusive in order to cope with the contextual reality of today's organizations as "one of ever-expanding diversity in which leadership happens across levels, roles, and cultures" (Gallegos, 2014, pp. 177-178). Such a context requires people at all levels within an organization who can span boundaries and use their collective intelligence "to learn their way to . . . solutions" (Heifetz & Laurie, cited in Gallegos, p. 178). It also requires a more decentralized and flexible structure to foster everyday leadership opportunities (Ernst & Yip, cited in Gallegos, p. 177). Regardless of their position at the company, and in keeping with research on inclusive leadership behaviors, almost all participants described cultural expectations, events, and stories that indicated leadership is an everyday activity that can be enacted by anyone at Jellyvision (Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2010; Gallegos, 2014; Henderson, 2014; Vaill, 1996).

Inclusive leadership. Evidence of inclusive leadership practices, which include corporate structure and leader accessibility, corporate philosophy, feedback culture, and boundary-spanning helpfulness at Jellyvision are discussed below (Gallegos, 2014, p. 192-195).

Corporate structure and accessibility of leaders. Jellyvision's corporate structure changed dramatically as it started to scale around 2012. At that time, news articles and online interviews with Amanda Lannert mentioned the need to assemble an executive team (Wong, 2012). And while the CEO took the advice to heart, she also struggled with finding a way to refer to them that did not seem hierarchical or possessive. As Simone Snook noted in 2016:

> [T]hey're still trying to figure out what to call the people who report directly to Amanda. You may've heard about this, they were called ADRs, Amanda Direct Reports, for a very long time. And we're trying to find another term that maybe, Amanda doesn't want it to be so much about her. She's like, "It really shouldn't be this much about me." But at the same time, we've played with like "Oh, executive leadership team," and that sounds weird. So everyone has kept using ADR for now.

In addition to the attempt to find more inclusive nomenclature, and despite the addition of vice president and senior vice president titles and positions on the company flow chart, Jellyvision has tried to maintain a decentralized and flexible structure that allows people to identify potential roles and work their way into them, as Courtney Flannery did with her job as the sales team's hiring and training manager. The company has also tried to keep an open communication structure as much as possible. Amanda again sets that standard with her open door policy (see Banerji interview in Chapter IV), and it is followed by CMO Bob Armour both in communication and location accessibility. As Melanie Chapman described it, "Bob, who's our CMO, sits out with us, which I think really breaks down barriers in communication that way."

Corporate philosophy. Jenny Fukumoto described leadership as an everyday activity that can be enacted by anyone because of Jellyvision's leadership structure and philosophy:

> There are so many opportunities here at Jellyvision to step up and, you know, lend my skills to the greater good, and that's, to me, what leadership is. Being able to step up and help out in some way and be recognized for it. . . I've worked at very small companies, you know, seven folks, and I've worked at, actually this is the largest company I've worked for and we're almost, we're at 250 right now. So I think that, ironically, at the largest company—Jellyvision—I've worked for, leadership is the flattest, because it really is, we really empower anyone to step up and be a leader.

Nicki Halenza, who identifies as a leader described leadership at Jellyvision as enacted by people "who actually kind of do [the work] or help implement that actual process." It's a view that Halenza said has been passed down from the CEO and vice president level.

> We had a meeting with a production team, with Amanda, and also Brynn, and they told us basically [that] the difference between management and leadership is that there's not always a management role, . . . but there are plenty of opportunities for leadership, or to step up into leadership-type positions varying from project to project.

Feedback culture. Katie Knotts, Linda Dao, and Rudra Banerji stressed Jellyvision's commitment to embracing improvement through feedback from everyone, even if it means changing existing practices. Banerji said that Jellyvision's leaders regularly inform "people that a key part of their job is to tell [management] what we're missing because we've been here too long. What's the thing that we just got used to doing?"

Dao agreed, stating that everyone from the CEO to the vice president of sales to the vice president of people request and appreciate feedback from anyone at the company. "I mean, what a great organization, where, across the board everyone's asking 'How can we do better?' Those are great leaders."

Boundary-spanning helpfulness. Knotts said that the apprentices who are hired on are the ones who are helpful, willing to span boundaries, and are able to suggest improvements even when others might be satisfied with the status quo. "[They're the ones who were always right there saying, 'How can I help? What can I do? Let me take this. Here is a solution that you didn't ask for that's going to make things easier.'"

The company's mantra, "Be Helpful," is an important part of Jellyvision's leadership philosophy. As Mary Beth Wynn explained:

> We are very much more "You build a good team. You let them run and they're going to [do good things] ." Really, if it's more important to you to be like "I need great people

and I need to be able to give them the resources that they need, and then they do amazing things that I can't possibly take credit for that," that's the kind of management we're looking for.

Empowered leadership. According to Gottlieb, empowering everyone to lead is a process that does not begin with the people who are traditionally identified as leaders, but it must be modeled by those people.

> The stage is set and it's very, very important that those kind of leadership people live the values that they want to see in others. . . . [I]f you trust people to be good to each other, expect them to be good to each other, and as leaders you demonstrate that, then they are good to each other. And work hard for each other.

In his view, leadership and followership must be enacted by everyone at some point, which is consistent with DAC (Drath, et al., 2008) and means that deeper learning must occur in order for employees to develop as leaders (Booysen, 2014). Therefore, encouraging and supporting personal development is key to empowering people to lead.

Melanie Chapman and Melanie Tercha, both of whom discussed acts of everyday leadership that they engage in, spoke about the support they have received as they transitioned into their latest roles at the company. Chapman described the chief marketing officer's leadership style as "very much, supportive in that, if I ever need help, all I have to do is raise my hand and he'll come in and he'll give advice." Tercha said that she sees her manager as "somebody who is looking to remove constraints from me, or push me to do the thing I might be a little nervous about doing."

But empowerment at Jellyvision doesn't stop with interpersonal interactions. The company pays for employees to pursue advanced education through coursework and training. Melanie Chapman received training directly related to her position as email and automation marketing manager. And Lisa Rosselli-McDermott was enrolled in classes on servant leadership through Harvard Extension.

Transparent leadership. The benefits of transparency and communication of transparency in business and in the workplace have been discussed numerous times and include the creation and restoration of stakeholder trust, ethical behavior, quality of productivity, better innovation, lower costs, sustainable business, and increased market value (Auger, 2014; Bandsuch, Pate, & Thies, 2008; Estlund, 2011; Rosenfeld & Denice, 2015; Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016; Tapscott & Ticoll, 2003). Most participants' views about transparency were related to communication and therefore are discussed in that section later in this chapter. However, the contexts in which transparent communication occurred included acknowledgment of leadership style and organizational benefits, both of which are discussed below.

Leadership style. As stated earlier, Jellyvision's foundation for transparency in leadership can be traced to a darker time in the company's past when 80 percent of employees lost their jobs. Amanda Lannert felt transparency allowed employees to have time—close to nine months for some—to find new positions elsewhere (Wong, 2012; Stengel, 2016).

Benefits. Transparency fifteen years later still begins at the top at Jellyvision. Leadership that is transparent builds trust and earns loyalty, as Melanie Tercha indicated:

> The other thing that I would say about Jellyvision and why it's easier to feel loyal to them is the feeling of transparency that I have. Like if a decision is going to be made, we will get such early warning about it, even just like "We're thinking about doing this thing" is a large group meeting with everybody there.

As Anderson (2010) stated, transparency provides employees with the information they need to make decisions individually and collaboratively, and to grow, creating a communication network that transcends notions of hierarchy and status (Satell, 2015). Brynn Michelich, senior vice president of operations, stressed leadership transparency and its benefits for the company:

> Transparency of thinking allows good ideas to come from anywhere. One, it's the transparency and trust. Two, good ideas come from anywhere. So if we're trying to think through something or we're like, we're thinking about doing this new product, or this is

probably the next thing we're going to focus on or something like that, then you get people who come out of the woodwork and go "I actually, I have experience with that," or "My brother did a Ph.D. thing on that," and we're like, "Oh, amazing!" But like if we hadn't have told people, we wouldn't have gotten that expertise.

Lisa Rosselli-McDermott said that she tries to manage with a lot of transparency in order to gather feedback from her staff so that they can make the best collaborative decision about how to proceed. She said that information does not always arrive when needed, but clarification is easy to get:

> Yeah, sometimes there's a little bit of a clog in that drain. But, conversely, you can simply put an appointment on Amanda's calendar be like "Hey, I have questions about this," and she will answer them. Or it's in an email and she will be completely transparent about it. It's not as if they're trying to keep stuff from us, it's just that they're working it out.

Delightful leadership. As established in the discussion about the cultural manifestations of delight, humor and a sense of fun permeate all levels of Jellyvision. Leadership is no exception.

Take Amanda Lannert for example. Not only is she described as fun by the company's founder and other colleagues in Chicago's press (Pletz, 2015; Wong 2012) but she also has lent her birthday to a company-wide celebration called Mustache Day, when employees "don mustaches, dress in clever/funny/weird costumes, and celebrate [their] awesome colleagues" (Fukumoto, 2016). Even Harry Gottlieb participates in what Lannert calls a "very great, celebratory, stupid company holiday," serving employees meat at an area restaurant (Jellyvision, 2016; Wong, 2012, para. 2).

According to Katie Knotts, leaders like Production Director Sam Hebert wear their sense of fun on the sleeves and in their hair: "You know Sam, like, she's got this streak of pink and she's always wearing all the colors of the rainbow." And some, like Vice President of Design

Travis Mandell, exhibit humor visually and in written form in their [official biography](#) on the company's website (Travis Mandrell, 2017).

Thematic Analysis of Jellyvision's Communication

As might be expected from a company that specializes in producing software that makes complex concepts accessible, Jellyvision's cultural concepts are clearly and consistently articulated throughout all levels of the organization, its artifacts, and its physical environment. Those concepts also are clearly evident in the stories of the case participants who serve as public relations ambassadors in everyday contexts. Additionally, they are presented to the external world in the form of press releases and talking points about culture, cultural fit, and hiring that inform the stories published by third parties as evidenced by search engine results for searches about the company.

Hayles (2014) said such messaging practices indicate an advanced inclusive environment (p. 70). Like other organizations that are in advanced stages of realizing a vision of diversity and inclusion, Jellyvision has communicated messages about respect, appreciation, inclusivity, and transformation, for more than a decade. It has leaders who "acknowledge when unfortunate things occur and talk about corrective action as well as learning and prevention" (p. 70). Additionally, messages and actions of inclusion are incorporated into all business and human resource processes. Hallmarks of communication in an advanced inclusive environment include "shifts toward messages to reinforce progress, avoid regression, celebrate successes, take on new challenges, and institutionalize process . . ." (p. 70). These inclusive leadership communication practices have much in common with public relations educators' thoughts about practitioner leaders who need to be able to listen for and act on feedback that "enables [them] to go back and modify, reinforce, or even keep things the way they are" (Ewing et al., 2019, p. 43).

Communication in an inclusive organization flows freely across levels of responsibility in order to leverage employees' knowledge and build criteria-guided operating systems that facilitate continuous learning about oneself and others in order to create both personal and business growth (Woods, 2002, p. 39). Examples of how Jellyvision's communication practices meet the criteria for an advanced diverse and inclusive organization can be found in the following discussion of the emergent themes and their sub-themes.

Inclusive communication. Jellyvision's inclusive communication practices are evident in the diversity-related messages that it produces for external and internal audiences and in its internal communication expectations and practices.

Diversity-related messages. Diversity is an essential part of an inclusive organization because "it challenges individuals to develop an expanded set of awareness, interpersonal and leadership skills, including open-mindedness, curiosity for learning about others, flexibility, dialogue rather than debate, tolerance for ambiguity, understanding, [and] fairness and consistency without imposing sameness" (Woods, 2002, p. 38). However, it tends to be missing from the workforce in technology, as illustrated in a [2016 study of 38 leading technology companies' self-reported gender and race data](#) that showed that the workforce was 63 percent male and 54 percent white (Information Is Beautiful, 2017).

Jellyvision does not publish data about the gender or race diversity of its workforce. However, Mary Beth Wynn told the business magazine Fast Company in 2016 that the company's gender breakdown was 51 percent male and 49 percent female, and the leadership team breakdown was 55 percent male and 45 percent female (Dishman, 2016, para. 16); it is currently at 50 percent (Hines, 2018). According to Wynn, the higher-than-average gender representation was not the result of a direct initiative, "as much as a byproduct of the

company's values, leadership, and an intentional recruitment process" (Dishman, 2016, para. 17).

External communication also plays a large role. Wynn said that the company tells recruiters to find diverse candidates, and that language on the Jellyvision website includes job descriptions that emphasize the characteristics of both the job and job applicant (Dishman, para. 19-22). An FAQ page that was written to address questions and needs of transgender and disabled candidates has been replaced by inclusive language on the current job openings page ("Join Our Team," 2018).

According to an Associated Press story, the evolution of audience and communication awareness and the language change was prompted by the hiring of the company's first transgender employee (Rosenberg, 2016). The website language change prompted the company to reexamine how it addresses transgender candidates and introduces them to their new colleagues (Rosenberg, 2016).

In actuality, the awareness may have begun sooner. Office manager Simone Snook's discussion (see Chapter IV) with the company's transgender employee, who had already sent a company-wide email about his transition, about the need for inclusive signage for restrooms set the stage for reevaluating other uses of written and verbal language at the company. It is similar to the personal realization about the everyday masculinization of language that Amanda Lannert (2015) had and wrote about in an article for Built in Chicago.

An external communication-related effort to recruit a more racially diverse workforce, and thereby transform the industry, included partnering with Tech While Black, an online community for black technology professionals, to host a free, open access, evening workshop at Jellyvision's 848 location in October 2016. Participants in the networking event could watch new

product demonstrations and learn tips and techniques for career growth ("Learn About Tech While Black," 2018; Moss, 2016).

As indicated by some of the study's participants, ongoing conversations across departments and responsibility levels at Jellyvision recognize the need for more diversity within technology in general and the organization's own walls specifically. For example, Hiring and Training Manager Courtney Flannery was hyperaware of the organization's policy to "look at people from all walks of life." People Apprentice Katie Knotts said that "it's been really interesting to be in the HR kind of meetings talking about how do we make sure that our job application or our job descriptions are showing [diverse candidates] that [Jellyvision is] very accepting." And Chief Market Officer Bob Armour discussed the company's need to promote itself and its jobs at varied venues and to diverse audiences in order to hire "the best possible people."

The company's more recent external public relations messaging outlines how it is addressing that need. Human Resources manager Hibben Rothschild spoke about the company's grassroots diversity group, DiversityFTW, that "meets regularly to discuss and plan initiatives to help foster an inclusive environment," stating that "the group's membership and scope will expand in 2018 as it partners more closely with senior leadership to ensure that diversity and inclusiveness are infused into every part of our culture and are top of mind for every person at every level" (Hines, 2018, para. 31). Additionally, the organization has been exploring "new avenues for recruitment and community involvement, from visiting historically black colleges to partnering with Everyone Can Code in Chicago," to hosting a mentoring event with Embarc, a three-year, experience-based program that "pair(ed) 25 high school students with 25 Jellyvision

employees to share stories and give the students exposure to different career paths and office environments" (Hines, 2018, para. 33).

Communication expectations and practices. Jellyvision's internal communication practices begin with Harry Gottlieb's honest-but-kind and schmutz pact philosophies, which set forth a moral expectation, or vision, to communicate responsibly. It is a communication strategy that requires employees who have strong communication and relational skills, and who are empowered to lead as examples every day. Furthermore, it is illustrative of how inclusive leadership, which is learned and practiced collectively and cyclically in context by people committed to common good (Booysen, 2014, pp. 305-306), can foster public relations leadership that is "a dynamic process that encompasses a complex mix of individual skills and personal attributes, values, and behaviors that consistently produce ethical and effective communication practice" (Berger & Meng, 2010, p. 427).

Honest-but-kind. All Jellyvision employees are expected to treat each other with respect, even when discussing difficult topics. The philosophy is part of the company's dedication to seeking and respectfully receiving feedback.

According to Harry Gottlieb, honest-but-kind communication is a skill. "[I]t has to do with the words that you choose, your body language, and empathy, and it's something that one can get good at doing." Mary Beth Wynn said that the skill involves paying attention and considerately and thoughtfully listening before honestly and kindly responding to what you hear. In her view, engaged and respectful dialogue "gets around a lot of communication differences."

It is a skill that illustrates "an emphasis on communication as a tool for negotiating relationships" instead of one concerned with communication management (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 23). Such negotiation often requires self-awareness and -reflection, a willingness to hear

varied viewpoints, and an empowerment to challenge cultural assumptions, all of which are the

hallmarks of inclusive leadership.

Simone Snook's example of working with the company's transgender employee is

perhaps the best example of a conversation that challenged an assumed norm about acceptable

restroom signage:

> [The transgender employee] is great and certainly a person brought a lot of things we
> might not have considered to the forefront of our attention, which is great. I think it can
> be really difficult to speak up about things, but I do truly feel Jellyvision is like "Oh no.
> Please, please, please. Good or bad, speak up about things."

Schmutz pact. The company also expects employees to speak up whenever they notice

something is amiss. Harry sees the responsibility as a moral one, noting that withholding

information about something that does not meet the shared values of Jellyvision contributes to its

potential damage to the social and business fabric of the organization.

CMO Bob Armour concurs. He stated that an expectation of honesty and responsibility at

all levels of the organization is essential when "everybody is one-click away from doing bad

things."

Katie Knotts said that the expectation of direct communication that is the schumtz pact
works:
> What that means here is that if somebody does something or says something that's not
> ok, then you are going to go to that person. You're not going to call them out in front of
> everybody, but you're going to say, "Hey. I just wanted to let you know that that wasn't
> an alright thing." So that works. It really, really, really works.

My own interactions with participants and other Jellyvision employees bear out her

assessment. Participants were genuinely curious about my research and were not afraid to ask

questions in order to reconcile what I was doing with their own understandings of

communication, public relations, and leadership. Though my interactions with other employees

were limited to friendly "hellos" and small talk, I was able to experience direct communication

with someone who was inconvenienced by my interview schedule. One interview session ran

over its allotted time and the participant and I were interrupted by another Jellyvision employee

who had booked the room we were in in order to make calls for two hours. Although we clearly

were not conducting "official" business and keeping him from his work, he conscientiously and

graciously offered more time for us to finish the thread we were discussing. The exchange was

honest, direct, kind, and a perfect example of public relations diplomacy.

Although every participant who spoke of internal communication expectations and

practices framed them as good, three people pointed out a shortcoming in translating theory into

practice. Harry described it most succinctly: "Our problem around here leans more toward not

that people have a difficulty with being kind. It's that people have a difficulty with being

honest."

Brynn Michelich put the issue into a context that illustrated the role that skill, or lack

thereof, can play with the best communication processes:

> Honest is the tough part there, because sometimes you have to sit down with a co-worker
> or your manager or somebody and say, like, "This thing that you did was frustrating to
> me or upset me or whatever, so let's talk about it and let's fix it so that we have a better
> working relationship." That's really difficult. Most people avoid conflict.

Courtney Flannery's assessment of the communication expectation also indicates a

weakness when it comes to talking about difficult subjects. She attributed the issue to a

combination of a relatively flat leadership structure and the kindness of Jellyvision employees.

"There's a lot of 'I don't want to upset somebody.' So rather than upset them, they just change

[the way they do] things and then hope that it's ok." She said that mindset can be detrimental to

accomplishing business goals if it goes unchecked. "We lose a lot of that transparency of 'This is

what's wrong, can we fix it?' in the weeds of 'We can't be rude. We can't be honest. That's

[being] critical.'"

Empowered communication. Jellyvision employees are empowered to communicate through an environment structured for face-to-face communication and a feedback culture that encourages employees to identify and share better processes.

A communication environment. As established in the culture section, Jellyvision's physical workspaces are structured for face-to-face communication whether the faces are in the same room or somewhere else in the city, country, or world. Lisa Rosselli-McDermott said that employees are encouraged to talk face to face whenever possible. To that end, "the company is wired to talk with and see each other openly in almost every room." Because a portion of Jellyvision's workforce works remotely, and the [company encourages its office-based staff to work remotely](#) as needed, Rosselli-McDermott said that the company is "wired for remote people to work properly." Examples of the technology—table-mounted tablets and wall-mounted screens—Rosselli-McDermott referred to can be found on the company's [social media sites](#).

Feedback culture. Communication empowerment also occurs when employees are encouraged to share knowledge about each other and business processes [Woods, 2002, p. 39]. However, according to Harry Gottlieb, Jellyvision's current feedback structure is the result of the crash of a previous version of the company in 2001. He said that at that time the company employed 70 people, but it did not have the business processes in place to track employee performance and act on the results. "We did a bad job of giving people feedback."

Melanie Tercha described how the Jellyvision that exists now actively seeks feedback from employees following its very busy open enrollment season:

> Open enrollment is our busy season, and at the end of that we always have feedback meetings about, like, "How do you think it went? What are the ways that you think we could improve for next year? What were your pain points?"

She said that feedback is solicited at other times, as well. "I just had a meeting this week where I was looking at a new tool that eventually we'll all be using and it was to give feedback on that tool."

Nicki Halenza described a 360-feedback session where management was looking for help in clarifying roles in production to allow for employee growth. And Becki Schneider said that the direct personal feedback that everyone gives about the people they work with is a "great thing."

Transparent communication. While Jellyvision may not have been good at providing employee feedback and support in its early years, the company has always been transparent, even if, as Brynn Michelich said, it creates information overload:

> Sometimes [the transparency is] to our detriment. We try to tell our employees everything. And sometimes that causes what I think people would call whiplash, because if we tell them one thing and then we change our minds, it's like people feel whiplashed. But we choose that over what so many companies do, which is "don't say anything until it's all figured out," because we really believe that we're all family and it's hard to do what we're doing, it's hard to grow the way that we're growing, but the best way to do that is to get the trust of everybody to know that we'll be honest and that we're not hiding anything from them.

She said, ultimately, the frustration that everyone in the company experiences as they try to figure out how to navigate an ever-changing business climate is worth the effort:

> We've talked about a lot, like, "Should we stop communicating things as we find them out then communicate what we know for sure?" And then we're like, "No we shouldn't. We should be honest with people so that they see what we're going through." So that hasn't changed at all.

As committed as Jellyvision is to transparent communication, Rosselli-McDermott said that she feels like employees are sometimes kept in the dark too long about potential business decisions that may affect team workloads. "I think where the communication falters a bit is there's a lot happening up top. . . . And I think we don't hear about it until it's 'here's the work. Do it.'"

Echoing Michelich's comments about the communication frustration factor, she also acknowledges that too much transparency can have a negative effect as well. She said that the mention of potential products that might be developed has sent her team into a panic.

> They're like "Oh my god. There's too much work." So that's an example of like, "probably too early to tell them, because now they're freaking out." [The leadership] is trying to be transparent and show us something they're really excited about, and in turn the developers get really nervous.

Participants also noted that the company's management expects open and honest feedback from employees, offering as examples Amanda Lannert's open-door policy and the organization-wide expectation that anyone and everyone should be willing to identify and proffer better ways of accomplishing what Jellyvision does and how it does it.

Delightful communication. When it comes to Jellyvision, delightful and communication go together like rama lama lama ka dinga da dinga dong, which is appropriate considering that the original Grease was also born in Chicago (Kogan, 2016). The company has made its multi-millions using a formula of humorous writing to explain complex and mind-numbing subjects like health insurance options to employees weary of information that has more tiers than extravagant wedding cake.

Examples of the Jellyeffect on communication can be seen in employees' use of gifs to illustrate email messages (K. Knotts, personal communication, April 2014), on the company's website, in tutorials on its ALEX YouTube channel, and in the first sentence of the paragraph above.

According to Business Support Manager Danny Coleman, delight is so important to the people at Jellyvision that they insisted on a communication platform that was "both functional and delightful," turning down another functional option because it "looked like it was designed by an engineer."

Summary of Jellyvision Thematic Analyses

This chapter examined themes, contexts, and evidence to uncover the key ways in which inclusive leadership and communication manifest at Jellyvision. A comparison (see Figure 5.3) of the ways in which inclusivity, empowerment, transparency, and delightfulness occur and are experienced by employees reveal that the company has a clear vision for its culture, coordination and integration of its actions and language use to support its cultural vision, and people who are dedicated to the collective success of the organization's culture. In that way, Jellyvision is a place of direction, alignment, and commitment (DAC) where everyday leadership occurs (Drath et al., 2008; McCauley, 2014, p. 1).

The analyses of the manifestations of culture, leadership, and communication provide insight into how DAC is created and sustained at Jellyvision. It is clear through review of participant transcripts and secondary sources, as well as my own observations, that the organization's culture is based on very straight forward concepts of respect, trust, individual value, high expectations of people's work and personal capabilities, and clear, honest, and kind communication in all applications. Hiring, onboarding, and reinforcement of inclusive messages through internal and external communication, as well as a commitment to employees' personal growth and development, play key roles in sustaining the company's culture despite rapid growth. Participants' stories overwhelmingly indicate that Jellyvision is a safe learning and working environment where people can engage in self-reflection and self-expression (Ferdman & Roberts, 2014), and where inclusive leaders of business and public relations communication practices can be developed (Booysen, 2014; Ferdman, 2014).

The findings indicate that Jellyvision's success is a result of DAC that includes inclusive behaviors and organizational policies and practices that result in inclusivity, empowerment,

Inclusivity

individuals valued & accepted, people are open minded, environment is open, decentralized/flexible leadership, accessible leadership, helpful/boundary-spanning expectation, sense of responsibility and trust, creates shared values

Empowerment

everyday leadership expectation, individuals trusted, people are supported, environment is conducive to work,   people are responsible for success, helpful/boundary-spanning expectation, feedback culture
creates shared values

Culture, Leadership, Communication

Transparency

creates trust & goodwill facilitates personal growth encourages collaboration creates shared values, open/honest communication/feedback, can cause confusion

Delightfulness

values the individual, values humor, relieves tension, celebrates successes, creates unity, facilitated by environment, creates passion, creates shared values

Figure 5.3. Characteristics of inclusivity, empowerment, transparency, and delightfulness in Jellyvision's culture. Analysis revealed that the company's expectations, practices, and values support direction, alignment, and commitment.

transparency, and delightfulness (Ferdman, 2014; McCauley, 2004). How this knowledge can be

used to inform the creation of a PRL curriculum are discussed in Chapter VI.

Chapter VI: Toward A PRL Curriculum

As established earlier in this dissertation, multiple voices from educational and professional arenas have called for change in the way in which public relations undergraduates are prepared to navigate complex communication challenges in the 21st century. The most-recent proposals to address this change have touched on the idea of leadership (Berger & Meng, 2014; Bronstein & Fitzpatrick, 2015; Cheng & de Gregorio, 2008; Demetirous, 2013; Gregory & Willis, 2013; Holthausen, 2000; L'Etang, 2005; Neff, 2010; Tyler, 2005), and, in one instance, have explored best leadership development practices for undergraduates in accredited and/or certified public relations programs (Ewing et al., 2019). However, all have left out any framework for designing a curriculum for leadership in public relations programs in higher education.

The review of the literature in Chapter II shows ample evidence that public relations, because it is a relational act, should be inclusive. Furthermore, an inclusive approach to public relations suggests new ways in which the profession can contribute to the health and social responsibility of organizations. Therefore, any attempt to incorporate leadership into the undergraduate curriculum would need to examine inclusive leadership and communication practices in complex, adaptive environments to provide insight into the skills and knowledge that students would need to prosper.

The purpose of this chapter is three-fold. First, it offers a discussion about how the lessons learned from the Jellyvision case study, one about an organization that exemplifies very successful inclusive leadership and communication practices, can be used to guide the development of a PRL curriculum. Second, it offers a review of public relations programs accredited by both AEJMC and PRSA (CEPR) in order to establish a representative sample of

current public relations curricula as a basis for comparison. Third, it answers the question: What would a PRL curriculum look like? The chapter concludes with a discussion of the practicalities of implementing curriculum change and identified avenues for further research.

Lessons Learned from the Jellyvision Case Study

Three lessons were learned from the Jellyvison case study: 1) the organization practices an inclusive, whole-systems approach to leadership; 2) the company creates a safe learning environment through clear communication and practice of cultural expectations; and 3) hires and supports people who have defined communication and relational skills that are a fit for the company culture. Each of the lessons is presented in more detail below.

Leadership approach. It is clear that Jellyvision is a successful, complex, adaptive organization committed to inclusivity. It can be argued that the success of its culture can be attributed to Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC), a whole-system practice, which recognizes that the essential properties of the whole are formed by the relationships between its parts (Senge, 2006). As discussed in Chapter II, DAC recognizes that "leadership happens in the interactions and exchanges among people with shared work" (McCauley, 2014, p. 1). The same can be said for public relations leadership, which can serve as "a catalyst for change" (Ewing et al., 2019, p. 43).

As the findings indicate, Jellyvision has fostered and sustained its inclusive culture through DAC. Because leadership practice is not tied to individual managers in DAC, it can happen within and across any number of groups, and across levels and functions. In short, successful leadership can be enacted by anyone in a collective context as long as, according to DAC, it produces:

- agreement on what the collective is trying to achieve (direction);

- effective coordination and integration of the different aspects of the work, (including systems and processes, so that it fits together in service of the shared direction (alignment); and

- people who make the success of the collective (not just their individual success) a personal priority (commitment). (McCauley, 2014, p. 1)

Analysis of participants' experiences, secondary sources, and my observations of Jellyvision during several visits revealed behaviors, practices, and processes that meet or exceed the DAC criteria. Figure 6.1 illustrates how direction, alignment, and commitment are created at Jellyvision to form an inclusive culture.

Safe learning environment. The case study also revealed that Jellyvision creates an environment of trust, respect, and a sense of responsibility through clear, consistent communication and action that work together to create and ultimately achieve commitment to both the business and cultural expectations of the company.

As discussed in Chapter V, examples of the safe learning environment include openness of both Jellyvision's people and workspaces that allow employees to be their best selves, do their best work, and learn to lead. The message that employees are valued, accepted, and supported through consistent expectations and communication, as well as a work environment that facilitates face-to-face meetings was evident in the interviews conducted, observations made during site visits, and in third-party media articles on CEO Amanda Lannert.

Empowerment of Jellyvision employees through organizational expectations of, and support for, personal growth, a mentoring system and comprehensive onboarding for new hires, and 360-degree feedback constructed to help them succeed help create and maintain the community, safe places for dialogue, and fully functioning society are discussed in the public

Direction → **Alignment** → **Commitment**

Direction
- By creating simple concepts that established communication protocol, inclusive attitude and behavior, and trust
- By failing and learning from mistakes
- By designing policies that complemented the vision
- By studying industry trends
- By hiring people who shared similar values of inclusiveness, transparency, adaptability, and fun
- By clearly stating expectations

Alignment
- By being open to and continuously requesting feedback
- By making adjustments based on feedback
- By redesigning roles
- By creating fun collective events
- By tracking employee performance and fit and offering periodic feedback
- By creating a mentor system
- By supporting personal growth opportunities
- By desiging workspaces that support needs and expectations
- By creating an onboarding process consistent with organizational values and expectation
- By being transparent in all business matters
- By creating a collaborative hiring system to find the right DNA fit
- By empowering employees to make decisions

Commitment
- By rewarding people with new roles/positions
- By celebrating successes
- By offering collective bonuses
- By charging all hires with the responsibility to maintain culture of the organization
- By communicating concepts clearly and consistently through all channels
- Through commitment contagion

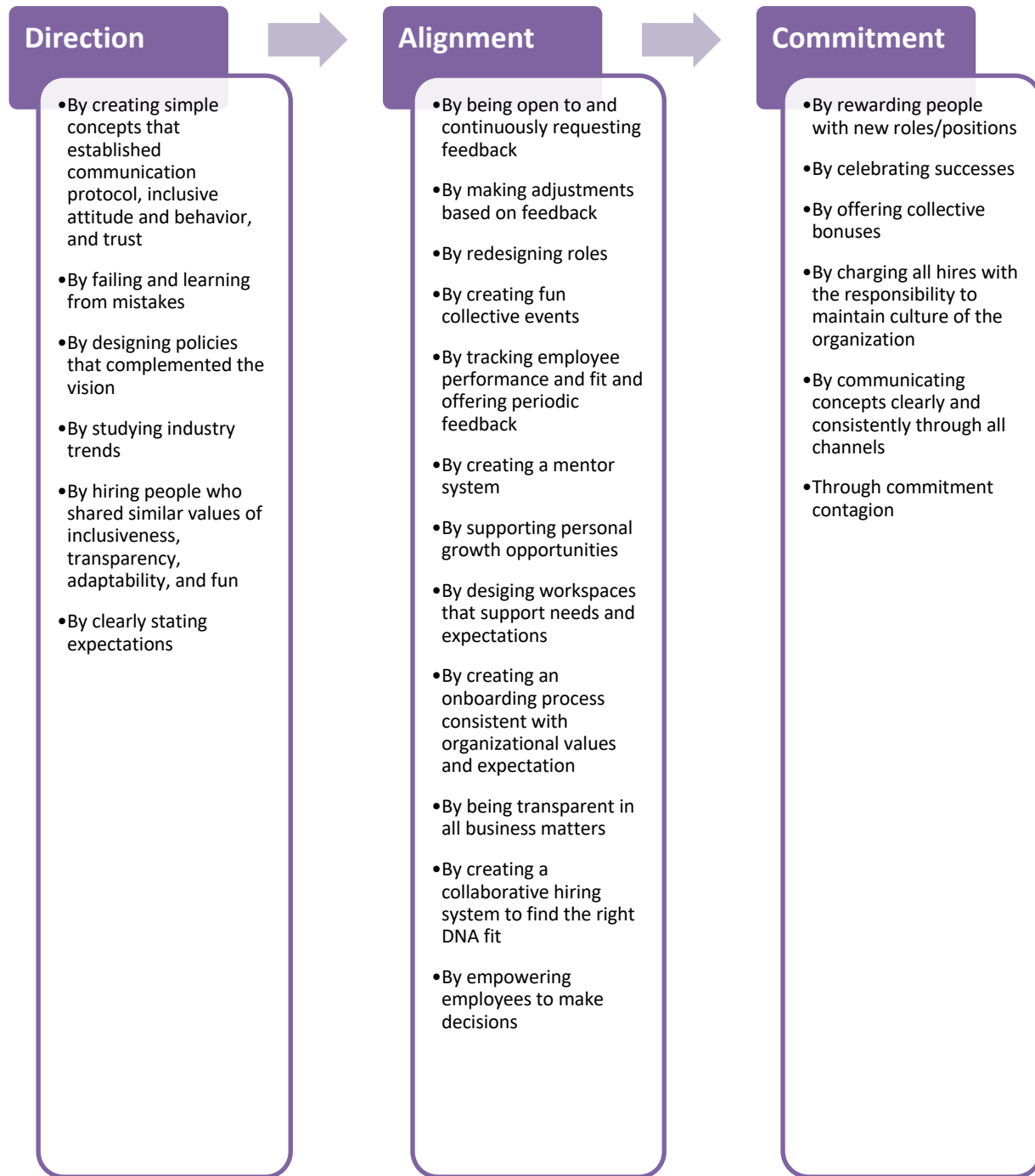*Figure 6.1*. How DAC creates Jellyvision's inclusive culture. Findings from the Jellyvision case study indicate that the organization uses direction, alignment, and commitment to create an inclusive culture of communication and work. This way of summarizing how DAC was generated in a specific case study was adapted from *Making Leadership Happen*, McCauley, 2014, pp. 3, 5. Copyright 2014 by the Center for Creative Leadership.

relations literature as necessary both for a new direction in academic research and professionals to take on a leadership role (Ewing et al., 2019; Heath, 2006; "The Madrid Momentum," 2015).

Hiring and support. Organizations do not exist without the people who first organize themselves then create and run a resulting organization, through human communication processes (Weick, 1979; Wheatley & Frieze, 2006). Participants' views and secondary sources indicated that hiring and support of employees' personal development are the keys to Jellyvision's success. The company hires for a combination of communication, relational, and technical skills that fit a culture that expects hard and oftentimes technical work, collaboration, respect, honesty, ethical citizenship, clear communication, inclusion, and delight. Jellyvision not only expects employees to help make the company better through respectful communication, collaboration, and feedback, but it also empowers and supports people through respectful communication, work, feedback, continuing education, and non-work related activities.

Jellyvision is a prime example of the ways in which inclusivity can become a core component of organizational culture if DAC is applied. It is also a prime example of how inclusive, everyday leadership and public relations leadership can be developed (Booysen, 2014; Ewing et al., 2019). The use of consistent language to describe similar experiences in the interviews and secondary material indicate not only an adoption of consistent messaging that any public relations practitioner would envy, but also the creation of an environment that would allow public relations leadership realize the profession's potential to do good.

The Current Public Relations Curriculum

It is one thing to know that inclusive leadership can be developed and that it has the potential to help undergraduates develop the skills that professionals and educators say are in short supply. It is another thing entirely to try to lead a curriculum change initiative for an entire

discipline. But, as Berger and Meng (2014) suggested, educators will have to lean into the discomfort of a paradigm shift in order to help students and the profession realize their collective potential.

However, before a new curriculum can be proposed, the current one must be examined in order to identify areas of improvement (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2018). As noted in the literature review, it is virtually impossible and beyond the scope of the research in this dissertation to provide a definitive comprehensive examination of how leadership is treated in public relations curricula throughout the United States. The extreme difficulty of such an endeavor lies in the inconsistencies in where programs and courses are housed within universities, in the number of the types of courses taught, in extant accreditation practices and status, and lack of access to course syllabi to determine what classes cover, what texts/readings are assigned, and what learning activities students are expected to engage in (Wright, 2011). Therefore, a representative sample of undergraduate public relations programs and their courses are offered as an illustration of the similarities among degree paths at universities throughout the nation.

A representative sample of standard PR courses. An examination of accredited undergraduate public relations programs at U.S. universities was conducted in order to uncover similarities in curriculum structure and course content that would serve as a representative sample of a standard curriculum. As stated earlier in this dissertation, public relations programs can seek accreditation from AEJMC and PRSA's CEPR. The programs reviewed were chosen from a list of institutions that were accredited by both for reasons involving guarantee of a public relations program, curriculum standardization, and a manageable sample size.

PR program guarantee. Any academic program that seeks CEPR certification must offer a public relations curriculum that has at least a minimum group of particular classes that cover specific areas of the profession. Those that receive AEJMC certification do not necessarily have to offer a program of study in public relations, because the accrediting criteria is based primarily on values and competencies associated with the field of journalism and the ACEJMC accreditation is for entire departments only. At the time research was conducted, AEJMC listed 103 accredited programs in the U.S. PRSA listed 34 CEPR-certified programs offering a bachelor's degree.

A standardized curriculum. CEPR certification requires programs to offer public relations-specific courses, including "principles, writing, research, campaigns/case studies, and experiential learning" (PRSSA, 2018, p. 6). CEPR criteria come from reports authored by the Commission on Public Relations Education that has been researching course development and content needs since 1973 (2018, pp. 7-8. The Commission's work has influenced all public relations programs, including those accredited by AEJMC, which does not specify the types of courses, but instead offers a list of core values and competencies that "all graduates should be aware of" ("Nine Accrediting Standards," 2018). While broad, the AEJMC standards do include language that indicates course work specific to individual disciplines in mass communication. Additionally, AEJMC's accreditation principles include an educational mission statement that refers to the groups—the public, clients, consumers, employers—that students should held accountable to, as well as a statement about program commitment to diversity and inclusiveness.

Sample size. Although 15 programs were double-certified by both PRSA and AEJMC, only 14 programs of varying sizes from both public and private institution throughout the U.S. were examined (see Table 6.1). Brigham Young University's program was not included, because

neither a curriculum map nor an undergraduate catalog with degree information could be found on the university's web site.

Current curriculum analysis. The literature is clear that there is a gap between the way undergraduates have been prepared to enter the workforce as technicians and the need for entry level employees who understand and can ethically navigate the interpersonal dynamics of a public relations job ("About GA," 2015; Cheng & de Gregorio, 2008; Commission on Public Relations Education, 2018; "The Madrid Momentum," 2015). Scholars have also noted that undergraduate curricula vary from technical to very theoretical (Berger & Meng, 2014, p. 305). Additional criticism of the role the accreditation process plays in creating an emphasis on serving the business needs of society at the expense of the public have been offered by scholars like L'Etang and Pieczka (2006).

Table 6.1 provides a starting place to examine the similarities and differences of accredited programs. The titles of the specific course offerings above are used simply to demonstrate a naming technique consistent between the programs and with the requirements set forth to achieve CEPR accreditation. What they cannot do is provide insight into exactly what each course covers or how each is taught. Course descriptions, while intentionally vague to allow for differences in instructor approach, do provide some indication of what the course is about and how it might be approached.

Review of each program's course descriptions reveals course offerings influenced by accreditation and industry expectations, as well as differences that potentially can be ascribed to many factors, including each school or department's size, resources, and educational philosophy/mission, and intentional specialization related to degree marketing and university location. For example, a smaller program, like that at the University of Memphis, has fewer

Table 6.1

Courses Offered and Degrees in Public Relations Programs Accredited by both AEJMC and CEPR in the U.S.

University	Degree Name	Specific PR Courses Offered
University of Alabama	Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations	*Required:* Intro to PR, Strategic Thinking, Investigation & Insights, Basic Principles of Design, PR Writing *Plus 3 Electives:* PR Concepting & Implementation, A(dvertising)+PR Management, Crisis & Emergency Management, International Relations, PR Leadership, PR Campaigns
California State University, Fullerton	Bachelor of Arts in Communications, PR Concentration	*Required:* PR Principles, PR Writing, Capstone in PR Management or PR Student Agency *Elective:* Entertainment PR, Current Topics in PR, PR Agency Seminar, Corporate and Nonprofit PR, Crisis Communication, International PR, Event Planning & Management
University of Florida	Bachelor of Science in Public Relations	*Required:* PR Principles, PR Research, PR Strategy, PR Writing, International PR, PR Campaigns *Elective:* Sports Communication, Social Media Management, Ethics & Professional Responsibility in PR, Principles of Fundraising, Public Interest Communications, Special Study in PR, PR Undergraduate Research, PR Internship
Ball State University	Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science in Public Relations	*Required:* Strategic Writing, Principles of PR, PR Writing Tech, Account Management, Diversity & Media, Strategic Communication Emerging Media, Branding for AD & PR, Strategic Communication, Internship, Strategic Communication Case Studies, PR Campaigns
Indiana University	Bachelor of Arts in Journalism, Public Relations Concentration	*Required:* PR Principles, PR Writing, PR Planning & Research, PR Campaigns, PR Management, Social Media Communication Strategies

Drake University	Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Mass Communication	***Required:*** PR Principles, PR Writing, PR Research, PR Planning & Management, PR Case Studies Analysis, PR Campaign Strategy
Western Kentucky University	Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations	***Required:*** Fundamentals of PR, PR Digital Tactics, PR Writing & Production, International PR, Research in PR, PR Strategy/Planning, PR Management
Loyola University, New Orleans	Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication, Strategic Communications Sequence, Public Relations Track	***Required:*** PR, Writing for PR, Research in Advertising & PR, Strategic Problem Solving in Advertising & PR, PR Capstone: PR Cases & Campaigns ***Elective:*** Strategic Event Planning & Promotions
Southeast Missouri State University	Bachelor of Science in Mass Communication: Public Relations Option	***Required:*** Strategic Relations, PR Principles, Strategic Writing, Strategic Production, PR Research & Strategy, Strategic Communication Issues, PR Case Studies & Campaigns
Syracuse University	Bachelor of Science in Public Relations	***Required:*** Practical Grammar for Public Communications, Advertising & PR Law, PR Principles & Concepts, Writing for News & PR in a Digital Age, Advanced PR Writing for a Digital World, PR Research, PR Planning & Execution, The Ethics of Advocacy, Public Relations Management
Kent State University	Bachelor of Science in Public Relations	***Required:*** Research & Measurement in Advertising & PR, Principles of PR, Digital Analytics in Advertising & PR, Law of Advertising & PR, Media Relations & Publicity, PR Tactics, Digital PR, PR Publications, Seminar: PR Campaigns ***Electives:*** Advertising & PR Industry Tools, PR Practice: Public Affairs, PR Practice: Crisis Communication, Global Advertising & Public Relations, Practicum in Advertising & Public Relations
Temple University	Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations	***Required:*** Intro to PR, Practical Grammar for Public Communications, Communicating Leadership, Communicating Organizational Change, Leading Groups & Team Building, Global Communication & Leadership, PR Theory, PR Writing, Digital/Social Media & Audience Analytics, Law/Ethics/Diversity & Media Issues of

		PR, Crisis Communication, PR Field Experience, PR Campaigns & Case Studies, PR Management & Problems
University of Memphis	Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations	*Required:* Survey of PR, PR Writing, PR Research, PR Campaigns *Plus 1 Elective:* PR Case Studies, Event Management, Crisis Communication, Music Promotions
University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh	Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science in Public Relations	*Required:* Principles of PR, PR Techniques, Case Studies in PR *Elective:* Media Organization & Management, PR Campaigns

public relations core courses than what is required at the University of Florida, but Memphis offers an elective course in music promotion/public relations because of the city's role in music production. Florida requires a course in international public relations while Memphis does not list an international public relations course in its undergraduate bulletin.

As illustrated in Table 6.2, most of the undergraduate public relations programs examined contained similar foundational courses, including an introduction to the field and profession (principles), professional writing and design or production, research, and campaigns. Additionally, the majority of programs offered public relations courses in social media, case studies, crisis communication, and public relations management. The commonality of these offerings is also supported anecdotally: the Department of Communication at Appalachian State University, which is my home department and which is not accredited by either of the two standard organizations discussed in this dissertation, offers all of the courses mentioned above, except public relations management. While descriptions of courses offered by each program indicate content commonalities conducive to communication and relational skills development, including teamwork and experiential learning, many emphasize technical skills associated with prediction, standardization, and control.

Table 6.2

Frequency and CEPR Requirement Status of Course Offerings in the Sample Public Relations Programs

Course Type	No. of Programs Where Offered	Required by Program	Required by CEPR
PR Principles	14	14	Yes
PR Writing	13	13	Yes
Design/Production	12	11	Yes
Research	14	13	
PR Campaigns	10	9	Yes (or case studies)
Social/Digital Media & Analytics	11	8	
Event Planning	3	0	
Media Relations	1	1	
Case Studies	12	9**	Yes (or campaigns)
Crisis	5	1	
Corporate	1*	0	
Nonprofit	3*	0	
Leadership/Social Change	3	1	
Organizational Change	2	1	
Small Groups/Team Building	1	1	
PR Management	10	7	
PR Skills	2	2	
Grammar	7	7	
Other Writing (Journalism, Broadcast, Film, Magazine)	11	9	
Diversity	4	3	

Ethics	9	5	
Advertising	5	0	
Branding	2	1	
Entertainment/Music/Tourism/ Sports	4	0	
COM History	6	0	
COM Law	12	12	
COM Technologies	2	1	
Mass Media & Society	12	10	
International	7	3	
Design/Web/Presentation Software	4	2	
Internship/Practicum/Experiential	9	6	Yes
Persuasion	1	0	
Public Speaking	1	1	
News Literacy	1	0	
Program Orientation/Career Prep	6	6	
Business-Oriented Classes	4	2	
Photo Journalism/Photography/ Videography	4	1**	
Media Management/Operations	2	0	
Science-Oriented Communication	1	0	
Gaming Industry	1	0	

*Course covers two emphases. **An alternate selection doesn't cover purported content.

While only three programs require majors to take a course dedicated to diversity, 13 of

the 14 require at least one course that addresses diversity or lack thereof in the context of mass

mediated messages. Furthermore, while only five programs require a class dedicated to ethics, nine programs require at least one course that covers ethics. It should be noted, however that ethics is an elective at approximately a third of the sample programs, which means that students can graduate without taking a professional ethics class. A search of every course that was either required or offered as an elective to fulfill a requirement for the public relations-related degree programs in the sample revealed that only three programs offer a dedicated course in leadership/social change, and that only one of those programs requires students to take the leadership course. An expanded search to look for descriptions that contained leadership, leading, leader, and lead, returned a total of 13 course offerings, nine of which are required for public relations majors (see Table 6.3). All of the courses except one are offered within the department offering a public relations-oriented degree. Although many of the course descriptions indicate that leadership is discussed, most do not indicate what types of leadership are discussed or if inclusive leadership is discussed at all. Additionally, as previously discussed, lack of access to course syllabi makes it impossible to determine assigned text books, readings, and specific content.

Only two of the programs offer more than one course with leadership content as part of the curriculum. The University of Alabama, home to the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations, offers one leadership course as an elective option for its majors and a joint advertising-public relations management course that covers leadership. Of the two programs, Temple University is the standout, incorporating no fewer than five leadership and/or organizational change and diversity courses into its required curriculum. The following excerpt from the program description for its Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations provides clear connections to relational leadership and its value in preparing undergraduates for leading change

Table 6.3

*Sample Programs' Course Offerings with Stated Leadership Content and Their Requirement
Status*

Program	Course Name & Description	Requirement Status	Inclusive Leadership Content
Alabama	**A+PR Management** Examines the managerial role in both advertising and public relations practice. Key dimensions in communication management, including, but not limited to, professional and business ethics, business and financial literacy, media management, organizational culture and communication, and leadership are covered. A variety of teaching approaches—case studies, team projects, debates, simulations, student presentations, readings and lectures—are employed. Writing proficiency within this discipline is required for a passing grade in this course.	**Elective**	**Undetermined**
Alabama	**PR Leadership** Public relations leaders represent vital human capital in organizations in today's dynamic, high-speed communications world. This course describes the process or journey of becoming a PR leader and explores leadership theories, key research findings, top issues in the profession, roles and responsibilities of leaders, and the development process. Students will gain self-insights and develop their own leadership capabilities and capacities through diverse readings, assignments and exercises during the semester.	**Elective**	**Likely**
Ball State	**Account Management** Covers roles and functions of account management within a strategic communications environment. Includes account management concepts and terminology; covers leadership styles and behaviors; addresses basic business definitions and concepts as they apply to advertising and public relations; and introduces application of primary and secondary research to strategic communications campaigns.	**Required**	**Undetermined**
Florida	**Public Interest Communications** Delves into strategies to drive social change, strategic planning process for social change communications campaigns, and tools and tactics that make these campaigns effective. Gain insight to the richness of the field and the power that communications has to	**Elective**	**Undetermined, but likely**

	address problems and profoundly affect people's lives.		
Loyola-New Orleans	**Seminar in Mass Communication** This course prepares students to enter the global mass communication industry and offers all the tools necessary as students begin searching for their first jobs. Students create resumes and portfolios for professional purposes and fine-tune their job hunting and leadership skills.	**Required**	**Undetermined**
Memphis	**Organization and Management** Comprehensive survey of basic management concepts, principles, and function; coverage in planning, organizing, leading and controlling organizational resources to achieve objectives; overview of decision-making within the context of organizational global environment, strategy, organizational structures, culture, human capital, ethics and corporate social responsibility and performance.	**Elective (Management)**	**Undetermined**
Southeast Missouri State	**Strategic Relations** Strategic communication techniques for leadership roles in client relations, human resources, media conferences, videoconferences, and crisis and issues management.	**Required**	**Undetermined**
Syracuse	**PR Management** Capstone course to understand management of public relations in an organizational context, apply best practices in diverse and challenging global environments, using the managerial process of planning and decision making, organizing, controlling and leading.	**Required**	**Undetermined**
Temple	**Global Communication and Leadership** This course focuses on communication processes and issues that arise in multinational and global organizations. This course explores the relationship among culture, communication, technology, and ways of organizing across national contexts and in different types of organizations (nonprofit, voluntary, civic, governmental, small business and corporate systems). The communicative and ethical dimensions of international organizing are addressed.	**Required**	**Undetermined, but likely**
Temple	**Communicating Leadership** This course will introduce you to leadership studies from a communication perspective. Through all course activities (e.g., readings, discussion, and case studies) you will gain a broad understanding of how leadership emerges and is enacted on a daily basis through communication.	**Required**	**Likely**

Temple	**Communicating Organizational Change** In this course, we will analyze the forces that drive individuals, teams, and organizations to change. We will examine a range of theoretical concepts and practices of leading change in organizational, community, political and global contexts. We will examine impediments to change.	**Required**	**Undetermined, but likely**
Temple	**Leading Groups and Team Building** Teams, and small groups, are an essential element of work and social life; we are constantly asked to cooperate, coordinate, and collaborate. While teamwork can be a productive, immensely satisfying and rewarding experience, too often it falls short of meeting our expectations. This class introduces students to the small group communication theories and principles that provide the basis for both understanding team building and becoming a productive group member and leader. Through (1) the study of small group communication theory, (2) the evaluation of teams in practice (from mountain climbing to virtual work teams), and (3) analyzing students' own group experiences, students will develop the communication and analytic skills necessary to make teamwork work for you.	**Required**	**Undetermined, but likely**
Temple	**Law, Ethics, Diversity and Media Issues of PR** Law and ethics are a crucial component of public relations practice. Accompanying these are the growing importance of issues surrounding diversity and the ever-changing media landscape. This course explores and supplies students the critical knowledge of these areas through theoretical perspectives, analyses of ethical issues public relations professionals and organizational and community leaders confront, discussions and case studies of ethical reasoning and practical, philosophical and theoretical concerns affecting everyday matters of moral choice and of moral judgment, and current trends on these topics in the media and public relations.	**Required**	**Undetermined, but likely**

Source: Compiled from the online undergraduate bulletins from each institution.

in a diverse and complex world:

> The goal of the Public Relations major is to help students understand public relations is an ongoing communication and relational process, not a position. Viewed this way, public relations requires responsible, thoughtful reflection and action from all levels of organizations, not just those in leadership positions. This approach requires competencies of self-awareness, oral and written communication skills, ethical decision-making and action, and the ability to understand audiences' needs, wants and desires, and generate

mutual win-win scenarios using a variety of communication tools to generate a vision and lead with, through, and for others to bring about positive change.

This program will build both knowledge and skills for students to understand true public relations, e.g., "relating" to publics through building a meaningful two-way dialogue built on mutual trust and respect, and be able to effectively formulate a position and influence and empower others. They will be able to use the knowledge gained from this program to bridge the divide between the theoretical and practical application in the organizations they work in and the communities they serve.[1]

Despite Temple's relational approach to educating public relations undergraduates, the dominant findings from the sample above are consistent with those of Erzikova and Berger (2012) offering evidence that leadership is not integrated into the undergraduate curriculum nationwide or, according to more recent research by Ewing et al., into the majority of courses that public relations undergraduates must take. The findings also reveal language in at least two instances that associate management with modernistic control of resources, including people. Furthermore, with the exception of Temple, the findings do not indicate what types of leadership are addressed. The lack of integration, and the indication that an entity approach to leadership may be present in course offerings, establishes an opportunity to create a course of study that allows students to be both technically savvy and develop the inclusive leadership skills the profession needs (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2018).

A PRL Curriculum

So what would a PRL curriculum look like?

An examination of the public relations literature reveals that attempts to legitimize public relations through an emphasis on positivistic processes and control of outcomes and association with the dominant power structure in organizations has created educational, and by default, professional practices that concentrate on technical abilities at the expense of both the

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[1] From "Bachelor of Arts In Public Relations," Undergraduate Bulletin 2018-2019, webpage. Copyright 2019 Temple University. Reprinted with permission.

practitioner and the publics they represent (Berger, 2005; Gower, 2006; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002; L'Etang, 2005; Pieczka, 2007; Remund, 2011; Tyler, 2005). More recently, scholars and practitioners have suggested that leadership offers a way to develop the abilities entry-level practitioners need to succeed in the 21st century, raising the question of how to reconcile the identified need for both technical and communication and relational skill sets (Berger & Meng, 2014; Bronstein & Fitzpatrick, 2015; Commission on Public Relations Education, 2018; Ewing et al., 2019).

On a parallel course, leadership scholars have posited that the key to developing organizations that have both a healthy working environment and profit margin lies in relational leadership, specifically inclusive leadership (Booysen, 2014; Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Komives, et al., 2005; Komives & Wagner, 2009; Uhl-Bien, 2006). The inclusive view of leaders and leadership as dynamic, group-based, and ethical shares much in common with the ideal form of public relations that is accountable to all stakeholders (Hodges & McGrath, 2011; Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; Meng et al., 2004; Neill, 2014).

Additionally, the findings of this research endeavor illustrate that inclusive leadership and communication practice produced through DAC has contributed to the success of Jellyvision and its mainly millennial-age workforce in a rapidly changing field and, therefore, is an appropriate way to help impart the communication and relational skills entry-level public relations practitioners need (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2018; Ewing et al., 2019).

Therefore, I propose that a PRL curriculum is one that uses DAC to integrate inclusive leadership development practice with existing public relations undergraduate courses and set the stage for larger curriculum change. Although inclusive leadership is not presented as the sole

answer for the needs of the profession and undergraduate education, it a strong answer to the

question of how to better prepare public relations undergraduates for 21st century workplaces

because it has the demonstrated potential to support people as they cultivate identified

communication and relational skills to be inclusive leaders and communicators (Commission on

Public Relations Education, 2018; McCauley, 2004; see Chapter V). As Booysen (2014) stated,

> inclusive leadership extends our thinking beyond assimilation strategies or organizational
> demography to empowerment and participation of all by removing obstacles that cause
> exclusion and marginalization. Inclusive leadership involves particular skills and
> competencies for relational practice, collaboration, building inclusion for others, creating
> inclusive work places and work cultures, partnerships and consensus building, and true
> engagement of all. (p. 298)

As discussed by Ewing et al., the best practices of leadership development in public

relations undergraduate programs indicate the need for a DAC approach through faculty

training, integration of leadership principles throughout the curriculum, student pursuit of

leadership opportunities, and creation of leadership opportunities through experiential learning

(p. 43). It is my assertion that the integration of inclusive leadership into existing classes that

develop much desired technical skills can provide a framework on which to build a curriculum

that imparts communication and relational skills to undergraduates in a way that can have long

lasting effects on education, public relations, and society (Booysen, 2014; Cunliffe & Eriksen,

2011; Ewing et al., 2019; Komives, et al., 2005; Komives & Wagner, 2009; Uhl-Bien, 2006;

Wheatley & Frieze, 2006).

Discussion of, and support for, what that integration may look like and how it may be

achieved is offered below.

Inclusive leadership integration. Starting points for inclusive leadership integration can

be found in scholarly and business calls for the incorporation of communication and relational

teaching and learning into public relations undergraduate programs, as well as in the lessons

learned in the Jellyvision case study about communication and relational skills, valuing a culture of inclusion, and inclusive leadership development.

Communication and relational skills. The literature indicates that both scholars and business professionals from a variety of fields agree that a concentration on professional technical skills without regard to the way business has changed over the past 30 years has produced undergraduates who lack the communication and relational skills necessary to answer the complex demands of the 21st century (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Bancino & Zevalkink, 2007; Berger & Meng, 2014; Bronstein and Fitzpatrick, 2015; Brungardt, 2011; De Villiers, 2010; Ewing et al., 2019; Farr & Brazil, 2009; Gregory & Willis, 2013; Marques, 2013; Robles, 2012). Specifically, public relations scholars have indicated a need for curriculum revision that addresses not only technical and strategic/analytical skills, but also communication and relational skills required for excellent leadership for dynamic, innovative workplaces (Berger & Meng, 2014; Bronstein & Fitzpatrick, 2015; Ewing et al., 2019). Other scholars have made the link between the value of communication and relational skills development at the undergraduate level and career success. For example, a study that examined the benefit of student-run public relations firms found that graduates, "when asked how they applied their [hands-on] agency experience to their current positions," reported that communication and relational skills— listening, empathy, ability to connect with diverse people, working well in teams, professionalism, public speaking/presentation abilities—were critical to their career success (Bush, Haygood, & Vincent, 2017, p. 418). Such findings are supported by research efforts that identified integrity, communication, courtesy, responsibility, social skills, positive attitude, professionalism, flexibility, teamwork, and work ethics as the top 10 communication and relational skills desired by business executives (Robles, 2012).

The findings also are in alignment with results from the Jellyvision case study. Participant views and secondary data indicate the communication and relational skills employees possess comprise the largest part of employee DNA that the company looks for when hiring a good fit. Participants spoke about the ability to be considerate, empathetic, flexible, adaptable, and proactive when describing the people the company hires. Furthermore, company policies such as honest-but-kind communication and flexible time off, rely on employees' ability to make ethical decisions.

Further communication and relational skills discussion. The need to incorporate communication and relational skills into the public relations curriculum necessitates a discussion of skills that might be specific to inclusive public relations leadership development.

Five main categories of communication and relational skills competencies can be found in literature from business higher education (De Villiers, 2010; Weber et al., 2009). Based on the work of Boyatzis (2008) and others, De Villiers (2010) offered communication, problem-solving/thinking, leadership/team work skills, ethical and moral values, and self-management as most relevant in business (p. 4).

De Villiers' categories parallel the six interrelated dimensions of "self-dynamics, team collaboration, ethical orientation, relationship building skills, strategic decision-making capability, and communication knowledge and expertise," identified by Berger and Meng (2010) as necessary for public relations leadership (p. 425). Moreover, they reflect the skills that Jellyvision looks for in new hires, indicating that the skills presented by Berger and Meng also facilitate inclusive leadership development.

It should be noted that the skill of relationship building, while sharing some characteristics with De Villiers' communication and leadership/team work skills constructs, is

specific to public relations practice in that it speaks to the need for leaders in the profession to

possess an understanding of ways in which "a complex communication skill set and knowledge

of media and new technologies and information systems" can be used to create connections

within the social constructs of organizations, publics, and society (Berger & Meng, 2010, p. 426;

Commission on Public Relations Education, 2018). I propose that this specialized knowledge is

not only technical in nature, but also speaks to the need for undergraduates to develop greater

emotional literacy in the effect the messages they produce can have (Rosch, Joseph, & Newman,

2011; USC Anneberg, 2018).

It is a proposal based on and supported by the Jellyvision case study. Emotional literacy

development is part of the company's honest-but-kind communication policy, which requires

employees to consider the effect each message can have on a recipient. It also is part of the

personal growth discussed by case study participants. Additionally, emotional literacy, as

discussed by participant Katie Knotts, relies on one's ability to think critically. Knotts said that

the organization's inclusive communication exists, "because, as a group of people, we are critical

thinkers. Because, you know, that's what it takes. Right? Like, you're raised in a way and you

get to a point [where you say], 'I believe this, but I want to look at why I believe it. I don't want

it to just be because I was raised this way.'"

Valuing a culture of inclusion. It is clear from the findings that employees value

Jellyvision's culture of inclusion. They act as citizens of Jellyvision who reflect on their own,

and others', participation in the culture and who work to maintain its health and welfare. As Lisa

Rosselli-McDermott stated, this type of everyday leadership requires a boundary-spanning

mindset and willingness to work with others that is supported by the organization.

> I came [to Jellyvision] from pharmaceutical advertising. And that was very much like "Whatever the situation might be, like this isn't my job." And that was ok to say. Like here that is not ok to say that. There's nothing that really isn't your job.

As established in the findings, the sustainability of a culture of inclusion lies in the use of DAC. Because DAC focuses on the ways groups produce collective outcomes in multiple ways within multiple structures, it is a very useful way to change an existing system through collective action (Drath et al., 2008; McCauley, 2004). The establishment of inclusive, transparent, open, consistent, and respectful communication across all levels, the holistic recognition of employees, the development of policies that support and reward personal growth, the expectation and use of feedback, and the design of workspaces that facilitate collaboration combine to help Jellyvision's employees assume responsibility for the continuation of the culture they join the company for (see Figure 6.1). It is a use of influence to achieve socially responsible visions internally in the organization at the individual (micro), organizational unit (meso), and whole organization (macro) levels. The potential of DAC to extend external influence from the organizational (micro) level to the market/industry (meso) and society (macro) levels is evidenced by Jellyvision employees' participation in Chicago community events, in the company's initiatives to increase the participation of, and opportunities for, women and people of color in technology, in third party coverage of the company in multiple media outlets, and in its industry reputation as a positive, successful, and desirable company for which to work. This use of influence is similar to Werder and Holtzhausen's (2009) look at inclusive public relations leadership (pp. 406-407) and is supported by the thoughts expressed by public relations undergraduate program directors and educators who "considered leadership to involve motivating staff members and helping them grow, especially by providing a professional and ethical example of what it means to lead" (Ewing et al., 2019, p. 42).

A DAC approach to curriculum development is beneficial because it potentially can capitalize on the self-governing nature of university departments and schools, help create or refine assessment and peer-review policies, foster a collegial working environment, and help justify space and technology requests. DAC could also benefit individual classes by creating more engaged learners who feel supported and more readily recognize the benefit of their programs of study.

Inclusive leadership development. Lastly, the practice of inclusive leadership at Jellyvision and the ideas behind inclusive leadership development provide a guide to incorporating relational leadership and leadership as learning into the undergraduate public relations curriculum to help develop the communication and relational skills public relations graduates are missing (Booysen, 2014; Shorter-Gooden, 2014). A collaborative, purposeful, collective, and values-based process, inclusive leadership's concepts of self-awareness and learning through assessment, challenge, and support can help academic institutions and communities function more effectively and humanely (Booysen, 2014; Komives et al., 2005; Komives & Wagner, 2009).

Assessment. Academic life is full of assessment opportunities. Faculty assess students, themselves, each other, and their department's programs. Employers assess employees' professional performances. And, as the findings show, in an inclusive organization like Jellyvision, employees assess each other's performances using 360-degree feedback, and the founder's actions through empowerment derived from the company's honest-but-kind and schmutz-pact communication policies. If students are to develop into inclusive leaders, it is critical that they become self-aware, or "fully understand their situation, through reflection, and . . . become motivated to capitalize on the learning opportunities available to them" (Booysen,

2014, p. 316). Because change is at the heart of any development exercise, students need to know who (and how) they are before learning takes place. That "knowing" can be addressed in multiple classes at all levels through self-reflective exercises and surveys (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013).

Challenge. Support for the use of inclusive leadership in public relations again can be found in the work of Werder and Holtzhausen (2009), who stated that inclusive leaders are socially responsible change agents who engage in collaborative, shared, and participative practices for the good of the group and the organization (pp. 406-407). This assessment is in line with the findings, which demonstrate that Jellyvision employees regularly collaborate for the good of their units, the product they produce, and the company as a whole. According to Bob Armour, good team members are those who not only have the necessary technical skills, but who also are willing to embrace and demonstrate vulnerability.

> To me it really comes down to do you have people that can do the job really well, and do you have people that are very willing to open themselves up . . . to mentoring and coaching and input, and open themselves up to the broader team about how to work together and how to come together to make it all happen.

Providing opportunities for undergraduates to develop inclusive relationship building skills through leadership training and experiential learning, and self-reflection through relational developmental assignments, job rotation/sharing, collaborative activities, opportunities for deep self-reflection, and development of an awareness of other perspectives would allow students to expand their learning beyond the technical components of public relations and refocus the purpose of strategic communication for the benefit of all (Berger & Reber, 2006; Booysen, 2014; Dozier & Lauren, 2000; Ewing et al., 2019; Holtzhausen, 2002; Komives & Wagner, 2009).

Support. In order for curriculum change and leadership development to successfully occur, the findings and literature show that support systems for students must be in place. The development of communication and relational skills requires that learners face challenges to the ways in which they see themselves and others and the ways in which they interact with others. In a process that requires a recognition and state of vulnerability among all participants, it is crucial that learning takes place in a respectful and empowered learning environment with people who can provide mentorship and coaching (Alexandre, 2010; Booysen, 2014; Komives & Wagner, 2009; Wagner, Ostick & Associates, 2013).

Curriculum change practicalities. Despite the identified need for public relations undergraduates to develop communication and relational skills, and the calls from both scholars and business professionals for curriculum revision to prepare students to succeed in the 21st century, little if any advice has been offered on how to accomplish the task. The reality is that a multitude of barriers exist, including very real issues with financial and physical resources (faculty, class size, classroom space, technology), training, legislative mandates regarding matriculation, extant reward systems, assessment, course proposal and approval processes, academic turf assumptions, faculty abilities, and human inertia (Alexander, 2004; De Villiers, 2010; Shorter-Gooden, 2014). An in-depth discussion of these barriers and their potential solutions is beyond the scope of the research in this dissertation. However, acknowledging the potential barriers can guide practical recommendations for curriculum revision.

While the Temple University curriculum provides one way to develop relational, and perhaps inclusive, public relations leaders, it is potentially the way most fraught with resistance. The time and resource investment of any curriculum change can be daunting, but the creation of an entirely new curriculum may be beyond the means of programs with limited faculty, space,

and administrative support. As Weick (1984) pointed out, large scale changes are fraught with barriers and resistance that paralyze action because of their sheer number and size. But action is more likely to take place if issues are reframed and presented in more manageable proportions that can empower individuals. In the case of curriculum change, that often means examining existing courses and making incremental changes in content and assessment. While the courses offered at Temple and program's stated intent clearly mark the curriculum as relational and most likely inclusive, implementing the same approach nationwide would require almost every university to create a completely new course of study for undergraduates. While this option is valid, it requires the most resources and could encounter the largest number of barriers. Moreover, because the research in this dissertation is based on the identified need for a postmodern approach to undergraduate public relations education, it would be antithetical to propose that one curriculum could work at every institution. For all of the reasons stated, it is not the recommended approach.

Instead, the recommended PRL curriculum development approach is one that uses DAC to create an integrated curriculum modification, or the re-engineering of many existing courses combined with the addition and/or deletion of other classes, in order to incorporate the communication and relational skills associated with inclusive leadership multiple times at every level in the major. While curriculum revision ideally includes agreement about what faculty would like to achieve with course changes, it does not necessarily ensure that changes are aligned to serve the shared direction or that individual faculty members consider the success of all program students and colleagues a personal priority. The benefits of a DAC strategy for curriculum revision are supported by the work of leadership and business scholars who stress the

importance of a variety of development experiences within the culture of an organization, be it a classroom or a business (Booysen, 2014; De Villiers, 2010; Komives et al., 2013).

Table 6.4 offers a PRL curriculum template to demonstrate how integrated curriculum modification can address the development of inclusive public relations leaders. Its design is based on core communication courses recommended by the Commission on PR Education (2018) and courses needed for CEPR and, in-part, AEJMC certification; is influenced by common courses in the sample programs and the curriculum at my home institution; and is supported by Ewing et al.'s exploratory study of best leadership development practices in public relations undergraduate education.

Table 6.4

Proposed PRL Curriculum Template Based on Insights from Jellyvision's Inclusive DAC Processes

Common Communication Core Courses	Course Description	PRL Content	Semester Hours
Introduction to Communication	An introduction to the development, research, theory, and field of human communication.	Integrate inclusive leadership development content/exercises.	3
Public Speaking	Composition and delivery of various types of speeches.	Integrate inclusive leadership development content/exercises.	3
Mass Media & Society	A survey of the social impact of mass media. Analysis of issues such as mass media and individual behavior, violence and TV, media and consumers, and mass media and popular culture.	Usually already includes inclusive leadership development in the form of diversity and inclusion awareness content and assignments.	3
Introduction to Public Relations	An overview of the technical elements and basic principles of public relations. Introduces students to the concepts and activities that form the foundation of professional practice.	Integrate content that addresses diversity and inclusion.	3

Public Relations Writing	A skills-based course in developing and preparing collateral public relations materials.	Integrate content and assignments that address ethics, diversity, and inclusion.	3
Research Methods	The proper and ethical gathering, analysis, and reporting of primary and secondary data, including the use of interviews, focus groups, surveys, and analytic software.	Ethical component already meets inclusive leadership development criteria.	3
PR Campaigns/Case Studies	An opportunity for research, application, critique, and presentation of public relations recommendations based on primary and/or secondary research, coursework, and experience to a client or as part of a case study analysis.	Integrate inclusive leadership development content/exercises and ethics.	3
Internship/Practicum/Student-run Firm	Should place students in program-approved positions to gain career-related experience and establish professional contacts under the supervision of an experienced communication or public relations practitioner.	Assessment of student performance should include leadership development.	3
Communication/PR Ethics	Reflects not only codes of ethics advocated by professional associations, but also an exploration and refinement of an individual's personal compass for working as a practitioner who must interact with the social environment, share information used by publics for decision-making, and serve as the conduit between publics and organizations, often playing an ethical counsel role.	Inclusive leadership content and exercises should already be part of course design.	3
Business Literacy	Provides student with a working knowledge of the fundamentals of corporate accounting and finance, economic thinking, capitalism, markets, and financial communications. Related to business literacy is the ability to measure, evaluate, and report public relations outcomes that support business objectives.	Should integrate content specific to the value and measurement of the of inclusive leadership practice.	3

Content Creation	Develops writing, audio/video production, and graphic design competence for social, print, and broadcast applications.	Content should include development and assessment of emotional literacy and inclusive messages.	3
Analytics	Equips students with the ability to gather, assess, and analyze data used for trend-spotting, policy recommendations, and forward-looking communication strategy.	Content should cover ethical and inclusive aspects of data collection, analysis, and use.	3
Digital Technology	Provides familiarity, use, and experience that enable students to recommend applications, channels, media, and management practices to support or modify organizational objectives and best serve client needs.	Inclusivity for marginalized populations, e.g., speech, vision, and hearing impaired, should be addressed.	3
Measurement and Evaluation	Covers skills in tandem with, and expanding upon, current industry expectations and reporting practices to demonstrate the effectiveness and value of public relations for an organization.	Measurement and evaluation should include public relations efforts regarding diversity and inclusion.	3
PR/Communication Electives	Electives could include courses devoted to inclusive leadership, communication and relational skills refinement, portfolio development that highlights inclusive leadership knowledge and practice, the role of communication in successful and inclusive organizational change.	Include appropriate content and exercises.	3-9
Total Semester Hours			**45-51**

PRL curriculum summary. The creation of a PRL curriculum requires the integration

of inclusive leadership communication and relational skills development into courses, whether

extant or new, at every level of the major to better prepare undergraduates to be socially

responsible organizational citizens. As a system or process of leadership development, the full

integration of communication and relational skills is pedagogically sound as it allows students

multiple opportunities to develop through classroom challenges and assessments that focus on the leadership process of creating knowledge, being self-aware and aware of others, acting on what they have learned (Komives et al., 2013, pp. 97-102). Moreover, such opportunities can be incorporated into, or further developed in, extant public relations courses, a student-run public relations firm, and internship experiences (Ewing et al., 2019).

From an administrative perspective, the benefits of holistically modifying existing curricula include the ability to work with current faculty and physical resources, honor the spirit of the accreditation process, and meet credit hour limits in the major. Furthermore, integrating inclusive leadership into existing courses that already address the technical needs of public relations would allow students to experience both technical and communication and relational skills development, providing them with a greater understanding of the power they possess to create inclusive and, by default, more ethical organizational environments.

Conclusion, Recommendations for Future Research, and Reflection

"Art is sort of there to be interpreted; it is never finished." ~ Travis Mandrell, Jellyvision's vice president of design.

The research in a dissertation, regardless of its methodology, is only one more step toward creating a fuller picture of a topic. By its nature it leaves avenues of exploration that are limited only by others' ability to make their own connections with the work herein. Therefore, like art, the research provided is to be interpreted and can never be truly finished.

The research in this dissertation was undertaken to fill the gap in the literature between relational leadership and recent calls for public relations leadership needs at the undergraduate level. Specifically, the case study of one exemplary inclusive organization was conducted to

offer insight into the construction of a PRL undergraduate curriculum. As such, it creates a starting place for discussion and direction for future research.

Recommendations for future research. One identified research direction that could create a fuller picture of a PRL curriculum includes a comprehensive review of how leadership is treated in public relations curricula throughout the United States. For example, a detailed analysis of entry- and advanced-level public relations textbooks could provide a more complete picture of current public relations undergraduate education leading to information about specific practices, environments, and support mechanisms that could broaden curriculum redevelopment options.

Another research area is the need for more interdisciplinary work between public relations and leadership scholars (McKie & Willis, 2015). As identified in the literature review, public relations and leadership share many characteristics. However, despite the key role public relations communication, and its related relational skills, plays in leadership, it is often missing in the greater academic discussion and/or in the classroom (see Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Clampitt, 2012; Commission on Public Relations Education, 2018; Gilley et al., 2009; Goodman & Truss, 2004; Johansson & Heide, 2008; Proctor & Doukakis, 2003). Moreover, as McKie and Willis (2015) illustrated, much of the public relations leadership literature lacks critical connections with scholarly work in leadership.

Because the research in this dissertation was conducted to show the value of linking inclusive leadership and public relations as a way to re-envision the public relations undergraduate curriculum, it does not offer a detailed model for incorporating inclusive leadership development into an existing curriculum. Future work in this area could offer practical

pedagogical examples that could be applied in a number of courses throughout an existing curriculum (Ewing et al., 2019, p. 53).

Last, future research could be conducted to provide resources on inclusive leadership for public relations faculty who wish to further develop their own leadership skills.

Reflection. Art of any type, including the academic variety, is a form of expression. I posit that all art, particularly the academic variety, is also a form of self-reflection. Therefore, I would be remiss if I neglected to share my reflections on my research and writing experience.

My public relations academic journey began more than 30 years ago when, as an undergraduate student at Ohio University, I sat through classes that touted what was then a new way of theorizing public relations. What I remember most about that time period was how uncomfortable Excellence Theory made me. Despite the theory's emphasis on two-way symmetrical communication, I instinctively knew that it represented the interest of the dominant power coalition, which, in a male-dominated business world, did not really include me or anyone else who did not represent the dominant hegemonic.

That discomfort never left as I moved from the classroom to the workplace as a practitioner, to the classroom-as-a-workplace as a professor, and from the workplace to the classroom as a doctoral student. What changed was the ever increasing number of voices, the majority of which belonged to women, that expressed my concerns in academic critiques and moved me to add my own voice to the discussion when the time came to research and write this dissertation.

Those voices echoed my unease with a public relations approach that always felt like business first, people second. I longed for a way to help my students think of public relations and its effect on society in deeper, more meaningful ways. I wanted them to enter the workforce not

only with technical knowledge, but also with experience in what Benefiel (2005) called soul, or a "sustained purpose, culture, and identity [that] can transcend and enhance an organization's performance and success" (p. 9).

Discovering inclusive leadership and change and recognizing its link with socially responsible public relations validated my long-held belief that better ways to run a business and to communicate with people within and outside of its walls can exist. More importantly, it provided a new way to frame my work in the classroom, to provide a deeper "why" behind each technical "how."

Speaking and making meaning with the people at Jellyvision demonstrated that embracing inclusiveness, complexity, vulnerability, humor, collaboration, and individuality in the office and in public relations efforts can be wildly successful in both a soulful and an economic sense. The experience was thought-provoking, challenging, up-lifting, and, in true Jellyvision fasion, delightful.

I hope the information shared within this dissertation is similarly received.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Links to Available Jellyvision Employee Biographies

The following employee biographies are written by each employee at Jellyvision. Links to those that are available are included here to give readers insight into each individual and Jellyvision's culture.

Harry Gottlieb
Founder
https://www.jellyvision.com/about-us/team/harry-gottlieb/

Mary Beth Wynn
Vice President of People
Not available.

Brynn Michelich
Senior Vice President of Operations
https://www.jellyvision.com/about-us/team/brynn-michelich/

Sam Raue Hebert
Director of Content Production
https://www.jellyvision.com/about-us/team/sam-raue-hebert/

Travis Mandrell
Vice President of Design
https://www.jellyvision.com/about-us/team/travis-mandrell/

Melanie Chapman
Marketing Manager
https://www.jellyvision.com/about-us/team/melanie-davis/

David Daskal
Director of Business Development
Not available.

Melanie Tercha
Flowchart Manager
https://www.jellyvision.com/about-us/team/melanie-tercha/

Nicolette Halenza
Production Specialist
https://www.jellyvision.com/about-us/team/nicolette-halenza/

Becki Schneider
Production Apprentice
Not available.

Rudra Banerji
Senior Creative & Media Producer
Not available.

Linda Dao
Senior Account Executive, Enterprise West
Not available.

Danny Coleman
Business Support Manager
Not available.

Jenny Fukumoto-Pasko
Digital Marketing Manager
https://www.jellyvision.com/about-us/team/jenny-fukumoto/

Katie Knotts
People Apprentice
Not available.

Simone Snook
Office Manager
https://www.jellyvision.com/about-us/team/simone-snook/

Jason Knox
Media Producer & Audio Manager
https://www.jellyvision.com/about-us/team/jason-knox/

Bob Armour
Chief Marketing Officer
https://www.jellyvision.com/about-us/team/bob-armour/

Lisa Rosselli-McDermott
Scrum Master
Not available.

Courtney Flannery
Hiring & Training Manager
https://www.jellyvision.com/about-us/team/courtney-flannery/

Appendix B: 1ˢᵗ Interview Framework

Because I will interview people from a number of different positions at Jellyvision, specific questions and how I ask them will vary and be based on the interaction I have with, and research I conduct on, each person beforehand. I have provided the following framework to illustrate the intent of and justification for the interview process.

Getting to Know You
The purpose of the beginning of the interview is to start a conversation. It is intentionally structured to establish how each person describes what she or he does and/or the role she or he plays at Jellyvision. Example prompt and questions:

> Tell me a bit about you and your life here at Jellyvision. What's your background? How did you get here? How long have you been here? What's your title? What are your duties? What role do you see yourself playing/how or where do you fit in the larger Jellyvision world? What do you love about working at Jellyvision?

Views on Communication
Questions in this part of the interview will be structured to gain understanding of how each person views communication practices in general, as well as at Jellyvision. I will ask specific questions about how each person participates in the company's communication culture, what works well or doesn't about communication at Jellyvision, and, if appropriate, what recommendations each has about creating a stronger communication culture.

Views on Leadership
I will ask questions about each person's views about leadership in general, learning about leadership, and how each sees herself or himself as a leader. I also will ask about leadership in public relations when relevant.

Views on Public Relations
When relevant, I will ask about public relations education.

Roundup Questions
Questions in this part of the process will be structured to prompt each participant to self-reflect on her or his views about communication and leadership.

Appendix C: Interview Consent Form

Tell Me What You See: Research to Create a Public Relations Leadership Curriculum Informed Consent Form

Informed Participant Consent Request

You have been asked to participate in dissertation research conducted by Heather Paige Preston, a doctoral candidate in the Leadership and Change program at Antioch University, Yellow Springs, Ohio.

Dissertation Title

Tell Me What You See: A Portrait of Postmodern Public Relations Leadership Education

Name and Contact Information of the Researcher

Heather Paige (HP) Preston, ███████████████, Mobile: ██████████

Purpose and Benefit of the Research

The purpose of the research is to develop a deeper understanding of an inclusive leadership and communication culture in a for-profit organization for the purpose of constructing a new public relations undergraduate curriculum. The research is to allow me to engage in the collection, interpretation, and presentation of data specific to research in inclusive leadership and communication during the dissertation process. While it is hoped that the insight provided by the research study will help me gain insight necessary to create a public relations leadership curriculum, it is also hoped that you will gain deeper understanding of your own views about leadership and communication and ultimately contribute insights that strengthen Jellyvision's culture during a time of growth.

Participant Requirements and Expectations

Time. The study involves, at a minimum, one face-to-face, conversational interview that will be arranged at your convenience during the time I am at Jellyvision. It is expected to last 30 minutes to 1 hour, depending on what and how much we talk about. I will record the interview through note-taking in a field journal. If you approve, I will also tape record the interview as a way of ensuring accurate quotation.

Because my research method is collaborative, I may need to contact you for clarification about what we talk about. If a second interview is needed, it may be held face-to-face or conducted via technological means, e.g. telephone, Skype.

Privacy. You will be identified by name, title, age or age range, gender, race, profession, and location. Information that you share may be directly or indirectly quoted (paraphrased) by me in the study. You will be allowed to review all quoted material for accuracy.

The draft and final contents of the research study will be made available to the dissertation committee responsible for evaluating my work. The final dissertation will be publicly accessible through Antioch University. It also may be included in future scholarly presentations and publications.

Interview recordings will not be kept on a computer. Instead, they will be downloaded onto a flash drive and kept with interview notes in a secure filing cabinet in HP's home office. All material collected for the purpose of the study will be destroyed through deletion (recordings) or shredding (notes) once the dissertation has been submitted and approved.

Risks. Discussion of your views about Jellyvision's leadership and communication culture contains the risk of divulging confidential information of another or the company without permission. Although your views may already be known by those at Jellyvision who assess your work, you may provide information that is at odds with the company's current culture. The risk of exposing those views is minimized by where you and I choose to have our conversations, as well your ability to clarify what you mean during the interview transcript review.

Because the study is conducted for the benefit of you and your role at Jellyvision and the company's successful growth the risks to you are considered minimal. No unforeseeable risks of harm resulting from the study are identified.

Your Rights. Your participation is voluntary. You may discontinue participation at any time without negative repercussions. In the event of withdrawal, all notes and recordings from interviews to that point will be immediately destroyed.

Additional questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or concerns or complaints about the research may be directed to Dr. Lize Booysen, Professor of Leadership and Organizational Behavior, Antioch University (abooysen@antioch.edu, 336.285.8757).

Sincerely,

Heather Paige Preston. Doctoral Candidate
Antioch University
Mobile

My signature below indicates agreement to participate in the study. I am not waiving any legal rights by signing this informed consent document. I will receive a copy of the signed document.

Participant Signature: _____   Date_____

Printed Name of Participant: _____

Researcher Signature: _____   Date_____

Appendix D: Introductory Letter to Jellyvision's Employees

September 2015

Hi, Jellyvisionaries.

I'm HP Preston, the doctoral student you might've heard about at the last company meeting. You know, the one interested in visiting Jellyland to pick your respective brains about inclusive leadership and communication?

A lot happens at meetings, so I understand if you don't remember my moment in the spotlight. In case you missed it, I'll arrive in your midst within the next couple of weeks to start my dissertation research. Technically, I'm trying to create a new undergraduate curriculum in public relations leadership.

What's that? You weren't a PR major and have never designed an undergraduate course of study?

No worries. I'm coming to hang out at Jellyvision and speak with some of you about your views on Cool Company Culture. Say that five times real fast.

In a feat of academic engineering I'm going to use what you share with me to help figure out how to incorporate leadership into public relations.

I hope you'll be willing to sit and talk with me while I'm in Chicago. The A Team has said "go for it!" as long as we're not too disruptive, though Harry has assured me that a little disruptive is ok.

So if you're up for it, we can grab a cup of tea/coffee/refreshing carbonated beverage and chat about some of the things you do and think about at work. The type of research I do is qualitative (no numbers unless they're large and in my checkbook, please), so I'm interested in finding out about your individual thoughts and views through a conversation or two in a timeframe that works with what you need to get done.

Intrigued? I hope so.

Already convinced that you can help? Great! Feel free to drop me a line at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ and I'll be happy to discuss times that we might be able to talk.

In the meantime, I look forward to seeing the great people and things at Jellyvision that I've already heard about.

All the best – HP

Heather Paige Preston
Doctoral Candidate
Antioch University

Appendix E: Links to Images of Jellyvision's Physical Environment

Office Envy: Jellyvision's Space Expands to Keep Up With Fast Growth
https://www.americaninno.com/chicago/office-envy/office-envy-jellyvisions-space-expands-to-keep-up-with-fast-growth/

Jellyvision offices celebrate mustaches and a 'figgin' awesome band'
http://www.chicagotribune.com/bluesky/series/office-tours/ct-jellyvision-office-tour-bsi-photos-20160630-photogallery.html

Jellyvision
https://kellstadtcmcblog.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/jellyvision-front-desk.jpg

Appendix F: Secondary Data List by Outlet Type and Date(s) of Collection

Digitally Published/Distributed Information Created and Distributed by Jellyvision

Social Media
Initial collection time period was October 1-14, 2015. Subsequent collection continued as needed June 28, 2018

>   *Facebook and Twitter:* Read/viewed and analyzed posts about, and images of, employees and their activities, company events, awards received.

>   *YouTube Channel:* Viewed and analyzed posts about communication and ALEX.

>   *Instagram:* Viewed/read and analyzed posts about employees and their activities, company events, awards received.

>   *LinkedIn:* Viewed/read and analyzed pages produced by research participants, as well as information on the company's page.

Company Website
Initial collection time period was October 1-14, 2015. Subsequent collection continued as needed June 28, 2018

>   Read, collected, and analyzed information about research participants, employee and company activities, press releases about company news (awards/press coverage/events/new hires), job openings.

E-Newsletter
I registered to receive the newsletter beginning October 1, 2015.

>   Read and analyzed newsletter content about ALEX and company-recommended corporate communication practices.

E-Books
Downloaded on two separate occasions during research period of October 2015-June 2018.

>   Downloaded, read, and analyzed one e-book on on-boarding and one on ALEX communication.

Company Memorabilia
Collected during a visit on October 16, 2015.

>   Collected a Jellyvision logo sticker and branded Kazoo during the company's Confusion Destruc-a-thon & Communication Kumbaya workshop for Chicago Ideas Week.

Digitally Published Information Created and Distributed by Third Parties

News Stories/Blog Posts/Videos/Press Release
Initial access time period was October 1-14, 2015. Subsequent collection continued as needed
June 28, 2018

> *News Stories:* Accessed, read, and analyzed news stories published by the Chicago
> Tribune, Inc.com, Ad Week, Chicago Woman, Forbes, Time Out Chicago, and
> technology industry outlets, including Crain's Chicago Business, Built In Chicago, and
> Tech While Black.

> *Blog Post:* Accessed and analyzed posted interview with Amanda Lannert on Know Your
> Company.

> *Video:* Viewed and analyzed an interview with Harry Gottlieb on Advisor.tv

> *Press Releases:* Accessed and analyzed a Rotary Club of Chicago press release about
> Amanda Lannert and

Appendix G: Permissions for Adapted and Included Tables and Figures

Permission 1: Temple University Copy Request

RE: Permission Request to Quote UG Bulletin Material in Dissertation

Joan Mcgoldrick <████████████████████>   Mon, May 20, 2:57 PM
                                                               (16 hours ago)

to me

Dear Heather Paige Preston,

Please accept my apology for the delayed response.

I am happy to report that you have permission to include the text regarding Temple University's Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations in your dissertation.

We wish you the best of luck on your dissertation!

Sincerely,

Joan McGoldrick

Temple University Student Collaboration Center
████████████████
████████████████████
phone: ████████████

From: Heather Paige Preston <████████████████████>
Sent: Tuesday, May 14, 2019 10:36 AM
To: Joan Mcgoldrick <████████████████████>
Subject: Permission Request to Quote UG Bulletin Material in Dissertation

Dear Temple Undergraduate Bulletin Team—

I am a student finalizing my dissertation, entitled "Come Together: Inclusive Leadership and Public Relations Education," as part of Antioch University's PhD in Leadership & Change. To that end, I'm requesting permission to include a large portion of text from the webpage about Temple University's Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations located at https://bulletin.temple.edu/undergraduate/media-communication/advertising-public-relations/ba-public-relations/.

The context in which the content would be used in the dissertation is to present Temple's public relations program as am exemplar of relational public relations undergraduate education. It would appear in the dissertation this way, minus email formatting issues:

Only two of the programs offer more than one course with leadership content as part of the curriculum. The University of Alabama, home to the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations, offers one leadership course as an elective option for its majors and a joint advertising-public relations management course that covers leadership. Of the two programs, Temple University is the standout, incorporating no fewer than five leadership and/or organizational change and diversity courses into its required curriculum. The following excerpt from the program description for its Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations provides clear connections to relational leadership and its value in preparing undergraduates for leading change in a diverse and complex world:

> The goal of the Public Relations major is to help students understand public relations is an ongoing communication and relational process, not a position. Viewed this way, public relations requires responsible, thoughtful reflection and action from all levels of organizations, not just those in leadership positions. This approach requires competencies of self-awareness, oral and written communication skills, ethical decision-making and action, and the ability to understand audiences' needs, wants and desires, and generate mutual win-win scenarios using a variety of communication tools to generate a vision and lead with, through, and for others to bring about positive change.

> This program will build both knowledge and skills for students to understand true public relations, e.g., "relating" to publics through building a meaningful two-way dialogue built on mutual trust and respect, and be able to effectively formulate a position and influence and empower others. They will be able to use the knowledge gained from this program to bridge the divide between the theoretical and practical application in the organizations they work in and the communities they serve.[1]

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[1] From "Bachelor of Arts In Public Relations," Undergraduate Bulletin 2018-2019, webpage. Copyright 2019 Temple University. Reprinted with permission.

Permission would be acknowledged in APA 6th edition style in the accompanying footnote and in the Appendix.

My dissertation will appear online at:

 Antioch University's AURA, an open access archive at http://aura.antioch.edu/

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The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my dissertation, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages, and to the prospective publication of my

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Please let me know if you have questions or need additional information. Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely—HP Preston

Heather Paige Preston, Doctoral Candidate
Antioch University
Leadership & Change Program

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Permission 2: Permission to Adapt Figure from CCL Publication

FW: Permission to Adapt Figure Request

Lombardino, Kelly   Mon, May 20, 2:52 PM
                                                         (16 hours ago)

to me

Heather –

After talking again to one of the CCL Faculty particularly close to the CCL DAC Model, she has concluded a comfort level in the following citation to the CCL White Paper, "This way of summarizing how DAC was generated in a specific case study was adapted from Making Leadership Happen, McCauley, 2014, pp. 3, 5. Copyright 2014 by the Center for Creative Leadership."

Kelly

Kelly F. Lombardino
Center for Creative Leadership
Manager, Global Learning Products, Publications & Tools
Greensboro NC Campus

From: Heather Paige Preston [mailto:███████████████]
Sent: Tuesday, May 14, 2019 9:41 AM
To: Lombardino, Kelly <███████████████>
Subject: Permission to Adapt Figure Request

Dear Ms. Lombardino—

I am a student finalizing my dissertation, entitled "Come Together: Inclusive Leadership and Public Relations Education," as part of Antioch University's PhD in Leadership & Change. To that end, I'm requesting permission to adapt a DAC figure from *Making Leadership Happen* (McCauley, 2014).

The context in which the photo would be used in the dissertation is to help illustrate how my research organization uses DAC to create an inclusive environment. It would appear in the dissertation text as a figure with a caption that reads:

Figure 6.1. How DAC creates Jellyvision's inclusive culture. Findings from the Jellyvision case study indicate that the organization uses direction, alignment, and commitment to create an inclusive culture of communication and work. Adapted from *Making Leadership Happen*, McCauley, 2014, pp. 3, 5. Copyright 2014 by the Center for Creative Leadership.

The original figure looks like:

ers were expected to schedule time each week to get out among staff and keep the initiative visible: they looked for evidence of plan execution, asked about successes and problems encountered, and reinforced the importance of the initiative. The VP of Nursing was particularly vigilant with her "qual-

THE RESULT: Two years later, an independent organization listed the hospital's quality of patient care as tenth best in the nation. Employee satisfaction was in the 95th percentile and physician satisfaction was in the 94th percentile nationally.

Clearly leadership is happening in this scenario. There was a shared direction. People were coordinating their efforts in service of that direction. Commitment to the initiative was high. How was all this DAC created? Through many different interactions and exchanges. Some of the key ones are highlighted in the chart below.

IMPROVING PATIENT CARE

HOW WAS DIRECTION CREATED?
- By joining in a movement that was already afoot in the healthcare field—a movement to enhance the quality of patient care in hospitals.
- By customizing organizational goals in ways that met local needs and desires.
- By having organizational goals crafted through discussion and joint agreement at the top of the organization and then tested for acceptance through meetings with staff throughout the organization.
- By having those who already shared in the direction influence others.

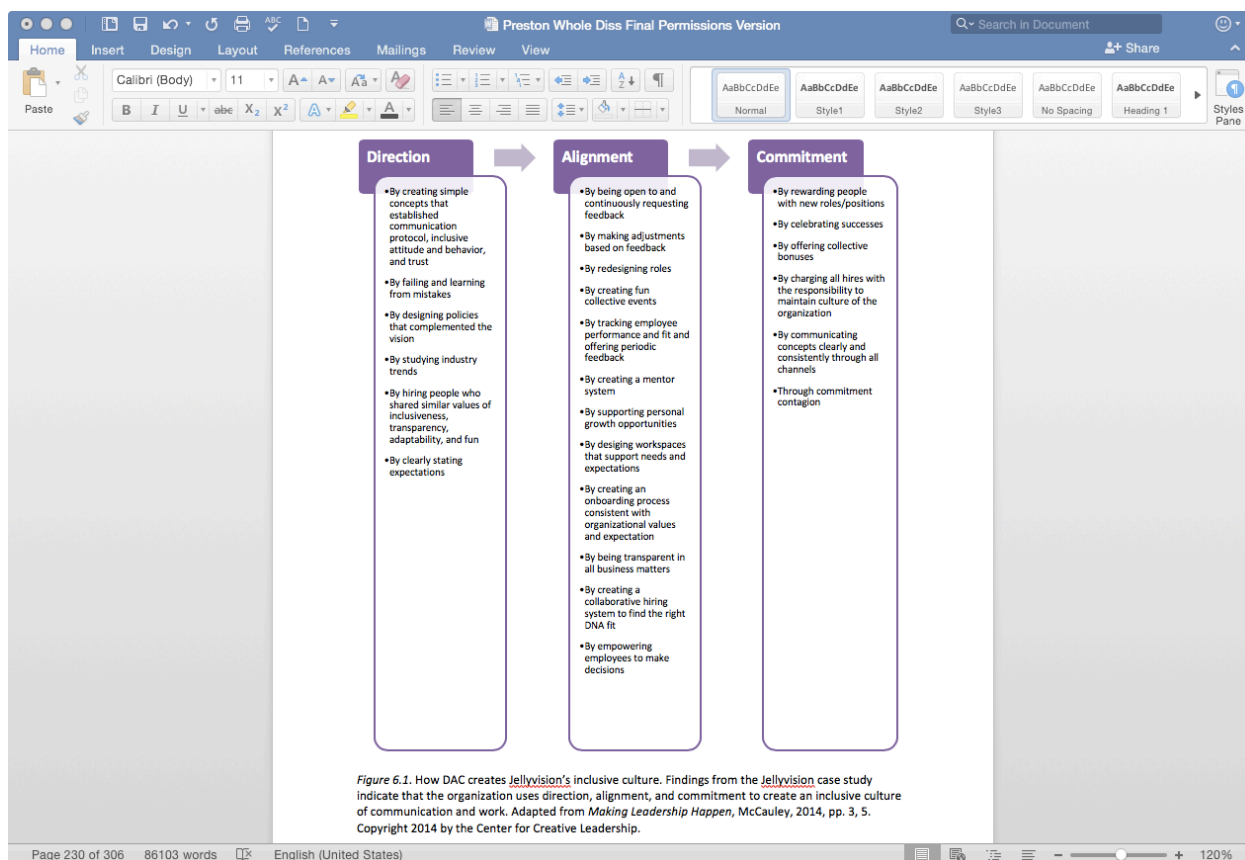**HOW WAS ALIGNMENT CREATED?**
- By involving many throughout the organization in crafting an implementation plan that specified department and unit responsibilities.
- By managers staying abreast of how implementation was going on the front lines and by employees keeping them abreast.
- Through a coordinating committee that monitored progress and made adjustments.

HOW WAS COMMITMENT CREATED?
- By connecting the improvement initiative to the existing motivations of individuals (e.g., to achieve beyond what others expected, to deliver high-quality patient care).
- By drawing attention to and reinforcing goal-directed effort.
- Through a "contagious" effect: seeing others' commitment increases one's own commitment.

The adaptation looks like:

Figure 6.1. How DAC creates Jellyvision's inclusive culture. Findings from the Jellyvision case study indicate that the organization uses direction, alignment, and commitment to create an inclusive culture of communication and work. Adapted from *Making Leadership Happen*, McCauley, 2014, pp. 3, 5. Copyright 2014 by the Center for Creative Leadership.

Permission would be acknowledged in APA 6th edition style in the dissertation in both the Figure 6.1 caption as written above and in the Appendix.

My dissertation will appear online at:

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OhioLINK's Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center, an open access archive at http://etd.ohiolink.edu,

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The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my dissertation, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages, and to the prospective publication of my dissertation by ProQuest through its UMI® Dissertation Publishing business. ProQuest may produce and sell copies of my dissertation on demand and may make my dissertation available for free internet download at my request. These rights will in no way restrict republication of the material noted in any other form by you or by others authorized by you.

Your granting of permission via email or letter (address beneath signature) will also confirm that you and your organization owns the copyright to the above-described material. If these

arrangements meet with your approval, please provide your consent by responding to this email or by letter to the mailing address listed below.

Please let me know if you have questions or need additional information. Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely—HP Preston

Heather Paige Preston, Doctoral Candidate
Antioch University
Leadership & Change Program

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