

Social media and not-for-profit sport organizations

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation was to address the degree to which social media can be utilized as a tool for stakeholder communication by not-for-profit sport organizations. Delimited to national sport organizations, specifically those in a Canadian context, and using a stakeholder theory approach, the project advanced three major research objectives: (1) determine what not-for-profit sport organizations are communicating to their stakeholders via social media, including identifying forces and pressures that impact content and messaging; (2) identify which stakeholders are positioned and advantaged in the social network of not-for-profit sport organizations; and (3) uncover the contextual factors that have enabled the use of social media channels by not-for-profit sport organizations. In order to accomplish these objectives, the dissertation was structured into three interconnected stages parsed into three research articles – each with its own supporting theoretical framework (i.e., institutional theory, network theory, and the contextualist approach to organizational change) – providing findings discussed using a stakeholder perspective.

In the first article, the results found social media communication was predominantly used for promoting, reporting, and informing purposes, attributable to the coercive (e.g., funding partners), mimetic (e.g., salient organization routines), and normative (e.g., best practices) pressures at play. In the second article, fans, elite athletes, photographers, competing sport organizations, and local sport clubs were identified as key stakeholders with significant advantage given their position in the social media network of not-for-profit organizations. The final article revealed social media has yet to radically impact the operations of these organizations, highlighting some of the challenges related to social media communication.

Cumulatively, the findings illustrate not-for-profit sport organizations can improve upon their current use of social media as a stakeholder communications tool. Through the implementation of a unique social media strategy composed of multiple philosophies, not-for-profit sport organizations could consider the variance in stakeholder groups while incorporating the immediacy and engagement social media requires. In doing so, organizations may create the conditions to satisfy stakeholder expectations and increase organizational capacity simultaneously. Concurrently, the findings represent a basis for future research using organizational theory frameworks to explain new trends and phenomena in the social media and sport domain.

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Writing a thesis dissertation is no simple task, and I wish to take this opportunity to recognize some of the friends, family, colleagues, and peers who have helped me along my doctoral journey. Although I will probably omit some names, there have been many individuals from around the world with whom I have had the pleasure of meeting, and I wish to say a big thank you to all. I hope to continue these bonds and repay those who have shown me such kindness and gratitude in the future.

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Statement of Author Contributions and Originality

The author of this dissertation (herein referred to as author) was responsible for the development and structure of this project on social media and not-for-profit sport organizations. He was the lead researcher, formulating research questions, developing the methodological design including data collection and analysis, interpreting results, and writing all three individual articles, as well as the introduction, discussion, and conclusion sections of this work. The author acknowledges the support of the dissertation supervisor (herein referred to as supervisor), Dr. Milena M. Parent, for her guidance, discussion, and review of the project, its subsequent findings, and preparation for publication in peer-reviewed outlets. As Chapter II, III, and IV of the dissertation are presented as co-authored works published or under review in peer-reviewed journal outlets, the subsequent preface is meant to add clarity to the authorship contribution of the author and of his supervisor.

Chapter II, which depicts stage one of the dissertation, was developed and written by the author, with minor involvement from the supervisor. Specifically, the author crafted the applicable research questions, collated and reviewed the pertinent literature and theoretical grounding, collected and analyzed the appropriate data, and developed the chapter's discussion. The supervisor was informed of and discussed all actions throughout the process, but did not offer a contribution by way of collection or analysis of data, or any written passages in the overview of literature, discussion, or any other section within Chapter II. Once the author had initially produced a final draft of the chapter, the supervisor reviewed the work, offering minor editorial commentary and feedback in preparation for submission to the *International Journal of Sport Communication*, a peer-review journal, which the author nor the supervisor are affiliated. Upon receiving blinded peer-review suggestions and

recommendations, the author of the chapter consulted with the supervisor with respect to the procedure and manner in which changes could be incorporated into the chapter. In adherence to the *American Psychological Association* (6th edition) guidelines for authorship, the author willingly listed the supervisor as a secondary author, without coercion or compellence.

Chapter III, which depicts stage two of the dissertation, was developed and written by the author with minimal involvement from the supervisor. The author developed the research questions, located and reviewed Twitter and network paradigm scholarship, as well as the collection and analysis of the relational data. The supervisor was informed of and discussed the progress made by the author throughout the entire development of this chapter. The author initially wrote a complete draft of the manuscript and provided said draft to the supervisor for a review in preparation for submission to a peer-review outlet. Upon receiving minor editorial commentary from the supervisor, the manuscript was submitted to the *Journal of Sport Management*, a top-tier publication outlet in the sport management domain, with the supervisor listed as a secondary author for her minor editorial contributions. While the supervisor holds editorial board membership with the journal, the decision to submit to this top-tier outlet was wholly made by the author. The supervisor also provided minor editorial assistance as the manuscript progressed through the review process.

Chapter IV, which depicts stage three of the dissertation, was also developed and written by the author with minimal involvement from the supervisor. Similarly to the previous chapters formatted for the peer-review process, the author donned the responsibility of developing research questions, collating and providing an overview of relevant literature and theory, collecting and analyzing data, and providing a discussion

linking results to previous literature. Once a complete draft of this chapter was produced solely by the author, it was sent to the supervisor for an editorial review. Following the minor comments provided by the supervisor, the manuscript was submitted to the *Journal of Sport Management*. The supervisor did not coerce or compel the author to submit this chapter to the outlet of which she holds an affiliation. After two rounds of blind peer-review, the manuscript was rejected from publication in this outlet, at which time the author proceeded to improve the chapter using reviewer feedback and additional minor editorial changes from the supervisor. Once completed, the author submitted the chapter in its current state to the *Journal of Amateur Sport*, an outlet which the author nor the supervisor hold an affiliation. This submission was accepted for publication by *Journal of Amateur Sport* on May 8, 2017.

The author of this dissertation certifies any ideas, techniques, quotations, or any other material from the work of others included here, published or otherwise, are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices of the *American Psychological Association* (6th edition). The author declares this work is a true copy of the dissertation, including any final revisions, as approved by the dissertation committee, and has not been submitted for an additional degree to any other institution.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full name
API	Application Programming Interface
CAQDA	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis
CNSO	Canadian National Sport Organization
CSO	Community Sport Organization
LTAD	Long-Term Athlete Development
NSO	National Sport Organization
OSFA	One-Size-Fits-All
RIP	Reporting, Informing, and Promoting
RQ	Research Question(s)
SNA	Social Network Analysis
SSCM	Strategic Sport Communication Model
TOP	The Olympic Partners
UGC	User-Generated Content
WWW	World Wide Web

Chapter I

Introduction

In the current globalized marketplace, sport organizations are subjected to economic discrepancies and technological advancements, among other environmental factors, which impact daily operations and the ability to deliver goods and services (Babiak, 2007, Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards, 1999). The internet and the World Wide Web (WWW), in particular, have become a salient topic amongst the management community (cf. Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This interest has led to various scholarly pursuits, such as the dichotomy between sport consumption via television and the WWW (e.g., Hutchins & Rowe, 2012), online message valence (e.g., Kwak, Kim, & Zimmerman, 2010), building relationships with consumers through webpages (e.g., Girginov, Taks, Boucher, Martyn, Holman, & Dixon, 2009), and how social issues can be advanced using a digital medium (e.g., Wilson & Hayhurst, 2009). While new developments and digital innovations may create turbulence for sport organizations to navigate through, understanding the value and impact of new tools can help an organization remain competitive against competing firms (Latimer, 2008).

One of the most pervasive digital innovations to impact sport organizations in recent years has been the emergence of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). As a mode of communication, social media platforms allow users to converse and interact synchronously and asynchronously with others around the world without temporal and spatial limitations. In any given minute on the internet, there are over 527,760 images captured and sent to users using Snapchat and 347,222 microblogged posts on Twitter, two social media platforms that have gained popularity (French, 2016). The prevalence of this new form of communication has led to various organizations, such as professional sport

franchises (e.g., Hambrick & Kang, 2014) and multi-national corporations, activating their sport sponsorships (e.g., Abeza, Pegoraro, Naraine, Séguin, & O'Reilly, 2014) using social media (e.g., blogs, content communities, and sharing hubs) to connect with their stakeholders. As a result, Clavio and Kian (2010) noted social media is now a permanent fixture within sporting spaces.

The emergence of social media in the sport landscape has also led to a significant spike in related scholarship (cf. Pedersen, 2014). In fact, Filo, Lock, and Karg (2015) highlighted several social media and sport articles, noting three prominent avenues of research topics: strategic (e.g., McCarthy, Rowley, Ashworth, & Pioch, 2014; Pfahl, Kreutzer, Maleski, Lillibridge, & Ryznar, 2012; Walsh, Clavio, Lovell, & Blaszkka, 2013), operational (e.g., Hambrick & Mahoney, 2011; Hull, 2014; Pegoraro & Jinnah, 2012), and user-focused endeavours (e.g., Smith & Smith, 2012; Stavros, Meng, Westberg, & Farrelly, 2013; Witkemper, Lim, & Waldburger, 2012). Yet, despite scholars choosing to explore the intersection between social media and sport, scholarship produced in this area has opted for a narrow focus with respect to its theoretical underpinning. For instance, Abeza, O'Reilly, Séguin, and Nzindukiyimana (2015) indicated social media and sport research has a propensity to focus on social media content with limited theoretical frameworks stemming from psychology, marketing, and crisis communication literature (e.g., uses and gratification, para-social interaction, and social identity). Filo et al. (2015) echoed this sentiment, suggesting social media and sport research incorporate additional frameworks (e.g., institutional theory) specifically to enhance the present understanding of social media and sport organizations. Additionally, and attributable to the attention paid towards enhanced marketing campaigns and larger financial resources, there also exists a propensity

for scholars to ground their studies in for-profit sport organizational contexts, such as professional sport franchises (e.g., Gibbs, O'Reilly, & Brunette, 2014; Stavros et al., 2013), professional athletes (e.g., Frederick, Lim, Clavio, Pedersen, & Burch, 2014; Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, & Greenwell, 2010; Lebel & Danylchuk, 2012), and professional sport competitions (e.g., Blaszk, Burch, Frederick, Clavio, & Walsh, 2012; Kassing & Sanderson, 2010). Very few studies have focused on not-for-profit sport organizations¹ in relation to social media, excluding intercollegiate athletics in the United States² and recent works conducted by Abeza and O'Reilly (2014), Eagleman (2013), and Thompson, Martin, Gee, and Eagleman (2014). This is particularly surprising given the dynamic challenges (e.g., capacity) these organizations experience (cf. Misener & Doherty, 2009).

Examining not-for-profit sport organizations would not signify a radical departure from previous works either. Regarding one type of not-for-profit sport organization, national sport organizations (NSOs), scholars have discussed various aspects including how these organizations structure themselves (e.g., Hinings, Thibault, Slack, & Kikulis, 1996), conceptualize strategic interests (e.g., Thibault, Slack, & Hinings, 1993), and change over time (e.g., Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1992). More recently, NSOs have been studied for their governance (e.g., Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012), knowledge management (e.g., O'Reilly & Knight, 2007), management by values (e.g., Kerwin, MacLean, & Bell-Laroche, 2014), sponsorship (e.g., Doherty & Murray, 2007), and strategic alliance practices (e.g., Kennelly & Toohey, 2014).

¹ The term not-for-profit can refer to organizations that are either non-profit or charitable in nature (see Neely, 2003). Not-for-profit is primarily utilized in this dissertation except for Chapter 3 where non-profit was used based upon a reviewer's comments.

² Although the National Collegiate Athletic Association has "non-profit" status in the United States, it generates a significant amount of revenue from sponsorships, broadcast rights fees, and private donor contributions to member institutions (see Mahony, Gladden, & Funk, 2003 and Zimbalist, 2013).

Despite these endeavours, research with respect to stakeholder communication, particularly in a digital, online setting, has been limited. One of the first articles to address this issue was the Girginov et al. (2009) study, which highlighted the lack of appreciation NSOs bear in using the WWW to develop and maintain relationships with stakeholders. Following this work, little progress has been made in continuing to explore not-for-profit sport organizations and online stakeholder communication, despite the growing use of social platforms, save for the few aforementioned social media studies (i.e., Abeza & O'Reilly, 2014; Eagleman, 2013; Thompson et al., 2014). Eagleman's work surveying NSO staff from the United States determined that social media was perceived as a public relations/communications tool, enabling the organization to engage in self-promotion. This sentiment was supported and advanced by Abeza and O'Reilly, indicating NSOs had yet to harness the interactivity social media provides vis-à-vis relationship building with fans. Finally, Thompson et al. documented some issues related to the development and maintenance of social media strategy for an NSO (e.g., content management, return on objective, and barriers to engagement). While these social media studies are useful in that they present preliminary observations related to social media and not-for-profit sport organizations, they simultaneously expose the need for a more in-depth inquiry related to stakeholder communication given their limited theoretical grounding (e.g., relationship marketing). These types of organizations are expected to communicate and engage with stakeholders to validate their mission and existence (cf. Girginov et al., 2009), especially given their importance in the sport system in terms of delivering sport services (cf. Thibault & Harvey, 2013). Yet, these previous studies have chosen to discuss the dyadic relationship between the organization and "fans", seemingly omitting the communication between the

organization and other stakeholders. As there are various types of stakeholders that an organization, especially a sport organization, has (cf. Parent, 2008), and as social media can increase awareness for niche or less salient organizations, which typically do not receive regular traditional media coverage (cf. Eagleman, 2013), there exists an opportunity to extend this line of research to consider and increase the awareness of other stakeholder groups (e.g., competing sport organizations, government, sponsors) for not-for-profit organizations in the communication process.

Accordingly, the purpose of this dissertation was to address the degree to which social media can be utilized as a tool for stakeholder communication by not-for-profit sport organizations. Specifically, I advanced three major research objectives: (1) determine what not-for-profit sport organizations are communicating to their stakeholders via social media, including identifying forces and pressures that impact content and messaging; (2) identify which stakeholders are positioned and advantaged in the social network of not-for-profit sport organizations; and (3) uncover the contextual factors that have enabled and hindered the adoption of social media channels by not-for-profit sport organizations. To achieve these objectives, I structured the dissertation into three interconnected stages (see methodology section for more details). Moreover, I focused on one type of social media platform (i.e., Twitter) and one form of not-for-profit sport organizations in line with previous examinations: Canadian national sport organizations (CNSOs). Both Twitter and CNSOs are reviewed with greater depth in this chapter.

Although scholars have heeded Thibault's (2009) call for greater attention to be paid towards sport organizations in light of technological advancements in society, scholars have shown a particular concern for the quality of social media and sport investigations

(e.g., Pedersen, 2014; Wenner, 2014). Thus, it is imperative that any social media and sport research be cognizant of its contributions from an empirical and theoretical perspective (cf. Pegoraro, 2014). This dissertation adheres to these concerns by examining multiple dimensions within the not-for-profit sport organization and social media discourse (i.e., content, social networking, and context) and does not simply rely on content and messaging for a cursory discussion.

In order to meet the objectives of this dissertation whilst heeding the call to present a strong theoretical foundation to discuss social media as a stakeholder communication tool for not-for-profit sport organizations, I applied a stakeholder theory approach as the principal, overarching theoretical framework (Freeman, 1984) supported by three organizational perspectives, including institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Tolbert & Zucker, 1983), network theory (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011; Borgatti & Lopez-Kidwell, 2011), and the contextualist approach to organizational change (Pettigrew, 1985, 1987).

I employed institutional theory in the first stage of the research project, to help explain why content and messages produced by not-for-profit sport organizations (i.e., CSNOs) are isomorphic by design. In the second stage, I used network theory as the underlying model for the ties between actors (or users in the case of a social media network). In the third stage of the dissertation, I incorporated a contextualist approach to examine the factors outlining the impetus for change, type of change, and the resistance brought about by adopting social media as tool for stakeholder communication. As multiple perspectives were utilized, it was imperative that one framework be presented which could bridge and discuss all three stages insofar as they relate to the project's purpose. As such, I applied stakeholder

theory in a holistic sense, providing insight from each of the three dimensions (i.e., content, social networking, and context) examined.

In the next section, I present my review of literature, which provides an overview of NSOs, organizational communication, and social media, specifically Twitter, the latter particularly examined for its connections with sport. The overarching framework, stakeholder theory, is also highlighted. Finally, I explain the dissertation's structure and general methodology (including my epistemological approach, research context, data collection, and data analysis).

Overview of Literature and Theoretical Framework

National Sport Organizations (NSOs)

Not-for-profit sport organizations contribute heavily to a country's economic structure, particularly with respect to providing essential community services (Anheier, 2014). As one form of not-for-profit sport organizations, NSOs represent a significant component of a country's sport industry, as they are responsible for planning, organizing, regulating, and implementing sport programs. Bell-Laroche, MacLean, Thibault, and Wolfe (2014) noted, as of 2006, more than 20% of not-for-profit organizations in Canada were sport-based, indicative of the significance of these organizations within a jurisdiction. What distinguishes these sport organizations from other not-for-profits – keeping with the Canadian context specifically – is that, while some organizations rely solely on volunteers to manage and administer services and programs, most NSOs employ paid professional staff to conduct at least part of their operations (e.g., community and high performance sport) (Slack & Parent, 2006). Moreover, the paid professional staff in NSOs typically work in tandem with volunteer board members to govern the organization, creating a unique dynamic from

within (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012). Bayle and Madella (2002) supported the unique characteristics of NSOs by noting these organizations differ from private sector sport organizations (e.g., professional sports franchises) in that they bear “multiple goals, multiple constituencies, and partial market isolation” (p. 2).

Also known as national sport federations or national governing bodies depending on the jurisdiction in which they operate (cf. Li, MacIntosh, & Bravo, 2012), there has been a considerable amount of research on NSOs, particularly in the Canadian context. Over two decades ago, scholars began to illuminate issues pertaining to CNSOs, and involved these organizations as the primary research setting (e.g., Chelladurai, Szyslo, & Haggerty, 1987; Hall, Cullen, & Slack, 1989; Slack & Kikulis, 1989). Since that period, there have been many more examinations of CNSOs, particularly from a strategic management viewpoint (e.g., Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2002; Babiak, 2007; Bell-Laroche et al., 2014; Hamm, MacLean, Kikulis, & Thibault, 2008; Havaris & Danylchuk, 2007; Kerwin et al., 2014). These recent endeavours have contributed greatly to understanding the unique dynamics of CNSOs. For instance, Amis et al. (2002) purported CNSOs were able to experience change if staff members within the organization held beliefs and values congruent with the anticipated changes to the firm. Yet, Havaris and Danylchuk (2007) noted CNSOs typically implemented basic, traditional methods of management, focused on setting and achieving objectives (and thus indicating change would be unlikely). Bell-Laroche et al. (2014) also mentioned this point, citing the majority of CNSOs are often managed to achieve a specific outcome (e.g., completion of objectives) instead of optimizing the organization through a management by values design which leverages organizational resources (e.g., motivates employees, rewards performance based upon espoused values). Although CNSOs maintain a

traditional, seemingly conservative design, they are not exempt from the impact of market forces and trends, including new innovations and technological advancements.

The growth of online communication has affected the way CNSOs (and NSOs generally) communicate with their stakeholders. Girginov et al.'s (2009) study on CNSO usage of the WWW demonstrated this point, highlighting the growth of online communication enabled these organizations to develop their virtual presence, albeit not to its full capacity vis-à-vis relationship building. Nevertheless, technological advancements have been recognized by not-for-profit organizations to be useful in communication and interacting with stakeholders (Cukier & Middleton, 2003). Social media has not differed in terms of communicating with stakeholders in a digital space. In fact, scholars have begun to chronicle the use of social media by not-for-profit organizations (e.g., Lovejoy, Waters, & Saxton, 2013; Nah & Sexton, 2013). However, these examinations remain limited with respect to NSOs, and are especially scarce in the Canadian context.

More specifically, Eagleman (2013) and Thompson et al. (2014) both advanced the NSO and social media line of research, while Abeza and O'Reilly's (2014) endeavour remains the lone examination of CNSOs and social media. With the Canadian Sport Policy (2012), a document which provides direction to CNSOs, underscoring the importance of strategic communication to engage stakeholders, continuing this line of research is relevant insofar as to examine the use of social media within the scope of stakeholder communication.

Organizational Communication

A research project on the use of social media as a means to communicate with stakeholders would be remiss if it did not discuss the concept of communication. In a sport

context, communication is a process where individuals and organizations involved in a sport setting generate meaning from interactions with others (Pedersen, Miloch, Laucella, & Fielding, 2007a). Although this definition is brief, it encompasses the communication process and its key elements (cf. Lasswell, 1948). First, there must be an initial party (whether individual or organizational) seeking to communicate with another party or parties (also either individual or organizational). Second, there is an interaction which could consist of spoken or written words, gestures, and even imagery. Finally, the interaction between parties is delivered through a channel which, for example, can be as simple as a face-to-face interaction or more complex like a television broadcast.

Emanating from this process and definition of communication is the strategic sport communication model (SSCM), posited by Pedersen, Miloch, and Laucella (2007b). The SSCM is comprised of three main components: (1) personal and organizational communication, (2) mass media, and (3) ancillary communication (e.g., advertising, crises communication). All three components are closely linked and often overlap, given the influences each has on the others (Pedersen, 2013). Nevertheless, the first component, consisting of various types of personal (i.e., intrapersonal, interpersonal, and small group) and organizational (i.e., intra-organizational and inter-organizational) communication, is perceived as most central, given the impact it can have on mass media and ancillary services (e.g., public relations). Due to the nature of this research project, organizational communication is necessary to further discuss.

Communication is vital for (sport) organizations (cf. Pedersen et al., 2007a). The process of interacting and involving various stakeholders enables an organization to establish, compose, design, and effectively sustain itself (Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, &

Clark, 2011; Putnam & Nicotera, 2009). Once established, the organization is defined, shaped, and controlled by the overall message it projects; thus, communication is constantly occurring (Christensen, Firat, & Torp, 2008). That message is often crafted with the intent of a consistent, conservative (i.e., formal), and professional tone (van Riel & Eombrun, 2007). However, in practice, organizations may craft multiple messages targeted to different demographics as a means of maintaining legitimacy and to compete in complex business environments (cf. Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987; Cheney, 1991). Yet, the creation of multiple messages can result in ambiguity such that stakeholders are confused and have ambiguous expectations of the organization (cf. Thøger Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011). While it is plausible an organization can describe its brand, values, and key objectives to multiple stakeholder groups using multiple messages, there is also a higher likelihood of alienating groups if the messaging is misconstrued or contradictory. Thus, while communication is important in the creation and preservation of the organization, it simultaneously presents an issue in terms of what the organization's identity is and how that identity is communicated to various stakeholders.

As the SSCM illustrates, organizational communication can be dissected into two primary forms: intra-organizational and inter-organizational (Pedersen et al., 2007b). While intra-organizational communication is certainly important (i.e., interactions that take place between staff within a given organization), inter-organizational communication (i.e., interactions between organizations) is critical given organizations typically operate in an interconnected setting and rely on relationships with others to extend or defend their operations (Pfeffer & Salanick, 1978/2003). These "others" include various stakeholder groups, such as consumers (and fans in a sport context), sponsors, governments, and

competing organizations, just to name a few. Engaging in inter-organizational communication is important to an organization, as it assesses its goals and objectives with the opinions expressed by stakeholder groups (Phillips, 2004). To conduct their communications activities, organizations choose from four main strategies: informing, consulting, involving, and partnering (Gregory, 2007). Informing occurs when one-way communication is initiated on the part of the organization to stakeholders with little to no response in return. Consulting is a two-way, interactive form of communication, where the organization responds to suggestions and actively listens to their stakeholders. Involving stakeholders is also a two-way, interactive form of communication; except here, the organization selectively interacts with stakeholders likely to be more active than passive. Finally, organizations may wish to indulge in inter-organizational communication activity by partnering with stakeholders. Whereas involving stakeholders serves as a two-way dialogue between the organization and stakeholders for the benefit of the organization's operations, partnering with stakeholders allows both the organization and the stakeholders to achieve mutual benefits. In practice, the informing strategy is often employed by not-for-profit organizations, engaging in one-way communication that divulges key facts and statistics to the general public (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). While this design may be appropriate for traditional forms of communication, it is challenged by the nature and characteristics of social media, as described below.

Social Media

The term social media achieved mainstream popularity circa 2005 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). During this period, there was a shift in how the WWW was conceptualized, moving from a place where users accessed content to one where content is user generated

and modified in a participatory manner. This new space, known as the Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2007), enabled new applications in a digital environment, such as blogs (i.e., online personal journals), social networks (i.e., exchange of personal content), content communities (i.e., collaboration and organizing content), and virtual gaming worlds (cf. Kaplan & Haenline, 2010). Social media grew out of this Web 2.0 space. Whereas the Web 2.0 refers to the entire shift towards user-generated content (UGC), social media represents the social aspects (e.g., networking, community) of the movement, including applications and sites fostering connections between users (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). Thus, social media is about creating, sharing, and having conversations (Sanderson & Yandle, 2015).

What distinguishes social media from other forms of communications is the ability to share, interact, and engage with multiple stakeholders, synchronously and asynchronously, as well as incorporating various multimedia (e.g., pictures or videos) across a variety of different channels (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Whereas other forms of communication like telephone calls, e-mails, and even face-to-face meetings may confine the interaction from a temporal or spatial perspective, social media offers increased flexibility, as a user can address one and all stakeholders instantaneously without such limitations. The capability of appending messages with multimedia through social media serves to enhance the conversation and incite interaction, a key characteristic omitted from other forms of communication (e.g., telephone) due to technological limitations or convention (Safko, 2010). Moreover, users are able to utilize multiple social media sites to maximize these characteristics; just as there are several e-mail hosts, numerous telecommunication carriers, and television broadcast stations, there are many social media channels users can choose from, each with their own functionality. Kietzmann, Hermkens,

McCarthy, and Silvestre (2011) posited all social media channels are composed of seven key functions (i.e., identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups). The identity function of social media allows users to disclose who they are by indicating their real name, age, gender, profession, as well as where they are located in the world. Even when users are not explicit about these attributes, the nature of social media is such that interactions may inadvertently disclose subjective information (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media, as previously indicated, is functionally an outlet to converse and share information with others. As a result of this connection to other users, one of social media's key characteristics is the presence it affords to a user; utilizing social media enables users to demonstrate active involvement in the discussion by noting their present location or current state of affairs (i.e., a status update). Social media also allows users to form relationships and groups; users can befriend others, or simply congregate in communal pockets to discuss shared interests. Another function that social media channels provide is the notion of reputation. Users may garner a particular reputation for the types of content they create, other users they befriend, or simply for having a presence in a popular location (e.g., sporting event). Though each social media channel is composed of these seven functions, some channels have a higher concentration on certain aspects and thus some functions are more prominent in some channels than others (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

Perhaps the most common channels to emerge from the populous social media environment are Facebook and Twitter (cf. Abeza & O'Reilly, 2014; Hambrick et al., 2010; Hull, 2014; Witkemper et al., 2012). Created in 2004, Facebook acts as a personal webpage, allowing users to set up profiles and reveal their identity to others they choose to befriend in their social network (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Users can communicate to their social

network asynchronously, through posts on their own page (known as their timeline), as well as synchronously through private messages. Facebook users are also able to share content from the WWW and offer elongated opinions on polarizing topics (though posts can also reference non-salient topics as they are chosen by the user themselves). Through its design, Facebook has been shown to be effective in engaging and strengthening social networking (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007), particularly amongst a digitally savvy demographic such as those individuals born in the 1980s and 1990s commonly referred to as “millennials” (cf. Tapscott, 2009). Conversely, Twitter is a microblogging tool that limits UGC and interactions to 140 characters, allowing users to access short bursts of information and content in an accelerated fashion. When a user posts on Twitter, it is placed on their “feed”, similar to the Facebook timeline, which aggregates content from others within that user’s social network; users on this platform follow others whom they wish to view microblogged posts. Twitter has been identified as a social media channel that incites frequent conversations between users based on polarizing discussions (cf. Clavio & Kian, 2010). As such, Twitter has become a mainstay in the contemporary social media experience, supplementing traditional consumption (e.g., television broadcasting) with impromptu, interactive content (Hutchins, 2011). Though Sanderson and Yandle (2015) suggested a digital portfolio should also consist of emerging platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Pinterest, Facebook and Twitter remain staples within the social media landscape.

The rapid development of social media and its channels, particularly Facebook and Twitter, have also spawned an interest from organizations looking to establish connections with their stakeholders in both online and offline settings (Williams & Chinn, 2010). In fact, Zhang, Jansen, and Chowdhury (2011) noted the ease of establishing a presence on social

media channels for organizations. The result, specifically in a sport context, has been promotional and informative (cf. Abeza et al., 2014; Gibbs et al., 2014) content that spreads from the sport organization's social network to their stakeholders' social networks. In this respect, social media (especially Twitter) serves as an electronic word of mouth (Curran, O'Hara, & O'Brien, 2011; Zhang et al., 2011). However, as alluded to previously, much of the work in this area has examined the for-profit (sport) organization context, opting to study professional teams and leagues (e.g., Blaszkowski et al., 2014; Gibbs et al., 2014). There still remains an opportunity to study social media in the not-for-profit sector, as the use of various channels is beneficial to organizations operating in this sector, as they often operate with limited traditional media exposure (cf. Curtis et al., 2010; Eagleman, 2013).

Stakeholder Theory

One of the emergent theoretical frameworks within the sport management literature has been stakeholder theory (see Friedman, Parent, & Mason, 2004; Mason & Slack, 1997; Parent, 2008; Parent & Deephouse, 2007; Parent, Kristiansen, Skille, & Hanstad, 2015; Trail & Chelladurai, 2002; Wolfe & Putler, 2002). Freeman (1984) argued organizations, groups, and individuals (i.e., stakeholders) have the ability to affect and/or be affected by a given organization and its actions. For Clarkson (1995), principal stakeholders included employees, shareholders, suppliers, and consumers connected to the focal organization. However, Post, Preston, and Sachs (2002) offered another view, citing stakeholders are boundless and could be those directly connected to the focal organization (similar to Clarkson's view), but also those extended groups found in the broader socio-political arena. Irrespective of the classification of parties (see Frooman, 2010 for a more complete list of stakeholder classification models), the choices and actions made by managers within an

organization (like a sport organization for instance), can be explained through an understanding of the relationships and expectations of stakeholders and the focal organization (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997).

There are four essential premises of stakeholder theory as identified by Jones and Wicks (1999) and Purnell and Freeman (2012) more recently. The first is the original conception made by Freeman (1984) that stakeholders exist (as individuals, groups, and organizations) and contribute to a focal organization's actions. The second tenet is that the theory is concerned with the nature, process, and outcomes for both the firm and its stakeholders. Third, the interests of all legitimate stakeholders – those parties which hold power, legitimacy, and urgency (see Mitchell et al., 1997) – have intrinsic value and do not have priority over the interests of others. Finally, stakeholder theory focuses on managers and decision-making (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). At its core, the intent of stakeholder theory is to describe “how to improve strategic decision-making” (Friedman et al., 2004, p. 186).

In addition to its four basic premises, there are three approaches to employing stakeholder theory as a theoretical framework. As Donaldson and Preston (1995) posited, stakeholder theory features a descriptive/empirical, an instrumental, and a normative approach. The descriptive/empirical approach focuses on the organization and its board members conceptualizing their stakeholder interests and the potential impact. The instrumental approach examines the potential links between the management of stakeholders and the desired objectives of the focal organization (e.g., financial targets). Finally, the normative approach allows researchers to provide philosophical guidelines for focal organization managers for their operations. These approaches also compliment Parent's

(2008) assertion that the theory can examine “the focal organization itself, the stakeholders, and the relationship between the focal organization and its stakeholders” (p. 137).

As a framework, stakeholder theory is not without opposition. Key (1999), for example, provided four critiques to Freeman’s (1984) contribution citing inadequacy of the process, incomplete ties to internal and external variables, insufficient attention paid towards levels of analysis and business operations, and overlooking the environment in which the business operates. Along this vein, Key (1999) proposed time and environmental variables be incorporated into the framework such that change and conflict in organizations could be examined. Similarly, Trevino and Weaver (1999) indicated stakeholder theory is not a theory so much as it is a research tool applied to the intersection of business and society-at-large; the “theory” could not explain a phenomenon by itself and would require another theoretical framework to compliment it. However, despite its opposition, stakeholder theory remains a theoretically-driven approach harnessed by scholars to explain the complexities in relationships between multiple parties (Gioia, 1999; Parmar, Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Purnell, & De Colle, 2010).

I employed stakeholder theory as my primary theoretical framework to address my dissertation’s purpose (i.e., the degree to which social media can be utilized as a tool for stakeholder communication by not-for-profit sport organizations) and connect the three major research objectives (i.e., analyzing social media communication to stakeholders and any pressures impacting said content, identifying stakeholders within the social network of not-for-profit sport organizations, and uncovering contextual factors pertaining to the use of social media).

Stakeholder theory has been applied in multiple contexts as an overarching,

umbrella concept (cf. Littau, Jujagirl, & Adlbrecht, 2010), including De Bussy, Watson, Pitt, and Ewing's (2000) work on stakeholder communication using the internet and WWW, helping to justify its inclusion here in a similar manner. Specifically, I utilize a normative approach to stakeholder theory in this dissertation to discuss the nexus between social media and not-for-profit sport organizations and determine useful implications for practitioners to guide their stakeholder communication operations in similar or like-organizations. In this capacity, my research project hones in on stakeholder theory from a focal organization perspective, adhering to one of Parent's (2008) notions of how stakeholder theory can be applied, particularly in a sport organization context.

As Table 1.1 reveals, stakeholder theory has been applied previously in both sport and non-sport capacities. In sport, stakeholder theory has been used in sport facilities (e.g., Friedman & Mason, 2004), events (e.g., Parent, 2008; Parent et al., 2015), and sponsorship (e.g., Tsiotsou, 2011) research, while non-sport literature has discussed various issues including, but not limited to corporate social and financial performance (e.g., Ruf, Muralidhar, Brown, Janney, & Paul, 2001), buyer-supplier relationships (e.g., Banerjee, Dasgupta, & Kim, 2008), tourism (e.g., Byrd, 2007), transportation crises (e.g., Acquier, Gand, & Szpirglas, 2008), information technology (e.g., Huang, 2015), and health care (e.g., Elms, Berman, & Wicks, 2002). Where there exists a gap is in the application of stakeholder theory beyond a real-world, physical context, towards the online relationship between an organization and its stakeholders, particularly with not-for-profit sport organizations. Zerfass and Viertmann (2017) introduced the idea of stakeholder theory and potential linkages with social media, but there has been no attempt to integrate stakeholder theory within the social media and sport literature specifically. As such, this dissertation occupies a unique space by

applying stakeholder theory to the nexus of not-for-profit sport organizations and social media. Moreover, to mitigate the concerns of stakeholder theory, three additional perspectives accompany the principal framework to address each of the three research objectives: institutional theory, network theory, and the contextualist approach to organizational change.

Institutional theory is applied to the first stage of the dissertation, helping to explain the content produced by not-for-profit sport organizations (see Chapter II for details on institutional theory). In the second stage, network theory is utilized to depict the relations between users of not-for-profit sport organizations’ social media network (see Chapter III for details on network theory). Finally, the contextualist approach to organizational change enables a discussion of why social media is adopted by these types of sport organizations, specifically looking at the context enabling this particular type of stakeholder communication (see Chapter IV for details on the contextualist approach). Beyond the fact these theories stem from a similar tradition (i.e., organization theory), stakeholder theory bridges the results yielded from each of the three stages of the dissertation, thereby providing insight from a holistic viewpoint. Indeed, the use of stakeholder theory in this dissertation contributes to a greater understanding of social media in not-for-profit sport organizations by uncovering the *what*, *who*, and *why* of this stakeholder communication activity.

Table 1.1 Examples of Stakeholder Theory in Sport and Non-Sport Settings

Author(s) (Year)	Domain	Description of Research/Outcomes
Rowley (1997)	Non-sport	Moving beyond considering stakeholder theory as a dyadic relationship between an organization and one stakeholder towards an organization and multiple stakeholders.

Kochan and Rubinstein (2000)	Non-sport	Labour situation at automobile manufacturer reveals employees as a key, influential stakeholder.
Ruf et al. (2001)	Non-sport	Primary stakeholder groups, such as shareholders, financially benefit when the organization meets the demands of multiple stakeholders.
Covell (2004)	Sport	The interests of one salient collegiate stakeholder group impacts athletic policy for multiple leagues seeking to maintain a high profile.
Heath and Norman (2004)	Non-sport	Shareholders, as one type of stakeholder group, wield power in the corporate governance of a firm.
Friedman and Mason (2004)	Sport	Stakeholders are mapped during the construction of a major sports facility, showcasing stakeholder power, legitimacy, and urgency.
Godfrey (2009)	Sport	Stakeholder theory remains a foundational piece of the sport and corporate social responsibility agenda.
Tsiotsou (2011)	Sport	Shareholders, as one type of stakeholder, do not perceive sponsorships of sport properties as business investments.

Overall Methodology

The major elements of a research project (i.e., epistemology and ontology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods) are often amalgamated without distinction (Crotty, 1998), which can pose a challenge with regards to how a research design came to fruition. Here, I define my epistemological and ontological approach, theoretical perspective, methodological approach, and research design, key elements in conducting this dissertation. Specifics related to each of the three stages are provided in those chapters to avoid repetition.

Epistemology, Ontology, and Theoretical Perspective

An epistemology, also referred to as a paradigm (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011), broad research methodology (Neuman, 2000), or philosophical worldview (Creswell, 2014), outlines “how we know what we know” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). It can be considered as the theory of knowledge and is rooted within the plan of action of every research endeavour; it is the connection between the investigator and knowledge (cf. Silk, Andrews, & Mason, 2005). Crotty (1998) identified three predominant epistemological views: objectivism, subjectivism, and constructionism. The objectivist epistemology maintains meaning is intrinsic to an object, which therefore leads to one reality, undisturbed by the consciousness of an investigator. Thus, research grounded in this epistemology should be designed simply to reveal the eventual, objective truth, as there can be no other meanings to be discovered or ascribed. Subjectivists purport a polar opposite view: reality is constructed by the individual who imposes their own meaning. In this subjectivist view, there is no single reality; consciousness creates truth, and therefore research in this tradition should be designed to stimulate interaction between the investigator and the object (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The constructionist view, which falls between the two previous epistemologies, is predicated on the notion that truth is constructed through engagement. Crotty (1998) explained that, in this particular epistemology, both the investigator and the object work in tandem to generate meaning. I adopt the position that present reality is composed of various perspectives with varying insights and knowledge; employing a constructionist lens can uncover the meaning of social media as constructed by not-for-profit sport organizations (through their staff).

Whereas epistemology concentrates on knowledge, ontology is concerned with reality and existence (Crotty, 1998). Similarly, one’s ontological approach also informs the theoretical perspective, methodology, and procedures of a research project. Particularly in

studies of organizations, ontological issues can misalign the use and practice of theory (Fleetwood, 2004, 2005). Moreover, Fleetwood (2004, 2005) deemed a critical realist ontology is appropriate for investigators studying organizations. Critical realism posits events are “real,” but attributable to mechanisms (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobson, & Karlsson, 2002). These mechanisms refer to the properties of society and individuals within that society, whether they be historical, social, or otherwise (cf. Bhaskar, 1978, 1989). Yet, as individuals will have varying experiences, reality may never be fully understood with exact precision (Frauley & Pearce, 2007) and not all understandings may be considered equally valid (Groff, 2004). Nevertheless, critical realists accept these challenges and continue to strive for enhanced understandings of the world and the phenomena within it (Bhaskar, 1989). As a critical realist myself, I, too, accept the notion I may not be able to arrive at a truth with absolute finality. Rather, I provide insights that present the most robust and convincing interpretation of what is real, as deemed through interaction with multiple individuals. With this ontological approach, I am able to recognize the impact of my own assumptions and biases, enabling me to choose the most appropriate methods for inquiry (Scott, 2007). Along this vein, critical realism enables me to observe multiple experiences pertaining to social media and not-for-profit sport organizations and yield insight that remains credible and trustworthy.

A theoretical perspective is a researcher’s “view of the human world and social life within that world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 7). By indicating their perspective, researchers are able to elaborate on their assumptions and biases, which inform their methodological and design selections. There are several types of theoretical perspectives, including (but not limited to) positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism, social constructivism, pragmatism, and critical

theory (cf. Creswell, 2013; Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Although the positivist mentality has been pervasive in sport management (cf. Edwards & Skinner, 2011), I identify as a post-positivist, a perspective which rejects the notion of one absolute or “real” truth, while incorporating reductionism, logic, and empirically-driven projects. Whereas the positivist tradition is rooted in validation through prediction and control mechanisms (Guba, 1990), post-positivism appreciates the construction of reality and patterned creativity that humanity exercises (cf. Miller, 2000). Given that post-positivism is predicated on logic while involving multiple realities, Creswell (2013) indicated researchers within this perspective tend to have rigorous, multiple stages of data collection and analysis, employ computer programs to assist in the analysis process, and present their works in a structured manner (e.g., problem, research questions [RQ], methods, results, discussion, conclusion). In addition to exemplifying these characteristics, the nature of post-positivism aligns with my epistemological (i.e., constructionist) and ontological (i.e., critical realist) views as the tradition appreciates multiple, constructed realities (cf. Miller, 2000).

Research Design

A research design is the strategy a researcher enacts to carry out a research project (Crotty, 1998). Typically, a research design emanates from one of three major streams: quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods. Quantitative strategies tend to gravitate towards developing structural models to explain behaviour or test theory (Creswell, 2014). Conversely, qualitative strategies explore meaning and experience of individuals and groups related to a problem or phenomenon. The mixed methods stream incorporates both quantitative and qualitative approaches, utilizing the strengths of both and minimizing challenges and limitations inherent by choosing one or the other (cf. Creswell, 2014;

Greene, 2007).

For this dissertation, I implemented a mixed methods design. The process of utilizing multiple approaches in research has varied amongst scholars (cf. Creswell, 2010; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Morgan, 2007), but there are key elements to this research approach. Such elements include multiple stages of data collection and analysis, inference techniques, and the use of both qualitative and quantitative measures (cf. Creswell, 2014). However, the traditional notion of mixed methods has evolved from the quantity of mixing to *what* it is that is being mixed by the investigator. As Greene (2007, 2012) suggested, the mixed methods design can be conceptualized into two streams: “mixed methods heavy” and “mixed methods lite”. The mixed methods heavy approach is a comprehensive mixture of quantitative and qualitative orientations, coupled with the mixing of multiple philosophical worldviews (i.e., epistemologies). Conversely, the mixed methods lite approach contains a mixture of quantitative and qualitative measures, but does not employ multiple worldviews. As I maintain a singular epistemological stance (i.e., post-positivism), I implement a mixed methods lite design in this dissertation.

Research Setting

Having established mixed methods lite as a strategy, it was important to delineate not-for-profit sport organizations to a context that would yield in-depth insights into the phenomenon. Based on past research endeavours examining NSOs, this type of organization was selected for study. Specifically, this dissertation focused on a subset of NSOs, namely CNSOs.

Sport has a celebrated history in Canada; spectating or playing sport at the local, provincial/territorial, or national level is entrenched in Canadian society (Morrow &

Wamsley, 2009). From an administrative perspective, sport in Canada is overseen by the federal government through Sport Canada, an agency operating within the Department of Canadian Heritage. In 2015-2016, Sport Canada provided \$146 million alone to Canadian sport organizations (Government of Canada, 2015a), including CNSOs. These particular types of sport organizations are responsible for the organization and administration of a given sport in the country, creating grassroots programs and developing high performance athletes, as well as training coaches and referees. With the unique circumstance NSOs occupy in the sport landscape (cf. Thibault & Harvey, 2013), I concentrated on CNSOs in my dissertation to provide insight into social media and not-for-profit sport organizations.

Research Stages

To address the purpose and the three major research objectives (i.e., determining what not-for-profit sport organizations are communicating to their stakeholders via social media, identifying which stakeholders are positioned and advantaged in the social network of not-for-profit sport organizations, and uncovering the contextual factors that enable the use of social media by not-for-profit sport organizations), the dissertation was divided into three interconnected stages, with each stage discussing one of the aforementioned objectives. Stage one involved analyzing social media content of CNSOs using a qualitative design (i.e., thematic analysis), discussed with an institutional theory lens. In stage two, social media networks of CNSOs were analyzed using quantitative elements of social network analysis (SNA), utilizing a network theory framework. The final stage employed an organizational change framework (i.e., the contextualist approach) and consisted of another qualitative design, analyzing CNSO responses to interview questions regarding the context of social media usage. As alluded to previously, the division of the dissertation into three

stages was useful in addressing the major research objectives, but it also enabled the supplementation of the main theoretical framework (i.e., stakeholder theory) with additional approaches (i.e., institutional theory, network theory, and contextual approach to organizational change). Moreover, segregating the project into three interconnect stages allowed the dissertation to adhere to the standards of the “article-based” dissertation format³ (Dunleavy, 2003).

Data Collection

Following the mixed methods lite methodology and division of the dissertation into interconnected stages, data were collected through two primary sources: Twitter, the social media platform, and interviews with CNSOs.

As mentioned previously, Twitter has emerged as one of the more prominent social media channels utilized by various sport stakeholders (e.g., Blaszkas et al., 2012; Frederick et al., 2014; Gibbs et al., 2014; Hambrick et al., 2010; Hull, 2014; Kassing & Sanderson, 2010; Lebel & Danylchuk, 2012; Pegoraro & Hambrick, 2014; Pegoraro & Jinnah, 2012; Watanabe, Yan, & Soebbing, 2015; Witkemper et al., 2012). Yet, what makes Twitter a viable site to gather data is its accessible ecosystem. Unlike other platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat), which have stringent privacy and security settings restricting access to data, Twitter’s application programming interface (API) is much more open to extraction (boyd & Crawford, 2012). Although some scholars have scrutinized projects utilizing data from Twitter (e.g., Billings, 2014; Hardin, 2014; Pedersen, 2014), there remains an opportunity to capture data extracted from this source to produce high-quality works (e.g., Pegoraro, 2014). Moreover, Cannarella and Spechler (2014) suggested the other salient

³ Adhering to the requirements of the peer-review process led to Chapter II, III, and IV utilizing US English standards, which differs from Chapter I and V which uses Canadian English.

platform, Facebook, is likely to experience a decrease in usage by the end of 2017. Thus, Twitter represents a source for social media data that is open, accessible (through its API) and non-diminishing in usage by stakeholders.

I collected two types of data from Twitter: content (i.e., tweets) and network ties (i.e., followership). After identifying all 61 CNSOs listed by the Department of Canadian Heritage (Government of Canada, 2015b) (see Table 1.1), I extracted content for a set of organizations ($n = 8$) chosen using a stratified random sampling technique (Creswell, 2014; see Chapter II for more details and organizations selected). To perform the extraction, I used the NCapture tool, an extension of the NVIVO software program. With NCapture, up to approximately 3,200 tweets (microblogged posts from a user) were captured from the delineated CNSO Twitter feeds, similar to Abeza et al.'s (2014) data collection process. Once extracted, the data were stored in eight separate Microsoft Excel spreadsheets (one for each CNSO) for subsequent analysis. In addition to collecting content from Twitter, I captured network ties. As Twitter users “follow” other users to get tweets aggregated for their viewing pleasure, extracting this data would yield insight into the network dynamics of a user (or CNSO in this instance). To collect this relational data, I used the NodeXL tool, a software program able to capture this specific type of data from Twitter (cf. Pegoraro & Hambrick, 2014; Watanabe et al., 2015) from two CNSOs from the sample. In this project, NodeXL captured the relational data (i.e., users following and users followed) from Twitter for two CNSOs from the stratified random sample, and I downloaded them into two separate Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. Once extracted, I used NodeXL again to cross-reference network ties between all users in the two CNSO networks, resulting in 1,407 unique queries performed (see Chapter III for additional details).

The other source of data for this dissertation stemmed from interviews conducted with CNSOs. Interviews are useful sources of information, increasing insight and understandings of a phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Moreover, interviews are especially useful when the *how* and/or *why* of change is under examination (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). As I sought to explain the context of social media (i.e., the *how* and *why*), interviews would yield relevant data.

The recruitment process for the interviews originated with the sample drawn from the Twitter content data collection (i.e., $n = 8$). E-mails featuring the letter of information were sent to this lot of CNSOs, specifically seeking a representative who was (a) actively employed, and (b) organized, controlled, managed, and/or oversaw the social media communications of their organization. If a CNSO from the initial sample did not wish to participate, I solicited another organization with similar characteristics (i.e., seasonality of sport and number of Twitter followers). After conducting eight interviews, I determined

Table 1.2 List of CNSOs

List of Canadian National Sport Organizations	
Alpine Canada	Hockey Canada
Archery Canada	Judo Canada
Athletics Canada	Karate Canada
Badminton Canada	Racquetball Canada
Baseball Canada	Ringette Canada
Basketball Canada	Rowing Canada
Biathlon Canada	Rugby Canada
Bobsleigh Canada	Sail Canada
Bowls Canada	Shooting Canada
Boxing Canada	Skate Canada
Canada Snowboard	Skeleton Canada
Canadian 5 Pin Bowlers	Soccer Canada
Canadian Blind Sports	Softball Canada
Canadian Cerebral Palsy	Speed Skating Canada
Sports	
*Curling Canada	Squash Canada
Canadian Cycling	Swimming Canada

Canadian Fencing	Synchro Canada
Canadian Freestyle Ski	Table Tennis Canada
Canadian Lacrosse	Taekwondo Canada
Canadian Luge	Tennis Canada
Canadian Sport Parachuting	Triathlon Canada
Canadian Tenpin	Volleyball Canada
Canadian Weightlifting	Water Polo Canada
Canadian Wheelchair Sports	Waterski and Wakeboard Canada
Canoe/Kayak Canada	Wheelchair Basketball Canada
Cricket Canada	Wrestling Canada
Cross Country Ski Canada	
Diving Canada	
*Equine Canada	
Field Hockey Canada	
Football Canada	
Goalball Canada	
Golf Canada	
Gymnastics Canada	

* This organization experienced a name change/rebrand over the course of the project.

additional interviews would be needed to achieve saturation – the point at which no new patterns or undiscovered elements emanate from the dataset (Glaser, 2001) – so I conducted two additional interviews, for a total of ten interviews. Table 1.2 provides interview information including participant pseudonym, their organization, interview method, and duration of interview, but withholds their position to protect their anonymity, though it should be mentioned participants ranged from chief executive officers, to directors of marketing and communication, and social media managers.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the CNSO representatives using an interview guide informed by the Twitter data analyses (see Appendix A). The semi-structured nature of the interviews provided some guidance with respect to the order of questioning, while allowing the flexibility for me to pose follow-up or prompt questions designed to illicit greater feedback from the participant. Prior to conducting the interviews, I solicited CNSOs through an e-mail containing a letter of information which detailed the

scope of the research (see Appendix B), and notified prospective participants the project was approved under ethical guidelines set forth by the University of Ottawa's Office of Research Ethics and Integrity.

Table 1.3 Interviewee Information

CNSO	Pseudonym	Interview Method	Duration
Archery Canada	Andrew	Phone	63 minutes
Bobsleigh Canada	Corey	Phone	59 minutes
Canada Snowboard	Bill	Phone	63 minutes
Canadian Freestyle Ski	Jade	Phone	67 minutes
Curling Canada	Anthony	Phone	57 minutes
Fencing Canada	Cassandra	Phone	75 minutes
Luge Canada	Terrence	Phone	50 minutes
Sail Canada	Carla	Phone	64 minutes
Softball Canada	Jim	In-person	73 minutes
Tennis Canada	Linda	Phone	66 minutes

Once a CNSO indicated their willingness to participate, I delivered a consent form via e-mail, which was signed and returned (also via e-mail) back to me (see Appendix C). Each consent form was duplicated and copies were kept by myself and the respective interviewees for their records. Interviews were conducted either in-person or via telephone. In-person interviews were the preferred form of interview, but were difficult to arrange given location and scheduling conflicts, among other barriers. Although CNSOs (through their representatives) had the option of participating in either English or French (the official languages of Canada and the University of Ottawa), all interviews were conducted in

English. Each session was digitally recorded and stored on my password-protected office computer to uphold privacy and ethical guidelines; once all interviews were conducted, the digital recordings were transcribed to ensure accuracy and easy transferability to programs in the data analysis phase (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), social network analysis (Prell, 2012), and deductive coding techniques (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Each of the three methods of analysis were applied to part of the data collected (i.e., thematic analysis to tweets, social network analysis of network ties, and open-and axial coding on interview data). Assigning an analysis to each of the three types of data collected aligned with the article-based format of the dissertation (see Chapters II to IV for specific data analysis details).

The Microsoft Excel spreadsheets containing Twitter content of the initial eight CNSOs were uploaded to Leximancer, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDA) tool. This particular CAQDA tool determines themes based upon semantic relationships found in a document and was the preferred tool in this instance for its ability to handle sizable datasets. After Leximancer produced themes (and the contents of each theme) from the Twitter data, I proceeded to rename themes, in line with the conventional steps in a thematic analysis (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006). This particular analysis was focused on addressing the first major research objective (i.e., determining the content produced by not-for-profit sport organizations).

The network data, also compiled into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, were imported as square sociomatrices into UCINET 6 (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002). This tool

performs quantitative network analyses, assigning values to users or “nodes” for various measures (e.g., centrality). In addition to these quantitative analyses, I mapped the network data in NetDraw 2 (Borgatti, 2002) for a visualization of the corresponding CNSO social media networks. These network analyses focused on the second major research objective of the dissertation (i.e., illuminating advantaged stakeholders vis-à-vis their position in a social media network).

The data produced by the interview method (i.e., transcripts) were uploaded to NVIVO 10, a tool which facilitates the coding of textual data. Data were broken down into fragments and deductively coded based upon the elements of the theoretical framework used (i.e., contextualist approach to organizational change).. Subsequent inductive coding was performed to reveal additional insights (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).. This third form of data analysis aided in the discovery of how social media was adopted by CNSOs (i.e., addressing the third major research objective).

Quality of Research

Meaningful, high-quality research must be trustworthy. For Guba (1981), trustworthiness is achieved when research can demonstrate credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility refers to the researcher presenting an accurate representation of a phenomenon and producing convincing results (cf. Miles, Huberman, & Saldaria, 2014). To achieve credibility, a mixed methods design with multiple sources of data (i.e., Twitter data and interviews) was implemented, including member checking of transcripts by interviewees to ensure an accurate account of their responses. Transferability pertains to the researcher’s ability to define parameters to generalize results to other similar contexts (Guba, 1981). In each of the three interconnected stages, careful consideration was

undertaken to identify limits of the ability to generalize or transfer results when discussing recommendations and conclusions. Dependability is the consistency in the research process, preventing the instability of data (Miles et al., 2014). In this project, I achieved dependability through peer debriefings (i.e., informal meetings) and the presentation of initial themes and results to experts at sport management and social media conferences. Finally, confirmability alludes to the potential impact of researcher bias on the results and conclusions drawn; trustworthy research should be objective, confirmed by others. To achieve confirmability, findings from this study have been submitted to or already undergone double-blind, peer review for scrutiny and feedback: the first and second stages of the dissertation (i.e., Chapters II and III) are published or accepted for publication while the third stage (i.e., Chapter IV) has been revised and resubmitted for publication, and thus all have been subjected to the double-blind peer review process by researchers in these fields of study. As such, the trustworthiness principle was considered throughout the research project.

Dissertation Outline

To address the primary purpose of this dissertation in addition to the three major research objectives, I organized my dissertation into three interconnected stages along with a discussion and conclusion chapter. As my dissertation also adhered to the article-based format (Dunleavy, 2003), the three stages were parsed into three separate articles, each with its own literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion section. Organizing the stages in this manner enabled the results to be disseminated to a wider audience, as articles were written considering the standard guidelines and expectations of the peer-reviewed outlets. Following the three articles is a

cumulative discussion of the findings and a conclusion outlining limitations and contributions for theory and praxis. Below is a brief overview of each subsequent chapter of this dissertation.

Chapter II – Stage 1

The first stage was expanded into an article, entitled “*Birds of a feather*”: *An institutional approach to Canadian national sport organizations’ social-media use*, was published in the *International Journal of Sport Communication* (2016), volume 9, issue 2. The aim of this specific work was to examine sport organizations’ social-media activity using an institutional approach, specifically, to investigate the main themes emanating from CNSOs’ social-media communication and the similarities and differences in social-media use between the CNSOs. Through the qualitative thematic analysis conducted on eight CNSOs’ Twitter accounts (ranging from 346 to 23,925 followers, with the number of tweets varying from 219 to 17,186), it was determined CNSOs generally use tweeting for promoting, reporting, and informing purposes. Despite the organizations’ differing characteristics regarding seasonality of the sport, Twitter-follower count, total number of tweets, and whether the content was original or retweeted, themes were generally consistent across the various organizations. Coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphic pressures helped to explain these similarities and offer reasons for a lack of followership growth by the less salient CNSOs.

Chapter III – Stage 2

The second stage was also expanded into an article, entitled *Illuminating centralized users in the social media ego network of two national sport organizations*, which

was accepted for publication on June 12, 2016, and published in the *Journal of Sport Management* (2016), volume 30, issue 6. The aim of this article was to examine NSOs⁴ social networks on Twitter, using a network theory approach, to explore followership between users, thereby illuminating powerful and central actors in a digital environment. Followership between the ego (i.e., the NSO) and its alters (i.e., stakeholders) were noted in square, one-mode sociomatrices for the Fencing Canada (381 x 381) and Luge Canada (1026 x 1026) networks on Twitter. Using social network analysis to analyze the data for network density, average ties, Bonacich beta centrality, and core-periphery structure, the results indicated fans, elite athletes, photographers, competing sport organizations, and local clubs are some of the key stakeholders with large amounts of power. Though salient users such as sponsors and international sport federations are also present in the network core, NSOs are better able to increase visibility of their content by targeting smaller-scale users.

Chapter IV – Stage 3

The third and final stage was parsed into an article, entitled *Social media as a trigger for change by sport organizations A contextual approach*, which was submitted to the *Journal of Amateur Sport* for review on December 23, 2016, and accepted for publication on May 8, 2017. The aim of this article was to examine social media adoption within not-for-profit sport organizations to illuminate the impetus for change, the type of change undertaken, and change resistance. Semi-structured interviews revealed social media has only moderately affected the stakeholder communication paradigm of NSOs who simply situated the practice within their extant structure as a result of limited organizational capacity. The external and internal forces also revealed unique challenges to these

⁴ The NSO acronym was used in this article, as opposed to CNSO, as per the outcome of the peer-review process.

organizations (e.g., stakeholder and staff resistance, balancing bilingualism and language) which diminishes the realized utility of the tool.

Chapter V

The concluding chapter summarizes the findings of each of the three stages and provides a critical analysis of social media and not-for-profit sport organizations.

Specifically, this chapter focuses on content, stakeholder positioning, and context to provide theoretical and practical implications for like-organizations. Finally, the dissertation concludes with a discussion of the limitations and future directions for extending research in the area of social media and not-for-profit sport organizations, particularly using a stakeholder theory and organization theory lens.

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Chapter II

“Birds of a feather:” An institutional approach to Canadian national sport organizations’ social media use

Naraine, M. L., & Parent, M. M. (2016). “Birds of a feather”: An institutional approach to Canadian national sport organizations’ social media use. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 9, 140-162. doi: 10.1123/IJSC.2016-0010

Scholarly pursuits regarding social media within a sport context continue to grow. From initial examinations of athletes (e.g., Lebel & Danylchuk, 2012; Pegoraro, 2010), journalists (e.g., Deprez, Mechant, & Hoebeke, 2013; Sheffer & Schultz, 2010) and sports events (e.g., Blaszka, Burch, Frederick, Clavio, & Walsh, 2012), recent endeavors have honed in on the intersection of social media and sport sponsorship (e.g., Abeza, Pegoraro, Naraine, Séguin, & O’Reilly, 2014; Delia & Armstrong, 2015), as well as sport organizations (e.g., Abeza & O’Reilly, 2014; Thompson, Martin, Gee, & Eagleman, 2014).

The introduction of the latter two topical areas to this line of research is unsurprising given Williams and Chinn’s (2010) finding social media is a valuable tool to build relationships with consumers. Yet, despite these advancements in the literature, there has been little discussion on how sport organizations utilize this practice (dis)similarly to other competing organizations. That is to say, although there is value in using social media, the degree to which organizations may communicate using social media can differ from firm to firm. Eagleman’s (2013) work on not-for-profit sport organizations and acceptance by employees was one attempt to uncover the similarities and differences between sport organizations’ social media use. Despite the significant finding that not-for-profit sport

organizations utilize social media for communication as opposed to marketing, there remains an opportunity to advance social media and sport literature by isolating the communication habits of these organizations using an institutional lens (i.e., identifying routines, behaviors, and norms between organizations). Thus, although social media and sport research continues to expand rapidly (cf. Pedersen, 2014), there is still much to be learned with respect to organizational routines and practices vis-à-vis differentiation and mimetic behaviors.

Based on this sentiment, the purpose of the present study is to examine sport organizations' social media activity using an institutional approach. By doing so, this study illuminates whether sport organizations, in similar circumstances, resemble other comparable sport organizations in their social media presence or differentiate themselves in their communications, for example, in an effort to gain a competitive advantage. Despite the growing number of social media and sport studies, researchers have relied heavily on existing communication theories, such as agenda setting, para-social interaction, social identity, and uses and gratification theory (cf. Pegoraro, 2014). These theories have often been utilized to understand fandom and interactivity amongst social media users. Scholarship examining social media from an organizational viewpoint (e.g., Abeza & O'Reilly, 2014; Eagleman, 2013) has done so using relationship marketing as a framework to depict social media usage. However, what is missing from the current approach is an understanding of how sport organizations operate on social media based on the environmental context in which they operate. That is to say, current approaches to social media and sport scholarship are unable to determine whether competing or like-organizations impact (and how) the actions of other organizations in a similar market.

The present study addresses this gap by introducing institutional theory – specifically isomorphism – to the social media and sport research agenda. Institutional theory has been previously utilized in a sport communication setting (e.g., Silk, Slack, & Amis, 2000) and, in the context of this study, moves this area of research beyond examining social media content for marketing practices or user gratification, towards examining content to explain the environmental pressures impacting organizational practice. The parameters of the study are narrowed to focus specifically on Canadian national sport organizations (CNSO) and Twitter, a popular social media platform. As types of not-for-profit organizations, CNSOs stand to benefit from social media usage (cf. Eagleman, 2013). With respect to solely examining Twitter usage, this particular social media platform has gained prominence amongst sport stakeholders (e.g., sports teams, athletes, journalists, fans), in addition to becoming rooted in sport communication scholarship (cf. Pedersen, 2014; Pegoraro, 2014; Sanderson, 2014).

This study contributes to the burgeoning social media and sport literature base by examining social media activity (i.e., content) of CNSOs using an institutional theory lens, moving away from studying social media as a vehicle for marketing communications, instead, exploring forces that may impact what information is being communicated by these organizations (cf. Filo, Lock, & Karg, 2015). Coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphic pressures help explain the social media similarities found and offer reasons for a lack of followership growth by the less salient CNSOs. Moreover, this study offers practitioners of these types of organizations an opportunity to reflect on their own current practices and those of other similar organizations in order to determine whether their current practices are sufficient or whether change is necessary.

Overview of Literature

The following is a review literature associated with national sport organizations, some of which incorporates CNSOs, and institutional theory, which informs the study's research questions.

National Sport Organizations (NSOs)

Also referred to as national sport federations and national governing bodies, these organizations oversee a particular sport or activity at a national level and do so with a mixture of paid professional staff and volunteers. Ultimately, these organizations exist to serve their membership and advance their sport in their place of operation. One defining feature of NSOs is they compete for funding to achieve their objective; as the primary revenue stream stems from government (cf. Abeza & O'Reilly, 2014), NSOs vie for funding from the same source, which can be problematic for sports that are unsuccessful at international competitions. Séguin, Teed, and O'Reilly (2005) also noted more salient organizations often receive significant revenue through corporate partnerships. What exacerbates the challenge for NSOs along with their limited revenue streams is the sports they represent are often "niche" sports that typically do not receive a large amount of attention outside of those accrued during large, multi-sport competitions like the Olympic Games (Eagleman, 2013).

Given their importance in the sport system, there has not been a shortage of previous literature examining NSOs, specifically CNSOs. In the 1990s, scholarship sought to illuminate the issue of organizational change (e.g., Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1992), strategy (e.g., Thibault, Slack, & Hinings, 1993), and structure (e.g., Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1995) in these organizations. Subsequently, research delved into additional issues

such as knowledge management (e.g., O'Reilly & Knight, 2007) and organizational values (e.g., Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2002). Girginov, Taks, Boucher, Martyn, Holman, and Dixon (2009) were one of the first research teams to examine the online communications of CNSOs using the World Wide Web platform. In that work, the authors found that while CNSOs were receptive to the innovative environment created by the Web, there was a failure to effectively communicate and build relationships with key stakeholders. One of the suggested recommendations resulting from that study was to encourage CNSOs to continue to invest in online communications with their stakeholders to grow their respective sport (Girginov et al., 2009).

It would appear that NSOs, not only those in Canada, have heeded this call. In the few scholarly works examining NSOs and social media (e.g., Eagleman, 2013; Abeza & O'Reilly, 2014), there is evidence to suggest not only have these organizations embraced and invested in this medium, but a continued exploration of their practices is warranted. The aforementioned work by Eagleman (2013) illuminated the degree to which social media is accepted within these organizations, offering insight into the routines and behaviors of NSO staff members. This insight brought with it a call for future research to conduct an analysis on the content of NSOs' social media activities to identify the types of content disseminated throughout their network of followers. Abeza and O'Reilly (2014) attempted to address this gap by specifically examining CNSO social media content vis-à-vis understanding the creation of relationships with various stakeholders such as athletes, local sport clubs, media, and sponsors. The authors found CNSOs utilize social media for the purposes of communication rather than interaction, and do so through providing information and updates about athletes, coaches, and events. Although this work advanced the inclusion of NSOs

(more broadly) into the social media and sport discourse, their findings were based on content over a three-week period. While the observation of content produced by these organizations is inherently valuable, the temporal limitation of Abeza and O'Reilly's (2014) work, alongside the nature of social media to produce large quantities of data (cf. boyd & Crawford, 2012), suggest additional studies in this area are necessary for deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

Beyond these works, Thompson et al.'s (2014) ethnographic study of one NSO and the formation of a social media strategy is particularly significant due to its notion of the "one-size-fits-all" (OSFA) approach to NSO social media management (Thompson et al., 2014, p. 56). Specifically, the authors noted that the NSO in question did not find success in replicating the same strategies used in other similar organizations, and that a unique, "tailored" approach would be most appropriate.

Overall, these research endeavors illustrate that (1) NSOs are utilizing social media because of the opportunities they afford and (2) scholars have yet to examine whether NSO social media usage varies from firm to firm or if the OSFA approach is the prevailing strategy. This research looks to address the latter sentiment and does so by drawing on institutional theory.

Institutional Theory

The practices and routines of an organization are affected by structures and guidelines created by the environment in which the organization operates (Scott, 2004). Conforming to these structures is thought to result from demonstrating the legitimacy of the organization vis-à-vis adopting the expectations of the environment, whether efficient or inefficient (cf. Meyer & Rowan, 1977). As such, institutional theory seeks to explain how

these structures or “institutional contexts” (cf. Greenwood, Oliver, Suddaby, & Sahlin-Andersson, 2008) influence an organization’s actions.

One of the primary tenets of institutional theory is the idea of isomorphism, the process by which organizations in a similar environment achieve homogeneity in their practices (cf. Greenwood et al., 2008; Slack & Parent, 2006). There are two stages in the process of isomorphism. The first stage occurs when an organization surveys its environment and implements specific practices thought to garner a competitive advantage. Second, as a result of adopting these practices, additional organizations in a similar environment implement the identical recourse and resemble one another (Tolbert & Zucker, 1983). From a theoretical viewpoint, isomorphism may always be present given its cyclical process (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008). That is to say, once there are changes in the institutional context, an organization may begin to survey the environment for the appropriate action and have organizations in the same environment mimic those actions.

The seminal work of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) on isomorphism identified three “pressures” apparent in the environment that would result in organizations resembling one another. The first, known as coercive pressure, suggests organizations receive pressure from powerful entities (e.g., political structures) to adopt specific actions else risk the potential for sanctions (e.g., restricting resources). Mimetic pressure, which is the second form, occurs when an organization surveys its environment, identifies practices of other “successful” organizations, and mimics those actions to stay relevant (cf. Haveman, 1993). Finally, isomorphism can also occur based on normative pressures, such as drawing from the same pool of resources for money and knowledge as a consequence of professionalization overseen by educational or regulatory bodies (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Regardless of the

type of pressure causing the process of isomorphism to occur, homogeneity has been found to legitimize the organization conforming to the routines and actions of others (Deephouse, 1996).

Although the concept of isomorphism has not, to our knowledge, been previously applied to a social media and sport context, it has been from a broader sport scholarship (see Washington & Patterson, 2011, for an overview of sport management institutional theory research). This line of research began with Slack and Hinings' (1994) examination of change in CNSOs based upon the pressures of government and the increasing number of paid, professionalized staff hired by these sport organizations (see also Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2004; Danisman, Hinings, & Slack, 2006). Outside of CNSOs, sport-based isomorphism research has also examined other amateur organizations (e.g., Stevens & Slack, 1998), professional sport franchises (e.g., Lamertz, Carney, & Bastien, 2008), as well as intercollegiate athletics (e.g., Cunningham, Sagas, & Ashley, 2001). With these examinations, Washington and Patterson (2011) contend isomorphism has been "well researched" in the context of sport (p. 7).

Despite its scant use in sport communication (cf. Silk et al., 2000), the concept of isomorphism is conducive to the recent technological changes in the sport landscape. Utilizing isomorphism as a theoretical framework can allow scholars to identify the extent to which social media usage by sport organizations is mimetic or utilized as a differentiation tactic, particularly those organizations (e.g., CNSOs) positioned to benefit from the medium's ability to deliver messages to a broader, global audience with limited resources (cf. Eagleman, 2013). Moreover, the inclusion of isomorphism in this work adheres to

scholars' calls to introduce new theoretical approaches into the social media and sport research agenda (e.g., Pedersen, 2014; Pegoraro, 2014; Sanderson, 2014).

Given the purpose of this study to examine sports organizations' social media activity using an institutional approach, the following research questions (RQ) are advanced:

RQ₁ – What are the main themes that emanate from CNSO social media communication?

RQ₂ – What are the similarities and differences in social media usage between the CNSOs?

Method

An exploratory qualitative thematic analysis was conducted on CNSO tweets using a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDA) tool (i.e., Leximancer). With scholars calling for improvements in social media and sport research (e.g., Pedersen, 2014; Sanderson, 2014) particularly regarding reproducibility and reliability, a CAQDA tool can mitigate these issues. One particular CAQDA tool, Leximancer, has been identified as a reliable tool in sport-based research (cf. Sotiriadou, Brouwers, & Le, 2014). Leximancer analyzes textual data from various sources (e.g., word processing documents, e-mails, tweets) to determine key themes based on semantic relationships. This particular tool has been used in sport management research previously including Shilbury's (2012) examination of strategy in sport management research, Abeza et al.'s (2014) illumination of themes emanating from Olympic TOP sponsors on Twitter, and Pegoraro, Burch, Frederick, and Vincent's (2014) exploration of how themes of a given hashtag change overtime. What is common in these research examples is the presence of large datasets; Leximancer has

been shown to handle an analysis of big data with little difficulty reported by scholars. As such, its inclusion here is warranted.

Sample

A stratified random sampling technique (Creswell, 2013) was performed in order to obtain variance (in terms of social media size) of the CNSOs. Similar to the procedure in Abeza and O'Reilly's (2014) work, all 61 NSOs listed as "sport organizations" on the Canadian Heritage website (Canadian Heritage, 2014) were noted and analyzed for their Twitter follower counts listed on their respective Twitter page. Counts were determined as of November 28, 2014 for all CNSOs to ensure consistency (as follower counts are subject to constant change). Once counts were noted, the organizations were stratified into five groups based upon size (see Table 2.1). The two main rationales for this included (1) the assumption that CNSOs with higher follower counts are more salient and thus stratification would allow this phase to illuminate less salient not-for-profit sport organizations in a similar context; and (2) it controlled for CNSOs without a Twitter account. The five stratified groups were labeled "high" (n = 11; i.e., follower count of 10,000 or greater), "mid-high" (n = 14; i.e., follower count of 4,000 – 9,999), "mid-low" (n = 18; i.e., follower count of 1,000 – 3,999), "low" (n = 9; i.e., follower count of 0 – 999), and "no follow" (n = 8; i.e., CNSO has a shared account or does not have one altogether). After this initial grouping, CNSOs within each group were also noted for their seasonality (i.e., summer or winter based sport). Once this process was complete, two CNSOs from each stratified group were chosen at random, while controlling for the fifth group with no Twitter account, with the stipulation that one summer and one winter sport per group would be included. The randomization process consisted of assigning a numeric value to CNSOs in each group and

Table 2.1 List of CNSOs on Twitter Stratified by Follower Count

Organization	Twitter Handle	Follower Count
<i>High</i>		
Hockey Canada	@HockeyCanada	180, 718
Soccer Canada	@CanadaSoccerEN	39, 952
Rugby Canada	@RugbyCanada	33, 469
Skate Canada	@SkateCanada	23, 925
Athletics Canada	@AthleticsCanada	22, 662
Tennis Canada	@Tennis_Canada	20, 705
Baseball Canada	@baseballcanada	19, 804
Golf Canada	@TheGolfCanada	19, 189
Basketball Canada	@CanBball	18, 698
Volleyball Canada	@VBallCanada	14, 511
Curling Canada	@CCACurling	14, 323
<i>Mid-high</i>		
Alpine Canada	@Alpine_Canada	9, 911
Swimming Canada	@SwimmingCanada	8, 545
Cricket Canada	@canadiancricket	8, 536
Cross Country Ski Canada	@cccski	8, 340
Rowing Canada	@rowingcanada	6, 451
Canada Snowboard	@CanadaSnowboard	6, 266
Equine Canada	@Equine_Canada	5, 929
Football Canada	@FootballCanada	5, 826
Softball Canada	@SoftballCanada	5, 629
Triathlon Canada	@TriathlonCanada	4, 603
Field Hockey Canada	@FieldHockeyCan	4, 512
Canadian Cycling	@CyclingCanada	4, 301
Canadian Freestyle Ski	@canfreestyleski	4, 124

Canoe/Kayak Canada	@CanoeKayakCAN	4, 110
<i>Mid-low</i>		
Ringette Canada	@ringettecanada	3, 895
Taekwondo Canada	@TKD_Canada	3, 550
Gymnastics Canada	@CANGymnastics	3, 549
Wheelchair Basketball Canada	@WCBballCanada	3, 485
Water Polo Canada	@waterpolocanada	3, 028
Synchro Canada	@SynchroCanada	2, 882
Judo Canada	@JudoCanada	2, 743
Canadian Lacrosse	@LacrosseCanada	2, 514
Squash Canada	@squashcanada	2, 326
Bobsleigh Canada	@BobCANSkel	2, 310
Sail Canada	@SailCanada	2, 274
Biathlon Canada	@biathloncanada	2, 085
Archery Canada	@ArcheryCanada	1, 804
Speed Skating Canada	@SSC_PVC	1, 844
Wrestling Canada	@WrestlingCanada	1, 806
Boxing Canada	@boxing_canada	1, 797
Diving Canada	@DivingPlongeon	1, 632
Badminton Canada	@BdmintonCanada	1, 032
<i>Low</i>		
Canadian Luge	@LugeCanada	997
Waterski and Wakeboard Canada	@WSWC_Canada	797
Canadian Wheelchair Sports	@WCRugbyCanada	793
Canadian Blind Sports	@CDNBlindSports	644
Racquetball Canada	@RBallCanada	614

Karate Canada	@KarateCanada	513
Canadian Fencing	@FencingCanada	346
Bowls Canada	@BCBBowls	294
Canadian Cerebral Palsy Sports	@ccpsaboccia	282
<i>No follow</i>		
Skeleton Canada ^a	n/a	n/a
Goalball Canada ^b	n/a	n/a
Canadian 5 Pin Bowlers	n/a	n/a
Canadian Tenpin	n/a	n/a
Canadian Sport Parachuting	n/a	n/a
Shooting Canada	n/a	n/a
Table Tennis Canada	n/a	n/a
Canadian Weightlifting	n/a	n/a

Note: Follower counts as of November 28, 2014

a. account shared with Bobsleigh Canada

b. account shared with Canadian Blind Sports

based on their seasonality. Using a website that performs random number generations (RANDOM.ORG, n.d.), one number was selected for each season from each stratified group. The resulting eight organizations were Skate Canada, Tennis Canada, Canadian Freestyle Ski Association, Rowing Canada, Bobsleigh Canada, Sail Canada, Luge Canada, and Fencing Canada. The number of selected organizations is comparable with previous social media research (e.g., Gibbs, O'Reilly, & Brunette, 2014), as well as with scholarship examining CNSOs specifically (e.g., Girginov et al., 2009). Although there is no typical test for institutional isomorphism in a sport (communication) setting, the number of organizations examined here surpasses those used by Silk et al. (2000), as well as Johnston's (2013) look at NSOs in New Zealand bidding to host international events.

Procedure

Tweets from these eight CNSOs were collected using NCapture, an arm of the NVIVO software program. NCapture has been identified as a useful tool to collect sport related content (e.g., Abeza et al., 2014), justifying its use here. NCapture is able to download an approximate maximum of 3, 200 tweets from a particular feed's history including tweets (i.e., original content) and retweets (i.e., pre-existing content reproduced). The extraction maximum is a number set by Twitter and varies based upon the number of extractions taking place at any moment and the software's ability to navigate through the Twitter ecosystem. While there is an approximate maximum of 3, 200 tweets, data collected for organizations could be lower than that benchmark if (a) the CNSO tweets were not above the approximate maximum or (b) the data collection process was inhibited by Twitter's rate limitations. Tweets were collected for all eight NSOs as of November 28, 2014, going backwards, and there was no range of time limiting the data collection. By not being hindered by time, this particular process was able to provide greater depth of social media use by CNSOs compared to previous scholarship (e.g., Abeza & O'Reilly, 2014).

After the collection phase, data were initially parsed using NVIVO 10 and then exported to Microsoft Excel as spreadsheets. The spreadsheets listed each tweet in a row with key information, including: the content of the tweet itself, format (i.e., retweet or tweet), users who retweeted that tweet, total number of retweets, total number of tweets by the user (if the user who tweeted was not the CNSO but was simply retweeted by the organization), total number of followers (i.e., inward connections), and total number of users followed (i.e., outward connections). Exporting the data from NVIVO 10 to Microsoft Excel

was necessary in order to conduct the thematic analysis using Leximancer, as the program is not able to handle files directly from NVIVO 10, as well as to produce descriptive statistics.

Analysis

Data were analyzed using Leximancer. This particular CAQDA analyzes textual data from various sources (e.g., tweets) to determine key themes based on semantic relationships. Once the analysis is completed, the tool enables the user to explore the concepts within the themes as well as identify messages (or in this context tweets) collected as part of a particular theme. However, Leximancer uses the most prominent concept in each theme as the label for that theme. Thus, once the automated analysis was completed, a manual review of themes was conducted, which included a renaming of each theme in line with the conventional phases of a thematic analysis (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally, all themes emanating from the eight organizations were collectively assessed and reimagined as tenets comprising the holistic thematic map of CNSOs. The steps undertaken in the analysis allowed for a comparative analysis of themes by CNSO to identify similar and differing tendencies in social media communication, as well as to conceptualize CNSO communication more generally.

Results

Descriptive statistics were compiled for the eight CNSOs (see Table 2.2). The range for Twitter followers was high (i.e., between 346 and 23, 925), with a mean score of 7641.5 followers. There was also a large range of users the CNSOs were following (i.e., between 74 and 1, 439), with a mean score of 468.5. Total number of tweets varied between 219 and 17, 186, with a mean score of 5277.38. The NCapture method was able to collect a total of 18, 393 tweets, accounting for the rate limitations imposed by Twitter. These limitations were

also present in collecting tweets from certain CNSOs well below the 3, 200 tweet threshold (i.e., Bobsleigh Canada, Sail Canada, and Luge Canada), which included data leakage between 1 and 7 tweets. An additional finding from the datasets was the percentage of original content (i.e., created by the CNSO), which also illustrated how much content exists in the form of retweets (i.e., content created by another user and resent by the CNSO). This statistic revealed no CNSO retweeted 100% of content emanating from its Twitter account, though Sail Canada was found to be an outlier from the rest of the CNSOs examined, tweeting 99.8% original content. No pattern could be discerned as to which CNSOs tweeted more original content than retweeting. A few organizations retweeted more content than they produced (i.e., Rowing Canada, Bobsleigh Canada, and Luge Canada), another two (i.e., Tennis Canada and Fencing Canada) tweeted and retweeted more or less equally (50% range), and two more (i.e., Skate Canada and Canadian Freestyle Ski) had approximately 75% original content.

Table 2.2 Descriptive Statistics for Sampled NSOs

Organization	Season	Followers	Following	Total tweets	Tweets collected	Original content (%)
Skate Canada	W	23, 925	814	8, 336	3, 039	72.3
Tennis Canada	S	20, 705	592	17, 186	3, 220	53.2
Rowing Canada	S	6, 451	371	4, 321	3, 215	39.4
Canadian Freestyle Ski	W	4, 124	1, 439	6, 415	2, 972	75.1
Bobsleigh Canada	W	2, 310	146	2, 556	2, 549	41.2
Sail Canada	S	2, 274	235	2, 421	2, 420	99.8
Luge Canada	W	997	74	765	764	44.8
Fencing Canada	S	346	77	219	219	57.5

Next, the results of the thematic analysis suggest there are similar themes emanating from the CNSOs (see Table 2.3). With the number of themes per organization ranging between 7 and 12, there was a collective, concentrated main group of themes pertaining to major sporting events, elite athletes, scores/results, media, and competition type and time (to name a few). This result is amplified when the organizations are analyzed by their Twitter follower groupings.

For the “high” follow group – which consisted of salient, popular sports – the two organizations seemed keen on producing content that contained their elite athletes. In the case of Skate Canada, their tweets connected the performances of their athletes at the most recent Olympic Winter Games (i.e., Sochi 2014) with athletes’ names (e.g., Scott Moir, Tessa Virtue) or Twitter account handles (e.g., Pchiddy, Rad85E). One tweet which exemplifies this connection read, “*First-time Olympians @kaetlyn_23 and @gabby_daleman advance to Thursdays [sic] free programs #CanadaSkates #Sochi2014 [url link].*” In this example, the tweet connects the major sport event to the marquee athletes’ Twitter handles and applicable hashtags whose purpose is to anchor the online dialogue. The other CNSO in this stratified group, Tennis Canada, demonstrated similar tactics by citing elite athletes’ Twitter handles (e.g., geniebouchard, milosraonic) and connecting them to competition events and venues. However, unlike Skate Canada, Tennis Canada’s dataset featured media organizations (i.e., RDS) and promotional content from media (i.e., opencourt). An example of this was a retweet by Tennis Canada from the French language sports broadcaster, RDS, “*RT @RDSCa: Ne manquez pas le match entre Federer et Raonic au Championnat de l’#ATP, dans quelques minutes sur #RDS! [link to image]*” (translation: RT @RDSCa: Don’t miss the match between Federer and Raonic at the #ATP

Table 2.3 List of Themes from Canadian NSO Tweets

Themes	Concepts
Skate Canada	
Major event – 1	Sochi2014, skate, Canadaskates, kaetlyn, gabby, Pchiddy, Weaverpoje
Focal organization	Skatecanada, Cdnolympicteam, team, today, event
Elite athlete – 1	mhjd_85, Rad85E, Meagan Duhamel, Eric Radford
Competition type – 1	short, free, mitchislam
Scoring/result	place, ISUJGP, programme, points
Elite athlete – 2	Scott Moir, Tessa Virtue, ice
Major event – 2	Ctnsc14, skating, skaters, Olympic, Canada
Competition type – 2	Danse
Major event – 2	Sci14, Kelowna
Tennis Canada	
Focal sport	tennis, Canada, tennisiscanada, daviscup, Halifax
Elite athlete – 1	geniebouchard, rolandgarros, Wimbledon, RG14, markhmasters, match, court, vs
Elite athlete – 2	milosraonic, Sportsnet, TSN, Geniearmy, tomorrow, fans, live, ready, time
Elite athlete – 3	Vasekpospisil, Nestor, Cdentennis, Canadian, play, week, today, year, day
Achievement	win, 1st, round, 2nd, final, VIDEO, tomtebbutt, reach, usopen, draw
Competition type	doubles, title, singles, career
Governing body	WTA, Abanda
Media – 1	RDS, Rdsca
Excellence	best
Team	Team
Media – 2	opencourt
Rowing Canada	

Focal organization	rowingcanada, rowtopodium, athletes, training, camp, work, vtccoach, Barneyrows
Scoring/result – 1	RESULT, final, wrchamps, heat, gocanadago, rep, win, amp, Zee, monsta
Focal sport	rowing, today, team, time, Olympic, ready, willcrothers, coach, London, Beashark
Racing	racing, canada, worldrowing, tomorrow, W8, colinmccabe
Competition time – 1	day, morning, luck, water, start, ready
Canadian Olympic team	cdnolympicteam, Olympic, silver, gold, Olympics
Competition time – 2	weekend, week, ROWONTARIO, cdnpararowing, RCA
Classification	women's, men's
Scoring/result – 2	results
Elite athlete	darcyrows
Canadian Freestyle Ski	
Canadian Olympic team	Cdnolympicteam, Sochi2014, halfpipe, roadtosochi, slopestyle, wearewinter, fisfreestyle, time
Focal sport	moguls, ski, Mikaelkingsbury, Audreyrobichaud, Marquisphi, medal, freestyle, skiing
Elite athlete – 1	Jdufourlapointe, finals, Cbcolympics, mike, luck, dorey, final, finals, start
Elite athlete – 2	Darahowell, kayaturski, tsubota, yuki, lamarre, 2nd
Elite athlete – 3	team, SDL, training, andi, naude
Focal organization	Canfreestyleski, athletes, support
Announcement	today, Canada, Travisgerrits
Elite athlete – 4	rozgroenewood, podium, live
Competition time	tomorrow, day, luck
Scoring/result	score
Bobsleigh Canada	
Elite athlete – 1	Bobteamspring, justinkripps, tomorrow, Canada's, support
Elite athlete – 2	Bobsledkaillie, Cdnolympicteam, Bobsleighcan, Sochi, time, gold, Olympic, morning
Focal sport	Bobsleigh, skeleton, race, 1st, results, FIBT, season, results, Cassiehawrysh

Focal organization	Bobcanskel, today, Winsportcanada, day, team, slidingcentre, yyc, down, week, track
General athletes	athletes, Skeletoncan, start, finish, 2nd, top, amp
Elite athlete – 3	Neilsoneric, Skelly, Johnnyfairbairn, Heat
Elite athlete – 4	Jesselumsden28, ready, Calgary, Cbcolympics
Elite athlete – 5	Heathermoyses, Cdnolympicteam
Athletic facility	Csicalgary
Sail Canada	
Racing	race, today, day, team, overall, Star, Bjorn, Clarke, start, Finn, medal, place, tomorrow, water, final
Scoring/result	Results, Laser, Radial, water, fleet
General athletes	Sailors, 49er, CST, training
Promotion	Check, CORK, sailing, full, action
Nationhood	Canadian, day, week
Other social media	posted, Facebook
Race conditions	breeze, course
Achievement	win, days, Olympic
Weather	Wind
Competition time	weekend
Focal organization	sail canada
Luge Canada	
Elite athlete – 1	samueledney, today, Tristanluge, alexgoughluge, justinsnith, team, season
Elite athlete – 2	Jonesluge, race, Kimmcraeluge, Whistler, Daynaclay, Frozenrosen
Training	day, training, start, tomorrow, weekend, week, morning, World Cup
Scoring/result	place, finish, world, Calgary, Alexgoughluge
Focal sport	luge, Canada, medal
Focal organization	Lugecanada, Winsportcanada, athletes

Athletic facility	Track, slidingcentre
Scoring/result – 1	1st, results
Governing body	FIL
Scoring/result – 2	2nd
Canadian Olympic team	Cdnolympicteam
Sport awareness	Lucytriesluge
Fencing Canada	
High performance	men's, foil, sabre, women's, team, pan, bronze, medal, junior, championships, silver, cadet, gold, GOLD, wins
Classification	senior, Elanor Harvey
Nationhood	Canada, Dylan French
Elite athlete – 1	beaudry, Cdnolympicteam
Focal sport	fencing
Major event	jcg2013
Competition time	weekend

Championship in a few minutes on #RDS). In this latter example, RDS communicated it was showing one of Tennis Canada's elite athletes (i.e., Raonic) in a championship match on the RDS television network. While the sport context differs between figure skating and tennis, there are strong similarities between their Twitter content.

The “mid-high” follow group, consisting of Rowing Canada and Canadian Freestyle Ski also offered similar themes. In the former, themes suggest a focus on competition times and results, pre-competition training, as well as elite athletes. Though there was only one elite athlete theme, many of the elite rowing athletes' Twitter handles were concepts embedded into other themes, attributable to the focal organization retweeting elite athlete tweets and supporting/encourage those athletes. The following tweet exemplifies this

finding: “RT @SnapPeaAshley: Off to Sacramento for the first @rowingcanada training camp of 2013! Excited for sun.” Here, the elite athlete Twitter handle (i.e., SnapPeaAshley) appears given that the tweet originated from that handle, and is semantically linked to the focal organization and pre-competition training. This sentiment is consistent when looking at the concepts within Rowing Canada’s themes (i.e., linkage between elite athlete and competition/results). Canadian Freestyle Ski themes also seemed to link elite athletes to results, as well as encouragement (e.g., support, luck). Where this particular organization differed from Rowing Canada was it also heavily linked its athletes to the most recent Olympic Winter Games, while incorporating hashtags linked to the Canadian Olympic Team (e.g., roadtosochi, wearewinter) and not necessarily the focal sport. One example of this was a tweet reading, “Tight run Justine Dufour-Lapointe at 22.73 #COP #roadtosochi #halfpipe #FIS #cdnolympicteam #wearewinter [link to image].” Although the elite athlete cited in this example (i.e., Justine Dufour-Lapointe) did not have her Twitter account handle cited, Canadian Freestyle Ski linked her name and competition score to key hashtags associated with the Canadian Olympic Team.

The two organizations in the “mid-low” follow group demonstrated variance in the themes emanating from their respective Twitter accounts. For Bobsleigh Canada, there was a considerable amount of elite athletes appearing as thematic concepts, which included the following handles: “Bobsledkaillie”, “Cassiehawrysh”, “Neilsoneric”, “Johnnyfairbairn”, “Jesselumsden28”, and “Heathermoyse.” In these instances, tweets were rooted in citing the Twitter account handles of these athletes and linking them to performances, scores, and the 2014 Olympic Winter Games. The prominence of athletes’ handles as opposed to their actual names is also indicative of the focal organization retweeting these athletes and others

using athlete handles, a notion supported by 58.8% of their content being retweets. For instance, one retweet read, “*RT @pmharper: Another great day for Canada at #Sochi2014 - congratulations @BobsledKaillie & @HeatherMoyses on your gold medal in bobsleigh!*” Here we see (former) Prime Minister Stephen Harper congratulating the two elite athletes using their applicable handles and, in the context of their performance, linking them to “Sochi” and “gold.” Another example tweet from this organization read, “*RT @JesseLumsden28: The totem continues at the Olympic parade. @samueledney #scottmoir #olympictotem @CDNOlympicTeam [link to image]*” highlights Bobsleigh Canada’s inclination to retweet messages of their prominent athletes, and in this case, related to the Canadian Olympic Team and Olympic Winter Games. Conversely, Sail Canada took a separate approach, communicating about results and finishes using athlete names without their account handles, while also offering more in terms of competition conditions, upcoming events, and even cross-promotion with its Facebook social media channel. The following example depicts how Sail Canada communicated about competition conditions: “*Full rigs and radials are off! Beautiful sunny skies and 5-8knts of breeze!*” Another example illustrates the focal organization linked their Facebook account such that it would post activity there as a tweet: “*I posted 4 photos on Facebook in the album ‘2014 IFDS World Championships’ [link to images]*”. Thus, while Bobsleigh Canada connected athletes’ accounts and applicable event hashtags, Sail Canada concentrated more on the characteristics of the event, results, and linking other social media.

Organizations in the “low” follow group also had similar tweets to the other CNSOs under examination. In the case of Luge Canada, tweets citing elite athletes did use those athletes’ Twitter account handles (e.g., Frozenrosen, Jonesluge, alexgoughluge). Conversely,

Fencing Canada chose not to cite athletes' account handles when tweeting about them. In both organizations, tweets depicted athlete performances and results, as well as promoting upcoming competitions as concepts like "weekend" and "tomorrow" were common.

Commonalities aside, Luge Canada did have one particular concept separating itself from Fencing Canada and some CNSOs as well. "Lucytriesluge," a Twitter handle belonging to a children's book of the same name, was often retweeted by Luge Canada as a means of promoting the sport to fans of the book and casual observers of the sport. One example was this retweet that read, "*RT @LucyTriesLuge: Look at the time! Good night all!*" Though this particular message contains no sport content at all, it is representative of the organization attempting to build its follower base to an account loosely tied to its sport. While some CNSOs were able to retweet sports media organizations referencing their sport and athletes (e.g., Tennis Canada), Luge Canada identified another loosely associated account to promote its sport, potentially to a different demographic.

Though messages communicated by these CNSOs are inherently unique given the different sports contexts, the results demonstrate these organizations have similar themes (e.g., elite athletes, results, competition times) and concepts associated with those themes. A collective assessment of themes and concepts also highlights there are three principal tenets regarding CNSO social media usage: promoting, reporting, and informing. As Figure 1 illustrates, tweets by these organizations are geared towards promoting athletes and events, reporting results and news (e.g., injuries, delays), and informing their audience with pictures, short video clips and by linking with other social media (e.g., Facebook).

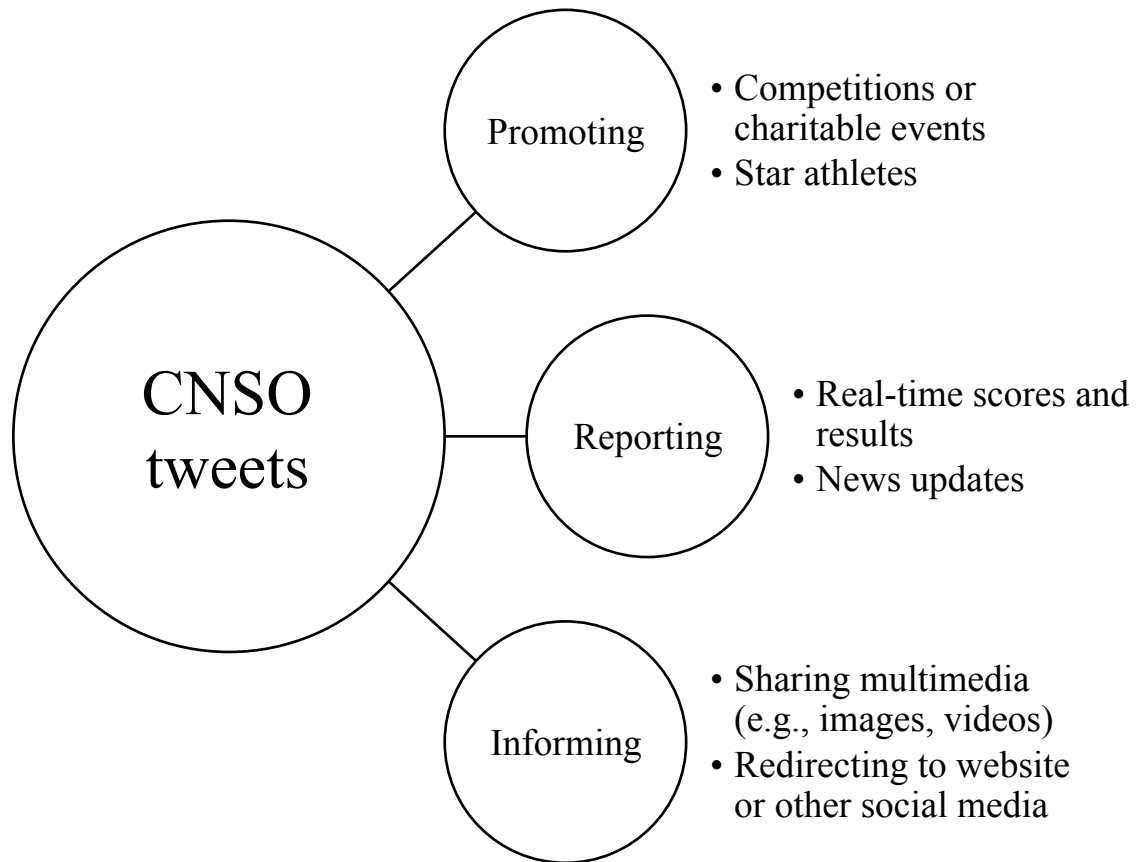


Figure 2.1 — Thematic Map of CNSO Tweets

Discussion

This study examined CNSOs' social media activity to determine whether sport organizations, in similar circumstances, have become isomorphic in their social media presence or differentiate themselves in their communications. Unlike previous scholarship in this area, which captured a small subset of what these organizations communicate (e.g., Abeza & O'Reilly, 2014), we collected a considerable amount of data, finding the central themes from CNSOs' communication on social media included: referencing elite athlete Twitter accounts, displaying results, and promoting upcoming competitions. With respect to the second research question (i.e., differences and similarities), it was evident promoting, reporting and informing tenets were representative of the similarities, while there were few

differences amongst these organizations. Regarding the latter, there were few instances of differentiation such as Rowing Canada's desire to communicate weather conditions, Tennis Canada's retweeting of sports media, as well as Luge Canada's attempt to branch out with "LucyTriesLuge." Despite these subtle differences, tweets promoting events, reporting results, or informing their followers were fundamentally indicative of the social media usage of these CNSOs.

Another significant finding from the study was themes were consistent across the various organizations, irrespective of several attributes including: the seasonality of the sport, Twitter follower count, total number of tweets, and whether the content was original or retweeted. Given the uniqueness of the sports represented by these organizations and the subcultures associated with them (e.g., freestyle skiing, sailing, rowing), one would expect organizations to have different messages outside of the sport context or perhaps engage in unique communicative strategies to build their follower base such as popular culture references and others identified by Pegoraro (2010).

The emergence of the three themes confirms the findings of Abeza and O'Reilly (2014) that CNSOs are not utilizing social media to build relationships with their stakeholders. Rather, by relegating tweets to those pertaining to promotional or informative messages, these organizations are choosing to utilize social media platforms like Twitter simply as another digital medium to broadcast their message. This ploy is not dissimilar from the digital strategy CNSOs have held previously. In fact, Girginov et al. (2009) indicated that though CNSOs are receptive to having an online presence, they remain inactive in building relationships with their stakeholders (e.g., participants). While an argument can be made that the nature of websites is not wholly conducive to relationship

building, the same cannot be said for social media. The ability of social media to present synchronous in addition to asynchronous communication can assist organizations build a relationship marketing strategy online (cf. Williams & Chinn, 2010). However, the findings here indicate that CNSOs remain resided to using social media as they would other mediums (e.g., websites).

With similar themes emanating from CNSOs' social media usage, the findings reveal of isomorphism amongst these organizations. As isomorphism is a result of coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures (cf. DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), it is appropriate to discuss how these pressures have resulted in the similarities between these organizations' social media activity. These pressures are especially important to flush out given the variance in CSNO salience and resources (e.g., sponsorships).

The first pressure (i.e., coercive) stems from the nature and characteristics of the organizations, notably CNSOs. Girginov et al. (2009) noted the federal government, as the principal funder, expects CNSOs to invest in online communication, given the salience and accessibility of social media (cf. Sport Canada, 2011). With very little by way of private sector support (cf. Séguin et al., 2005), these CNSOs risk losing the government's support if they do not partake in social media activities. Thus, with limited budgets, these organizations are coerced into having social media communication, partly attributing to similar organizational routines.

The second pressure (i.e., mimetic) can be seen in CNSOs copying the practices of other "successful" CNSOs. As Skate Canada and Tennis Canada (i.e., members of the "high" Twitter follower group) are more salient, have more mass media exposure and corporate sponsorships (Séguin et al., 2005), it is unsurprising that the other CNSOs under

investigation would communicate similar topics (e.g., elite athletes, competition results, upcoming events). An organization like Bobsleigh Canada, whose popularity is predominantly tied to the Olympic Winter Games every four years, opts to follow a similar social media strategy to Skate Canada (whose popularity is year-round) to remain legitimate in the eyes of its stakeholders (e.g., fans, athletes, government; Haveman, 1993). The same could be said for the other CNSOs in this study from the “low” and “mid-low” stratified groups mimicking the social media activity of organizations labelled “high” and “mid-high.”

Finally, the third pressure (i.e., normative) accounting for the isomorphic tendencies of CNSO social media communication likely emanates from these organizations sharing knowledge and best practices. As Slack and Hinings (1994) reported, there is a high degree of employee mobility between these organizations, suggesting knowledge from one organization is often transferred to another. Indeed, in the absence of a documented set of best practices for CNSO social media usage, the pressure to conform to the practices of other organizations in the environment is high (cf. Danisman et al., 2006). Taken holistically, the three pressures can explain why these organizations communicate in a similar manner on social media.

With the inherent power social media has for these types of organizations to connect to various stakeholders (Eagleman, 2013), the presence of isomorphic social media usage is significant. Social media communication is often distinctive, with organizations in a similar environment not exhibiting similar behavior (Abeza et al., 2014). Although this sentiment may be true, it is unable to explain the current circumstance, due in part to the institutional pressures at play. What remains unclear is why a non-salient CNSO would not adopt a unique strategy. By choosing an OSFA approach, these CNSOs are potentially failing to

broaden their audience reach or gain popularity amongst Twitter users. Thompson et al.'s (2014) description of the Tennis New Zealand strategy emphasizes this sentiment: fans are expressing "a desire for a range of different post content to be presented" (p. 52). For less salient organizations (e.g., Luge Canada, Fencing Canada), opting for an OSFA approach fundamentally relegates followership to core fans of that sport, which are often low to begin with. Although that strategy may please core stakeholders who follow these organizations on social media for immediate results and news updates, it negates the opportunity social media as a communications medium affords to the organization to connect to new demographics both domestically and globally. Moreover, the consistent use of tagging and promoting elite athletes, while seemingly beneficial on the surface, detracts from stimulating follower growth for the organization. Bobsleigh Canada and their repeated citing of one of their prominent athletes, Kaillie Humphries (i.e., @Bobsledkaillie) is a case in point. By tagging and promoting the athlete, one would be inclined to consider that Twitter users would follow both the athlete and the focal organization (i.e., Bobsleigh Canada). However, followership subsequently occurred for the athlete and not necessarily the organization. Bobsleigh Canada, which has 2,310 followers, has significantly less followers than the athlete who has over 19,000. This is not a criticism of athlete promotion; rather, it constitutes further evidence to support the notion an OSFA approach may not be appropriate for all CNSOs. One potential recourse is to supplement the current philosophy of promoting, reporting, and informing, with popular culture references to stimulate social relations between the organization and its followers. In this respect, these organizations can maintain their core constituency while attempting to increase followership. Another strategy would be to "poke-fun" and make light of the niche status these types of organizations have, utilizing

established conventions like “#firstworldproblems” and “#motivationmonday.” Particularly in the latter example, by tapping into a social media convention that is not specifically tied to an organization, athlete, or other sport stakeholder, NSOs can attempt to maximize visibility of their message within the social media ecosystem. Thus, isomorphism’s significance in this study refers to the possibilities available to CNSOs to diverge and shift their strategy away from an OSFA approach and stimulate followership growth.

Moreover, this study’s results support Eagleman’s (2013) assessment these types of organizations are “severely under-utilizing the sponsor-related benefits and capabilities that social media can afford” (p. 495). Less salient CNSOs, which currently do not have the advantages of mass media exposure and multiple corporate sponsorships, would be remised if they did not seize the opportunity to leverage their social media presence in a way that (a) stimulates follower growth and (b) entices sponsorships from brands also present on social media. Though adopting an OSFA approach as a result of the coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures may cause CNSOs to perceive their social media presence as legitimate (cf. Deephouse, 1996), less salient CNSOs may want to re-evaluate their approach as a means of building their follower numbers.

From an institutional theory perspective, the isomorphic tendencies of social media usage by CNSOs add to the extant literature base on isomorphism in these types of organizations (e.g., Amis et al., 2004; Danisman et al., 2006; Slack & Hinings, 1994) by highlighting the little differentiation between organizations vis-à-vis Twitter-based communications, due to comparable coercive, mimetic and normative pressures. NSOs (in general) have unique institutional contexts, the least of which exist in the physical world (e.g., human resources, funding, and organizational structure). In this study, we found the

routines and actions of sport organizations using social media have become isomorphic and attributable to coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures. The demands to compete in the social media environment are very real, as evidenced by Eagleman (2013). NSOs are seen as “niche” sport organizations, which compete against professional sport leagues, teams, athletes, but also other, more salient NSOs and associated athletes. Thompson et al. (2014) noted some of the barriers and challenges to NSOs on social media; but, the presence of isomorphism as found in this study suggests a need for further exploration in this area.

Conclusion

The idiom “birds of a feather flock together” is one which seems to reflect CNSO social media usage. Although the sports they represent are unique in their own right, these organizations have been shown to tweet in a similar manner. Indeed, coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures have contributed to this isomorphic behavior and have kept CNSOs from divergent actions that could stimulate follower growth and the benefits that associate growth (e.g., sponsorships).

This study’s findings also provide significant insight for both practitioners and scholars. For the former, it is an opportunity for CNSOs to reflect on current practices to determine whether there should be changes/modifications or whether they should maintain the current approach. Changing their routines could generate follower growth and extend the audience following on Twitter, specifically. Yet, this could mean detracting away from the organization’s mission and potentially alienate core, loyal fans. With respect to maintaining the status quo, CNSOs would not require additional dedicated resources (e.g., human, financial) for their social media operations; but, they would be relegated to follower growth based upon athlete performance and sport saliency. This sentiment would also apply to other

sport organizations, particularly those which are not-for-profit (e.g., community clubs) that may have or considered building or changing a social media profile. For scholars, particularly those looking to advance social media and sport scholarship, this study highlights how an institutional approach to organizational online communication can explain certain behaviors, which could subsequently be applied to NSOs in jurisdictions other than Canada, but also to other not-for-profit sport organizations (e.g., community clubs) and other organizations, such as those in professional sport, sporting goods retail, and sponsors (to name a few). Moreover, scholars may wish to understand results of not-for-profit sport organizations that diverge from the status quo (i.e., OSFA) in favor of unique social media strategies.

While the study's design overcame the limited content examined by previous studies in this area (e.g., Abeza & O'Reilly, 2014), it was still subject to the rate limitations of Twitter with respect to data collection. Though data leakage was minimal, it was present nonetheless. Also related to the study's design was the limitation of using CAQDA. The ability of computer software programs like Leximancer to handle big data is of great benefit to scholars; but, there exists a limitation in their ability to understand semantic relationships relating to concepts like sarcasm. For instance, organizations may mention a competitor in content that is unrecognized by Leximancer for its sarcastic tone. Leximancer's structure also limits the ability to connect themes with purpose; an organization may choose to mention elite athletes out of context to increase visibility and engagement with that athlete, which may affect theme and concept outcomes. Another limitation to note is the lack of photo and link analyses. As the text of tweets were the unit of analysis, not all the components of the tweet (e.g., photos, video clips), the study could not ascertain whether

NSOs utilize certain media (e.g., action photos of athletes) differently than others. In regards to delimitations, perhaps the most apparent was the focus on Twitter and not extending the study to other platforms. Although Twitter has become extremely popular in the sport communication literature and for various sport stakeholders (e.g., fans, athletes, organizations), studies in this area may wish to incorporate additional social media platforms (e.g., Facebook) to examine whether isomorphism exists beyond Twitter communication. Lastly, the study was also restricted to a focus on CNSOs; thus, the generalizability of the study's findings to NSOs in other jurisdictions is not currently possible.

Despite these (de)limitations, this study serves as a valuable contribution to extend institutional theory into the realm of social media and sport research. For one, a larger, cross-national study would be helpful in ascertaining generalizability of NSOs more generally. Future studies wishing to extend this research should also look to further explain this behavior by seeking the input of managers and executives of these organizations. A longitudinal approach may also be beneficial to this line of research, whereby social media posts are collected for several CNSOs at monthly or annual intervals to determine whether themes converge or become more distinct over time. Longitudinal approaches may also be applied to studies examining isomorphic behavior of CNSOs in Olympic years when sponsors and fans may pay more attention to these organizations. Finally, scholars may opt to move away from the content produced by these organizations towards an understanding of the stakeholders present in the social networks of CNSOs. By identifying who is following these organizations and who these organizations are following back, scholarship would be able to determine power and influence in these dynamic networks which could have an impact on the communication routines of CNSOs.

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Chapter III

Illuminating centralized users in the social media ego network of two national sport organizations

Naraine, M. L., & Parent, M. M. (2016). Illuminating centralized users in the social media ego network of two national sport organizations. *Journal of Sport Management, 30*, 689-701. doi: 10.1123/jsm.2016-0067

As entities with complex structures, value sets and operational practices (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007), nonprofit sport organizations, specifically national sport organizations (NSO), have been the topic of several investigations throughout the development of the field of sport management. From initial forays examining organizational strategy (e.g., Thibault, Slack, & Hinings, 1993) and structure (e.g., Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1995), recent examinations include (but are not limited to) governance (e.g., Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015) and social media communication (e.g., Eagleman, 2013). Yet, despite these advancements, there is still much to be learnt from organizations in the nonprofit domain, particularly as it relates to the latter topical issue (i.e., social and digital communication) and the dynamics of social networks.

Within the past five years, sport management has experienced a notable spike in social media studies (cf. Pedersen, 2014). Social media affords scholars an opportunity to collect dynamic datasets from digital environments which has led to examinations of various sports stakeholders including (but not limited to) athletes (e.g., Pegoraro, 2010), journalists (e.g., Sanderson & Hambrick, 2012), and sponsors (Abeza, Pegoraro, Naraine, Séguin, & O'Reilly, 2014; Delia & Armstrong, 2015). Though nonprofit organizations, such as NSOs,

have not remained absent from this rise in social media scholarship, studies are limited: Eagleman (2013) revealed the acceptance of social media within these types of organizations; Thompson, Martin, Gee, and Eagleman (2014) discussed the social media strategic development of an NSO; and Abeza and O'Reilly (2014) studied content produced by several NSOs over a two-week period. The dearth of studies examining NSOs and social media is particularly surprising given that these sport organizations have much to gain from social media as they represent niche sports with little notoriety (cf. Eagleman, 2013). With several calls to advance the current understanding of social media and sport beyond merely descriptive analyses of content (cf. Filo, Lock, & Karg, 2015; Pedersen, 2014; Pegoraro, 2014), including Naraine and Parent's (2016) suggestion to uncover key users that exist within NSO social media networks, there remains an opportunity to delve further into the intersection of (nonprofit) sport organizations and social media to illuminate other aspects of social networking including network ties and dynamics.

As such, this paper sought to examine the social media network of NSOs to explore the relations between various users (e.g., organizations, athletes, fans), thereby illuminating centralized actors in a digital environment. Clavio, Burch, and Frederick (2012) and Hambrick and Pegoraro (2014) previously employed social network analysis (SNA) in their social media studies, but did so using content to determine relationships between users in a given network (e.g., mentioning another user in a post, utilizing a hashtag). The present study applies a network paradigm (i.e., SNA principles) but utilizes "followership" as the sole marker of relations between actors and does so using the ego networks of NSOs in Twitter. An ego network consists of a focal actor or "ego" and immediate contacts or "alters" and all ties (as identified here by followership) between the ego and the alters, as

well as between alters (Prell, 2012). Setting the network boundary parameters (Prell, 2012) to focus solely on NSO ego networks in Twitter is a result of the open, dynamic, and salient nature of the platform and the prominence it has gained in sport management scholarship (Pedersen, 2014; Pegoraro, 2014). By identifying centralized users within a social media network, NSOs may wish to adjust their social media strategies by harnessing the position of said centralized users to re-disseminate ego generated content throughout the network, thereby working towards maximizing content visibility.

This study contributes to the growing nonprofit organization and social media and sport agendas by moving beyond examining content and communication habits in favor of identifying relationships within an online social network. First, as online communication is an important function for NSOs (cf. Girginov, Taks, Boucher, Martyn, Holman, & Dixon, 2009), social media studies utilizing these entities provide greater insight into the online operations of nonprofit organizations. Second, though there is inherent value in examining social media content, exploring social relations within a network like Twitter can offer insights for practitioners as to which users are advantaged vis-à-vis high degree of centrality and, as a result, highlight whom an NSO may consider targeting/cooperating with in their messaging (in hopes of “retweets” or a re-distribution of content). While “retweets” may not be the primary motivation for NSO communication using social media, this practice may allow content to gain greater visibility within NSO’s social network and the social networks of those centralized users as well. By applying SNA principles in this digital setting (i.e., ego networks in Twitter), this study also advances the current understanding of sport stakeholder networks by emphasizing the benefit certain actors have in social networks to control/bridge information between the ego and alters, as well as the potential to distort and

maintain ego generated messages (cf. Naraine, Schenk, & Parent, 2016). Along this vein, identifying key users within ego networks on Twitter is even more important given that there are lingering doubts as to the “realness” and authenticity of social media users (e.g., Billings, 2014). Finally, this study will be of interest to both network and social media scholars simply for the fact SNA measures are applied to a digital environment, thereby building upon the initial considerations put forth by Quatman and Chelladurai (2008a) and extending the use of SNA in a sport communication study.

Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework

In this section, an overview of the literature is provided, which highlights relevant social media and sport scholarship, specifically Twitter-based studies. A theoretical framework follows comprised of the network paradigm (e.g., network theory proper, SNA) including sport management research that has applied such an approach. Finally, close attention is paid towards key network concepts (e.g., centrality, density) that aide the exploration of relations between stakeholders in a NSO’s social media network.

Twitter and Sport Scholarship

As one of many popular social media platforms in the current digital environment, Twitter’s emergence into the sport management research landscape has been swift and impactful, as evidenced by the high number of citations these particular articles bear (cf. Abeza, O’Reilly, & Nadeau, 2014). Beginning with a special edition on new media in the *International Journal of Sport Communication* (i.e., volume 3, issue 4), Twitter-based studies received considerable attention by scholars, warranting its own special edition in the same publication only two years later. The growth of Twitter and sport scholarship has not been relegated to minor outlets either: some of the premier sport management journals have

published Twitter-based studies including the recent examination of content sentiment by Delia and Armstrong (2015) and fluctuation of followers of professional baseball teams by Watanabe, Yan, and Soebbing (2015) in the *Journal of Sport Management*.

Part of the explanation for sport management's fixation on this specific social media platform as opposed to other salient options (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) stems from the large, dynamic activity that is present (cf. Pegoraro, 2014). As a microblogging tool where users are limited to 140 characters per interaction, Twitter's ecosystem is one where users can access news and information in an accelerated fashion, offer a personal opinion, and utilize social media conventions like hashtags which enables interaction and engagement of a collated topic with others around the world, many of which result in polarizing discussions (Blaszka, Burch, Frederick, Clavio, & Walsh, 2012). Though these characteristics can also be found in other social media platforms, Twitter's focus on shorter bursts of content disseminating across vast networks separates itself from other social media platforms (Clavio & Kian, 2010).

Another manner in which users are able to experience communication by other users and interact accordingly is through another Twitter convention known as "following." Following consists of one user denoting they choose to receive messages another user creates. By following multiple users, a focal user is able to receive a summary of aggregated content on their personal "timeline." However, as these are summaries, users may not necessarily receive content from a particular user depending on when the focal user logs on and when the content was originally created altogether. Although Twitter has made modifications to its architecture affecting when content is received by a user (e.g., new algorithms), content produced by others is not guaranteed to appear at the top of a user's

timeline given the amount of followers that users typically have tied to their account (cf. Kleinberg, 2016). One way to mitigate this issue is increasing followership to include additional users who have the potential to “retweet” or disseminate content, thereby increasing the potential visibility of the original message. The “following” function on Twitter differs from some other social media platforms in that the relationship with the other user, while binary, is not necessarily reciprocal; whereas “friendship” on other platforms (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn) automatically creates a two-way bond⁵, Twitter following is a one-way interaction and does not equate to users automatically following each other. This sentiment explains why salient Twitter users like star athletes have a large amount of followers in their network relative to the number of users they themselves follow (cf. Clavio & Kian, 2010; Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, & Greenwell, 2010).

There have been several attempts at illuminating sport stakeholder networks within Twitter, such as the endeavors undertaken by Clavio et al. (2012), Hambrick (2012) and Hambrick and Pegoraro (2014). In the case of Hambrick (2012), tweets generated by a sport event organizer were collected, mapping the growth and degradation of a network through conversation over time. Clavio et al.’s (2012) research found fans of a football team interacted with other fans, media with other media, but team-related accounts were not present in the network, where tweets were also utilized as the marker of relationships between users. A third effort was conducted by Hambrick and Pegoraro (2014). Building upon Hambrick’s (2012) earlier study, they applied SNA to determine the growth and decay of network conversation related to the 2014 Sochi Olympic Winter Games. Though all three studies demonstrate SNA can be applied in the context of Twitter networks, a prominent

⁵ Platforms like Facebook have also segmented their site to offer “pages” in addition to individual, personal accounts where users can “like” a business, organization, or high-profiled celebrity/athlete page in a one-way interaction,

commonality across these works is the use of content (i.e., tweets) to establish connections between users and reveal a network thereafter. Certainly, there is value in identifying key users on Twitter who act as information hubs and who have control over the dissemination of communication (Hambrick & Pegoraro, 2014). Yet, attributing connections between users by using content is inherently biased towards those users who communicate more often and incorporate more users in their messages, and does not necessarily reflect the power that users may wield within a social network as a result of their follower/following relationships with others. In other words, a user who is cited by others may have some importance to social activity, but it is those users who are more central in an ego network (i.e., followed by multiple users) who have a greater likelihood of disseminating and/or distorting ego generated and related content as they see fit (hence their strength and advantage in these social networks). As such, this study accepts the foundation that previous studies (e.g., Clavio et al., 2012; Hambrick, 2012; Hambrick & Pegoraro, 2014) have established for the application of SNA in a Twitter context, and builds upon them by identifying users “following” other users to apply network principles.

Network Paradigm

Of course, any study that purports to apply a network paradigm would be remiss if it did not discuss the theoretical underpinnings of networks. A network consists of a set of relationships between two or more actors who may be connected by prior exchanges, location, affiliation, friendship, and/or demographic attributes (e.g., gender, ethnicity) among others (Borgatti, Mehra, Brass, & Labianca, 2009). Moreover, relations between actors can occur in multiple contexts such as within organizations, as well as online in digital environments. Thus, to theorize networks is to gain an appreciation for not just the

actors and the type of relations, but rather the patterns of relations between actors in a social environment, as well as the emphasis of properties attached to a given network (cf. Borgatti & Halgin, 2011; Borgatti et al., 2009; Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

Scholarship that utilizes a network paradigm often cites SNA literature and analytical measures but disregards the theoretical domain which networks bear. Borgatti and Halgin (2011) conceptualized the theoretical domain of networks into two parts: the theory of networks and network theory proper. The former, which can be considered a macro-level approach, refers to the understanding of properties and processes of networks as whole units. Conversely, the latter which is more micro-level in its approach, focuses on actors, linkages, and the resulting network configuration (Borgatti et al., 2009). For this paper, network theory proper is more useful as a theoretical foundation, emphasizing the structural components and connectivity within the Twitter network of NSOs (i.e., actors and their following of other actors). Moreover, given that network theory proper is common in organizational scholarship (Borgatti & Foster, 2003), it is a suitable framework for the current study.

There exists, however, an argument that the network paradigm is an orientation toward a particular methodological approach (i.e., SNA) and does not necessarily comprise a formal social theory (e.g., Scott, 2000). Indeed, Salancik (1995) noted that despite its emergence and usefulness for organizational scholarship, there was nothing truly “distinctive” about the network approach and that a “good theory” (at least as it pertained to a network theory of organization) remained absent. However, Kilduff and Tsai (2003) illustrated network paradigm studies often incorporate additional social psychology theories (e.g., balance theory, social comparison theory), as well as their own “home-grown” theories

such as heterophily theory and structural role theory. Moreover, many of these theories are refined aspects of the theory of networks and network theory proper (e.g., structural connectedness of a network is a result of the actors and linkages producing said network configuration). Thus, while the network paradigm may be too methodologically oriented for some (e.g., Salancik, 1995; Scott, 2000), there is a lack of recognition for the theoretical foundation associated with networks (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011).

In sport management, the network paradigm emerged as a beneficial lens of inquiry for scholarly investigations, though it is often labelled a network-based approach or perspective and paired with SNA (cf. Quatman & Chelladurai, 2008a). Prior to 2008, there existed several sport management studies that focused on networks (e.g., Cousens & Slack, 2005; Thibault & Harvey, 1997). However, in the period following Quatman and Chelladurai's (2008a) research, a considerable number of studies appeared with many of the network considerations put forth by the article (e.g., Cousens, Barnes, & MacLean, 2012; Katz & Heere, 2015; Maclean, Cousens, & Barnes, 2011; Sallent, Palau, & Guia, 2011; Warner, Bowers, & Dixon, 2012; Wäsche, 2015) including Quatman and Chelladurai's (2008b) own exploration of knowledge construction (i.e., social relations via publication authorship). For instance, Cousens et al. (2012) and MacLean et al. (2011) discussed the ties between community sport stakeholders using (betweenness) centrality, while Warner et al. (2012) examined the group dynamics of women's basketball teams using structural cohesion measures such as density, betweenness, and eigenvector centralities. Sallent et al. (2011) commented on the usefulness of these particular SNA considerations (i.e., centrality and density) in relation to building a conceptual framework to assess the effectiveness of a sport event network. Yet, despite these advancements, sport management scholarship employing a

network paradigm has been relegated to many of the initial considerations put forth by Quatman and Chellaudrai's (2008a). Though Wäsche (2015) applied the exponential random graph modeling technique, an advanced SNA measure, new studies should continue to seek out and apply additional measures from the SNA database to improve how network paradigms are applied, analyzed and understood in sport management.

Network Concepts

Within the network paradigm, centrality, power and density are considered to be dominant conceptual tools (cf. Castells, 2011; Everett & Borgatti, 2005; Oerlemans, Gössling, & Jansen, 2007). Initially introduced by Freeman (1979), centrality refers to the structural arrangement of actors (or "nodes" in the SNA lexicon) and how certain relationships may positively or negatively affect an actor. As centrality incorporates the positioning of nodes within a network, it is linked to the concept of power. In networks comprised of highly centralized nodes with many ties to others, those nodes are perceived to have a significant edge over less central nodes, equating to more power. Nodes with power are able to control the dissemination of information to others, particularly those less central actors in the network (Prell, 2012). Density is another commonly utilized concept in the network paradigm (cf. Oerlemans et al., 2007), depicting the structural connectedness of a network (i.e., the extent to which all actors in the network are linked). As a measure of the overall connectedness of a network, density informs researchers of all relationships realized or not, emphasizing whether a node's centrality actually equates to significant power and influence (Prell, 2012). Collectively, the concepts of centrality, power and density can attest to the social capital actors possess within a given network.

Given the focus of this study is to explore the relations between users within the Twitter ego network of NSOs, the following research questions are advanced:

RQ₁ – How are users positioned in the Twitter ego network of an NSO?

RQ₂ – Based upon network ties, which users are advantaged in the Twitter ego network of an NSO?

These research questions are guided by the network paradigm in which users and their ties to others (i.e., followership in this case) result in meaningful outcomes with respect to control, dissemination, and distortion of content. As a result, these questions extend beyond the previous works of SNA in a social media setting (e.g., Clavio et al., 2012; Hambrick, 2012; Hambrick & Pegoraro, 2014), looking not at how conversation creates a network, but how followership does and results in advantaged users.

Method

Sample

With previous scholarship of NSOs and social media utilizing organizations in a Canadian context (e.g., Abeza & O'Reilly, 2014; Naraine & Parent, 2016), the sample in this study was also selected from NSOs in this particular jurisdiction. Using Naraine and Parent's (2016) stratification of Canadian NSOs based upon followership numbers and their subsequent study of two organizations from each of the corresponding groups, this study examined the two organizations emanating from that study in the "low" followership group: Canadian Fencing Federation (@FencingCanada) and the Canadian Luge Association (@LugeCanada). Choosing these two NSOs was determined based upon the resources required to analyze sizeable networks such as time and computation limitations of SNA

software (cf. Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2013), as whatever number of followers the NSO had would be doubled in a matrix and each relationship examined one at a time (see below).

Procedure

Using a nominalist approach (Wasserman & Faust, 1994), the network boundary was defined by the Twitter ego networks of the two selected NSOs. Each ego network consists of the focal node (i.e., NSO) and its “alters”, comprised of users it follows and/or those following the NSO back. As such, all users either following or being followed by the ego (i.e., @FencingCanada and @LugeCanada) were noted. Two square, one-mode sociomatrices were created in Microsoft Excel consisting of each respective ego and its alters: the Fencing Canada matrix consisted of 381 total users, while the Luge Canada matrix consisted of 1,026 total users. With the ego and alters identified, all ties (i.e., followership) between alters were sought out using the NodeXL software program, a tool previously utilized by Hambrick and Pegoraro (2014). The software enabled a search of one alter at a time, revealing the followership of that particular user. After each search, any followership between alters were noted and cross-referenced in the corresponding ego network. As a result, there were 1407 unique queries performed using NodeXL, a process which took several weeks to complete. Once all alters were assessed, data were exported as separate matrices to the UCINET 6 SNA program (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002).

Data Analysis

The two sociomatrices were analyzed separately using SNA measures in UCINET 6 and mapped as sociograms produced by NetDraw 2 (Borgatti, 2002). In keeping with previous sport management literature employing SNA, density values (cf. MacLean et al., 2011), total number of ties, and average degree per node measures were sought for both

networks. Although “network centralization” has been computed by previous works (cf. Katz & Heere, 2015; MacLean et al., 2011), as the current networks feature directed data (i.e., followership not necessarily symmetrical), this type of analysis could not take place. However, centrality of the actors themselves was computed for both ego networks, with a slight departure from previous work. While Warner et al. (2012) utilized degree, betweenness, and eigenvector centrality measures, there are deficiencies present in all three cases: (1) degree does not measure popularity and ignores tie direction; (2) betweenness does not account for the connections a brokered actor has, and; (3) eigenvector centrality, though seen as a refined version of centrality, cannot be used for directed data (cf. Prell, 2012). To negate these issues, the Bonacich beta centrality measure was utilized to assess centrality of actors in these ego networks. Bonacich beta centrality looks at the relationship between centrality and power, calculating the benefit of relations to centralized actors; this measure is perceived as a combination of both degree and eigenvector centrality and is appropriate for directed networks (Borgatti et al., 2013; Prell, 2012). By utilizing the Bonacich beta centrality measure, the study was able to adequately address RQ₂. In conjunction with this centrality measurement, a core-periphery structure was performed. The core-periphery structure segregates all actors in a network into two groups: a core, where actors are connected to other central actors and peripheral actors, and a periphery, comprised of actors whose ties are limited to core members (Borgatti et al., 2013). In placing users of an ego network into two groups and mapping them accordingly (i.e., based on their ties to the ego and other alters), the study is able to address RQ₁. Moreover, by specifically identifying core actors (through performing a core-periphery structure and searching usernames in the Twitter ecosystem) and appending their Bonacich beta centrality scores,

the analysis is able to highlight the power and centrality of users who are advantaged by their followership of or by other salient actors.

Results

The visual results provide an indication of the overall structure of each Twitter ego network. Figure 1 captures the linkages in the Fencing Canada network between the ego (i.e., represented with an all-white node) and its alters (i.e., all-black), and between the alters themselves. From this graphic representation, there are elements of clusters forming as the greyed lines signifying followership become more concentrated and darker in certain parts of the network. The Fencing Canada sociogram also illustrates there are alters on the fringe of the network, as the black lines are sparse and more defined to these actors. However, the Fencing Canada network appears more fragmented relative to the Luge Canada network, depicted in Figure 3.1. In the latter graphic, there is less of a sporadic placement of actors, though there are still users on the edge of the sociogram denoting the network's peripheral membership. Although followership ties are somewhat visible in the Fencing Canada sociogram, the same cannot be said for Luge Canada; given the large amount of followership ties in the network, the sociogram in Figure 3.2 is greyed out and demonstrates the importance of using quantitative SNA measures to determine actor strength.

While network mapping is useful in providing a visual overview, it is also a descriptive tool that can be supplemented with overall network measures (see Table 3.1). In addition to boasting an ego network nearly three times the size of Fencing Canada, actors within the Luge Canada network also had a higher average degree (i.e., combining total following and followed), suggesting there was more activity present in the luge network.

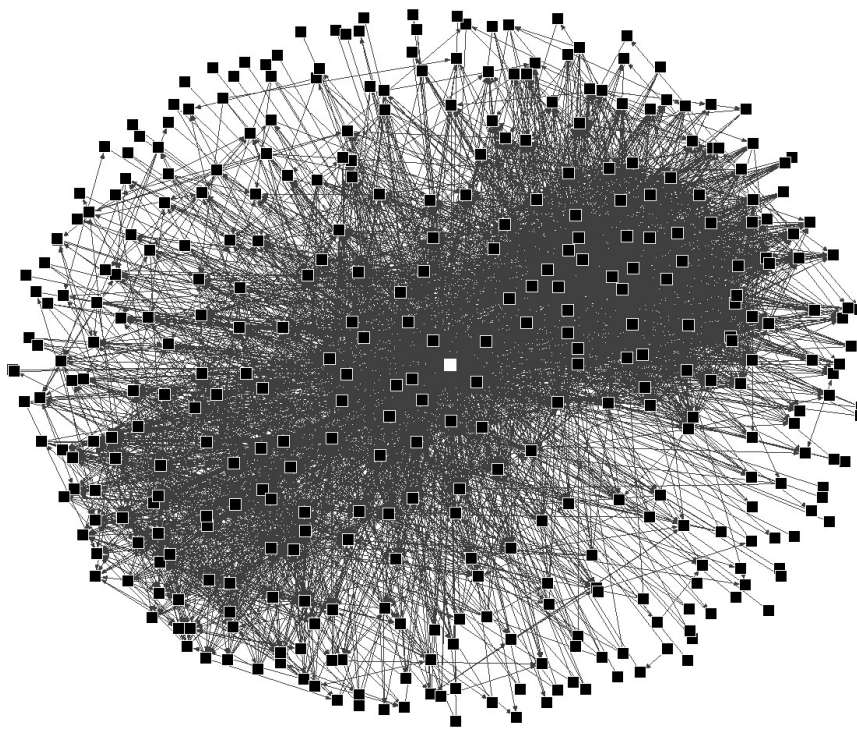


Figure 3.1 – Ego Network Sociogram of @FencingCanada

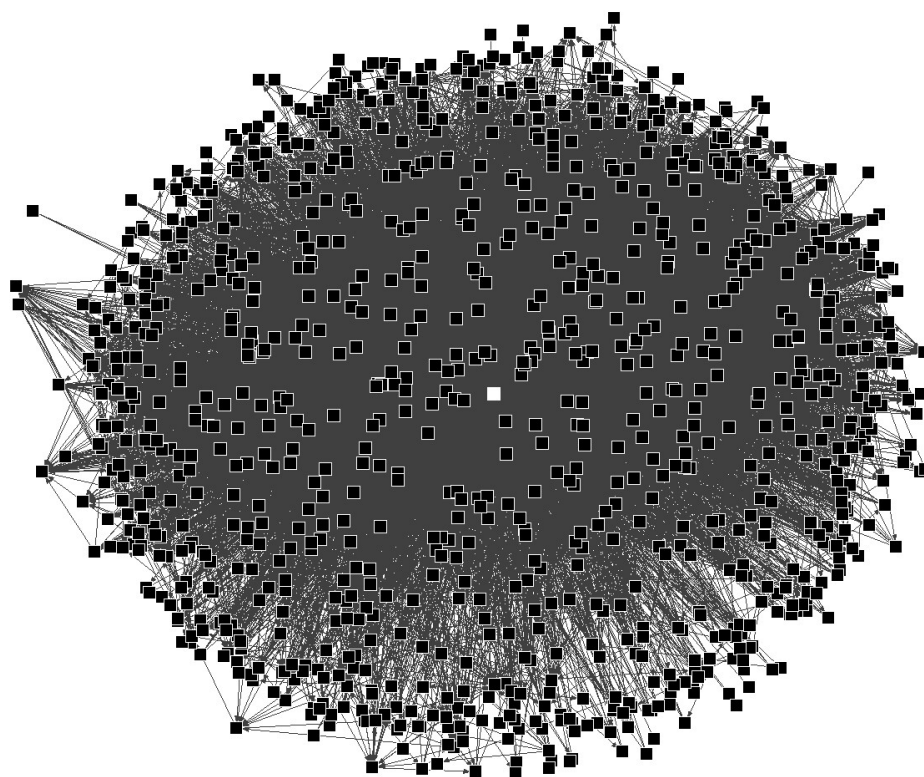


Figure 3.2 – Ego Network Sociogram of @LugeCanada

Density scores, which indicate the number of ties in a network expressed as a proportion of the total possible ties, were also captured. Both Fencing Canada ($n = 0.044$) and Luge Canada ($n = 0.023$) had low density scores, an unsurprising result for large networks (Borgatti et al., 2013). Moreover, the low density scores of both networks are indicative of highly fragmented networks, where the total number of followership possible is not being realized, suggesting that actors within these networks are following specific actors that they have deemed important or more salient.

Table 3.1 Overall Network Measures

	Matrix Size	Total Ties	Average Degree	Network Density^a
@FencingCanada	381 x 381	6231	16.484	0.044
@LugeCanada	1026 x 1026	24412	23.793	0.023

^a scores range between 0-1

Once density scores were calculated, core-periphery structures and Bonacich beta centrality measures were assessed for both ego networks, beginning with Fencing Canada. In the Fencing Canada network, there were 74 core users, representing 19% of the total number of users present. As evidenced in Table 3.2, many of these core actors included elite athletes, international federations, competitor fencing NSOs from other nations, sponsors, and even major competition events like the Olympic Games. This was an unsurprising result given many of these users have large numbers of followers or are particularly important to the focal sport (i.e., fencing). Yet, although nearly one fifth of users in the Fencing Canada network were present in the core of the network, the Bonacich beta centrality scores revealed many of the popular and well-known users in the core did not wield significant power through their network relationships (e.g., Olympics). Indeed, the top ten highest

Table 3.2 Core Actors in Fencing Canada Network with Beta Centrality Scores

Username	β^a	Username	β^a
FencingCanada	2.109	heideckerpascal	1.449
4fencing	2.268	herefordfencing	2.366
aimee_is_love	1.001	igfencing	1.672
alannag	0.094	juanreyhermida	2.688
angreal99	1.137	kelleighryan	1.127
asmeranoscherma	2.486	lelandguillemin	3.305
athletescan	0.468	libertyfencing	2.661
benjaminsarty	2.217	lynnseguin	1.543
bladefencingny	2.085	miami_fencing	1.590
bristolfencing	3.442	monivapeterson	0.869
britishfencing	1.413	mponichfencer	1.649
bukharafencing	3.605	nikefencing	0.364
canadagames	0.452	olympicfencing	0.883
catchsport	2.830	olympics	0.202
cdnfencer	1.410	paulapsimon	1.382
cdnolympicteam	0.649	phil_beaudry	0.760
chelwer_fencer	2.491	phoenixfencing	1.865
cnpfencingcamp	3.104	proprintwear	2.690
comerford15	1.007	qatarfencing	0.458
dieselnyc1	3.247	race_imboden	0.243
epa_escrime	2.689	sallegreen	0.725
escrime_neufcha	4.049	sandrasassine	1.701
escrime92320	2.890	sasktoonfencing	2.354
escrimeffe	0.807	schermamilano	1.009

esgrimabarajas	1.944	schermatorino	1.544
esgrimamexico	0.554	scottishfencing	0.647
eurofencing	0.805	skfencingassoc	2.785
federscherma	0.588	ssdescrime	2.250
fedesgrimavzla	1.829	sslazioscherma	2.539
fencingat	2.160	surlefildelepee	3.055
fencingbc	1.307	swissfencing	0.269
fencingnet	2.369	thebaycup	2.736
fencingpei	2.358	tivertonswords	2.203
fie_en	0.772	usfencing	1.457
fiathletecom	0.741	womensfoilcan	1.442
frederictrin	3.201	wstudentfencing	0.994
gladiatorsfc	0.688	yerglerj	2.857

a. Scores are normalized

Bonacich beta centrality scores consisted of the Belgian and Uzbekistani fencing NSOs (i.e., escrime_neufcha and bukharafencing), local sport clubs (i.e., bristolfencing and escrime92320), elite athletes (i.e., lelandguillemin and yerglerj), a photographer (i.e., dieselnyc1), trainer (i.e., frederictrin), and even an athletic facility (i.e., cnpfencingcamp). Moreover, provincial fencing organizations (e.g., skfencingassoc, fencingpei) also had relatively high Bonacich beta centrality values compared to others in the network (i.e., $\beta > 2$), indicating these smaller sport organizations have more power than larger sport stakeholders like the Olympics ($\beta = 0.202$) and the international federation for fencing ($\beta = 0.717$), thus highlighting their strength within the Fencing Canada ego network.

In the case of Luge Canada, the composition of the network core (as a result of the core-periphery structure application) was higher than the core yielded by the Fencing

Canada network ($n = 131$), but that sentiment is unsurprising given Luge Canada's network matrix was much larger from the outset (see Table 3.3). Despite the larger number of core users, the Luge Canada core only represented 12% of the total number of users in the network. Similar to the Fencing Canada network, the core of Luge Canada's network consisted of several popular sport stakeholders such as elite athletes, international federations, other Canadian NSOs, competition venues, and a Canadian politician. However, while the presence of these stakeholders in the core is notable, the centrality scores highlight the users with the most power are in fact fans and fan groups (i.e., ohcanadasports, craigdrebit, dawnbur, silver30, and markus_ja). In addition to fans, the top ten highest Bonacich beta centrality scores also included a children's book series (i.e., lucytrissports), an athlete-centered sport organization (i.e., atletescan), a photographer (i.e., davehollandpics), and athletic facilities (i.e., fieldhouseyc and winsportcanada).

A comparison between the two ego networks highlights key similarities and important differences. It is evident from the core-periphery structures both NSOs have network cores comprised of major sport stakeholders. There was an abundance of elite athletes in both cores, as well as various sport organizations at the international and local levels related to each sport. Indeed, while it may be construed as a preliminary observation, the sport-specific focus of users in both cores was quite evident. In fact, across both ego networks, only one user appeared in both cores (i.e., Olympics), and had decidedly low Bonacich beta centrality scores, indicating little power in either network. Another important difference was the inclusion of competitor organizations in the core of Fencing Canada's network and the presence of media personalities in Luge Canada's core. Ultimately, these differences demonstrate the specificities of each ego network.

Table 3.3 Core Actors in Luge Canada Network with Beta Centrality Scores

Username	β^a	Username	β^a	Username	β^a
LugeCanada	1.824	dawnbur	2.894	marcdurandtv	2.025
activateprogram	2.147	daynaclay	1.375	markconnollycbc	1.695
alexgoughluge	2.037	dishmonty	1.207	markus_ja	2.848
alpine_canada	1.989	divingplongeon	1.936	mgouletcoach	1.794
athletepursuit	2.666	dls Spencer10	1.677	mirelarahneva	1.951
athletescan	3.546	dnabobsleigh	2.293	mitchelmalyk	2.006
aussiebobsleigh	1.925	dornan10	1.414	monikaplatek	0.761
bakesmtl	2.124	dritterskier	1.879	mpricestrength	1.472
balgosal	1.968	emilybaadsvik	2.822	neilsoneric	1.246
bcbsa	1.969	erinhamlin	1.285	ohcanadasports	3.710
bcsportshall	1.601	ethicsinsport	1.418	olympichearts	3.970
bmwkevin1	2.654	fieldhouseyc	3.228	olympics	0.250
bobcanskel	1.443	fil_luge	2.470	olympiquecanada	1.796
bobsledkaillie	1.422	frank_meunier	2.530	ownthepodium	1.278
brendanhauptman	1.507	frozenrosen	1.767	righttoplaycan	1.440
brigittelegare	1.912	georgiasap	1.188	rin_ethier	1.991
bsd_presse	1.778	globalparker	1.466	samueledney	3.066
caaws	2.445	helenupperton	2.653	scott_c_fraser	2.072
calgbob	2.348	highfive_canada	1.973	seitzice	1.827
callumng	1.853	hudsonsbay	0.877	signabutler	1.723
canadasnowboard	1.474	janealmeida2014	2.297	silver30	2.863
canfreestyleski	2.551	jdtrains	2.198	sirctweets	1.462
canfund	1.640	jennyciochetti	2.078	skjcdn	0.363
cansportshall	2.027	jesselumsden28	1.686	slidingcentre	2.508

cassiehawrysh	0.329	jibrassard	1.091	slylecolympique	1.468
catrionald	1.390	jmckay1979	1.960	snowsportsworld	1.657
cbchh	1.394	johncanluge	2.733	sportablemedia	1.380
cbcolympics	2.326	johnnyfairbairn	1.336	sportanwellness	1.684
curlingcanada	0.211	jonesluge	2.086	sportcafe_co	3.501
cccski	1.394	jonmonty	1.794	sportcalgary	2.959
cdn_dcovington	2.381	judocanada	2.114	sportcanada_en	1.375
cdnblindsports	1.502	juliaclukey	1.045	sportchecklist	1.997
teamcanada	2.432	justinsnith	2.058	sportcology	0.777
charleszenon	2.507	kimmcraeluge	2.733	sporttourismldn	0.919
christieluge	1.044	lanemaster12	2.334	stevepod	2.245
cmoffat	0.900	lauraglovertwit	1.366	stutzskiing	1.053
coachesofcanada	1.543	lethbridgesport	2.171	thesportacademy	2.539
craigdrebit	3.197	lifespringpt	2.608	traceywalls	1.369
cs4l_acsv	1.827	lisabowes	2.085	triwhistler	1.119
csicalgary	2.353	lp_sliding	0.992	valleyactivecom	0.852
csiontario	1.971	lucytriessports	3.996	winsportcanada	3.119
ctjumpstart	1.373	makisha7a	1.973	wintersportscom	1.767
ctsc_ccse	2.488	manifesto_sport	1.745		
davehollandpics	3.285	manongilbert	1.812		

a. Scores are normalized

Discussion

The nature of followership within each ego network provides unique insights, particularly as it relates to addressing RQ₁ (i.e., how users are positioned in the network). For instance, the linkages displayed in the Fencing Canada sociogram (Figure 1) illustrates that, in addition to the presence of core users, many of which are clustered together to the

left of the ego, and fringe users who solely follow the ego, there exists other peripheral users who are connected to the ego and a small number of core alters. While this latter group of alters are not central to the network, they are more inclined to be active participants who genuinely want Fencing Canada content, unlike those fringe users with a simple tie to the ego who may be “fake,” “inactive,” and/or exist solely to post spam content (cf. Billings, 2014). The Luge Canada sociogram (Figure 2) also depicts the presence of these potentially fake outliers situated just beyond the peripheral concentric circle. Irrespective of where users were situated in these networks, the findings also highlight the potential lack of dependence on the ego for ego generated content. In the Fencing Canada ego network, each user had an average degree of 16.484, while users in the Luge Canada ego network had an average of 23.793. Although these averages combine indegree (followership of a user by an alter) and outdegree (followership of a user toward an alter), they remain a telling statistic; if each average is split in half for inward followership and outward followership, there are still approximately eight (in the Fencing Canada ego network) and 11 (in the Luge Canada ego network) alters from which they can potentially receive ego generated content through retweets and even original, ego related content. Even in the extreme case where a user only follows the ego and all other followership is received from alters (i.e., indegree), the user is likely to be salient (e.g., elite athlete) and privy to ego-related content from the outset. This sentiment is further exacerbated by the low density scores in both ego networks. Given all possible ties – all users in an ego network following each other – are not realized, there is great significance to the followership that does exist, particularly the followership of core users. However, due to the size of core followers in both ego networks, it is imperative to emphasize the most powerful users in this group.

Addressing RQ₂ (i.e., the advantage that users have based upon their ties to others), the findings indicated that some of the most advantaged users in these networks are ones who are smaller in nature. Though there were no hypotheses advanced due to the exploratory nature of this work, it would not be unreasonable to presume salient users with large amounts of followership would be central and powerful in a NSO's ego network. Yet, although these types of users were present in the network core, smaller groups, such as fans, photographers, trainers, athletic facilities and community clubs, emerged as those centralized users who wield the most amount of power through their ability to act as hubs of information (cf. Hambrick & Pegoraro, 2014). While the scope of Clavio et al.'s (2012) work differed in many ways (e.g., communication activity as relational ties), their results underscore the true power of users like fans and smaller sport organizations: in a network based on communication regarding a sports team, communication activity by the team with others is minimal, unlike the interactions between fans and other fans. Larger users such as sports teams, sponsors, and even major competition events have different social media goals and may not necessarily choose to communicate about a topic through original posts or retweets, let alone users connected to a particular sport, team, or issue (Clavio & Kian, 2010). This might be difficult to fathom for nonprofit sport organizations, as associating with salient users like the Hudson's Bay (a popular chain retailer in Canada in the core of Luge Canada's ego network) and their 100,000+ followers or the Olympics (in the core of both ego networks) and their millions of followers is an enticing endeavor. However, following these users does not automatically equate to access to their large followership bases, as it would still require a retweet to redistribute content. Moreover, associating with these large users may not result in content produced by the ego reappearing on Twitter

timelines of immediate followers if that retweet does not happen. Though these associations may work to legitimize the ego's Twitter presence, the findings here demonstrate it is the smaller sport stakeholders whom NSOs should seek engagement with, as those relationships can bring about positive brand associations (cf. Eagleman, 2013) and disseminate ego related content throughout the immediate network (cf. Hambrick & Pegoraro, 2014). There are various ways in which such engagement could take place, such as mentioning these users in appreciative posts or having a "back-and-forth" conversation with these users about a particular topic or issue that other followers are able to view. In this manner, NSOs would be able to take advantage of the power these smaller users bear within the ego network. However, the fact that powerful users were not consistent between the two ego networks highlights the need for NSOs to adopt original strategies and steer clear of one-size-fits-all approaches, similar to Thompson et al.'s (2014) contention. It is not sufficient for sport organizations, especially NSOs with limited organizational capacities, to replicate the practices of others simply for the fact that an approach may be easily implemented; organizations must be cognizant not only of the tone and personality of their social presence, but understanding that stakeholders have differing wants and needs as it pertains to communication. The latter point emphasizes the benefit of knowing which stakeholders have multiple ties within an ego network vis-à-vis their network centrality. Therefore, NSOs are encouraged to seek out these small-scale users (e.g., fans, community clubs) who may not have as large a followership base as sponsors and international federations but are contextually-salient and able to better redistribute ego-related content.

Implications

In applying a network paradigm to nonprofit sport organizations in a social media environment, this study makes several contributions to scholarship. First, although some of the measures employed were not new to SNA scholarship in sport management (cf. Katz & Heere, 2015; MacLean et al., 2011; Warner et al., 2012), to our knowledge, this is the first inclusion of the Bonacich beta centrality and core-periphery structure. Though there are a wide array of measures from which to choose, scholarship should continue to look beyond the initial considerations identified by Quatman and Chelladurai (2008a), especially when some of those considerations would not apply in the research context (as was the case with degree, betweenness, and eigenvector centrality in the present study). Related to this point, measures like the core-periphery structure, which segregates networks, affords researchers an opportunity to delve deeper within large datasets and generate inferences based on node relations. Second, this work extends the burgeoning social media and sport agenda by highlighting the followership as the marker of ties between social media users. The content produced by various sport stakeholders (e.g., fans, sponsors, organizations) has value, but should not necessarily remain the sole marker of relationships as previous works have done before (e.g., Clavio et al., 2012; Hambrick, 2012; Hambrick & Pegoraro, 2014). This study offers an empirical examination of followership between social media users in a sport context and can serve as the basis for renewed exploration of various stakeholders and the relations within their own ego network. Finally, this study contributes to the research agenda on nonprofit sport organizations, specifically NSOs, operating in a social media environment. While previous research looked at acceptance (Eagleman, 2013), relationship building (Abeza & O'Reilly, 2014), and development (Thompson et al., 2014) of social

media in these organizations, adding an application of a network paradigm and determining powerful users adds to the cumulative knowledge base by indicating that smaller-scale users should be targeted in order to maximize content visibility.

In addition to scholarly implications, this study also has managerial implications. NSOs are organizations that oftentimes represent niche sports with little mass media appeal, placing greater emphasis on the use of social media to gain followership growth through added exposure (Eagleman, 2013). However, stimulating followership growth can be an arduous task particularly with the limited resources these types of organizations typically have. Moreover, NSOs may simply wish to maximize the number of users who view their content (just because a user follows another does not mean they see all that user's content). As such, knowing which users in a NSO's ego network are centralized and able to retweet content in hopes of maximizing visibility can impact how these organizations sustain their followership and seek to build upon that figure. This study presents empirical evidence smaller-scale users within these networks should be targeted to maximize visibility and promote followership growth through the redistribution of ego related content (i.e., retweets). Specifically, NSOs should consider increasing interactions with these smaller-scale users and/or develop a strategy with these users in mind (e.g., promotional contests). Moreover, given the findings identified powerful users differ across networks, it is more important for managers in these organizations to not put stock into the fact large-scale users (e.g., Olympics, international federations) are part of their network. Thus, NSOs may wish to reflect upon their own network to identify and target those users who can actually advance their social media strategy.

Limitations and Future Research

Though this study has provided valuable insight into followership within NSOs' ego networks, it is not without (de)limitations that should be considered for future research. First, and perhaps most apparent, was the delimiting of the study to two NSOs in the same jurisdiction, which limits the generalizability of the results, despite the insights we were able to draw from them. Second, the study was delimited to one social media platform (i.e., Twitter), excluding the ego network relations on other platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. While Facebook may not lend itself to a similar study given followership ties on that platform are binary and symmetrical (except for instances where a user "likes" a business, organization, or celebrity "page"), followership on Instagram is not symmetrical and thus future studies should consider this platform. Related to this point, the study was delimited to followership as the sole marker of relations, excluding the potential connections that the egos may have had with non-followers in the Twittersphere via hashtag usage and retweets from others.

An important limitation to note was the possible fluctuation in followership from the data collection period through to the creation of the two network matrices. As indicated in the procedure, cross-referencing followership between alters was a time consuming process (i.e., approximately three months), and it was possible that an alter removed or added followership of another alter (and even the ego) during this period. Another key limitation was the computation abilities of UCINET, which struggles to perform SNA measures when a network is greater than 5,000 nodes. Though neither ego network had 5,000 nodes, it limited the ability of this study to incorporate NSOs whose followership would surpass that

threshold. While these (de)limitations are present, they do not hinder the overall value of the current study and offer considerations that can be addressed in future works.

Scholars looking to build upon the present study should consider both exploratory and explanatory approaches. As this exploratory study was delimited to two Canadian NSOs, additional exploratory studies incorporating a cross-national comparison of powerful actors within the ego networks of these nonprofit sport organizations would be warranted. Along a similar vein, extending a similar approach to community sport organizations may reveal powerful and centralized actors in other types of nonprofit sport organizations. In either of the last two recommendations, there is the potential to expand the network paradigm and SNA measures utilized, such as analyzing ego network homophily, which can illuminate whether certain users are following a specific type of alter based on their user type (e.g., fan, sponsor, organization). Scholars should also consider moving beyond ego networks in Twitter, despite its recent rise in sport management, towards examining followership in other social media platforms particularly as they gain prominence amongst the sport community (e.g., Instagram). Along this vein, scholars may also wish to address whether the strength and advantage of centralized users in social media ego networks are realized; future studies should consider analyzing centralized users to illuminate whether they actively disseminate ego produced and related content and/or if there is a distortion of ego content.

Though the present study made the case that identifying *who* is in a social network is as important as *what* information is communicated to said network, future studies should also consider a multiple method approach, utilizing both an analysis of the ego network and content produced by the ego to uncover whether key users are incorporated into social

communications. Moreover, a future study of this magnitude warrants a discussion with managers of (nonprofit) sport organizations, particularly with those individuals responsible for the development and implementation of the organization's social media to determine (1) whether the ego is aware of centralized users in the network, and (2) if the ego has or plans to make use of centralized users in their social strategy. Although the efforts made here are meaningful, it is necessary to understand whether practitioners are conscious of the powerful and centralized actors in their social media networks and whether that data may have an impact on their social strategies.

Conclusion

With an increased focus on online communication (Girginov et al., 2009), NSOs need a greater understanding of the characteristics of their social networks. Because the nature of social media often lends itself to varying motivations, strategies and content (cf. Abeza et al., 2014), these organizations require a unique, contextually appropriate strategy that considers various stakeholders and followership growth mechanisms. Relegating these decisions simply to a diversification of content, as others have argued (e.g., Abeza & O'Reilly, 2014), may not be sufficient enough, especially given the lack of exposure these organizations receive (Eagleman, 2013). Knowing the "who's who" of the social media networks of NSOs may assist in advancement and further development of the organization's social strategy vis-à-vis aligning content with advantaged users. Thus, NSOs may wish to utilize the results of this study and target those smaller-scale users such as fans, local sport clubs, photographers, and athletic facilities to redistribute content in hopes of maximizing content visibility and potentially increasing followership. Ultimately, the findings here demonstrate that ties between users in an ego network vis-à-vis followership positions

certain users in ways that may not have originally been conceptualized previously by (nonprofit) sport organizations.

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Chapter IV

Examining social media adoption and change to the stakeholder communication paradigm in not-for-profit sport organizations⁶

With fluctuations in human resources, new programs and services developed and offered, and innovations in organizational design archetypes (to name a few), sport organizations are subject to change decisions affecting their routines and operations (Slack & Parent, 2006). Sport organizations may desire or anticipate change, or have it simply thrust upon them due to internal or external pressures (cf. Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2004a; Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1995a). Change is also thought to ensure sustainability in highly competitive marketplaces, although organizational inertia and stability in routines and practices can also provide optimal outcomes (Yi, Knudsen, & Becker, 2016). With technological innovations and strategies gaining notoriety (cf. Caza, 2000), examining change to structures, processes, and/or mechanisms is important for the effective management of sport organizations (Cunningham, 2002).

One of the more recent technological innovations to emanate and subject sport organizations to change has been the emergence of social media. With its unique ability to connect to users across a wide demographic spectrum, social media has impacted how sport organizations consider their communication with stakeholders (Kaplan & Haenlien, 2010). Unlike traditional forms of communication (e.g., e-mails, telephone calls, radio segments, newspaper articles) in which discussion may have been limited to certain stakeholder groups, social media platforms provide an instantaneous link between sport organizations

⁶ A version of this chapter has been accepted for publication in the *Journal of Amateur Sport*.

and multiple stakeholder groups, enabling enhanced long-term relationships to be cultivated (Williams & Chinn, 2010).

Not-for-profit sport organizations, such as national sport organizations (NSO), have identified the importance of social media and have begun to develop and maintain social platforms (e.g., Thompson, Martin, Gee, & Eagleman, 2014). This group's adoption of social media as a stakeholder communication tool is of particular interest given their supposed lack of capacity (cf. Misener & Doherty, 2009) and of exposure by traditional media sources (cf. Eagleman, 2013). Indeed, with a specific focus on NSOs, scholars have noted these sport organizations' inability to diversify the range of content published on social media, succumbing to coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures (e.g., Naraine & Parent, 2016). As such, it remains unclear why NSOs (specifically) would opt to adopt social media and change the means by which they communicate with stakeholders. While social media is often espoused as an important communications tool for professional sport stakeholders (e.g., Waters, Burke, Jackson, & Buning, 2010), it would appear to be an inefficient use of capacity for NSOs – who experience resource deficiencies – to adopt social media and change the process of stakeholder communication, when a previous attempt to communicate and enhance stakeholder relationships online (i.e., using the World Wide Web) was not fully realized (cf. Girginov, Taks, Boucher, Martyn, Holman, & Dixon, 2009).

This begs the question: why have NSOs adopted social media and changed their stakeholder communication strategy as opposed to maintaining organizational inertia? Moreover, there is a limited understanding of whether these not-for-profit sport organizations have encountered resistance (internally or externally) in the adoption of social

media into their stakeholder communication strategy, and whether the said change brought about a radical, new paradigm or fine-tuned the pre-existing stakeholder communication process (cf. Greenwood & Hinings, 1996).

Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine social media adoption and change to stakeholder communication within the context of NSOs. Specifically, this study illuminates the overall impetus for change, the type of change undertaken (i.e., radical or convergent, evolutionary or revolutionary), and any (if at all) resistance to the change. Although a collection of scholarship exists pertaining to change and sport organizations (e.g., Hill & Kikulis, 1999; Kikulis, 2000; Kikulis et al., 1995a; Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1995b; Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1995c; Legg, Snelgrove, & Wood, 2016; O'Brien & Slack, 2004; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011), there remains a dearth of understanding reflecting and relating to contemporary technological advancements in online communication (e.g., social media) and change to sport organizations. Understanding the nexus between social media and organizational change in NSOs is relevant given the influence these organizations typically have on sport systems (particularly in terms of long-term athlete development), and the aforementioned constraint on resources often found within these organizations.

To address this study's purpose, the contextualist approach to organizational change was employed as the theoretical framework. Initially conceptualized by Pettigrew (1987), the contextualist approach is composed of three primary dimensions: content, context, and process. Here, content (not to be confused with social media content) refers to *what* aspect of organizational change is taking place (e.g., products, structure, technology). Context refers to both the environmental and intra-organizational elements influencing the change process, revealing *why* change occurred. Finally, the "process" elements reveal insights from

the change to depict *how* the change manifested in the organization. Although there are various perspectives on organizational change, including resource dependence (e.g., Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), life-cycle approach (e.g., Kimberly, 1980) and even Cunningham's (2002) model incorporating multiple dimensions of organizational change, the emphasis on the interrelationship between environment, internal structure, and human agency in depicting organizational change underscores the suitability of the contextualist approach for the present study. In doing so, this undertaking occupies a unique space within the extant literature, adhering to Filo, Lock, and Karg's (2015) call to advance social media and sport research using organizational theory frameworks. Moreover, the study provides important implications for practitioners in similar circumstances an opportunity to reflect upon how social media adoption occurs, the degree to which social media may change organizational actions, and the type of resistance that may be experienced as a result of the adoption process.

Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework

In this section, we provide an overview of the organizational change literature, including the types of change and why change is resisted, and the theoretical framework of interest, the contextualist approach, along with identifying the study's specific research questions.

Organizational Change

Organizations are often subject to environmental disturbances and internal influences which stimulate change. Even if a so-called comfortable level of stability – where comfort level is defined by the organization itself – is achieved and the organization has enacted a course of inertia, rapid changes in the organization's environment (e.g., technological

innovations) may force the adoption of change (Slack & Parent, 2006). In some cases, the external turbulence is attributable to political (e.g., Girginov & Sandanski, 2008; Zakus & Skinner, 2008) or social (e.g., Skirstad, 2009; Stronach & Adair, 2009) stimulants. From an internal perspective, change may manifest itself as a result of an anticipated need to change to remain competitive and make the organization more efficient (Slack & Parent, 2006). Irrespective of where the pressures of change originate, organizations still retain the ability to moderate the impact of change processes (e.g., products/services, technology, human resources). Greenwood and Hinings (1996) denoted two types of organizational change: radical and convergent. Radical change refers to major, transformational change which significantly alters the organization's operations, while convergent changes are slight, minor modifications to existing practices and routines. In the context of sport management, scholarship has focused primarily on radical change (e.g., Amis, Slack, Hinings, 2004b; Legg et al., 2016), though both types of change are difficult for organizations to manage (cf. Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards, 1999).

Resistance to change.

Part of the explanation for change being difficult to manage is the resistance organizations encounter. For Jaffe, Scott, and Tobe (1994), resistance is linked with the concept of denial, as agents exhibit a lack of trust and belief that change is necessary. As a result, employees may withhold their participation in the process, exhibit defensive behavior about the change, or even go so far as to persuade managers and other staff not to support the change. As Isabella (1990) suggested in her analysis, even in the aftermath of a change, pessimism about the change may persist. In this circumstances, staff may actively voice their displeasure or distrust of the adoption. Resisting change is not solely attributable to distrust

however; agents may disagree with change based upon their own self-interest, differing assessments of change consequences, and the costs associated with enacting change (Slack & Parent, 2006). When change occurs, there is the potential for some agents within the organization to lose resources, prestige, or professional competence; opponents of change are self-interested and looking to preserve the power they have within the current organizational dynamic (Ybema, Thomas, & Hardy, 2016). Beyond the intrinsic motivations to resist, agents may also worry about the unintended consequences of change. For instance, an organization adopting a new service or structure may be restricted from future changes as a result of expended resources, poor results, or simply fatigue (cf. Burgelman, 1991). As a result, while change in itself is not necessarily challenged by certain staff, the possibility of change may be problematic and challenge an organization's ability to adopt should modifications be required. Finally, individuals or groups within the organization may perceive the adoption as an inefficient use of the organization's (limited) resources (cf. Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Suddaby & Foster, 2016). Regardless of the type of resistance, managers may re-evaluate, pivot, and/or choose not to enact the proposed action based upon the resistance they receive (Slack & Parent, 2006).

Evolutionary and revolutionary change.

Given the threat change may bring to reliable, predictable operations (cf. Miller, Greenwood, & Hinings, 1997), the various types of change resistance may also instigate organizations to seek inertia, providing stability to their present form and processes (Yi et al., 2016). This is especially true of older and larger organizations which tend to have well-established hierarchies, policies, and routines considered normative operations (Shimizu & Hitt, 2005). However, resisting potential changes to the dominant organizational condition is

not always possible, especially when environmental trends dictate organizations align themselves accordingly (Boeker, 1997).

With the prospect of change, but a desire to maintaining stability, organizations may opt for evolutionary change. These incremental adjustments to the organization's routines allow change to be adopted, but mitigate possible incongruence (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). Similar to the concept of convergent change, evolutionary changes are slow and continuous, enabling the organization to preserve the integrity of their design and structure, while incorporating minor changes. In essence, evolutionary change balances resistance with the need to change to reflect current trends. However, evolutionary change is not always possible, as environmental stimuli may warrant a larger, more impactful change. The resultant revolutionary changes are swift and often discontinuous, as the organization attempts to respond to major external developments. For instance, the institutionalized pressures to radically shift an organization's form from a simplistic to a professional bureaucratic structure to secure revenues would constitute a revolutionary change (cf. Slack & Hinings, 1992).

Despite advances in organizational change scholarship, particularly those in a sport organization context (e.g., Legg et al., 2016; Zakus & Skinner, 2008), our understanding of new communication and technological developments in these organizations remains weak. As Burgers (2016) noted, the implementation of new communication technologies and developments can be considered within an organizational change framework, particularly given these changes could be incremental (i.e., convergent, evolutionary) or immense (i.e., radical, revolutionary). As such, while scholars have discussed social media usage by sport organizations, especially those in the not-for-profit sector (e.g., Naraine & Parent, 2016;

Thompson et al., 2014), the context of adopting this change to their stakeholder communication remains unclear. By understanding the context in which this change has been adopted, the impetus and type of change can be illuminated, in addition to discussing the presence and basis for change resistance.

Contextualist Approach

Examining organizational change is difficult to explain without articulating the actions and processes which impact the adoption and implementation of change (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Pettigrew, Woodman, & Cameron, 2001). Pettigrew (1987) conceptualized an approach that sought not just to illuminate *what* the change was, but also *why* change was occurring and *how* that change impacted routines and operations. The result (i.e., the contextualist approach to organizational change) was a set of three interconnected elements: content, context, and process. The first element refers to the areas and elements subjected to transformation. The content of change addresses *what* specifically has changed in an organization. Thus, content may refer to changes in human resources personnel, products and services offered or, in the case of the present study, technological advancements. The second element focuses on the *why* of change. The context of change explores environmental factors in which change is occurring. Pettigrew (1987) noted there are both internal and external contexts which explain the impetus for change. Within an organization (i.e., inner context), structure, culture, number of staff, types of leadership, and staff opinions can affect the change process. By contrast, the outer context refers to the broader circumstance (e.g., economic, social) affecting change. For instance, changes in best practices or turbulence in the operating environment may influence how an organization perceives its competitiveness and relevancy, and initiate the change process (e.g., Girginov

& Sandanski, 2008). The third and final element is concerned with the *how* of change. The process of change suggests actors, actions, and activities are key conduits in adopting change, as they can enable or inhibit the implementation of new or modified practices (Pettigrew et al., 2001).

Although Pettigrew's model has remained relatively unchanged (with regards to the interconnected elements), Dawson (2003) advanced a refined version of the framework. In this update, considerations were made to identify the type and scale of change (e.g., radical or convergent), while the process element incorporated the politics associated with change vis-à-vis resistance and conflict. Using the original approach with these refinements, the change literature is able to move beyond identifying the outcomes of adopting change towards *why* and *how* outcomes are shaped by contextual processes (cf. Wells, 2016).

An important part of the contextualist approach to change is situating the notion of time. As Pettigrew et al. (2001) proposed, research on organizational change should be cognizant of the challenge of studying change processes longitudinally while depicting change as it happens concurrently. Although the former sentiment (i.e., change over time) adopts a chronological interpretation of change, the latter sentiment emphasizes the factors causing change in the interim. As such, applying a contextualist approach can be done in both considerations of time, which is helpful given the present circumstance where social media adoption has occurred in a short timeframe (cf. Eagleman, 2013; Thompson et al., 2014).

Using the contextualist approach, scholars have previously focused on not-for-profit sport organizations spanning various geographical areas such as Canada (e.g., Thibault & Babiak, 2005), Bulgaria (e.g., Girinov & Sandanski, 2008), and Norway (e.g., Skirstad,

2009). Thibault and Babiak (2005) applied the approach to the Canadian sport system, documenting change from a bureaucratic to athlete-centered system longitudinally; Girginov and Sandanski (2008) examined Bulgarian NSOs over time to assess changes as result of political, economic, and social transformations the jurisdiction experienced moving from socialism to democratization; Skirstad (2009) utilized the contextualist approach to illuminate the gender imbalance of the Norwegian General Assembly of Sports over the course of three decades. However, it is Caza's (2000) work which sets a precedent to apply the contextualist approach in the present study. Caza's examination of technological change vis-à-vis implementation of computer scoring, as well as a new method of ranking athletes, highlight key aspects of receptivity related to the context of change (e.g., effect of leadership, goals and priorities, environmental pressures). The ability of the contextualist approach to illuminate catalysts and stimulus for the adoption of technological innovations, in particular, is thus a useful guide for the present study.

Here, the contextualist approach is applied to examine *how* and *why* social media has been adopted by NSOs, but does so with a slight departure from past scholarship. Due to the rapid increase of social media usage in a short period of time, the present study is not concerned with change longitudinally; rather, it is concerned with the change experienced by NSOs as it has occurred. Second, while others have utilized the approach to document the content, context, and process of change (e.g., Girginov & Sandanski, 2008; Thibault & Babiak, 2005; Skirstad, 2009), the content of change in this circumstance is already known (i.e., social media adoption). As such, the contextualist framework is applied here to draw out the additional elements of change (i.e., context and process) to complement existing knowledge.

Research Questions

As the purpose of the study is to examine social media adoption and change to stakeholder communication within the context of NSOs, and being informed by the literature and framework noted above, the following research questions (RQs) are advanced:

RQ₁ – What internal and external forces have enabled social media adoption by NSOs?

RQ_{2a} – What type of change was experienced as a result of social media adoption by NSOs?

RQ_{2b} – What resistance, if any, was experienced by NSOs in the adoption of social media?

Method

A qualitative design was implemented to uncover the experiences of individuals confronted with social media adoption within NSOs. Specifics on the participants, as well as data collection and data analysis techniques are provided below.

Participants

Drawing upon Naraine and Parent's (2016) work, a purposeful sample of eight Canadian NSOs were initially used. Although 61 NSOs in the Canadian sport landscape are currently funded by Sport Canada, the sample represented a balance of summer and winter sports and a range of social media presence (as defined by their followership). Preliminary contact was made with the same eight organizations via e-mail to ensure availability and willingness to participate. As two NSOs indicated they would not be participating, they were replaced with organizations with the same sport seasonality and similar social media presence (cf. Naraine & Parent, 2016). Once data collection ensued, additional interviews were deemed appropriate to confirm theoretical saturation achievement (cf. Charmaz, 2014), which resulted in a final sample of ten organizations (see Table 1). Participants representing these NSOs consisted of actively employed personnel who organized, controlled, managed,

and/or oversaw the social media operations within their organization. Based on these criteria, participants had various roles including chief executive officer (n = 2), director of marketing and communications (n = 4), communications and media relations manager (n = 2), and manager specifically in charge of digital content (e.g., websites and social media) (n = 2). All participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identities while reporting the results to adhere to this study's ethics certificate guidelines.

Table 4.1 Organizational characteristics

Organization	Interviewer Pseudonym	Season	Social media presence ^a	Twitter followers ^b	Facebook followers/likes ^b
Tennis Canada	Linda	S	High	29,418	37,964
Curling Canada	Anthony	W	High	27,470	52,365
Softball Canada	Jim	S	Mid-high	8,827	7,116
Canada Snowboard	Bill	W	Mid-high	7,438	13,223
Canada Freestyle Ski	Jade	W	Mid-high	5,602	10,677
Sail Canada	Carla	S	Mid-low	3,626	2,885
Bobsleigh Canada	Corey	W	Mid-low	2,834	1,568
Archery Canada	Andrew	S	Mid-low	2,570	2,481
Luge Canada	Terrence	W	Low	1,417	1,106
Fencing Canada	Cassandra	S	Low	996	4,245

a. Based on Naraine and Parent (2016)

b. As of November 15, 2016.

Data Collection

The lead investigator conducted semi-structured interviews with each NSO representative via phone conferencing given geographic distances. Interview questions (see Appendix A) were devised based upon the characteristics of the sample noted in Table 1 and previous literature on NSOs and social media (e.g., Naraine & Parent, 2016; Thompson et al., 2014), in addition to being guided by the contextualist approach framework. Through careful probing, the lead investigator was able to provide an opportunity for respondents to reveal unique insights and unanticipated sentiments related to their organization and the

adoption of social media (cf. Charmaz, 2014). Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes; interview sessions were voice-recorded, transcribed (maintaining anonymity of respondents), and returned to participants for verification. Only two interviewees requested changes to their applicable transcripts, wishing to clarify some concepts or redact names of colleagues or perceived defamatory comments.

Data Analysis

Data were deductively coded using Pettigrew's (1987) three-pronged framework and the refinements made by Dawson (2003). The sorting of data fragments into deductive elements provided an initial opportunity to align the present findings with the specified research questions, adhering to the approach of others who utilized the contextualist approach (e.g., Skirstad, 2009). However, subsequent coding was performed inductively to reveal additional insights or concepts not necessarily fitting into the conceptual model but addressing the study's purpose and research questions, akin to Legg et al.'s (2016) procedure. To perform these actions, all data were imported and analyzed using the NVIVO 10 computer software program, which can facilitate data fragmentation and coding. Findings were discussed between the authors to ensure coherence.

Findings

Interviewee sentiments were grouped into the categories derived from the contextualist approach (i.e., outer context, inner context, and process), and organized based on the organizations' social media presence (i.e., "high", "mid-high", "mid-low", and "low") to elucidate similarities and differences in the change experience. The findings' implications regarding organizational change are presented in the discussion section.

Outer Context

NSOs' impetus to adopt social media seemed to emanate from the need to engage with stakeholders, specifically fans of the sport, members (e.g., athletes), and even sponsors (to a lesser extent), as well as maintain the guise of a credible, modern organization in a competitive operating environment.

In the case of the high social media presence organizations, both respondents communicated the need to adopt various social media platforms to engage their stakeholders, but with slight differences in who those stakeholders actually were. Change to their stakeholder communication was deemed necessary and attributable to the environmental shift away from traditional media by other organizations. Yet, for Curling Canada, there was also a distinct focus on connecting with fans as opposed to other stakeholder groups:

I mean, it's rare that an organization doesn't have social media presence. I think it just is reflective of the demographics, and reflective of today's society. Traditional media, traditional ways of communicating are out the window. Cable television and newspapers just don't reach people the way that social media do, and that's the way the world has evolved. [Organizations] want to get things done. They want to reach their fans. (Anthony, Curling Canada)

When probed about wanting to “get things done” and reaching fans, Anthony explained his organization had “a very loyal fan base that love to engage on social media platforms,” requiring Curling Canada to adopt a social presence to ensure those fans remained loyal and engaged. The other respondent in this grouping, Linda (Tennis Canada), expressed a similar response, indicating that adopting social media was “definitely just a reality” of the current

environmental landscape: “I would think it was strange for sure if [organizations] weren’t investing at all in the social space.” However, Linda also indicated the expectation to adopt social media extended beyond fans to include teams and athletes, creating “a bit more personal connection” than traditional communication media can provide with those specific stakeholders.

The mid-high social media presence cohort also conveyed similar sentiments about the external context in which NSOs adopted social media, honing in on stakeholder expectations, as well as perceived success. Jade, a Canadian Freestyle Ski staff member, noted the “real responsibility that organizations have when it comes to social media” in that it serves as “the first point of contact for a lot of people in and outside the organization.” In this sense, adopting social media within NSOs was deemed critical based upon stakeholders’ expectations. Jade extended her thoughts about other organizations adopting social media, stating: “A lot of people and organizations define themselves and the success of their organization based on the number of followers they have...so I would question the credibility of an organization if they weren’t on social media.” In this respect, adopting social media moves beyond simply an expectation of stakeholders towards organizations being perceived as more credible and successful. Although he did not make a direct link with this idea, Jim from Softball Canada, explained sponsors have contacted his organization to remain apprised of the growth and reach of their social media following. The recognition of stakeholder expectations beyond simply fans and athletes was also noted by Bill at Canada Snowboard: “I think everybody’s engaging with so many different businesses now that I think it’s almost a necessary evil that you have to have now in order to connect with your followers.” Bill’s characterization of social media as a widespread tool utilized in

multiple industries supports the idea of NSOs being pressured into adopting new processes in order to maintain credibility with stakeholders and operate within the expected norms of a modern organization.

Organizations characterized as mid-low in their social media presence expressed similar environmental factors in their adoption of social media (e.g., stakeholder expectations), but downgraded the notion of perceived success. Carla, a Sail Canada staff member, commented hers and other organizations have “all come to realize that [social media] is not a fad, it’s not going away. We need to keep up with the times.” The notion that organizations adopt social media as a means to adhere to the status quo was also advanced by Carla: “I think we’re just going with the flow.” Similarly, Corey at Bobsleigh Canada, remarked: “Everyone knows it’s there, everyone understands we need to be part of it. And I bet you could poll a lot of people out there that say they do social media for the sake of doing social media.” Yet, although this opinion was shared by the respondents in this category, both Corey from Bobsleigh Canada and Andrew from Archery Canada indicated adopting social media was not a result of perceived credibility or organizational success, or even the expectation of funding partners. “Sport Canada really doesn’t care how well you’re communicating with your members,” Andrew explained. “They’re interested in how close you are to an Olympic medal.” In essence, staff members representing organizations in the mid-low social media presence category acknowledged the adoption of social media as a basic component of operating in the current time period, but not a component that can overhaul how stakeholders perceive the organization.

The two respondents in the low social media presence cohort also offered similar remarks, citing the adoption of social media as an expectation. Terrence at Luge Canada

commented: “I think it’s expected now in society that there is that type of, you know, those types of platforms in place. It would look kind of funny if you didn’t have it now.” While Cassandra at Fencing Canada made a similar comment, she suggested there was an element of adoption as a marker of effectiveness: “[Not having social media] gives the perception that you’re not with the times, you know you’re not maybe as effective as you should be.” While the two respondents agreed that adopting social media is an expectation, there was some division, as Cassandra advanced her attitude towards social media adoption and organizational effectiveness.

Coinciding with NSOs adopting social media because it is an expectation of their stakeholders (ranging from fans to sponsors depending on the respondent) is the idea of adoption of social media platforms as a means of connecting with a younger demographic. Across all ten organizations, respondents indicated adopting social media was attributable to its acceptance by younger individuals, particularly as a new generation of athletes begin to compete in their respective sport. As Carla put it: “If that’s the way it’s going with a younger demographic, we need to keep up with that and make sure that we’re staying somewhat relevant.”

Inner Context

Whereas the outer context revealed an environment in which NSOs are expected to adopt social media communication as a stakeholder-based normative behavior, pre-existing communications infrastructure, limited capacity (i.e., human and financial resources), and NSOs’ core focus were prominent internal factors impacting the adoption.

Both respondents at Curling Canada and Tennis Canada explained that, despite their organization’s standing amongst other Canadian NSOs, they, too, experienced capacity

constraints. Anthony from Curling Canada put it very bluntly: “We don’t have the money behind [social media]. Let’s get that straight.” Although Anthony estimated his organization had over 100 employees and interns, only four individuals were devoted towards the communications function, only one of whom was a full-time staff member, and tasked with media relations, website creation, and e-mails (among others). As such, contrary to their position as an organization with a high social media presence, social media adoption was added to Curling Canada’s small, but functioning communications team. Linda at Tennis Canada also expressed similar capacity concerns: “Everyone’s pretty stretched and it’s a relatively new thing to be focusing on.” In an organization similar in staff size and composition to Curling Canada, Linda explained Tennis Canada had already utilized digital properties (e.g., website, e-mails) as well as traditional communications activities (e.g., telephone calls, newsletters, face-to-face meetings) to interact with stakeholders and, thus, adopting social media for her organization was complimentary to the already established digital presence.

Softball Canada and Canada Snowboard provided similar experiences with capacity constraints, though Canadian Freestyle Ski has some slight deviations in their response. As Bill from Canada Snowboard explained: “We’re just trying to keep our heads above water. It’s just getting the resources, the human resources to execute.” Bill’s comments were amplified when he mentioned there were roughly a dozen full-time staff members within his organization. Similarly, Jim at Softball Canada indicated his organization only had one person charged with handling communications (out of eight reported staff members), indicative of a human resource shortfall. However, despite the deficiency in capacity, Jim noted it was important for his organization to focus on its task to communicate programs and

information to athletes, fans, and provincial softball associations. In the case of Canadian Freestyle Ski, whose reported focus was elite athlete development and high-performance, there was no direct mention of a lack of financial or human resources. Indeed, the challenge for Jade and her colleagues was not the initial adoption of social media to communicate with stakeholders, but rather managing social platforms as they grow, evolve, and cause “bandwidth issues.”

A lack of capacity was also evident amongst Sail Canada, Archery Canada, and Bobsleigh Canada. Within Sail Canada and its reported staff of eight, Carla acknowledged her organization was not alone in this experience: “I think we suffer very similar struggles that other NSOs have which are capacity issues. That’s always been our struggle.” With one person in her organization managing all communications aspects (e.g., e-mails, phone calls), it would appear unlikely to add additional communications tasks onto that individual. Yet, as Carla mentioned, adopting social media aligned with Sail Canada’s values of communication and accountability, thereby explaining why such a change would occur. This was also the case for Archery Canada; Andrew noted his organization was committed to serving its stakeholders, and social media enabled such service despite minimal staff (i.e., two full-time, one part-time). For Bobsleigh Canada, driving interest and awareness of the sport and athletes was reported as the primary focus of the organization, and all messaging reflected this focus. Indeed, Corey commented: “The opportunities are endless, but it all comes down to a capacity issue and what are the priorities, and you’ve got to deal with the priorities first.” As such, Corey acknowledged that adopting social media could help drive interest and awareness, but argued the lack of capacity had significant implications on the degree to which it was utilized.

Not dissimilar from the other groups, both Fencing Canada and Luge Canada espoused their limited organizational capacities for social media adoption. Cassandra revealed her organization was incredibly lean (i.e., two staff members) and did not boast a physical office, which had already placed a strain on Fencing Canada's operations. However, she also noted her organization was focused on serving its community (e.g., athletes, provincial associations) by "keeping people up to date." Nevertheless, when asked about adopting social media, Cassandra highlighted the lack of capacity ultimately affected her organization's ability to utilize it to a great extent. Terrence at Luge Canada communicated a similar sentiment, but went so far as to suggest the reality at some NSOs may be different than his organization's own experience: "I find a lot of the other NSOs probably have someone paid doing [social media]. Where us, we kind of try to do as much as we can, but there are certain things we can't, and [social media] would be one of thing." With a reported staff of six individuals, Terrence commented his organization was "very rudimentary" and could not allocate financial resources towards social media. Although Luge Canada did have centralized communications with one person managing e-mails and website activities, social media was considered an afterthought as the focus was and would always be on high-performance success, as Terrence reported.

Process (Politics of Change)

In discussing social media adoption, two prominent themes emerged: the politics of communication (for Canadian NSOs) and resistance experienced, whether internal (i.e., from staff within organization) or external (i.e., from outside stakeholder groups).

There was a clear division in the responses between Curling Canada and Tennis Canada when it came to understanding the process of adopting social media. When raising

the issue of language and content, Anthony mentioned adopting social media aided in promotional marketing and sharing multimedia, but the tool itself raised significant language concerns, specifically the tone and type of content and the issue of bilingualism.

We paint with a pretty broad brush. We're conditioned to the fact that we have corporate partners who need to be respected, and may not want to be associated with someone that pushes the envelope...posting out a couple of tweets about [an athlete] hitting on showgirls might not be something that the little old ladies in Saskatchewan would be down with. (Anthony, Curling Canada)

Indeed, it was suggested a professional tone was necessary to maintain organizational legitimacy amongst its stakeholders, specifically sponsors and older demographics who have demonstrated a hesitance towards adopting social media themselves. Translating Curling Canada content from English to French, an official language of Canada, was also reported to be problematic, as it took additional resources (e.g., money, time) for content to be translated and negated the expediency of using social media altogether. Conversely, Linda did not experience major resistance within the organization or from its stakeholders, but did note the difficulty in justifying a large social media presence without identifying the return on investment. Moreover, with two fluently bilingual staff members working on social media based in Toronto and Montreal respectively, managing content in both official languages did not appear to pose a problem for Tennis Canada.

Striking a balance between English and French content was also reported to be an issue for Canadian Freestyle Ski, Softball Canada, and Canada Snowboard, while the latter two organizations also explicitly documented the internal resistance to adopting social media altogether. Jade at Canadian Freestyle Ski indicated bilingualism in all communication was

paramount for her organization to ensure funding from government partners (e.g., Sport Canada) remained in place. Though her organization had French-language employees to populate content, she mentioned outsourcing of translation services created additional costs. At Softball Canada, Jim reported his organization was capable of handling the bilingualism issue, as the individual responsible for social media was fluently bilingual, but did reveal a tendency to focus mainly on English language content, because the overwhelming majority of stakeholders were English first: “You can get lazy sometimes and put more in English and kind of ignore the French.” Bill at Canada Snowboard summarized the bilingualism issue as it related to adopting social media:

Oh, it’s a massive issue. It’s something that, you know, we do have some obligation to with being a bilingual country, but also our – some of our funding is tied to making sure that we’re communicating in both languages with athletes that are, you know, primarily French or bilingual. The struggle that we’ve found is investing in that and the return on it. You know we’ve done a lot of analytics, posting in French and then posting in English or vice versa, or posting in both languages, and I would say that probably 90-95% of our following is at least English first, if not English primary.

What exacerbates the bilingualism requirement is the organizational resistance these organizations incurred simultaneously. As Bill suggested, it remained a challenge to get staff within Canada Snowboard to consider social media as a worthwhile investment, as opposed to devoting resources towards high-performance objectives. Jim expanded on this point, indicating the resistance from organization staff came from a specific subset: “Older administrators don’t seem to see the value in [social media].”

While Sail Canada's insight on the politics of social media adoption was similar to those of Canadian Freestyle Ski (e.g., having a bilingual social media curator, limited organizational resistance), both Archery Canada and Bobsleigh Canada depicted a struggle with the bilingualism and resistance to adopting social media. Andrew claimed Archery Canada worked diligently to have a balance of English and French posts, but the delay in French translation meant refraining from communicating for up to 24 hours in some cases, plus the high costs for such a turnaround. At Bobsleigh Canada, Corey did not choose to divulge the extent to which his organization maintained a bilingual social media presence. However, he did offer a comment pertaining to the resistance in adopting social media; within the Bobsleigh Canada organization, there was a recognition that athlete success was the most important priority and resources should be devoted to hiring coaches, trainers, and associated activities. Andrew agreed with this sentiment, but also reflected upon Archery Canada's stakeholders: "We have a little bit older, different generation who are very reticent to move onto [social media]." As such, Andrew believed it would be an inefficient use of his organization's resources to expand their social media presence when their stakeholders would not be utilizing those platforms.

The hesitance in committing significant resources towards social media as a result of internal or external resistance and the issue of bilingualism was also expressed by Fencing Canada and Luge Canada. Cassandra from Fencing Canada communicated the presence of "an age drop off," whereby certain age brackets would not be engaged with the organization on social media platforms. Beyond this resistance, she also expressed concerns regarding bilingual communication: "We have a strategy to try and post in both official languages, but we don't always succeed in that. [Sport Canada] audits us for bilingualism; it's a big issue."

This notion of a communications audit from a significant funding source illustrates Fencing Canada's reservations regarding social media adoption. Along a similar vein, Terrence at Luge Canada revealed his organization's cynical view of social media: "I don't think anyone sees the importance of it. We're at a stalemate, where we've got enough to do with what we're doing right now, and there's no argument in place by anybody to spend more." He expanded upon this point further through his \$30,000 example: if Luge Canada were to receive \$30,000, and had the option of hiring a high-performance coach or a dedicated social media curator, the former would be chosen, as it would contribute directly to athlete success, consequently increasing funding. As such, although the organization adopted social media, Terrence concluded it was an afterthought relative to Luge Canada's other priorities.

Discussion

The impetus to adopt social media within NSOs appears to be predominantly motivated by stakeholders' expectations and by pre-existing communications infrastructure. In the current business environment in which these organizations operate, incorporating social media is necessary to remain competitive given the recent shift in digital technologies (Kaplan & Haenlien, 2010). Moreover, the acknowledgement by respondents in the present study that their stakeholders expected organizations to have a social media presence reflects this trend. This finding explains why many of these organizations succumbed to coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures with their social media presence (see Naraine & Parent, 2016). The logic of adopting social media in order to remain competitive is exacerbated by the perceived legitimacy and relevancy such actions are believed to offer. As explained in the findings, there was a tendency for some to attribute the integration of social media into their organization as an act of demonstrating modernity. The evidence provided also

depicted the decision to adopt a social media presence as being affected by the current process of communication with internal and external parties. Communication is important for these organizations to demonstrate accountability and transparency (thus securing funding from government partners), and NSOs have shown a willingness to develop new platforms, especially in a digital setting, to conduct these activities (cf. Girginov et al., 2009). Thus, it is not unsurprising that a new communications tool such as social media would be adopted by the organizations under study; as new platforms emerge that foster enhanced communication (e.g., instantaneous, expedited), NSOs attempt to develop their presence and integrate the additional tasks alongside other ongoing communication activities (e.g., e-mails, telephone calls, newsletters).

Although the motivation to adopt social media would indicate an increased importance (given stakeholders' expectation) and few challenges (given the integration with other communications activities), the organizational capacity issue helps explain NSOs' subdued social media presence. It should come as no surprise that capacity is cited as having a significant impact on these organizations' ability to develop and maintain a social media presence; this issue has been previously identified as a key factor in the operations of sport organizations (e.g., Amis et al., 2004a; Misener & Doherty, 2009), and the findings here suggest capacity constraints affect the operationalization of social media as well. Specifically, the lack of human and financial resources hinders the ability to offer a diverse presence (on multiple platforms) with dynamic, engaging content as sport development-expenses are prioritized over social media-related expenses. Whereas a for-profit sport organization may have the ability to expend resources to develop a presence on a variety of platforms including incorporating new, emerging sites, not-for-profit sport organizations are

cognizant of their inability to offer a high-quality social media presence to communicate to their stakeholders. What is perhaps most remarkable about this finding was that the lack of capacity drew a consensus across the four groups of social media presence (i.e., high, mid-high, mid-low, and low). Despite the varying degree of commercial viability and professionalization amongst this cohort (cf. Girginov et al., 2009), all NSOs seem subject to similar resource constraints which inhibit their adoption of change. Indeed, the findings suggest capacity limitations can stymie the extent to which social media is adopted and advanced within an organization.

Along this vein, the challenge of balancing bilingual communication and resistance from staff members and stakeholder groups (e.g., older constituents) also impacted how NSOs adopt social media. Although these organizations are accustomed to the bilingual communications paradigm existing within the Canadian landscape, there remains an inability for these organizations to reconcile the expedited nature of social media communication (e.g., populating and translating content for English and French accounts in a timely fashion). The findings allude to the capacity issue once more, with few bilingual staff members tasked with communication, and/or an inadequate budget for translation. Concurrently, NSOs are faced with resistance from internal staff members looming over their adoption of this new form of communication. Despite the espoused benefits NSOs may receive from adopting social media, including alleviating a lack of traditional media coverage and increased marketing promotions (Eagleman, 2013), some within these organizations do not appear to ascribe to these espoused benefits, and contend that such communication merely diverts resources away from core objectives (e.g., elite athlete development) (cf. Hannan & Freeman, 1984). Indeed, there exists a lack of recognition of

the potential for increased partnerships and unique sponsorship activations that could yield additional revenue to apply to athlete development. The resistance within NSOs is also fueled by the perceived unwillingness of older demographics to communicate on these new platforms. As such, social media become a chore with a limited function. Social media is not perceived as a resource to increase the organization's capacity; rather, it is used to expedite communication with certain stakeholders. This reasoning also helps explain why there was little variance between the messages conveyed by these organizations on social media (cf. Naraine & Parent, 2016). Based on this premise, administrators are content to deploy limited resources towards their social media presence, and do so while maintaining a level of doubt about the potential benefits of such communication (cf. Isabella, 1990).

Considering the application of Pettigrew's (1987) contextual approach in this circumstance, the findings not only uncover *why* and *how* social media has been adopted as an additional medium to communicate with stakeholders, but underscores social media as an evolutionary, convergent change mechanism, rather than a source of radical, revolutionary change for NSOs. With external forces pressuring NSOs to adopt social media, the resistance begot from reticent staff and older stakeholders, and the limited organizational capacity were not enough to preserve organizational stability (cf. Boeker, 1997). However, the findings depict social media adoption as an incremental shift, incorporated into the existing communications paradigm, and mitigating the potential for incongruence with organizational stability (cf. Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). Social media adoption can also be considered as a type of convergent change. Developing and sustaining a social media presence has not affected major, transformational change in these organizations (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996); rather, change offers a slight, minor modification to the organization's

communication with its stakeholders. This is an important consideration given the degree to which social media is championed as a paradigm shifting vehicle (e.g., Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Waters et al., 2010). Although the emergence of social media has shifted NSOs away from a state of inertia, its adoption remains a minor change with minimal impact on the day-to-day operations. Given the above, we posit that the degree to which social media adoption can affect change is mediated by capacity and resistance (from stakeholders and staff members). This proposition should, however, be tested in other settings.

Implications and Contributions

From a practical standpoint, the findings provide new insight that may help managers and staff within similar organizational contexts. More precisely, understanding *why* and *how* social media has been adopted can enable other not-for-profit sport organizations who have hesitated or delayed this change in communicating with their stakeholders. Practitioners should be conscious of the challenge of and resistance to adopting social media, namely negotiating between multilingual content and clearly communicating to staff the intended purpose and goals of utilizing this vehicle. Reflecting upon the results, not-for-profit sport organizations in a similar linguistic circumstance may wish to consider making multilingualism imperative for tasks associated with social media (and traditional media) communication with stakeholders. Whether in the form of providing language training for communications staff or hiring bilingual staff, organizations can reduce the capacity strain (e.g., costs associated with translation). While Canada's bilingual circumstance may seem unique, practitioners in other jurisdictions may still wish to reflect upon how their organization incorporates official or de facto second (or more) languages, reducing the potential alienation of stakeholder groups. For instance, organizations in the United States

should be concerned with English and Spanish language stakeholders, Belgium with Dutch and French, and perhaps Germany with its growing Turkish contingent (to name a few). Ensuring staff understand how the adoption of social media can benefit the organization is also important to ensure resistance does not lead to change fatigue (cf. Burgelman, 1991) or belief their position is in jeopardy (cf. Ybema et al., 2016), the latter especially with older and/or unilingual employees.

For scholars, the findings presented here add to the current, fluid understanding of social media within sport, particularly in not-for-profit sport organizations. With social media continuing to gain prominence, it is plausible more organizations will continue to adopt this method of communication. However, the findings also suggest it is likely this change will be minor and not radically shift an organization's condition. This notion has important implications within the social media and sport domain, including helping to explain how not-for-profit sport organizations come to exhibit isomorphic tendencies in their social media presence (cf. Naraine & Parent, 2016). The reported impact capacity has on the adoption of social media also serves to advance the theoretical foundation of social media in sport. As social media is espoused as a tool with significant abilities (e.g., Eagleman, 2013; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Waters et al., 2010), it is critical to recognize the influence capacity can have on its utility. In the present circumstance, low capacity resulted in diminished utility once social media was adopted. While this concept is simple and straightforward, it raises an important consideration for scholars: the inverse (i.e., high capacity resulting in increased utility) may not necessarily be true. Given the elite athlete development focus by these types of sport organizations, it is unclear whether an organization with significant capacity would deploy more resources to their social media

presence. With calls to continue examining social media in sport using organizational and strategic management models (cf. Filo et al., 2015), highlighting how high versus low capacity impacts the adoption, utilization, and maintenance of a social media presence can reveal additional insights and complement the knowledge garnered in the present study.

Limitations

The present study was subjected to (de)limitations, much of which stemmed from the methodological approach. First, while this study focused on not-for-profit sport organizations, the sample was drawn from one jurisdiction (i.e., Canada), which affects the generalizability of the results. However, some of the results can still be adapted in other contexts (e.g., balancing multilingualism). Second, the findings were limited to the responses of the individuals representing the sampled NSOs; responses were assumed to be an accurate representation of the experience of their respective organizations, but respondents may have chosen to withhold information or provided an account differing from those communicated by their colleagues. Finally, the context of adopting social media was limited to one data source (i.e., interviews), and it is unknown whether data ascertained from additional sources (e.g., meeting documents, websites, e-mail exchanges) would have yielded new information.

Future Directions

Still, this study offers a basis on which future research may continue to build. Scholars should continue pursuing qualitative approaches to enhance the social media and sport research agenda, including uncovering the experiences of practitioners dealing with the phenomena. However, future studies may consider shifting the context from North America (e.g., Canada, United States) towards the Global South (e.g., India, China). Given the

capacity issues cited in this study, understanding how change to stakeholder communication is adopted (or not) from these perspectives can enhance the findings of the current study. Scholars may also wish to reflect upon how stakeholders perceive the adoption of social media in a given organization; the present study isolated focal organizations adopting the change, but future studies may wish to explore how stakeholders react to the change process. Finally, although social media is still emerging and evolving, researchers may reflect upon this change to stakeholder communication once the process has matured, taking a longitudinal approach and juxtaposing the results with those found in the present study.

Conclusion

Although social media is lauded for its ability to help organizations connect with stakeholders instantaneously without spatial limitations, it does not seem to have triggered the immense change previously postulated (cf. Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Using Pettigrew's (1987) contextualist approach, this study's findings note adopting social media results in an evolutionary, convergent change to the stakeholder communication paradigm within not-for-profit sport organizations. The findings reinforce the notion of organizations changing for change's sake (i.e., to meet stakeholder expectations and maintain relevancy/legitimacy) instead of choosing inertia due to their limited capacity. Moreover, as new innovations and advancements occur in the operating environments, not-for-profit sport organizations are likely to incorporate this change without maximizing its utility.

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Chapter V

Discussion and Conclusion

The overall purpose of this dissertation was to address the degree to which social media can be utilized as a tool for stakeholder communication by not-for-profit sport organizations. To do so, three specific research objectives were advanced: (1) determining what not-for-profit sport organizations are communicating to their stakeholders via social media (2) identifying which stakeholders are positioned and advantaged in the social network of not-for-profit sport organizations; and (3) uncovering the contextual factors that have enabled the use of social media channels by not-for-profit sport organizations. With each objective corresponding to one of the three interconnected stages of the research project, the cumulative findings serve as the foundation to fulfill the overall purpose of the project.

This dissertation was compiled using an article-based format (Dunleavy, 2003), where each specific objective was discussed using separate organizational theory perspectives. First, tweets from eight CNSOs were extracted and thematically analyzed using an institutional theory framework (see Chapter II). Second, Twitter ego networks of two CNSOs were mapped and analyzed using network theory principles (see Chapter III). Finally, a contextualist approach to organizational change was employed to discuss the factors for social media usage as offered by representatives from 10 CNSOs (see Chapter IV). The present chapter concludes the dissertation by reflecting on the three stages using a stakeholder theory lens.

The remainder of this chapter features a brief summation of the three stages, highlighting *what* CNSOs are communicating using social media, *who* the users are that compose the social media network of CNSOs and occupy an advantaged position, and *why*

social media channels have been adopted by these not-for-profit sport organizations altogether. Following this summary, this chapter presents the cumulative discussion of the findings related to the overall purpose of the dissertation, including presenting a framework of social media and not-for-profit sport organizations as evidence of the dissertation's theoretical contribution. Finally, this chapter concludes by offering contributions for practitioners and scholars, comments regarding the research process (e.g., limitations), and opportunities for future research.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of the first stage (Chapter II) in this dissertation, "*Birds of a feather*": *An institutional approach to Canadian national sport organizations' social media use*, was to examine sport organizations' social media activity using an institutional theory approach to explain possible similarities between like-organizations (e.g., not-for-profit sport organizations operating in same jurisdiction). This stage advanced two RQs (i.e., (1) what are the main theme that emanate from CNSO social media communication? and (2) What are the similarities and differences in social media use between CNSOs?), and captured 18,393 unique messages posted to Twitter, the popular social media platform, from eight different CNSOs (i.e., Skate Canada, Tennis Canada, Rowing Canada, Canadian Freestyle Ski, Bobsleigh Canada, Sail Canada, Luge Canada, and Fencing Canada). In doing so, this stage was able to improve upon recent scholarly endeavours investigating social media content of sport organization (e.g., Abeza & O'Reilly, 2014; Gibbs, O'Reilly, & Brunette, 2014), as well as addressing the first dissertation-specific RQ (i.e., determining what not-for-profit sport organizations are communicating to their stakeholders via social media).

While the eight sport organizations in the first stage varied in terms of their size, social media presence vis-à-vis followership and message frequency, there were similar themes with respect to social media communication. Specifically, themes emanating from the data focused on athlete promotion, communicating results, scores, and news updates, as well as sharing multimedia and enticing users to visit the organization's website. The results also indicated the strategy of reporting, informing, and promoting (RIP) was consistent across the CNSOs examined. Though there were subtle sport-specific differences found (e.g., weather conditions), the promotion of events, reporting of results, and informing users with images, videos, and hyperlinks to other sites and platforms were the prevailing course of action for CNSOs.

From an institutional perspective, the findings produced in stage one underscore the presence of isomorphic tendencies attributable by coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures. There has been an increasing amount of expectations from funding partners placed upon CNSOs in the wake of digital developments (cf. Girginov, Taks, Boucher, Martyn, Holman, & Dixon, 2009), yet this coercive pressure alone cannot account for the close similarities in social media activity. The pressure to adopt the practices of others perceived to be successful may result in similar organizational routines; for CNSOs with limited salience (as evidenced by their social media followership), mimicking those with higher followership numbers and more exposure via mass-media and corporate partnerships may be considered an effective strategy. Moreover, as CNSOs have similar organizational structures, environmental influences, and funding mechanisms, the normative pressures that emanate from sharing insights are also connected to the findings from article one.

The findings from the first stage extend the present understanding of the social media activity and sport organizations not solely through its enhanced data collection and analysis techniques, but through the inclusion of institutional theory to this line research. While incorporating larger datasets into social media and sport research may not constitute an immense contribution, the revelation of isomorphic behaviour makes an important contribution to the concept of social media and sport entities, particularly in light of previous scholarship indicating the uniqueness of activity by organizations in a similar operating environment (cf. Abeza, Pegoraro, Naraine, Séguin, & O'Reilly, 2014). Thus, as a result of this article, social media and sport researchers should be cognizant there are noticeable activity patterns that have emerged in these digital spaces and continually work to flush out and identify the factors resulting in said patterns.

After identifying what CNSOs were communicating on social media (e.g., Twitter), stage two, *Illuminating centralized users in the social media ego network of two national sport organizations*, delved into the social media network of CNSOs to highlight centralized actors. Using a network paradigm approach to frame and analyze the data, and delineating social media networks to those found on Twitter, two RQs were advanced: (1) How are users positioned in the Twitter ego network of a CNSO? and (2) Based upon network ties, which users are advanced in the Twitter ego network of a CNSO? After downloading all users present in the network and noting all ties between the organization and followers, two square, one-mode sociomatrices were created for the Fencing Canada (381 x 381) and Luge Canada (1026 x 1026) networks. The examination of these two social networks directly answered the second dissertation-specific RQ (i.e., which stakeholders are positioned and advantaged in the social network of not-for-profit sport organizations).

Network analyses performed on both organizations demonstrated social media networks are composed of both popular, well-known users as well as less salient users, though the latter have more power than the former. Indeed, while core actors in both networks consisted of prominent users like international sport federations and sponsors, those core actors with the highest centrality scores (as determined using the Bonacich beta centrality measure) were more small-scale in nature such as local sport clubs, photographers, and athletic facilities. Thus, while the nature of social media allows CNSOs to connect with stakeholders from around the world, it appears smaller, local users have more significance to the organization vis-à-vis their centrality in the network.

The results generated by the second stage underscore the importance of understanding network dynamics with respect to social media usage. Especially on social media platforms like Twitter, where messages can be redistributed or shared across multiple social networks (e.g., through the “retweet” convention), having knowledge of users that can maximize ego related or generated content (i.e., content that pertains to the organization and/or the sport it represents) can be beneficial for CNSOs in two respects. First, having other users spread information and disseminate ego related content in their own social networks enhances the visibility of the message and mitigates some of the strain CNSOs experience in using social media (e.g., capacity). Second, should users choose to share and disseminate organization-based content within their own social media networks, CNSOs could achieve organic growth through a possible increase in followership. As users become privy to ego related or generated content, they may opt to follow the CNSO on social media directly thereafter to receive future communication. This has important implications for CNSOs as followership growth and an increased salience on social platforms may yield

new, lucrative partnerships with sponsors or simply increase participation and awareness of the organization and the sport it represents. Although there is no guarantee centralized users in a network will act accordingly, the fact remains their advantaged position can potentially be harnessed by CNSOs if these stakeholders are incorporated into the social media strategy.

The third and final stage of this dissertation, *Examining social media adoption and change to the stakeholder communication paradigm in not-for-profit sport organizations*, revealed the contextual factors for social media's adoption by CNSOs. Three RQs were advanced to achieve this purpose: (1) what internal and external forces have enabled social media adoption by NSOs?; (2) What type of change was experienced as a result of social media adoption by NSOs?; and (3) What resistance, if any, was experienced by NSOs in the adoption of social media? Semi-structured interviews were conducted with CNSOs representing various levels of social media presence outlined by Naraine and Parent (2016), and until theoretical saturation was reached ($n = 10$). Through eliciting insight from CNSOs directly, this article was able to provide additional clarity to the discussion on social media and not-for-profit sport organizations, addressing the third dissertation-specific RQ (i.e., uncovering the contextual factors that have enabled the use of social media channels by not-for-profit sport organizations).

Using Pettigrew's (1987) contextualist approach, the third stage revealed CNSO social media activity is a product of their pre-existing communications infrastructure (i.e., internal context perspective), as well as a result of the recent shift in the business environment towards increased digital engagement (i.e., external context perspective). With limited financial and human resources, social media has been incorporated into the communications arm of CNSOs, thereby complimenting other media offerings (e.g.,

WWW). However, although social media is espoused as a radical, transformational vehicle, it has only resulted in incremental change to the stakeholder communication paradigm for not-for-profit sport organizations.

The findings of the third stage shed light on the organizational transformation (or rather the lack thereof) caused by operating a social media presence. While CNSOs understand social media is no longer a “fad,” the lack of adoption by older demographics and pessimism emanating from older staff members have contributed to CNSOs’ hesitance to fully embrace social media communication. CNSOs also exhibited reservations about the overall utility of social media. With the perception that social media is solely a tool to promote and increase the visibility of the organization (i.e., business-to-consumer view), there is a hesitation to expend significant resources into this communications vehicle; social media has been situated in CNSOs’ extant structure vis-à-vis the communications department and not pursued any further (e.g., for use in governance, strategy). Moreover, given the issue of handling both official languages (i.e., English and French) and the formal tone of communication, CNSOs were more inclined to situate social media within their current processes and not choose to radically depart from existing norms. This behaviour can also be attributed to the capacity issues CNSOs experience. With the vast majority of attention paid towards athlete development, resources are allocated accordingly, leaving little for implementing a comprehensive social media strategy. When given an injection of financial resources, CNSOs prefer earmarking those funds for hiring coaches, training staff, and equipment, as opposed to social media curators. While these organizations have not refrained from adopting social media, there is no indication CNSOs have significantly augmented their existing departmental areas either. Given the aforementioned issues and

challenges, social media simply compliments the existing communication and marketing arms as a ploy for increased visibility, specifically to consumers (i.e., fans).

Social Media and Stakeholder Considerations

Stakeholders are boundless; they can be closely linked to the focal organization such as employees, board members, and consumers (Clarkson, 1995), or loosely connected such as local businesses, other organizations, and governments (Post, Preston, & Sachs, 2002). This is also true of sport organizations whose stakeholders include (but are not limited to) fans, athletes, sponsors, media, government, and the local community (cf. Chappelet & Parent, 2015; Freeman, 1984; Parent & Deephouse, 2007). Irrespective of the strength of the relationship between stakeholder and focal (sport) organization, all stakeholders – that are perceived to be legitimate by the focal organization – have the ability to affect the actions of an organization (Jones & Wicks, 1999).

The collective findings of this dissertation align with this sentiment as well as Mitchell, Agle, and Wood's (1997) transposition that explains organizational actions and choices as a result of the relationships and expectations of stakeholders and the focal organization. At its core, the decision for not-for-profit sport organizations to be active on social media, which includes Twitter as well as other platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram), is a result of the expectations imposed on these organizations by external pressures, including those stemming from their stakeholders. In the current environment, in which there has been significant growth in communications technology, sport organizations have been receptive to connecting with their stakeholders (cf. Williams & Chinn, 2010). Yet, expansion into digital communication for sport organizations (especially CNSOs) had previously transpired with sites on the WWW and, as Girginov et al. (2009) revealed, not to

a great extent vis-à-vis building relationships with stakeholders. While social media platforms do allow greater interaction between the organization and its stakeholders (Sanderson & Yandle, 2015), why would not-for-profit sport organizations like CNSOs commit to expending resources on new communications platforms instead of augmenting its pre-existing digital presence (i.e., websites)? The impetus for this behaviour is attributable to the perceived expectations their stakeholders bear. In this respect, operating on various social media platforms (e.g., Twitter) is seemingly reflexive, utilized to demonstrate consideration for stakeholder attitudes and opinions, and the organization's relevancy amidst the shift in modern communication.

Although the findings do not explicate which stakeholder group(s) have these expectations (given the focus of this dissertation was on the focal organizations themselves), the articulation of social media as an expectation remains significant given the interests of all (legitimate) stakeholders have intrinsic value (Donaldson & Preston, 1995); if stakeholders believe social media usage is important, not-for-profit sport organizations may feel compelled to have a social presence to satisfy these groups. Moreover, in complying with these expectations, organizations legitimize those stakeholders and their concerns, as well as the organizational actions resulting from said concerns (i.e., social media as a form of inter-organizational communication). In conceding to the wishes of stakeholders, not-for-profit sport organizations are also likely susceptible to further changes should those same stakeholders foster new expectations thereafter; to not conform to these stakeholder(s) expectations in the future would be problematic given the rationale for implementing social media in this instance (e.g., demonstrating relevance/currency in current operating environment). Furthermore, acknowledging social media as a form of inter-organizational

communication in which the organization should be engaged reveals an additional host of issues and challenges (e.g., capacity and bilingualism).

In using social media to connect with their various stakeholders (as evidenced by Twitter communication in Chapters II and III), the organizations discussed in this project (i.e., CNSOs) alleviated some of the traditional challenges of exposure while simultaneously experiencing the clash between this new communication paradigm and their pre-existing communication philosophies. This dissertation's findings assert social media platforms like Twitter are capable of connecting CNSOs with multiple stakeholder groups without hindrance, unlike traditional mass media, confirming Eagleman's (2013) position. Though this benefit may lure like-organizations towards adopting social media as a communications method, there is a contradiction between the prevailing strategy and the nature of social media. The informing strategy, in which one-way communication saddled with facts and statistics occurs (Morsing & Schultz, 2006), is the primary philosophy for not-for-profit sport organizations as the findings in Chapter II substantiate. Yet, this philosophy is in direct opposition to social media's conversational function (cf. Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). The rapid growth of social media stems from its ability to enable users to create, share, and converse (Sanderson & Yandle, 2015), and the latter specifically does not appear to compliment the informing strategy. However, this is not to suggest informing stakeholders is completely inappropriate for this medium; there are social media functions (e.g., identity, presence, reputation) that align with the predominant communication philosophy. By using social media to inform stakeholders, organizations can communicate their mission, vision and values in a consistent manner, reducing confusion and ambiguity (cf. Thøger Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011). Nevertheless, organizations should remain

cognizant of the two-way nature of social media (e.g., Twitter) and seek to augment their strategy to incorporate more consulting, involving, and partnering activities.

Figure 5.1, adopted from Gregory (2007), considers the communication goals based upon the interest and power of stakeholders. Using this figure as a guide, organizations could theoretically employ all four strategies in their social media communications, of which Twitter is included. For instance, CNSOs could inform casual fans about updates and news, consult with athletes’ entourage, coaches, and organization staff and board members, involve larger stakeholders such as government and media in their posts, and partner with stakeholders (e.g., sponsors) to cross-promote and maximize content visibility. In this example, the organization exhibits two-way communication while still promoting itself and offering news and information to its followers. As such, though social media affords new opportunities to connect to multiple stakeholders simultaneously, simply applying an informing philosophy may not be as conducive to the medium as a multi-faceted philosophy

		Stakeholder Interest	
		Low	High
Power	Low	Inform (e.g., casual fans)	Consult (e.g., coaches, staff)
	High	Involve (e.g., government, media)	Partner (e.g., athletes, sponsors)

Figure 5.1 — Communication Goals Based on Interest and Power (adapted from Gregory, 2007)

which includes two-way communication (e.g., conversation, stakeholder involvement, and partnerships).

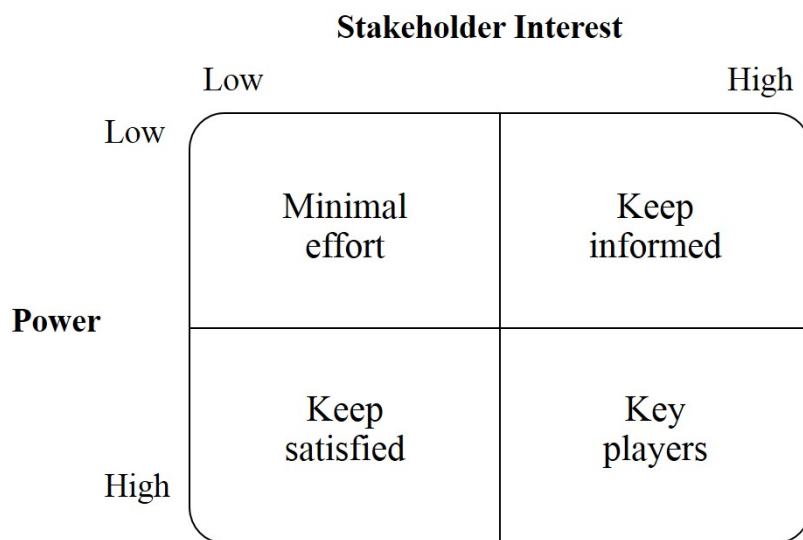


Figure 5.2 — Example of social media communication using multiple strategies (adapted from Gregory, 2007)

Figure 5.2, also adopted from Gregory (2007), correlates with Figure 5.1 and highlights the need for not-for-profits to incorporate consultation, involvement, and partnerships with their stakeholders to enhance their social media communication, especially their Twitter communication. While stakeholders with little power and interest (e.g., casual fans) may expect minimal effort in regards to social media communication, coaches, athletes, sponsors, and government are influential bodies who may provide additional support, insight, or feedback to the organizations vis-à-vis their social media messages. Thus, it would be in the best interest of the organization to identify which stakeholders are more powerful and interested in order to deploy an appropriate communications approach for that group.

Along this vein, shifting from a one-way, informing philosophy towards a multi-faceted, two-way approach requires further consideration of what content stakeholders want to read and interact with and how said content should be packaged. Certainly, accessing

informational content in an expedited fashion through social media platforms like Twitter is desired by some stakeholders (e.g., fans) (Gibbs et al., 2014). Though there is evidence not-for-profit sport organizations are packaging informational content for stakeholders to consume, there is a tendency to refrain from using social media as a form of inter-organizational communication to “tag” or mention specific organizational stakeholders, in addition to the absence of a relaxed, conversational tone. Beyond the practice of including athletes from their sport in social media messages, CNSOs do not engage in the tagging of other stakeholders such as competing organizations, media, politicians, and athletes from other sports. As revealed in Chapter III, not only do these stakeholders exist within the social media landscape, but they are present in the immediate social network of CNSOs. Incorporating these stakeholders into informational content would not only promote interaction between the focal organization and those tagged stakeholders, but may also provoke interaction by non-tagged users choosing to join in on the “conversation” with replies, likes, and further disseminating (e.g., retweeting, sharing) the message across their social networks. Conversely, by not utilizing this social media function (e.g., tagging users), CNSOs appear less “social” and ostracize themselves from other users within the social media landscape, thereby limiting their potential exposure in the social media sphere. The type of tone utilized to communicate on social media platforms like Twitter may also impact whether stakeholders choose to interact with the focal organization. While organizations often communicate using a conservative, professional tone (van Riel & Eombrun, 2007), this style may not necessarily reflect the nuances of social media communication, and limit the potential value social media may afford CNSOs (e.g., increase in followership, additional sponsors).

In discussing the potential shift away from an informing, one-way social strategy towards a multi-faceted, two-way strategy, not-for-profit sport organizations, especially CNSOs, must also consider the importance of the stakeholder groups with whom they communicate. Certainly, the point made earlier regarding the organization producing content that stakeholder groups are perceived to desire still holds true. However, given CNSOs seek to be efficient and effective with their resources (Misener & Doherty, 2009), prioritizing stakeholders based upon their perceived value (where value is determined by the organization) is an equally important task. Accordingly, prioritizing stakeholders can occur on a spectrum from low importance to high importance, where an informing strategy would be utilized to communicate to stakeholders of lower importance, followed by consulting, informing, and partnering strategies as stakeholder importance increases. The prioritization of stakeholders also aligns with the notion of advantaged users presented in Chapter III and mentioned in this chapter; in knowing which users can maximize the visibility of content within their social network, CNSOs may prioritize those advantaged users and choose to involve these stakeholders as opposed to inform them. To clarify, advantaged users are stakeholders who already exist within the social media network (or Twitter network in the specific case of Chapter III) and who are being followed by other users within that same network, thus gaining the ability to redistribute organizational content and increasing the likelihood of visibility by users in the network. The opportunity presented through the redistribution of the organization's content is in the exposure of content beyond the immediate CNSO network to the social networks of those advantaged users, thereby enabling the organization to reach more stakeholders. As such, these advantaged users serve

as one example of stakeholders who may be prioritized in the multi-faceted, two-way social media strategy advanced by the CNSO.

Here, an example is presented to demonstrate how stakeholders, including but not limited to those advantaged users, can be prioritized for CNSOs. For Luge Canada, lower priority stakeholders would include the casual or occasional fans, perhaps those friends and family of high-performance athletes, or sled sport enthusiasts. These stakeholders would remain in Gregory's (2007) informing strategy quadrant (i.e., maintain status quo).

The next stage of prioritization would be to consult with stakeholders. At this stage, Luge Canada should seek out their internal stakeholders, such as coaches and trainers, to get a sense of what content these groups would like to be advanced. Moreover, stakeholders such as board members and operational staff may be prioritized in this consultancy stage.

With respect to involving, Luge Canada would reach out to external stakeholders such as community groups, other sport organizations, government affiliated bodies (e.g., Sport Canada, Government of Alberta), sport facilities, and even some of the less salient, advantaged users within their pre-existing network (see Chapter III) to incorporate into their social strategy. This may be a passive involvement such as deliberate tagging and mentioning of these users in content produced, or even the organization itself (i.e., Luge Canada) taking the initiative to comment on communication produced by those stakeholders. By inserting themselves into these higher priority stakeholders, Luge Canada and other CNSOs can provoke a response from those stakeholders and incite other stakeholders regardless of their priority to involve themselves as well.

Finally, at the highest end of the priority spectrum falls those stakeholders whom Luge Canada would deem to be the most important or highest priority. Those stakeholders

may include potential or realized sponsors, marquee athletes, other CNSOs, and more salient, advantaged users (see Chapter III). In this circumstance, Luge Canada may work in tandem with their partners to activate social media marketing campaign, or as mentioned above, insert themselves into pre-existing conversations with potential partners to attract new support. Moreover, partnering with other CNSOs to congratulate, support, and with whom to generally converse can provide mutual benefit and attract other stakeholders (e.g., Canadian Olympic Committee, Sport Canada) to engage and distribute those messages amongst their own social networks. Although some CNSOs (e.g., Sail Canada, Volleyball Canada) have begun to demonstrate some sociability via congratulating teams on their successful performances or results, this behaviour is not widespread nor consistent with a partnership strategy. For those CNSOs in the mid-low to low tier based upon their followership, it would be beneficial to collaborate with those organizations in a similar context (i.e., other lower tier CNSOs) to stimulate engagement and seek out potential sponsors (thereby increasing organizational capacity).

In practice, a CNSO must first identify and prioritize all their legitimate stakeholders (cf. Phillips, 2003) using the four strategy quadrant's offered by Gregory (2007). Once the organizations has conducted this internal action, engagement should begin with those highest priority stakeholders noted for partnership. Specifically, the CNSO must reach out to these stakeholders either online (e.g., private messaging functions of social media platform, e-mails) or offline (e.g., telephone conferencing, face-to-face meetings), to initiate the proposed partnership. In this setting, the CNSO must communicate its desire to work alongside the stakeholder with explicit mention of what goals and objectives the CNSO perceives for itself and how a partnership would benefit the stakeholder simultaneously.

At this step, the CNSO must also work with the stakeholder to develop the strategic social media plan of the focal organization, identifying when and how the partners can be included into communications, and how those partners can involve the CNSO in their own strategic communication. While this step mimics the "cold-calling" element of sponsorship (e.g., Chadwick & Thwaites, 2005), stakeholders in this quadrant may not necessarily be potential sponsors, and thus it is imperative to select those organizations who may be more willing to engage in this type of agreement such as other CNSOs. Following this identification of partners, CNSOs should then proceed to engage with those stakeholders they perceive to be useful in an involvement role. Similarly, the focal organization should be engaging in either (private, non-public) online or offline communication with these stakeholders who can play a role in stimulating engagement (e.g., media, government, NSOs from abroad). While government and media stakeholders may not be specific to CNSOs necessarily, the involvement of competing sport organizations in other jurisdictions is unique in this context, and a sentiment that may not have been considered previously. The CNSO should be indicating to these stakeholders what it plans to communicate, and what types of interactions could take place thereafter. Where this step differs from the partnership stage is in the ability to create and modify the strategic social media plan of the CNSO; whereas partners will be actively involved in shaping the strategy of the organization, stakeholders who are simply involved may not. Prior to developing a new or reshaping an old social media strategy, the CNSO may then proceed to consult with its internal stakeholders (e.g., athletes, coaches, staff) to determine the best course of action. This could involve a set of focus groups, surveys, or interviews with these stakeholders to determine

what these groups perceive to be proper course of action for the organization's social presence.

Finally, with those stakeholders the CNSO has designated for the informing strategy, the organization may wish to communicate to these stakeholders of new partnerships (if any) or continue to offer RIP posts to these groups. These actionable steps require forethought from the CNSO and a willingness to expend resources to determine the priority of stakeholders, and engaging in dialogue with these groups (see the discussion on organizational capacity in this chapter).

CNSOs in this research project also articulated a reserved tone is optimal given that (a) this is the familiar approach taken in other media and (b) concern an animated approach may offend or displease certain stakeholders or specific demographics (e.g., elderly fans, sponsors). Despite this sentiment, Armstrong, Delia, and Giardina (2016) noted social media is not a convergence of traditional media (e.g., print, TV, radio) and requires innovative techniques; embracing earnestness and an animated approach is useful for sport organizations as they build relationships and foster a sense of community with stakeholders on various social media platforms. This point is especially important for those CNSOs who are less salient (in terms of social media followership): in order to compete with like-organizations on social media, a more engaged and animated style could be utilized to shed their low profile and gain followers at a significant rate. At present, intra-year social media followership, specifically Twitter, is in the range of 4% to 31%, with larger, salient sports at the higher end of this range. While positive growth is encouraging for CNSOs generally, it emphasizes the disadvantage a low-profile organization like Luge Canada has in relation to a high-profile organization like Tennis Canada. Despite Luge Canada having a slightly greater

percentage increase of followers compared to Tennis Canada, Tennis still has approximately 20,000 more followers in total; if organizations like Luge Canada hope to get to similar followership levels as the Tennis Canada types and accrue the benefits of said growth (e.g., increased visibility, attract sponsors), it may be logical to change their current social media practices and adopt a more animated style to social media communication on Twitter and other platforms. Although the mimetic and normative pressures outlined in Chapter II may be influencing these smaller organizations, it is important to recognize social media is not like traditional forms of communication, as well as being advantageous to demonstrate the personality of the brand (cf. Armstrong et al., 2016).

Another point of discussion with respect to social media content and stakeholder considerations is in reference to an earlier point about being “social” on social media. As previously alluded to in this chapter, organizations ostensibly ostracize themselves on social media platforms when they do not use normalized and expected social media activities (e.g., tagging, hashtags). But this notion also extends to being proactive about conversing with stakeholders on social media. Whereas organizations like CNSOs may be inclined to produce content and respond to stakeholder questions, comments, or queries thereafter, it may be prudent to begin to identify and engage with key stakeholders found within their social network. These communicative messages could be non-sport related, especially if the stakeholder is an organization in a different sport or different sector altogether. What is often overlooked through this type of behaviour is the level of transparency it provides; although a post may be as simple as a conversation between two organizations (e.g., one congratulating the other for a recent success), the content is privy to the social networks of both parties, and even more users if the post contains hashtags. As

the findings demonstrate, CNSOs' social networks are not solely comprised of vested focal-sport stakeholders, but contain passive and non-sport related entities altogether (see Chapter III); non-sport-related conversations may be of interest to a larger segment of social media users while simultaneously allowing the organization to demonstrate an engaging personality. While this proactive strategy implies the expenditure of more resources as opposed to a reactive strategy, increasing the amount of interactions between the organization and various users on social media platforms can maximize the focal organization's visibility and potentially yield more followers.

While the usage of Twitter in this dissertation is noted as a delimitation in the corresponding section (see page 195), it is important to recognize the demographic variance which exists between Twitter and other social media platforms and the impact of said variance on stakeholder considerations. Takhteyev, Gruzd, and Wellman (2012) noted that a large proportion of Twitter users emanate from the Western hemisphere, specifically large metropolitan cities such as New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, and Toronto. Moreover, the majority of Twitter users predominantly fall within the higher age bracket of the millennial generation, working as young professionals in lower managerial or administrative professions (Sloan, Morgan, Burnap, & Williams, 2015). Other platforms like Facebook and Instagram have a much wider global reach with higher engagement levels amongst other groups such as young millennials (cf. Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016). This is an important consideration as CNSOs and like-organizations advance their social media strategies as depicted above. Specifically, it is not in the best interest of these organizations to consider a multi-faceted, two-way approach to social media while negating the intricacies and unique characteristics of each social media platform. While

Twitter was utilized to collect the content and relational data in Chapter II and III respectively, the specificities of the RIP strategy and types of advantaged users will differ from platform to platform. For instance, while sport facilities may emerge as centralized users in a CNSO Twitter network, it may not automatically be the case for Instagram or Snapchat. As such, it is imperative that alongside a multi-faceted, two-way strategy, organizations develop communication goals matrices (cf. Gregory, 2007) for each social media platform on which they intend on maintaining a presence. In addition to plotting stakeholders on a prioritization spectrum (as noted above), strategizing how individual social media platforms can connect with certain stakeholders also enables CNSOs to reconsider social media and the expenditure of organizational capacity.

Social Media and Organizational Capacity

The dissertation's findings shed light on the challenges for not-for-profit sport organizations, notably the issue of capacity, as social media continues to grow as a viable, salient communications medium. While not-for-profit sport organizations like CNSOs should consider how they are communicating with stakeholders using social media, there should also be consideration of the degree to which social media can be utilized to communicate altogether. A lack of capacity (e.g., human or financial resources) is often cited as a key barrier restricting not-for-profit organizations from implementing new proposals or enhancing existing schemes (cf. Misener & Doherty, 2009), and so it should come as little surprise CNSOs in this dissertation expressed a similar sentiment as it relates to using social media.

In discussing social media and capacity, there is an inclination for organizations to cite shortcomings and challenges, and to overlook the benefits of using social media

platforms like Twitter to improving capacity. While the findings reveal capacity poses a challenge for CNSO-stakeholder communication via social media, there also appears to be a refusal to acknowledge social media may alleviate capacity issues over time, a discussion point made in Chapter IV. The breadth of social media, especially Twitter, to include multiple stakeholder groups, especially sponsors, is seemingly overshadowed by the willingness of organizations to focus on connecting with consumers (i.e., fans). Moreover, the results also highlight current and potential sponsors are not solely present in the social media landscape but are, in fact, linked to CNSOs vis-à-vis their own social network (see Chapter III). With sponsors of sport entities demonstrating variance in how they utilize social media to activate their partnerships (cf. Abeza et al., 2014), it remains unclear why not-for-profit sport organizations would not seek to diversify the social media focus to incorporate these financially significant groups. One potential explanation for this behaviour is the emphasis CNSOs place on LTAD and athletic development generally.

More precisely, when articulating their *raison d'être*, these organizations assert developing athletes (and achieving successful results) in their respective sports is a main priority. As such, there is a predisposition to allocate resources towards LTAD (e.g., hiring coaches) first, followed by allocating the remainder of resources towards tertiary areas, which includes social media activities on Twitter and other digital platforms. In essence, there is a reliance on increased partnerships as a result of positive athletic performances. Yet, this scheme is unfavourable for those organizations that do not have successful athletes or mass media exposure, such as those found in the low and mid-low groups revealed in Chapter II. If social media were leveraged to garner more partnerships, CNSOs would improve their capacity, which could be reinvested into their LTAD models. While

the path to achieve these partnerships through social media is unknown to CNSOs, it should begin with an increased commitment of resources to new and existing social media platforms. In order to gain more visibility and accrue more followers (attractive attributes to a potential sponsor), organizations need to increase their focus on engagement and stakeholder interaction. This practice can be implemented with an adjustment and refinement of the current social media communications plan, as well as introducing more human and financial resources (although this is easier said than done). As partnerships with sponsors develop from this social media push, capacity accrued can be allocated to LTAD thereafter. Thus, in conceptualizing social media as a promoter instead of a drain on organizational capacity, CNSOs and like-organizations can reconcile the importance of social media as a stakeholder communications tool, which can foster connections with current and future sponsors in addition to other major groups (e.g., fans).

Though parts of this discussion have provided overarching points to address not-for-profit sport organizations or organizations similar in nature more broadly, it is important to recognize the findings from the each individual stage and collectively concentrate on CNSOs and improving social media communication within these particular organizations despite their limited capacities. Indeed, the revelations of isomorphic behaviour, advantaged users, and the inner, outer, and political contexts in which social media is adopted are certainly useful on their own and, collectively, inform many of the considerations and recommendations offered in this chapter.

Specifically, beginning with the understanding of social media and stakeholder considerations, CNSOs must realize an informing, one-way strategy does not harness the reach and ability social media platforms like Twitter provide. Through the introduction of

the prioritization of stakeholders, the objective is to allow CNSOs to look introspectively at the current activities, but initiate the strategic planning of their social media presence vis-à-vis recognizing which stakeholders offer more (or less) value and require the expenditure of more (or less) organizational resources. The chapter then proceeds to reveal the importance of CNSOs developing a multi-faceted strategy that varies from platform to platform. This sentiment is then followed up by the present section, which discusses the inability of CNSOs to consider social media as a catalyst to improve capacity, not a constraint. Combined, these considerations and recommendations can improve the current state of social media within CNSOs, and shift practitioner perceptions towards using social media to improve and accrue more organizational capacity (e.g., sponsorships). Though the chapter may make reference to like-organizations and other forms of not-for-profit sport organizations (given the scope of the dissertation), the delimitation to CNSOs provides specific examples for these organizations to improve their social media communication to stakeholders.

Theoretical Summation

Emerging from this dissertation is a framework for the theoretical development of social media and not-for-profit sport organizations. As Whetten (1989) advanced, the theoretical development process in management is principally grounded in the “what”, “how”, and “why” elements which can describe and explain a phenomenon. These elements are especially useful in framing a theoretical contribution for this dissertation and are outlined in Table 5.1.

Utilizing a stakeholder theory approach to connect the three stages and their associated theories (i.e., institutional theory, network theory, and the contextualist approach

to organizational change) is useful in conceptualizing a framework for social media and not-for-profit sport organizations. Freeman (1984) noted stakeholders can be affected by or influence an organization's actions, and the latter is especially true in this circumstance. Yet, it is also apparent there are additional factors outside of stakeholder expectations impacting the degree to which social media can and is employed as a communications tool by CNSOs. In order to provide some clarity to the interplay between the various elements, a visual representation is presented of the social media and not-for-profit sport organization process (see Figure 5.3).

The process may initiate from the environmental landscape, where technological advancements, innovation, and common practice amongst competing organizations lies. The process flows into the focal organization itself, affected by its internal operations and mechanisms. Once the organization has decided to output social media communication, it is then filtered by other variables and challenges which alter the communiqué and its presentation. After this stage, the communication makes its way to various stakeholders who may internalize the communication and create a new or altered set of expectations, which flows back into the environmental landscape (depicted with the white arrow on the right side of Figure 5.3) or directly to the focal organization for additional commentary (depicted with the black arrow on the left side of Figure 5.3). It is this latter flow (i.e., from stakeholders to the focal organization) which extends previous conceptualizations such as the SSCM purported by Pedersen, Miloch, and Laucella (2007). Certainly, the notion of stakeholder feedback flowing to the focal organization is not novel; rather, the idea that feedback and new/altered expectations can occur simultaneously due to the immediacy of social media communication is key to this particular process. Moreover, the process does not necessarily

have to originate from the environmental landscape, because it may commence from stakeholders themselves as they create UGC on various social media platforms and then flow through to the focal organization and/or the general landscape.

Table 5.1 Elements of Theory Development

Element of Theory	Description of Element	Support from Dissertation
What	Which factors should be considered in the explanation of the phenomenon?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment in which CNSOs operate. • Capacity and organizational communication infrastructure. • Variables and challenges to use social media (e.g., lack of resources, bilingualism).
How	What is the relationship between the factors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organizations under examination exhibit a limited scope to their social media communications; in light of stakeholder expectations, CNSOs embed a social media presence within their present strategic communications infrastructure without committing additional resources.

Why

What are the undercurrents that explain the factors and the found relationships?

- Institutional theory explains the isomorphic tendencies of CNSO social media communication.
- Network theory depicts the stakeholders with whom CNSOs are connected to through social media.
- Contextualist approach outlines the circumstances for implementing social media, including barriers and challenges.

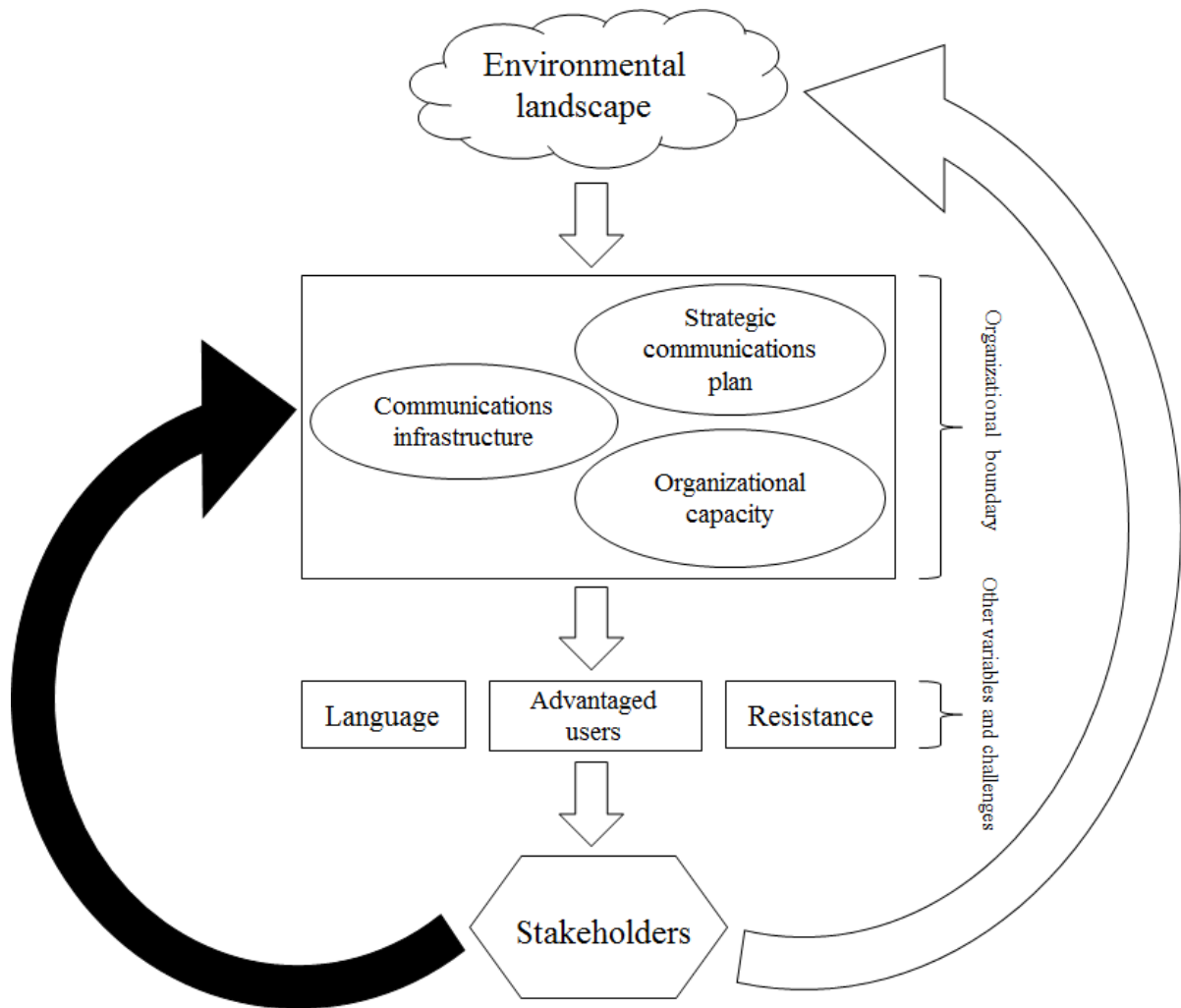


Figure 5.3 – Social media and not-for-profit sport organization process

Additionally, this process flushes out the “who,” “when,” and “where” factors that impact the range of a framework (see Table 5.2; cf. Whetten, 1989). When referring to the “who,” it is evident there needs to be a focal organization, as the absence of one would simply constitute social media communication between stakeholders. Yet, it is important to note the significance of those within the focal organization, such as staff and board members, who can accelerate or decelerate the process. From Chapter III, it is also evident there are multiple stakeholders with whom the focal organization communicates as a result of the process. The “when” factor is particularly significant given the immediacy of social media communication. Though social media communication happens almost instantaneously, there are elements which may cause lag in the process.

Table 5.2 Temporal and Contextual Factors

Factor	Description	Results
Who	The individual(s) and/or organization(s) affected by the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focal not-for-profit organization including staff, board members, and volunteers. • Various stakeholders consisting of (but not limited to) athletes, fans, facilities, sponsors, media, competing sport organizations, and politicians.

When	Time period over which the described process takes place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature of social media is such that communication happens in an incredibly condensed timeframe. However, flows from the environmental landscape to the focal organization and from focal organization on through to the consumer may take longer (e.g., days, weeks) as they may require additional consideration (e.g., variables, planning). • Flows from the stakeholders back to the focal organization occurs instantaneously.
Where	The place(s) where the process occurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the focal organization itself, in the external landscape, and on the various social media platforms that not-for-profit sport organizations operate on (e.g., Facebook, Twitter).

If the process originates in the environmental landscape, there is the potential for delay as the organization navigates through what it perceives in the external environment as well its own internal context. Moreover, variables and challenges may also delay the communication by the focal organization; delays in language translation, lack of resources to respond to stakeholders, and platform selection can all impact the time it takes for the social media communication process to occur. Should the process of social media communication originate with the stakeholders themselves, there could also be significant lag in the time it takes the focal organization to respond. Indeed, though the act of using social media may enable instantaneous communication between parties, the complexities of the process suggest it is unlikely to be as immediate as anticipated. Finally, the “where” factor

highlights the process is likely to occur in multiple places including not-for-profit sport organizations, its stakeholders using social media, in addition to the various social media platforms.

Contributions to Practice

In addressing social media and not-for-profit sport organizations, this dissertation offers practitioners several items to consider as social media maintains its expansive growth amongst various sport and non-sport entities. For not-for-profit sport organizations, social media may provide the connection to stakeholders that would otherwise not exist given the lack of mass media exposure (cf. Eagleman, 2013). There is little doubt boasting a social media presence allows for this connection. Yet, the findings underscore the need for practitioners to exhibit greater flexibility with regards to social media; there exists a predisposition to consider social media using a similar framework for other communication media, which is not applicable and can adversely affect the organization. As alluded to in this chapter, a multi-faceted, two-way approach can position these organizations for success in the social media environment. Along this vein, practitioners would be well positioned to utilize the social network dynamics illuminated in this dissertation to appropriately manage, consult, and partner with stakeholders to increase efficiency in the communications process and limit the expenditure of resources (e.g., human and financial).

This study has also demonstrated CNSOs are reserved in how they perceive social media. Although CNSO managers recognize social media is no longer a “fad,” there is still a reticence to devote resources towards this form of communication. However, as social media becomes more prevalent, it is imperative these organizations shift their perceptions away from social media communication as a drain on capacity towards an opportunity to

increase capacity. Whether in the form of increased partnerships with sponsors or more followers resulting in increased participation in the focal organization's sport, investing in social media may improve the standing of not-for-profit sport organizations beyond simply alleviating the lack of mass media exposure.

CNSOs and similar organizations are able to utilize the dissertation's findings, particularly the contextual factors for social media implementation, to assess their own circumstances and mitigate those concerns. For instance, the issue of language may impact how these organizations recruit staff to operate and manage their social media communications (e.g., hiring individuals who are bilingual in English and French). Organizations may also appreciate the capacity concerns as it relates to social media, which may result in CNSOs adopting new strategies such as incorporating interns specifically devoted to engagement and responding to stakeholder inquiries.

Finally, the inclusion of stakeholder theory in this dissertation provides a practical contribution to those within not-for-profit sport organizations. While the results of the individual stages are relevant, collectively they demonstrate the need for administrators within CNSOs (as one form of not-for-profit sport organizations) to not isolate their organization from their stakeholders. To wit, practitioners within these organizations seemingly isolate their organization in the social media space, adopting the content behaviours of their peers (as per Chapter II), negating the advantage of certain stakeholders (as per Chapter III), and experiencing resistance from older internal and external stakeholders (as per Chapter IV). As much of this chapter has already documented, operating a social media presence across multiple platforms (including Twitter) requires continual thought of the organization's stakeholders. However, those stakeholders are not

solely relegated to fans. Government, media, athletes, coaches, as well as competing organizations or other national sport organizations (in the case of CNSOs), are relevant to an organization's social media communications. Considering these various groups in the context of social media is imperative given that their presence on various platforms generates legitimacy (as they can influence discussion and perception of the organization on those platforms), thereby affecting the actions and operations of the organization (Jones & Wicks, 1999).

Contribution to Literature

This dissertation's findings contribute most prominently to the social media and sport domain, through the dissertation's utilization of organizational theory principles (e.g., isomorphism, centrality, and convergent change). By doing so, the dissertation adds to the increased usage of organizational theory in sport contexts (e.g., Friedman, Parent, & Mason, 2004), and specifically contributes to the scant usage of organizational theory in social media and sport studies (Filo, Lock, & Karg, 2015). Within the social media and sport context specifically, there had been calls for more rigorous contributions with strong theoretical underpinnings (cf. Hardin, 2014; Pegoraro, 2014). This dissertation heeded this concern, rooting the study of social media and sport within three separate organizational frameworks (i.e., institutional theory, network theory, and the contextualist approach to organizational change). The inclusion of institutional theory was particularly useful in providing an explanation of the content produced on social media platforms, demonstrating value in the analyzed content (cf. Pedersen, 2014). Chapter II extends the social media and sport literature by indicating there are coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures resulting in isomorphic communication. With Chapter III, the intricacies of social media networks

were flushed out, highlighting the favourable positioning of lesser-known users to access and potentially re-disseminate focal organization related or produced content. In this respect, Chapter III demonstrated not all users on social media should be considered equal as some many offer additional advantages given their followership with other users. Moreover, analyzing the networks of sport entities on social media platforms allows sport management scholarship to extend the notion of social capital to non-traditional contexts (e.g., digital environments). Chapter IV advanced scholarship in the social media and sport domain through its qualitative approach, revealing the factors for the adoption of social media generally, as well as illuminating issues and challenges which have arisen as a result of including this mode of communication. Lastly, Chapter V highlights the stakeholder considerations for not-for-profit sport organizations as they incorporate social media into their operations.

The dissertation also makes a contribution to the present understanding of not-for-profit sport organizations in light of new innovations and technological advancements. These organizations are expected to adapt and conform to new market conditions, as indicated by key stakeholders (e.g., funding partners), and have demonstrated a willingness to explore new options (cf. Girginov et al., 2009). Yet, various pressures and shortcomings do not allow not-for-profit sport organizations to fully embrace new developments or implement them to their full extent. Indeed, this dissertation's findings suggest the scarcity of organizational capacity drives the ability of these organizations to change their stakeholder communication paradigm and also hinders their adoption of any new developments. Although there is very little by way of NSO and social media research (e.g., Abeza & O'Reilly, 2014; Eagleman, 2013), this dissertation offers more depth to the

content, relationships, and context of NSOs and social media, thereby providing a foundation for future scholarship to build upon.

The utilization of stakeholder theory in this dissertation demonstrates another example of how this particular framework can be applied in sport management research. While Parent (2005) incorporated stakeholder theory in a sport management doctoral dissertation previously, its inclusion here demonstrates its viability as an umbrella framework for sport and social media research, similar to the notion put forth by Littau, Jujagirl, and Adlbrecht (2010). Specifically, the use of stakeholder theory supported by institutional theory, network theory, and the contextualist approach to organization change in this project is indicative of the flexibility of stakeholder theory to be applied to social media and sport research moving forward. Employing stakeholder considerations in this dissertation reveals a new avenue for social media and sport research to continue to build upon.

As not-for-profit sport organization communication continues to shift towards an increased usage of social media, stakeholder theory can be applied to continue to advance the present understanding for the organization, its stakeholders, and the relationship between the two (Parent, 2008). Certainly, the works produced by De Bussy, Watson, Pitt, and Ewing (2000) and De Bussy, Ewing, and Pitt (2003) are indicative of stakeholder theory's ability to frame new media studies. However, with findings of this dissertation, stakeholder theory may also be utilized to emphasize sport organizations, sport stakeholders, and their relationship specifically in an online setting. With the present project focusing on the organizational element of stakeholder theory, there is a basis to conduct further research, much of which is discussed in this chapter already. However, what remained beyond the

scope of this dissertation but within the stakeholder theory lens is the notion of the stakeholders themselves, and the relationship between those stakeholders and the organization. Though scholars have discussed sport stakeholders like athletes (e.g., Pegoraro, 2010) and sponsors (e.g., Abeza et al., 2014), these groups are examined in isolation of one another, and not considered in the context of an organization's social media communication. As evidenced by its presence here, stakeholder theory can be implemented for future projects that account for primary stakeholders (Clarkson, 1995) and secondary stakeholders (Post, Preston, & Sachs, 2002), and discuss their perceptions and desires of social media content produced by not-for-profit sport organizations (especially CNSOs), thus building upon this dissertation.

The application of stakeholder theory in this dissertation also aids in the discussion of perceiving stakeholders beyond one mass group in the context of social media. As demonstrated in this chapter already, the social media and not-for-profit sport organization social media process indicates that stakeholders (as one whole unit) are not solely consumers in a one-way communication process; stakeholders have a say in what the organization communicates in addition to having the ability to produce content themselves. Yet, in regards to social media and sport communication, sport organizations must consider different types of stakeholders and their importance as those characteristics will impact the strategy employed to communicate to those groups. As depicted previously, the sport organization may consider its stakeholders to be primary or secondary in terms of their importance. The assessment of these stakeholders, according to the framework, has traditionally been resigned to the perception of importance by the organization (cf. Phillips, 2003; Post et al., 2002). However, the findings of this dissertation suggest that not-for-profit

sport organizations, particularly CNSOs, are not making this distinction between primary and secondary stakeholders when it comes to social media communication. As such, collating all stakeholders as one unit has an impact on the organization-stakeholder relationship in an online setting, specifically in terms of adopting one communications strategy and considering all stakeholders with equal merit and legitimacy. Thus, the dissertation's application of stakeholder theory in the context of social media reveals a line of inquiry related to depicting the primary and secondary stakeholders of a sport organization, and how this distinction can impact a social media strategy.

Limitations of the Research Project

As with all research undertakings, this dissertation was subject to (de)limitations. With NSOs in multiple jurisdictions worldwide, data collection and analysis would have been time consuming (in the scope of a doctoral dissertation) and costly. Thus, in order to address this issue, the project was delimited to a focus on CNSOs. This delimitation coincides with my ontological approach as a critical realist, accepting that I cannot achieve the truth with absolute finality or with exact precision. As such, with the delimitation of the dissertation to CNSOs, I do not seek to generalize the findings beyond this context. However, this project does present empirical evidence that can be utilized to support continued research and seek generalizable findings.

Another key delimitation was the focus on Twitter as a primary social media platform to perform data collection. While scholars have extracted data from other platforms previously such as Facebook (e.g., Boehmer & Lacy, 2014), Instagram (e.g., Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016), and Pinterest (Hambrick & Kang, 2015), Twitter's API remains conducive to extracting large, dynamic datasets which was necessary for a project of this

scope. Thus, bounding the dissertation to collecting social media data via Twitter was attributable to the content and relational data that could not have been collected from other platforms (due to lack of accessibility and software capabilities).

The dissertation was also subject to limitations through the interviews conducted in Chapter IV. The findings emanating from that part of the dissertation are subject to the accounts of participants who may wish to knowingly withhold information, choose to portray their organization (and themselves) in a positive manner, or simply forget to mention specificities of the circumstance (cf. Golden, 1992). It is important to recognize this limitation as well as the steps taken to minimize its impact, namely the corroboration of accounts vis-à-vis theoretical saturation. It should also be noted that, although participants in this project were willing to share their accounts, some prospective participants had chosen not to participate, a possible indicator of organizations not having the capacity to participate in such endeavours or wishing to uncover their operational routines (including possible shortcomings).

Areas of Future Research

This dissertation provides an initial basis to address the issue of social media and not-for-profit sport organizations upon which future research can be undertaken. For instance, the inclusion of institutional theory represents an important contribution to the social media and sport domain, and future endeavours may wish to examine NSOs from other jurisdictions, incorporate multiple platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram), and even utilize semi-structured interviews with NSOs and other stakeholders (e.g., athletes, government, media, and fans) to elucidate the coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures that influence isomorphic social media communication. Alternatively, scholars may consider

the deinstitutionalization of social media, the process of deinstitutionalization or the abandonment of institutionalized practices (Oliver, 1992). With other not-for-profit sport organizations such as community sport organizations (CSOs) recognizing their extremely limited visibility and notoriety on social media, some have opted to move away from the seemingly accepted way of doing social media, opting for braggart, non-politically correct content, driven by the personalities of staff with extreme ideologies (e.g., Mississauga Tomahawks lacrosse club). By analyzing this strategy, it may provide additional insight and help uncover the rationale behind adopting or rejecting the practices of peer and competing organizations.

It would also be worthwhile to continue the network theory approach as it relates to social media and not-for-profit sport organization, given the dissertation's unique application of SNA (i.e., using followership as a marker of relations between users). While centralized and advantaged users in the social media network of NSOs were flushed out, there exists an opportunity to dissect similar networks even further. SNA techniques such as "cliques" and "factions" are analyses of subgroups within a network (Prell, 2012) and are useful to detect localized communities within social media networks (Papadopoulos, Kompatsiaris, Vakali, & Spyridonos, 2012). Applying similar subgroup analyses to the social media network of not-for-profit organizations can assist in refining the social media communication to target specific groups. An additional SNA technique that could be applied in similar circumstances is known as "homophily," analyzing the users within these social media networks and their preference (or not) to follow others who have similar characteristics (e.g., same stakeholder classification). An analysis of this nature would

enlighten not-for-profit sport organizations to partner or involve certain users into their social media strategies given their diversity (or lack thereof) in social media followership.

Similarly, the utilization of the contextualist approach to organizational change in this dissertation also provides an opportunity for continued research. Whereas the present utilization of the contextualist approach was done “in flight,” (i.e., as it is occurring) future studies may wish to examine social media and technological innovations over an elongated period of time. As the next decade unfolds, it will be worthwhile to assess whether social media has brought about radical, revolutionary change to organizational structure and strategy in various types of sports organizations (e.g., not-for-profit, for-profit, sport event organizers). At that time, studies may also wish to reflect upon the internal and external contexts and the challenges of social media use, identifying whether these characteristics persist over time or if there are new contexts and/or challenges which impact its adoption and operationalization.

Beyond future studies that hinge upon the three supporting theoretical frameworks used in this dissertation, there is room to continue utilizing stakeholder theory as it relates to social media and not-for-profit sport organizations, akin to the comments provided in the contribution to literature section of this chapter. While stakeholder theory was used to offer considerations from an organizational perspective, research may wish to hone in on the stakeholders themselves, or the relationship between both parties (cf. Parent, 2008). Stakeholders are an integral part of the social media and not-for-profit sport organization process and, although it was beyond the scope of the current project, it would be worthwhile to explore their interactions, social network dynamics, and possible reservations (if any) in communication to organizations using social media. Moreover, an additional avenue of

research may recruit various stakeholders, such as those indicated by Parent and Smith-Swan (2013) for their input on the extent to which their engagement on social media platforms has influenced not-for-profit sport organizations as well as the environmental landscape more generally.

With the increasing use of various social media platforms by not-for-profit sport organizations, future studies may also wish to expand upon the developments outlined by Figures 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3. With the possibility of sport organizations revising their communication strategy to include consultation, involvement, or partnerships, future studies may wish to illuminate these important areas of discovery. For example, a case study which documents a partnership between a stakeholder and a not-for-profit sport organization and their social media communication would provide new insights on the social media adoption process. Moreover, it would also be worthwhile to assess stakeholder perceptions to depict whether current social media communication is aligned given their interest in and power to the sport organization. Additionally, future studies may seek to stay within the organizational boundary (see Figure 5.3). As social media continues to proliferate amongst not-for-profit sport organizations, there exists the potential to diversify the use of social media as a strategic communications tool. Therefore, an intriguing line of inquiry would be to examine the extent to which social media is utilized to communicate other aspects of not-for-profit sport organization practice, including the governance of the organization and brand management. Introducing these and other topics that may surface within the organizational boundary (e.g., infrastructure, culture, behaviour) can enhance the present understanding of social media in not-for-profit sport organizations and showcase additional dimensions of this pervasive communications medium.

While the three stages discussed in the dissertation provide a foundation from which future research can be built upon, there were findings which emerged beyond the scope of this dissertation which may stimulate further pursuit. The ability to use social media to not just increase a sport organization's visibility but accrue sponsorship and grow capacity is a notion that has yet to be explored in the literature; while Abeza et al. (2014) have shown corporations do activate their partnerships on social media, the ability to use the communications medium to forge a new partnership may result in future investigations. Specifically, researchers may consider a case study that documents the solicitation of a sponsor via social media, and the resultant impact on an organization's overall capacity. Additionally, while it was not a major focus of this project, future studies may wish to explore the evolution of social media platform selection by these organizations, especially in regards to isomorphism and first-mover versus late-mover status. In sum, this dissertation advances the current understanding of social media in not-for-profit sport organizations using organizational theory frameworks, and provides a foundation upon which future scholarship on social media and sport can be based.

Finally, it is worth building upon the findings of this dissertation to explore how, as this communications paradigm matures, organizations will integrate and operationalize their social presence. As LTAD emerged as a central component of the CNSO core, understanding the degree to which social media has or has not been leveraged or parlayed to advance other areas of the organization's operations (e.g., LTAD, governance) is important to uncover, and missing from the literature base. Moreover, identifying these issues directly connect back to the discussion on social media as an improver or catalyst to increase capacity, not drain CNSO (or not-for-profit sport organizations more generally) resources.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

General information

1. What is your role within the national sport organization?
2. How long have you served in this role? Have you performed other duties within the organization?
3. How does your role allow you to communicate to others within the organization and external to the organization?

National Sport Organization design

1. What is the primary function of your organization? Who does it serve? Why does it exist?
2. What is the mission of the organization?
3. What are the organization's vision and values?
4. How many staff work in the organization?

Stakeholders

1. Who are the principal (most important) stakeholders to your organization?
2. Who are the secondary stakeholders (less important)?
3. How does your organization communicate to stakeholders?
4. How does stakeholder communication fit in with your organization's mission?

Social media

1. What types of social media does your organization use?
2. What type of information is presented and communicated using social media platforms?

3. How would you describe the social media presence of your organization compared to traditional modes of communication?
4. How does a social media presence align with your organization's mission, vision, and values (if at all)? Do you use social media to advance these at all?
5. What social media platform does your organization use most often? Which platform do you feel is most effective?
6. What is the greatest strength and challenge to your organization in using social media?

Twitter

1. Which stakeholders does your organization follow on Twitter?
2. Which stakeholders follow your organization on Twitter?
3. Are there certain Twitter users that your organization had identified to be more important or relevant?
4. What do your organization's tweets tend to consist of? Are they original or retweets?
5. Does your organization target a specific stakeholder audience with certain tweets?

Isomorphism and credibility

1. Are sport organizations more credible if they have social media platforms? Less credible if they don't?
2. How would you compare your organization's use of social media compared to other national sport organizations in Canada?
3. Do you mimic or adopt practices of other NSOs with respect to social media? If so, which ones and why? If not, why?
4. How does your organization differ from other similar organizations with its social media?

5. Is there a set of best practices that exist for a national sport organization or another non-profit organization to use social media?

Future

1. Will social media become more important, less important, or remain the same for your organization? Why?
2. How does the emergence of new, salient social media platforms affect your organization?
3. Does the emergence of new social media trends or platforms affect your organization's strategy? Why?
4. Is there more your organization can do to connect to stakeholders via social media? If so, what?

Final question

1. Is there anything else you would like to mention in regards to what we've discussed today?

Appendix B

Letter of Information

Dear National Sport Organization staff member,

I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa, and I am currently conducting a research study titled, “Social media and not-for-profit sport organizations” for my doctoral thesis. This research aims to explain national sport organization (NSO) social media usage vis-à-vis the expectation of these organizations to connect with stakeholders. To do this, I will be conducting interview research from staff members within NSOs.

I am contacting you because you are a current employee of a national sport organization in Canada and either operate, oversee, or plan the usage of social media for the organization.

Each interview is scheduled to last approximately sixty minutes. You will receive a pseudonym to protect your identity, but the organization which you represent will be identified in the study. As such, anonymity cannot be guaranteed in this study, but there is no risk to the participants of physical or social harm.

Participant involvement is completely voluntary and no compensation will be offered. However, the findings of the study will be made available to participants for use in their organizations. Participants will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis.

This study, conducted independently from your organization, has received approval by the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board (#H06-15-17). If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please contact the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity at ethics@uottawa.ca. To participate in the interviews, please e-mail the principal investigator.

[Personal identification has been removed for privacy concerns]

Appendix C

Consent Form

Title of study: **Social media and not-for-profit sport organizations**

You are invited to participate in a research study on social media and national sport organizations being conducted by a researcher from the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa, independent of your organization. The interview is part of a doctoral dissertation looking at social media use as a means of communicating with stakeholders.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explain NSO social media usage vis-à-vis the expectation of these organizations to connect with stakeholders and disseminate their mission and core values.

PARTICIPATION

If you volunteer to participate in the interview process:

- You will be interviewed by the principal investigator one-on-one with no other persons present.
- Your name will not appear anywhere, but anonymity cannot be fully guaranteed
- You will be asked semi-structured questions; the interview is scheduled to last up to 60 minutes
- You consent to being audio recorded so that the principal investigator can transcribe and analyze information from the session.
- You may request to review your transcript, memos, or notes from your session prior to analysis.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Risk associated with participation in this study will be no greater than what you would experience in your daily life. You will not be penalized by your employer should you choose not to participate or if you withdraw from the study after consenting.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS

Participants may benefit from this study as they gain greater knowledge about their organization and look introspectively at current practices. It is also a professional benefit to those individuals who work in the sport management industry to seek out best practices and an understanding of contemporary phenomena such as social media usage.

COMPENSATION

Participants will not be compensated for their involvement in the study.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

All information provided through the research process will be kept with the strictest confidence by the principal investigator. Only the principal investigator and the thesis advisor will have access to the data and data will be stored on the primary investigator's University of Ottawa secured network drive. Pseudonyms will be used and your specific role/position will not be reported, although the name of your organization will be identified. However, anonymity cannot be guaranteed as other national sport organizations may identify the participant in the reporting of the study.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO PARTICIPANTS

Results of the study will be published in the principal investigator's doctoral thesis and will be made available to the participants by accessing the University of Ottawa's thesis and dissertation repository. The principal investigator will make arrangements with any willing participant who wishes to view the results.

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA AND DATA RETENTION

Data from this study will be stored for a minimum period of five years on a secured University of Ottawa network drive accessible by the primary investigator and/or the thesis supervisor. Data may be used in subsequent studies, publications, and/or presentations. Your specific role/position or name will not be reported in future studies.

ACCEPTANCE

I, _____, hereby consent to participate in the above research study conducted by the School of Human Kinetics.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or his/her supervisor.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5

Tel.: (613) 562-5387

Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is yours to keep

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date