Framing for the cure:

A thesis submitted to the College of Communication and Information of Kent State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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May, 2014
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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Nonprofits</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Susan G. Komen for the Cure</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Theory</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Framing Theory</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Sample</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Analysis</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. FINDINGS</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. DISCUSSION</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgments

My most sincere thanks and gratitude goes out to the friends, family, and coworkers who supported me throughout the past two years. Thank you for being there when I needed someone to bounce ideas off of, another set of eyes to proofread a section, or just a kind ear to listen to a mid-process vent. I never would have made it through this program without all of your support, and I will be forever grateful.

I also want to thank the faculty and staff of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication who have provided me with the information and guidance necessary for the completion of this program. Thank you to Michelle Ewing for stepping in as the third member of my committee and offering invaluable insight about the world of PR. Thank you to Jan Leach for providing me with the best graduate assistantship experience for which I could have ever asked, and for the endless supply of Diet Coke and chocolate which became crucial toward the end of this thesis writing process. I will always remember you as one of the major people who helped me through this program. Last, but not least, thank you to my advisor and director Dr. Danielle Coombs for her constant support and encouragement. You have been there to help, guide, and encourage me from day one, and I will never forget everything you have done for me.

I have been incredibly fortunate in my time in the Public Relations program here at KSU, and I am humbled by the integrity, intelligence, and excellence exuded by all of the people with whom I have had the privilege to work throughout the past two years. I hope my thesis and my continued work in the field of Public Relations will make all of you proud. Thank you – for everything.
Chapter 1

Introduction

The nonprofit world is a unique segment of the United States economy that relies on the generosity of the general public to function. Nonprofits are perpetually in need of funding, personnel, and other assorted resources (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2012). In the current economic climate, nonprofit organizations are in need of even more aid than before. As the economy worsens, the public need for their services increases as the funding of their services decreases (Brindgeland, McNaught, Reed, & Dunkelman, 2009). Now more than ever, nonprofits could use some extra information to help them continue their missions.

In this research study, I sought to help nonprofit organizations by contributing to the practical and academic knowledge base. I aimed to study the emergence of media frames in comparison with those produced by in-house nonprofit public relations efforts. By identifying when and how the media adopted the frames that were produced by a nonprofit organization, I hope to provide nonprofits with information that can help them increase efficiency and increase reception of their messages, thereby helping them to achieve their missions. I also hope the following study significantly contributes to the academic world’s understanding of nonprofits.

A review of the literature has found previous studies that look at nonprofit organizations and human resources (Mirvis & Hackett, 1983), nonprofit organizations and fundraising, public relations and nonprofit fundraising (Nonprofit and Fundraising, 2000), framing as it relates to direct communication with nonprofit publics (Weberling, 2012), and the economic pressures nonprofits face (Brindgeland, McNaught, Reed, & Dunkelman, 2009). However, a search for literature examining the messaging process as communication flows from nonprofits to the media revealed a gap in research.
In the following research study, I sought to contribute to the body of knowledge and fill in the knowledge gap by examining the production and adoption of frames in the nonprofit-mass media relationship. I sought first to understand the patterns and themes that emerged from communication originating from a nonprofit and directed toward the media. I then endeavored to identify the patterns and themes that emerged in mass media coverage of the nonprofit. Finally, I compared my findings to understand the similarities and differences in the results.

In an effort to contribute as much to the knowledgebase as possible, this research study focused on the Susan G. Komen for the Cure foundation. The foundation was chosen as a research subject because of its size and considerable success throughout the late 20th and early 21st century. The foundation has owned the breast cancer awareness movement, saturating the market with its message so much that now even the National Football League has been pinkwashed. Pinkwashing is a phrase commonly used to describe the practice of turning things pink across the county, particularly during October (breast cancer awareness month). Consumer brands make pink packaging and special pink products, buildings put pink filters on their lights, sports teams like those of the NFL wear pink jerseys, and the list goes on. It has become incredibly popular to broadcast personal or corporate support of the cause by using the color pink in any and every way possible.

Adding to the foundation’s value as a subject for study, in the beginning of 2012 the foundation released a decision to stop the funding of the Planned Parenthood Federation, basing its decision on “a new policy requiring it not to fund organizations under government investigation” (Bruell, 2012). In a statement issued on February 1, 2012, the foundation described its decision:
“We made the decision to implement stronger performance criteria for our grantees to minimize duplication and free up dollars for direct services to help vulnerable women. To support this new granting strategy, Komen has also implemented more stringent eligibility standards to safeguard donor dollars. Consequently, some organizations are no longer eligible to receive Komen grants... We regret that these new policies have impacted some longstanding grantees, such as Planned Parenthood, but want to be absolutely clear that our grant-making decisions are not about politics.” (Susan G. Komen for the Cure, 2012)

After a swift and negative reaction by the general public, the foundation reversed its position. In a statement issued on February 3, 2012, the foundation apologized, saying, “We want to apologize to the American public for recent decisions that cast doubt upon our commitment to our mission of saving women’s lives” (Susan G. Komen for the Cure , 2012).

The resulting controversy and media coverage provided a prime opportunity (as well as a massive amount of data) to conduct a study that examined media frames. The foundation’s position as a top-of-mind, beloved charity in 2008 in comparison with its involvement in the 2012 controversy made it an ideal subject of study for this paper. Focusing on the Susan G. Komen for the Cure foundation allowed me to produce a detailed and robust research study and contribute to the body of knowledge on nonprofit public relations.
Chapter II
Literature Review

Nonprofit Literature

There are more than 1.5 million nonprofit organizations in the United States of America (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2012). The majority of these organizations is in a constant fundraising battle, fighting for their share of the almost $300 billion that “individuals, foundations, bequests, and corporations” donate annually (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2012). According to a 2011 ranking of the largest charities, the Susan G. Komen for the Cure foundation had the 53rd largest annual revenue in the country (Forbes, 2011). The foundation continued its success in 2012, despite a major public relations crisis, rising to number 40 on Forbes’ 2012 list (Forbes, 2012). This continuous financial success, along with very successful awareness efforts, leads many other charitable organizations to ask the question: “How do they do it?” In this research project, I used framing theory to look at the messaging of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure foundation to explore answers to that question.

The importance of nonprofits. In a 1994 article about the rise of nonprofits, Salamon predicted the future growth and importance of nonprofit organizations, saying:

We are in the midst of a global ‘associational revolution’ that may prove to be as significant to the latter twentieth century as the rise of the nation-state was to the latter nineteenth…The proliferation of these groups may be permanently altering the relationship between states and citizens, with an impact extending far beyond the material services they provide. (Salamon, 1994)

His prediction has come true throughout both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Currently, nonprofit organizations, often referred to as members of the third sector, make up a significant portion of the economy. According to the Urban Institute, “in 2010, nonprofits
contributed products and services that added $779 billion to the nation’s gross domestic product; 5.4 percent of GDP. Nonprofits are also a major employer, accounting for nine percent of the economy’s wages, and over ten percent of jobs in 2009” (Nonprofits). They provide hundreds of thousands of services to people and animals in need, both in the United States and globally. In “many critical areas, nonprofits have become primary service providers,” (Kickingbird, 2002) bridging the gap between what the general public needs and what the public and private sectors can provide.

Not only do the organizations of the third sector benefit society monetarily and programmatically, but they also provide a “space for participation, engagement, collective action, and affiliation that is the necessary support structure for civil society” (D’Agostino & Levine, 2011). They give members of society an opportunity to come together and form socially beneficial relationships through activities that interest all of the members involved. These kinds of activities enhance society members’ sense of self, identity, and self-worth (Clary & Snyder, 1999).

Challenges faced by nonprofits. Despite their beneficial role in both the economy and the society as a whole, nonprofits face large challenges that stunt their growth and inhibit them from achieving excellence. One of those challenges is a lack of resources. There are only so many hours in a day, and many nonprofits have a difficult time fitting their business in those hours.

Human capital is a difficult commodity to acquire. Although “nonprofit employees are more likely to report that their work is more important to them than the money they earn,” nonprofits often have difficulty competing with for-profit businesses for competent and talented employees (Mirvis & Hackett, 1983). Some scholars find that those who choose to work in
nonprofits do so for personal reasons, and accept the time challenges and lower income as part of the package. Newmand and Wallendar suggest that they develop a ‘mystique’ about the organization and come to accept pressures and conflicts as integral to their work and the organization's mission” (as cited in Mirvis & Hackett, 1983).

Unless the employee has a passion for the cause, it can be very difficult for a nonprofit organization to lure a top-level candidate away from a job that can pay far more and offer benefits. In their previously mentioned 1983 work, Mirvis and Hackett found:

In the case of all persons employed 20 hours or more per week, nonprofit employees earn 67.5 percent of for-profit and 67.1 percent of government wages. For persons employed 35 hours or more per week, nonprofit employees earn 68.1 percent of for-profit and 72.8 percent of government wages…Fully one-third of those employed in nonprofit establishments receive only one or no fringe benefits, compared with one-fifth of profit-sector workers and one-tenth of government employees. (Mirvis & Hackett, 1983)

The lack of abundant funds makes it near impossible, particularly for smaller nonprofits, to offer high salaries. Additionally, this lack of funds limits the number of employees a nonprofit can hire, in contrast to the large hierarchies that may exist in many for-profit organizations. “For-profit employees work in larger firms and report having more chances for promotion than do nonprofit workers. Lack of promotional opportunities may contribute to the lower levels of tenure among third-sector people” (Mirvis & Hackett, 1983). This presents an additional challenge to finding top-level talent and makes streamlining and maximizing the time of employees even more important.
The economic downturn and its impact on nonprofits. The recent recession of 2008 has caused a significant number of problems for nonprofit organizations. They already had to manage the challenge of a lack of manpower, resources, and money. The fall of the economy put an even greater strain on these already struggling organizations, most of which do not, as a practice, have excess funds upon which they can draw in times of need. “In the wake of the economic downturn, hospitals, nursing homes, nursery schools, senior centers, soup kitchens, and other nonprofit organizations have been hit by a triple whammy,” explained authors of a 2009 report by Civic Enterprises. “The evaporation of wealth has decimated charitable donations; the state and local budget crunch is costing nonprofits their foremost paying clients; and the human need for nonprofit help is skyrocketing as nonprofit resources shrink” (Brindgeland, McNaught, Reed, & Dunkelman, 2009).

Nonprofits are also facing a huge decrease in donors. As people have less expendable income, they have less to offer charities. In an interview with NPR, Steve Gunderson, the president of the Council on Foundations explained,

Two things are happening at the same time, and they converge in a difficult way. On the one hand, the needs of the American people in our communities have grown. At the same time, the value of foundation asset is decreasing and while there may be a short time lag in some of that. There is inevitably a downturn in foundation assets. (Gunderman, 2008) Even those who subscribe to the idea of tithing, traditionally a reliable source of income for many nonprofits and particularly faith-based nonprofits, are giving less as a result of decreased income levels.

Nonprofits are also facing a decrease in the already small pool of job applicants.

According to a 2009 survey, “hiring qualified staff within limited budget constraints (30.0%)
remained the number one response from 2008 to 2009 when organizations were asked about their greatest staffing challenge. Coming in second for both years was Finding Qualified Staff (25.6%)” (Nonprofit HR Solutions, 2009). In times of financial trouble, it is extremely important to have employees who are capable of performing multiple tasks, have multiple skill sets and who have the intelligence and problem-solving skills to overcome challenges. Fewer applicants leads to even more trouble for nonprofits who are desperately trying to acquire highly skilled employees. These challenges make it necessary for nonprofit organizations to figure out how to do more with less.

**The importance of public relations for nonprofits.** As previously mentioned, to stay afloat despite the many challenges in their way and to maximize the time of the employees they have, it is essential for nonprofits to streamline their efforts. One way of increasing efficiency is by utilizing more effective public relations efforts.

Several studies have been done identifying the relationship between public relations and nonprofit fundraising efforts. In a 2002 work, Rooney Hall looked for similarities between “characteristics of a set of successful fundraising programmes [and] those of successful public relations programmes,” and found that there were many (Rooney Hall, 2002). McAdoo and Pynes (1995) published a case study about a nonprofit public relations plan in which “sustained financial viability was the primary objective” (McAdoo & Pynes, 1995). Kelly, an internationally renowned expert on the subject, concentrated many of her works on examining the relationship between public relations and fundraising (Kelly, 1991; Kelly, 1994; Kelly, 1998).

Furthermore, in a 2008 study of a Texas nonprofit, O’Neil found that “the daily efforts of public relations practitioners in showcasing their organizations’ efforts in a timely, thorough, and
responsible way have a direct ramification in building trust, satisfaction, and commitment” (O'Neil J., 2008). Trust, satisfaction, and commitment have been shown to be significant factors in determining financial support for nonprofit organizations (O'Neil J., 2007). By improving the traits mentioned above, nonprofits can fundraise more effectively and efficiently, maximizing their use of employee time and minimizing the associated cost. Bonk et. al (2008) further emphasizes the benefits of public relations for nonprofits, saying it can “increase name recognition, boost fund-raising, recruit membership, and advance changes in public policy” (Bonk, Tynes, Griggs, & Sparks, 2008).

As mentioned in the introduction, the proposed research study seeks to focus on one nonprofit organization. The chosen nonprofit, the Susan G. Komen for the Cure foundation, has exhibited an ability to overcome the obstacles presented above. For this reason, among several others, the foundation is a prime subject for examination.

Susan G. Komen for the Cure Literature

How it began

The Susan G. Komen for Breast Cancer foundation (also known as the Susan G. Komen for the Cure foundation, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, Komen or the Komen foundation) was founded in 1982 by Nancy Brinker, the sister of Susan G. Komen. Komen was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 33. Throughout her battle with the disease, she continually expressed her concern about other women going through the same hardships. At one doctor’s visit, while waiting in an uncomfortable chair in a sparsely furnished room, she uttered this quote: "Nan, as soon as I get better, let's do something about this. You can find a way to speed up the research. I know you can. And I want to fix up this waiting room and make it pretty for the women who
have to be here. This isn't right." Brinker refers to this quote as the real beginning of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure foundation (Susan G. Komen for the Cure, n.d.).

**The founder.**

Nancy (Goodman) Brinker was born on December 6, 1946, in Peoria, Illinois to Marvin and Eleanor Goodman (Encyclopedia of World Biographies, n.d.). She was the second daughter of the family, and enjoyed a very close relationship with her older sister, Susan.

Brinker’s first experience with breast cancer was in 1956. She and Susan were visiting their aunt, Rose, in New York City when they accidentally walked in on their topless aunt. Rose had recently undergone a mastectomy because of her own battle with breast cancer. The girls saw their aunt’s chest “concave and burned from high-voltage radiation treatments, with grotesque scars running across her chest.” This experience frightened both sisters, later affecting them as they both went through personal battles with the disease. (Key, 2009)

Brinker attended college at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Upon graduating from the university, she moved to Dallas, Texas. It was there that she began her public relations career at Nieman-Marcus. (Encyclopedia of World Biographies, n.d.) Her public relations career would later play an important role in the success of her foundation.

During the last conversation Brinker and Komen had before Komen’s death in 1980, Komen again brought up the sisters’ previous conversation, asking her sister to do something to help women with breast cancer. In a story written for the Susan G. Komen for the Cure website, Brinker said, “I was haunted by our last conversation and lay awake sometimes all night wondering what I could do to help other women with breast cancer” (Brinker N. , n.d.).

In 1981 Brinker met her future husband, Norman Brinker, founder of the Steak and Ale, Bennigan's, and Chili's restaurant chains. Her marriage to the multi-millionaire allowed Brinker
to quit her job. She devoted her newfound spare time to fulfilling her promise to her sister.

(Encyclopedia of World Biographies, n.d.)

**The first years.**

Brinker began the breast cancer organization in 1982 with “with $200 and a shoebox full of names in [her] living room” (Brinker N., 2012). Fortunately for Brinker, the early 1980’s were years in which the taboo of talking about breast cancer was beginning to disappear. The media were beginning to allow the issue some airtime and “public health advocates established screening guidelines, encouraging women to do breast self-examinations (BSEs) and have regular screening mammograms and clinical breast examinations (CBEs)” (Braun, 2003).

As Brinker continued to grow the organization, she focused on a desire to change the way the nation thought about and spoke about breast cancer. As she and a co-worker wrote in an article about the foundation, “it became clear [to Brinker] that – to eradicate breast cancer, it would take a monumental increase in awareness by Congress, the scientific community, corporate leaders, and most significantly, the American Public” (Braun & Brinker, 1998). With this in mind, Brinker began doing two things that were a turning point for the organization. She began going to Washington, D.C., to become an advocate for the cause and she began the Komen Race for the Cure event.

**Advocacy**

A fair amount of research has been done on the correlation between the successes of nonprofit organizations and their advocacy efforts. However, the research differs depending on the individual researcher’s definition of the word “advocacy.” Some define advocacy as a direct service to constituents, such as being a legal advocate for a minor (Kimberlin, 2010). Others define advocacy as any attempt to influence the decisions of an institutional elite on behalf of a
collective interest” (Jenkins, 1987) or “the protection of rights and promotion of political interests” (Boris & Mosher-Williams, 1997).

Nicholson-Crotty (2009) defined advocacy as “a two-stage decision, where providers first choose whether or not to become politically active and then select from among available tactics.” In the case of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation and Nancy Brinker, the choice was made to engage in advocacy by educating the public and championing causes at a legislative level, such as “the Mammography Quality Standards Act, the establishment of a special fund in the U.S. Department of the Army for breast cancer research, the establishment and expansion of the Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, and extensive increases in federal funding for the National Cancer Institute” (Braun, The History of Breast Cancer Advocacy, 2003).

This two-part advocacy model appears to have been extremely successful for the organization, setting it apart from the rest of the nonprofit world. According to a study done in 1998, more than a decade after the founding of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer foundation, only 1.5 percent of nonprofit organizations reported lobbying expenses on their nonprofit tax forms (Boris & Krehely, 1998). Brinker’s decision to take on advocacy put the foundation ahead of 98.5 percent of the competition.

The Komen Race for the Cure

The first Komen Race for the Cure event took place in Dallas, Texas in 1983; 700 women participated in the event (King, 2004). That single race has now turned into a series of over 140 events across the globe, gathering more than 1.6 million participants (Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation, 2012). Though impressive, these statistics demonstrate only the success of the series in terms of participation. What raw data does not account for is the ripple effect of the
series of races and what that has done to help propel the foundation to one of the nation’s “hot charities” (Belkin, 1996).

In her study of the series, King (2004), acknowledges the financial successes of the races, but points out that they are: “also promoted and widely understood as a grassroots social movement that has succeeded in bringing about a shift in public attitudes toward breast cancer and in creating a space in which breast cancer survivors can publicly and collectively acknowledge their experience with the disease” (King, 2004). The races are not simply fundraisers; they are celebrations of life and of the survivors (Kaiser, 2008). Discussing the disease in terms of survivorship set the series apart, earning it media attention (King, 2004).

**Communication**

In addition to the foundation’s direct advocacy efforts and execution of the race series, a large part of its success can be attributed to its communication and public relations efforts. The relationship between successful fundraising and awareness campaigns and public relations has been studied multiple times.

In her article on that subject, O’Neil (2008) quoted Lee Jackman (2000) saying “the more that donors know about an organization, the more they empathize with it and the more likely they are to make larger and larger gifts to it.” O’Neil proved this statement true in her study, previously mentioned in the literature review, that looked at 1,042 individuals who donate to a food bank in Texas. Her findings indicated that “the daily efforts of [PR] practitioners in showcasing their organizations’ efforts in a timely, thorough, and responsible way have a direct ramification in building trust, satisfaction, and commitment,” which she found are factors in the donor decision process (O’Neil J. , 2008).

Das, Kerkho, and Kuiper (2008) looked at how the messages an organization chooses to
put forth affect “attitudes and intentions to donate to charity” (p.10). One of their findings indicated that anecdotal messages and “evidence” were more effective than pure statistics (Das, Kerkhof, & Kuiper, 2008). The Susan G. Komen for a Cure foundation uses this tactic in a majority of their advertising and public relations efforts, highlighting the stories of men and women who have had breast cancer affect their lives (Susan G. Komen for the Cure, 2012).

The work of Small and Verrochi (2009), however, disagrees with the communication efforts of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure foundation. In their study of the use of faces in the communication and marketing efforts of nonprofits, they “provide insight into how emotion expressions on advertisements influence consumers and their behavior” (p.778). In contrast to the overwhelming use of images of happiness and hope used by the foundation, their study found that images of sad faces actually promote more empathy and subsequently more donations than the use of happy faces (Small & Verrochi, 2009).

On a technical note, Yeon, Choi, and Kiousis (2005) studied the use of websites for the communication and public relations efforts of nonprofits. One of the findings of their study found that “organizations need to use consistent terms to indicate media-related information on the Websites in order to avoid confusing journalists” (Yeon, Choi, & Kiousis, 2005). The Susan G. Komen for the Cure site has a clearly labeled “Media Center” link on the front page of its website, in line with the recommendation of this study.

Financial reports, existing literature, as well as a broad success with awareness efforts indicate the foundation is doing something correctly. Its success provides an ideal sample for the proposed research project to study. However, a good research study does not rely solely on a case study; it also relies on an examination of relevant theories for guidance.
Theory Literature

As previously mentioned, in this study I sought to expand upon the existing knowledge base of nonprofit public relations. The expansion is intended to afford nonprofits the power to make an impact on the media with a minimal amount of trial and error. Additionally, my hope is that this study will contribute significantly to the existing literature about nonprofits and guide future research efforts about the third sector. Like all other good research, my work was informed by theory.

Framing theory. Framing theory is an often-used framework for evaluating and analyzing message creation and reception. Entman (1993) argues that framing is a process in which one takes “some aspects of a perceived reality and makes them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation.” It is a contrast to rational choice theory, which hypothesizes that “all action is fundamentally 'rational' in character and that people calculate the likely costs and benefits of any action before deciding what to do” (Scott, 2000). Conversely, framing theory posits that an issue can be viewed and evaluated in multiple ways and from multiple viewpoints, and that the implications drawn from one’s evaluation can differ depending on the way the issue has been communicated (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Tversky and Kahneman, 1981). Chong and Druckman (2007) describe the framing process as the “process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue.”

Tversky and Kahneman (1981) conducted a study illustrating the power of framing. In the study, they presented two groups of students with a situation in which they were asked to
make a choice. The two groups of students were told to “imagine that the U.S. is preparing for the outbreak of an unusual Asian disease, which is expected to kill 600 people. Two alternative programs to combat the disease have been proposed.” The first group of students was given the following situation:

“If Program A is adopted, 200 people will be saved (72 percent). If Program B is adopted, there is 1/3 probability that 600 people will be saved, and 2/3 probability that no people will be saved (28 percent). Which of the two programs would you favor?” (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981).

The second group of students was given an alternate phrasing of the situation:

“If Program C is adopted 400 people will die (22 percent). If Program D is adopted there is 1/3 probability that nobody will die, and 2/3 probability that 600 people will die (78 percent). Which of the two programs would you favor?” (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981).

The study found that the majority of students given the first phrasing of the situation chose a “risk averse” option, while the second group of students chose a “risk taking” option. Despite the identical outcomes of the situations, opposite reactions were evoked based on the way the message was framed. This study illustrates the shortcoming of rational choice theory and the power of message framing (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981).

Expanding upon the knowledge contributed by Tversky and Kahneman as well as other framing scholars (Tuchman 1978; Gamson & Modigliani 1987; Shah et al. 2002; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Entman, 2004; Feldman & Zaller, 1992; Iyengar. 1991; Arnold et al. 1998; Chong & Druckman 2007), Chong and Druckman (2007) identified four general steps of the process of understanding frames. First, “the issue or event is identified.” Second, “if the goal is
to understand how frames in communication affect public opinion, then the researcher needs to isolate a specific attitude. Third, an initial set of frames for an issue is identified inductively to create a coding scheme.” Lastly, “once an initial set of frames is identified, the next step is to select sources for content analysis” (Chong & Druckman, 2007). These four steps will help guide the research process of the proposed study.

**Agenda setting.** Within framing literature, the idea of agenda setting has been explored several times. The 1970s brought on “the birth of agenda-setting research in political communication. Sparked by the landmark study by McCombs and Shaw (1972), the effect drew considerable attention from researchers frustrated by the minimal-effects perspective common at the time” (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

McCombs and Shaw (1972) studied agenda setting as it related to political campaigns. Their research found support for the hypothesis that “the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues” (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In essence, their work found that the way the mass media chose to speak about an issue shaped the public’s perception of the issue. Many scholars have built upon their work, and some scholars have used both agenda setting and framing theory to inform their research (Kleinnijenhuis, Oegema, Utz, & van Atteveldt, 2012). A basic understanding of the concept is useful in understanding relevant framing literature.

**Framing comparison.** The following research study did not stop at identifying and analyzing the emergent frames of the identified issue. Instead, it identified and analyzed the frames that emerged both from an organization and the media, and then compared the two. Similar processes taken by other researchers informed this methodology.
In 1998, Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad published a study comparing the “U.S. and Chinese press coverage of the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women and the Non-Governmental Organizations Forum in Beijing in 1995” (Akhavan-Majid & Ramaprasad, 1991). Their research analyzed the frames that emerged from both cultures’ coverage of the event and compared them, identifying the different weight that was placed on particular topics. Their work is a useful guide for other studies looking to compare emergent frames.

Additionally, Henningsen, Henningsen, Cruz, and Morrill (2003) studied social influence by applying both “Relational Framing Theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model to social influence in groups” (Henningsen, Henningsen, Cruz, & Morrill, 2003). Though their study focused on identifying the merits of the two theories, their comparative evaluation provides valuable insight into the process which can aid in the development of the proposed research project.

The last example I will mention is a study by Kuypers and Coopers (2003). They published a study comparing the frames they identified in coverage of the Iraq war. They looked at the difference between the framing created by embedded reporters and those created by behind-the-lines reporters. They used comparative framing analysis to identify which type of reporter was more able to cover the topic. (Kuypers & Coopers, 2005) Like Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad’s study from 1998, Kuypers and Coopers’ work provides a good reference for other works that look to compare frames.

These examples are just a few of the many works that compare frames to analyze an issue. Other works compare frames in political campaigns and associated media coverage (Strömbäck & van Aelst, 2010), different frames used within the same study (Hoffner & Ye, 2009), and even gender differences in framing tactics (Royal, 2008). None of the studies
replicates this research project, however they provided valuable insight into the comparative process, therefore informing the research process used to complete this study.

**Framing and public relations.** Though there has been an abundance of work on framing as relates to politics and traditional journalism, framing is also relevant to the field of public relations. Knight (1999) calls frames “powerful mechanisms” that can be used by public relations practitioners. Hallahan (1999) describes framing theory as “a potentially useful paradigm for examining the strategic creation of public relations messages and audience responses” (Hallahan, 1999).

In his 1999 article, Hallahan analyzed framing literature to identify models of framing that could be applied to public relations. He reinforces his argument for the use of framing theory in public relations, saying

“framing is conceptually connected to the underlying psychological processes that people use to examine information, to make judgments, and to draw inferences about the world around them…Moreover, framing phenomena operate across levels of analysis (J. M. McLeod, Pan, & Rucinski, 1994; Pan & McLeod, 1991), making framing theory applicable at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, organizational, interorganizational, and societal levels in which public relations influence attempts operate” (Hallahan, 1999).

These articles indicate that framing will come to be an important tool for public relations practitioners. Research should not stop with an understanding of the mechanics of examining framing in public relations efforts. Instead, it should examine how frames are created and the messaging transferred from one frame to another. The following research study will attempt to explore those ideas in its examination of the data collected.
Chapter III

Research Methodology

The following research study used framing as both a theory and a method to inform the research process. Additionally, textual analysis was used in conjunction with framing to guide the analytical process. In this study, I looked at the Susan G. Komen for the Cure foundation and identified frames that emerged in media coverage of the foundation in 2008. I then analyzed the press releases published by the foundation that same year. After those two analyses, I compared my findings and identified the similarities and differences of the first two analyses. Following the 2008 analysis, I followed the same format in analyzing media and foundation-generated frames that emerged from data pulled between January 1, 2012 and March 31, 2012. Lastly, I compared my findings from the two years and identified patterns of similarities and differences.

Framing Theory

Entman described the process of framing as a selection of “some aspects of a perceived reality [made] more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman, 1993). In his 1993 article, Entman recognized the “fractured paradigm” surrounding the discussion and definition of framing and sought to provide clarification to the idea (Entman, 1993). He summed up the many studies of framing with the statement, “whatever its specific use, the concept of framing consistently offers a way to describe the power of a communicating text.”

Though there are an abundance of definitions of framing (Entman, 1993; Druckman, 2002; Chong & Druckman 2007), the methodology I used was based on Entman’s conceptualization. For the sake of this study, Framing Theory was used in conjunction with
textual analysis methodology to analyze sets of data and identify how frames were produced, adopted, reformed and/or changed in the process of media coverage of a nonprofit.

**Textual Analysis.** Throughout the execution of the study, I used textual analysis to identify frames that emerge from the data. Textual analysis is, in its simplest form, “an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of a text.” In his book, *A beginner’s guide to textual analysis*, McKee offers the previous definition as a simple way for beginners to grasp the concept. He further explains that “textual analysis is a methodology: a way of gathering and analyzing information in academic research” (McKee, 2001). McKee also provides a basic guide for textual analysis, breaking down the process into nine basic steps. They are as follows:

- [First,] choose your topic of interest. [Second,] if necessary, focus your question to become more specific. [Third,] List the texts which are relevant to this question from your own experience. [Fourth,] find more texts by doing research both academic and popular. [Fifth,] gather the texts. [Sixth,] watch as many examples of each program as you can and notice how particular textual elements work in each one. [Seventh,] watch other programs in the same genre to see how they work. [Eighth,] get as much sense as you can of the wider ‘semiosphere’ … as you can to get some sense of how these texts might fit into the wider context. [Lastly,] with this context in mind, return to the texts and attempt to interpret likely interpretations of them. (McKee, 2001)

McKee’s advice on the process of textual analysis guided my own analysis as I completed the proposed research project. His guidance was a resource often used to re-ground my process as I worked through the data. Combining the methodologies of framing and textual analysis allowed
me to perform a vigorous analysis of the identified texts. It informed my approach as I filtered through data and helped to guide my examination of the patterns and themes that emerged.

**Sample**

To produce a study that will provide a significant contribution to the body of public relations and nonprofit knowledge, the choice of a sample is extremely important. The sample to be examined must be significant, relevant, and accessible. For these reasons, I chose to study the Susan G. Komen for the Cure foundation. Its success, as described in the literature review of this proposal, makes it an ideal organization for this research project.

**To**. As mentioned previously, the research performed focused on data from 2008 and between January 1 and March 31 of 2012. The media coverage sample was drawn from articles and news transcripts from the following major media outlets: USA Today, the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the New York Daily News, the New York Post, the Washington Post, the Chicago Tribune, the Houston Chronicle, the Arizona Republic, CNN, CBS, Fox News, ABC, CNBC, and MSNBC. The aforementioned news outlets were chosen based on circulation numbers during 2008 and 2009, Nielsen ratings, geographical influence, and audience diversity.

Broadcast transcripts from the television news outlets were identified by searching LexisNexis and Factiva for stories containing relevant keywords. Newspaper publications were identified in the same way. LexisNexis and Factiva were both used when pulling the data prevent relevant information from being missed.

The same keywords were used in all of the data searches. The searches performed were all based on the following keywords: “komen or ‘race for the cure’ or ‘komen for the cure’ or
'Hala Moddelmog’ or ‘Susan G. Komen for the Cure’ or ‘leading cancer organization’ or ‘breast cancer advocacy’ or ‘leading breast cancer’ or ‘Nancy Brinker.’" These words and phrases were chosen in an attempt to draw a comprehensive collection of data. Notably, keywords associated with Planned Parenthood were not used. This choice was made to avoid irrelevant data. I wanted to analyze only data that was specifically and clearly linked to Susan G. Komen for the Cure®.

**Press Releases.** Press releases published by Susan G. Komen for the Cure were used to identify self-created frames. The press releases were pulled exclusively from the foundation’s website. No other source was used to find press releases. It should be noted that the analysis of only press releases that could be found on the website does present some possible limitations. It is possible that there were releases posted on the website in 2008 or 2012 that have since been deleted. It is also possible that the foundation sent out press releases or direct pitches to members of the media that were not posted on the website.

However, the decision to use only releases available on the website was made so the analysis could focus on the information chosen by the foundation to be its best face, so to speak. A website is an organization’s home base, in which the foundation can completely control every single aspect of its image. Anything published on a website represents the perfect image an organization wants to put forward. Analyzing only information deemed website-worthy by the foundation allowed me to look at pure data, untouched by any outside force.

**Analysis**

The examination of the collected data was qualitative to allow for the most flexible and contextualized understanding of the data. Though quantitative tactics are valuable, their rigidity was not ideal for a complete understanding of this data. Qualitative research “uses language to understand concepts based on people’s experience [in an attempt] to create a sense of the larger
realm of human relationships (Brennen, 2013). A qualitative approach enabled me to see the texts, patterns, and stories as a whole, giving greater depth to the final understanding of the issue.

The analysis of the data began with the identification of frames that emerged in the coverage of the foundation by the aforementioned media outlets between January 1, 2008 and January 1, 2009. Data drawn from Factiva and LexisNexis were examined individually to ensure quality and rigor. After pulling all of the data, I went through the data sets and cut out the irrelevant sections to make it easier to read through the relevant parts. Each time I deleted text from the data pull, I replaced it with &lt;&lt;DeletedText&gt;&gt; so I would remember that there was something there originally.

After cutting the data, I began examining each data set individually. To clarify, this means I examined four data sets per year examined, not including the press releases. As previously mentioned, I began my research by looking at media data from 2008.

For each data set, the analysis began with the performance of a pure read to familiarize myself with the content of the pull. After the initial pure read, I created a coding scheme to use throughout the second read. During the second read, I went through the articles and I highlighted the texts according to the content. Sentences and phrases were highlighted in blue if they were about the Race for the Cure, green if they were about money of fundraisers, pink if they were about the pink movement, light purple if they were about non-Race events, and yellow if they were anything else that I thought warranted a second look. The last step in the analysis was a third read to identify key words and phrases that showed up repeatedly in the data. These words and phrases were circled in red. After the three steps were completed, I wrote a stream of consciousness reflection to capture my ideas and observations before I moved on to the next section. This process was repeated for each data set.
After the four media data sets were examined, I moved on to the press releases published by the foundation during 2008. The press releases were analyzed using the same three-read process as the media data. After all of the analysis was finished for 2008, I wrote a reflection on my findings, comparing the data and identifying frames, patterns, and themes that had emerged throughout the analysis.

After completing the analysis of 2008, I followed the same process in my analysis of 2012. There were some slight differences in the coding scheme, and these were accommodated by the addition of extra highlighting colors. Other than content-based differences, the processes were identical. After all of the data was processed and examined, I performed my final analysis, comparing all of my findings and drawing insights from those findings.

The described methodology was constructed to allow for a thorough, rigorous examination of the data. My intention in following this methodological approach was to produce a piece of work that will benefit both the nonprofit community and the academic community. To ultimately achieve that goal, the entirety of the described methodology was designed to answer the following research questions.

R1: What frames emerge from mass media coverage of Susan G. Komen for the Cure and press releases published by Susan G. Komen for the Cure in 2008?

R2: What frames emerge from mass media coverage of Susan G. Komen for the Cure and press releases published by Susan G. Komen for the Cure throughout the Planned Parenthood situation of 2012

R3: How do the frames identified in answer to R1 and R2 compare?
Chapter IV

Findings

Throughout the following section of this paper, I will describe the findings of my research study. The findings are arranged to roughly follow the research process. They begin with the findings from my analysis of 2008 media coverage of Susan G. Komen for the Cure®, followed by those from my analysis of press releases published by the foundation during the same time frame, and my comparison of those two sets of findings. After the 2008 portion of this findings section, I will discuss my findings from my analysis of 2012 media coverage of the foundation as well as my analysis of 2012 press releases. The 2012 portion will include discussion about the specific 2012 findings as well as how they compare with those of 2008.

2008: Analysis of Media Coverage of Susan G. Komen for the Cure®

The first portion of this research project involved a detailed analysis of media coverage of Susan G. Komen for the Cure® during the 2008 calendar year. The media coverage data were gathered using the database search tools LexisNexis and Factiva. Data were pulled from both newspaper and television coverage of the foundation.

After numerous reads of the texts, several major areas of findings became apparent. Trends emerged dealing with naming and identification of the foundation, the subject of the text, key words and phrases, and use of the foundation as a go-to resource.

What’s In a Name

Something as simple as a name can have a lot of implications. The manner in which an organization is named or described by the media can say a lot about how the general public feels about that organization. Halpern and Regmi described the importance of a name, saying a “name
is a key feature in branding that is recognized for its ability to provide symbolic meaning for both tangible and intangible products and services” (Halpern & Regmi, 2011).

In the case of Susan G. Komen for the Cure®, media coverage exhibited a number of variations on the foundation’s name. Both the television and newspaper data showed a large variety of names used to describe the same organization. Examples include “Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation,” “the Komen foundation,” “Susan G. Komen for the Cure,” the Susan G. KOMEN for the Cure of Breast Cancer,” “Susan G. Komen for the Cure organization” and other variations.

Variations also became apparent in the manner in which the foundation was described or identified in the texts. Some texts defined the foundation in terms of its mission, others focused on its tax status, and some focused on its fundraising activities. Mission-focused taglines or descriptors included phrases like “promotes breast cancer research and awareness” (Slein, 2008) and “a group that aims to provide all women with access to the quality care that can prevent breast cancer” (Geller, 2008). The descriptions that focused on the foundation’s tax status primarily defined the foundation with the words “non-profit” or “501(c)3.” Taglines and identifications focused on fundraising included phrases such as “which raises money to fight breast cancer” (Buckman, 2008). There were also some instances in which the mission and fundraising focuses merged. These instances used phrases such as “foundation that raises money to support research and help breast cancer patients” (Moonan, 2008).

Even more alternative descriptions arose with texts that focused on the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure®. Some texts used descriptions focusing on the breadth of the event series, using phrases such as, “National Race for the Cure.” Others took a local approach, naming the race after the local affiliate running the event. Examples of this focus include “Komen New
York City Race for the Cure” (The New York Times, 2008) and “Susan G. Komen Maryland 5K Race/Walk for the Cure” (The Washington Post, 2008). Lastly, there were multiple instances in which the event was described in terms of the mission of Susan G. Komen for the Cure®. For example, in one mention of the event, the Washington Post used the phrase, “the 2008 Susan G. Komen National Race for the Cure to end breast cancer” (Barr, 2008).

The inconsistent use of the name of the organization by media outlets communicates some confusion about the foundation and its title. However, the name inconsistency demonstrates that the foundation is clearly and solidly framed as an organization that wants to end breast cancer. Despite other confusions and semantic inconsistencies, it was very clearly communicated that the organization (and any event associated with it) exists to further an anti-breast cancer agenda. It is also evident that any event associated with the organization is intended to further that same agenda. Though the wording and the specifics may differ, the image of the organization’s ultimate goal is consistent.

This is an important distinction because it illustrates the key strength of the foundation’s brand. Kapferer (2001) describes three major purposes for a brand in the eyes of a consumer: “an information purpose, a risk-reduction purpose, and an image purpose...In their risk reduction function, brands serve as a signal and proof of quality. They serve as a safety measure, which elicits trust in the eye of the consumer (as cited in Voeth & Herbst, 2008). (Voeth & Herbst, 2008) In the case of Susan G. Komen for the Cure®, the strength of its brand resided mainly in its risk-reduction purpose. Its brand, despite inconsistencies in the specific wording, was strongly associated with quality and trust. It was clear that the brand centered on what the public and media deemed to be a worthy cause, and the foundation was trusted to further that cause.
Local and Personal Focus

Analyzing the choices made by media decision makers about the content of their coverage of the foundation provides a great deal of insight. What the media choose to cover and how they choose to discuss those topics can tell us what the media and the general public find important. In this case, the analysis revealed that the most important topics were either hyper-local events that would impact the immediate community or personal stories that gave the disease a face.

Many of the newspaper articles focused primarily upon events and fundraisers that were held to benefit the organization. In fact, the majority of the articles pulled focused on or mentioned an event or fundraiser. Of the events mentioned, the majority was related to the Race for the Cure. Other events included non-race fundraisers and general awareness events.

Articles and broadcast transcripts related to the events ranged from short, facts-only posting to longer stories encouraging audiences to participate. The longer event-related stories often incorporated personal stories along with the basic event information. These texts often seemed to attempt to connect the audience with the personal story with the intention of encouraging audience members to take action and participate in the event.

Additionally, some articles included events sponsored by the foundation or its affiliates along with other breast cancer related events. This phenomenon occurred primarily during the month of October. That timing makes sense given that October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

**People.** As noted earlier, a second area of focus for the 2008 media coverage was personal stories. This area of focus was more prevalent in the television coverage than the newspaper coverage, however it was present in both.
The majority of personal interest stories in the television texts focused on celebrity stories. In fact, of the 22 television texts that included personal stories, 16 of them focused on celebrities or public figures. Celebrities such as Laura Bush, Cynthia Nixon, and Christina Applegate were popular interviewees. The overwhelming presence of celebrities in television coverage of the foundation presents a framed-by-association scenario. Small nonprofits or causes without a lot of power are rarely able to connect with national celebrities. Associating coverage of Susan G. Komen for the Cure® with popular national celebrities gives the foundation a stamp of authenticity that is more powerful than any certificate or proclamation.

In contrast with the trend that emerged from the television texts, the newspaper articles gave more space to the stories of regular citizens. Stories involving those who would not be considered a celebrity or a public figure accounted for 61 percent of the personal stories that appeared in the newspaper texts. These texts included stories about breast cancer patients who had passed on, patients who were pronounced free of the disease, and the family members of the two aforementioned groups.

It should be noted that obituaries, though included in the texts for content analysis, were not included in the calculations for this finding. The reasoning for this is that almost 100 percent of the mentions of the foundation in the obituaries were requests by the families for donations instead of flowers. Though there are insights to be drawn from this, those insights are not applicable to an analysis of a media outlet’s choice for the content of a main article.

The findings described in this section are important because the subject of a text communicates what the author or decision-maker found to be the most important part of a story. Additionally, the mere existence of the story also reflects on the perceived importance of the
matter at hand. The decision to run a particular story communicates not only that the story is deemed important to the general public, but also what part of the story is the most important.

The repeated emphasis on hyper-local events and personal stories shows the weight placed upon those subjects by media decision-makers. To the decision makers, current events and personal stories were the most important and interesting stories to be told. This imposed hierarchy of stories frames the organization not only as a large national force, but also as a local presence that helps people to whom audiences can relate. These decisions also reflect public sentiment, illustrating that the general public viewed the organization as both event-driven and centered around the interests of the individual.

**Words of War**

The most apparent linguistic trend was that of “fighting words” or words one would typically associate with a discussion of a battle. For example, an article in the New York Daily News described an announcement by Cynthia Nixon as, “her secret battle with breast cancer” (Parker, 2008). Both television and newspaper texts used words such as “survivor,” “battle,” “crusade,” and “warriors” on a frequent basis. The use of these words frames the issue of breast cancer as a war, lending to it a general feeling of urgency and immediacy.

The war frame conveys a great deal about the media and the public’s interpretation of the cancer and the breast cancer cause. It is perceived as an extremely important cause, a situation from which a great number of people are dying. The war frame communicates that the foundation is fighting against a great enemy, and that common enemy is a uniting force. Additionally, within the war frame lies an implicit call to action, inspiring both the media and the general public to sit up, take notice, and take action against said common enemy.
Framing breast cancer as the enemy and Susan G. Komen for the Cure as the heroine and conqueror boosts the organization’s brand, providing even more strength to its already solid base. The foundation is seen as a driving force behind an imminent victory over the disease. This concept is further supported by the abundant use of the term survivor which implies that the disease is a war that can be won with the help of forces such as the foundation. The frame casts Susan G. Komen for the Cure as the hero of the story, wielding her pink sword to fight cancer and save the world. The hero archetype supports the foundation’s positive image and encourages positive public sentiment; everyone likes to support a hero.

**An Intellectual Monopoly**

One trend that emerged that struck me as particularly telling was the reoccurring use of or referral to the foundation as a resource. The foundation was used as a resource for quotations about a cancer-related issue, as well as referred to as a resource for anyone looking for more information about breast cancer. It became clear the Susan G. Komen for the Cure was the go-to resource for all issues relating to breast cancer.

For example, on December 9, 2008 there was a segment on CNN Newsroom about a report published by the International Agency for Research on Cancer. During that segment, Judy Fortin, CNN Medical Correspondent, made the statement, “The American Cancer Society, the Lance Armstrong Foundation and Susan G. Komen for the Cure organization are recommending that the U.S. take a stronger lead in fighting the global cancer epidemic” (Fortin, 2008). This statement is significant because it defines Susan G. Komen as one of the three top-of-mind organizations when addressing issues of cancer. Even more telling was its inclusion with the American Cancer Society, a massive organization with more than 50 years of seniority over Susan G. Komen for the Cure. In this example and many similar instances that occurred
throughout the data, the foundation was clearly framed as a leader in the world of cancer and cancer organizations. Though other organizations existed and were respected, Komen owned the conversation.

**Informative and reliable.** The foundation was repeatedly referred to in both the newspaper and television texts as a source of information about breast cancer. Many times it was an explicit reference. For example, in an October 25, 2008 segment on CNN: House Call with Dr. Sanjay Gupta, CNN Medical Correspondent Elizabeth Cohen spoke about a column that gave a list of resources for women:

> So, in the "Empowered Patient" column this week, we have a list of the best women's health Web sites, the best place for women to get medical information. What we did is we asked four women doctors what they thought the best Web sites were, where they send their patients. And here's the list that we compiled. There's many, many Web sites. Here are a few. First of all, for fertility, one doctor recommended the fertilesoul the fertilesoul.com and fertileheart, fertileheart.com. For breast cancer, the Susan G. Komen Foundation, Komen.org, the Gynecological Cancer Foundation, thegcf.org, and Dr. Susan Love's Web site, susanlovemd.com. (Cohen, 2008)

This mention, as well as various other similar references, illustrates the general sentiment that the foundation is a primary resource for information about breast cancer. Once again, the foundation was framed as a leader of the movement and the owner of the entire issue.

**A gauge of authenticity.** In other instances, the reference to the foundation as a go-to resource is more implicit. For example, there are multiple instances in which foundation board members, staff members, or related spokespeople are interviewed or quoted in the texts. For example, in a New York Times article on June 22, 2008, the entire article was written about
Lance Armstrong. However, at the very end of the article, there was a quote from the president of Susan G. Komen. Even though the article had nothing to do with breast cancer specifically, because it spoke about cancer in general, the author incorporated the voice of the foundation. This is important because it expands upon the foundation’s influence. Komen was not only the owner of the breast cancer conversation and the leader of the breast cancer movement; it was also a major player in the national cancer conversation.

All of the examples I have listed and described above highlight that the foundation was framed not only as a major resource and authority on all things related to breast cancer, but as the resource. The foundation was so much a part of the cancer conversation that it influenced the very language of the discussion, instilling in it a sense of urgency and a battle mentality. The coverage highlights an underlying current of trust and reliance on the foundation that elevates it onto a pedestal. It was looked at in 2008 as an informative, highly knowledgeable resource that can be relied upon without question and framed as a trustworthy leader and a formidable force in the nation’s fight against cancer. These frames solidify and elevate the brand of the foundation, creating a nearly indestructible link between the public’s view of the foundation and the idea of a capable, trustworthy leader at the forefront of a national crisis, deserving of both attention and support.

2008: Analysis of Susan G. Komen for the Cure® Press Releases

Partnered with the previous section, this portion of the study involved a detailed analysis of press releases published by Susan G. Komen for the Cure® on Komen.org during the 2008 calendar year. The data were gathered by downloading the documents directly from the foundation website. This data is valuable because it is a representation of what the decision
makers at the foundation deem as important. It represents the face that the foundation paints for itself and provides valuable insight into the goals and values of the organization.

As with the previous section, after numerous reads of the texts, several major areas of findings became apparent. Trends emerged providing insight into the foundation’s self-definition and the way it defines itself in conjunction with other agencies. Emergent trends also shed light on the type of subject matter the foundation deems the most important, illustrated by its publication on the foundation’s website.

**Framing the Self-Portrait**

After examining the frames that emerged from the media’s descriptions and definitions of the foundation, it was only natural to look at how the foundation described itself. When creating a self-portrait, a person typically tries to cast herself in the best and most flattering light possible. This is no different when it comes to an organization. By examining what the foundation focused on when creating its self-portrait, I was able to gather some valuable information about who the foundation wants to be and how it wants to be seen. The first topic examined was the foundation’s choices when it came to naming and describing itself.

While I was expecting to find a consistent use of only one name when the foundation referred to itself, instead three versions of the name were repeated. “Susan G. Komen for the Cure®,” “Komen for the Cure,” and “Komen” were used interchangeably to refer to the organization. Though there were three variations to the name used by the foundation, it is notable that there were only three, in comparison with the numerous different names used by the media. The foundation clearly had a consistent method of self-description, which contributes to the general strength of its brand.
Additionally, the descriptions and taglines the foundation used to describe itself cast a great deal of light upon how the foundation wants to be seen. The most common taglines used in the press releases were “the world's largest breast cancer organization” and “the leader of the global breast cancer movement.” Other taglines included, “international breast cancer advocacy organization,” “the world's largest grassroots networks of breast cancer survivors and activists,” “the world's largest breast cancer advocacy foundation,” and “the global leader in the breast cancer movement.”

In addition to single-sentence taglines, the press releases also included longer self-defining statements. For example:

As the largest private sector funder of breast cancer research and community outreach programs, Susan G. Komen for the Cure has invested more than $1.2 billion over the past 26 years, toward fulfilling our promise to end breast cancer forever. (Susan G. Komen for the Cure, 2008)

This statement and others like it were frequent throughout the press releases, providing more comprehensive descriptions of the organizations.

The taglines and the descriptive statements made it clear that the foundation has a specific image it wants to project. It wants to be known as a leader, a global force, an advocate, and a research initiator. Interestingly, these goals are reflected in the subject matter chosen for the press releases.

**Brand-focused messaging.** Each press release had one or two specific areas or topics of focus. An analysis of these areas of focus indicated that Susan G. Komen for the Cure® seeks to define itself as a globally influential entity that has the ability to have an impact on the prevalence of breast cancer both domestically and abroad. It looks to be seen as a massive force
that can help thousands of patients. It is not a small, community non-profit looking to help raise money for one or two beloved community members. It is interested in the big picture. All of the releases are remarkably on-message, staying consistent in their depictions of the image of the foundation. The foundation painted a strong picture of itself by choosing those very specific, goal-oriented areas on which it focused. The focus and brand strength evident in the press releases highlights the trend of brand strength that is increasingly apparent as analysis of the data progresses.

The most common subject of the press releases was a partnership of some kind. Of the 22 press releases pulled, 12 were either exclusively about or made mention of a partnership of some kind. Of those 12, seven were about global partnerships and initiatives. This emphasis on international endeavors and partnerships reflects the global force trend that emerged in the self-identifying language. Choosing to focus on global endeavors enables the foundation to frame itself as a global entity.

A secondary trend that emerged from the analysis was the repetitive mention of the patients and survivors. Of the pulled texts, 65 percent mentioned current, past, or future breast cancer patients. Often, mentions centered around women who were or will be diagnosed and the hope to have more survivors and/or for a better future. For example, in a release about a global partnership, the following sentence was used to convey the described message.

More than 25 million cases of breast cancer are expected to be diagnosed over the next 25 years, with more than 70 percent expected in developing countries, where cultural and economic issues create barriers to care. To address these issues, Komen for the Cure formally expanded its international work by launching a global breast cancer initiative in 2007. (Susan G. Komen for the Cure, 2008)
Instances like the one above repeatedly conveyed the idea that the foundation wants to be seen as one that cares about women and wants to make a difference.

Interestingly, however, there is a distinct lack of language about individual patients. In fact, the word “individual” is only used twice in all of the data from 2008. It was used once to thank participants in a walk and once to describe donations. Similarly, there is no use of the word “each” in terms of patients, survivors, or even anyone in a patient’s support system. The prevalence of references to the group and lack of reference to the individual frames the foundation as large and helpful, but impersonal and removed. It presents an interesting image.

The last major frame identified in this portion of the analysis is one that casts the foundation as an interested, domestic player. The foundation issued several press releases about national news or relevant current events. For example, there were releases congratulating President Obama on his victory, expressing condolences and a promise of support to celebrities who were recently diagnosed with some sort of cancer, and announcing new appointments to the foundation’s boards. Though these examples seem somewhat miscellaneous, the existence of the releases indicates that the foundation is involved in the world outside its office. The releases about the president and celebrities are particularly interesting. They show that the foundation has a hand (or at least wants to have a hand) in both Hollywood and politics. This frame once again highlights the foundation’s desire to be seen as an important leader.

2008: Comparison of Media Coverage and Press Releases

Major Similarities

For the most part, the media picked up the definitions and descriptions as put forth by the foundation. There was definitely a bit of the “telephone game” phenomena occurring, distorting the words a bit by the time they reached the general public, but the general message was
consistent. The foundation framed itself as a leading breast cancer charity and the media did the same. In this way, the foundation’s effort to establish a solid frame about itself was successful.

The second major similarity was the elevation of the foundation as the go-to resource on all things related to breast cancer or cancer advocacy. The foundation clearly wanted this status, as evidenced by the self-identification findings described in the previous section. Its efforts to earn the position as the top resource were successful, as media outlets clearly used and referred to the foundation as a major resource for information on and quotes about cancer.

Similar to its success with influencing the media’s descriptions of the foundation, Susan G. Komen for the Cure® was also successful in influencing the words and phrases used to discuss breast cancer and cancer advocacy efforts. Words like “survivor” and “fight” were particularly frequent in both the media coverage and the foundation’s press releases.

The data examined from 2008 showed that Susan G. Komen for the Cure® sought to establish a set of positive frames about itself. It sought to create an important leader frame, a global force frame, an advocate frame, and a research initiator frame. Though the data indicates different degrees of success for each frame, it is clear that the frames were solidly established. This success will be important in 2012.

Major Difference

The major difference between the Susan G. Komen for the Cure® press releases and the media coverage of the foundation was the stories themselves. The stories promoted by the foundation were not picked up by the media. The foundation pushed stories about national news and international efforts. However the media outlets covered stories about people and local fundraisers and events. It is possible that the stories being published and aired are pitched by local affiliates, but most instances did not refer to a local affiliate unless it was in reference to a
race. This could be for multiple reasons, and this inconsistency could be further explained by future research into local affiliates of the foundation. However, for the purposes of this study, the important finding is that the inconsistency exists.

**What It Means**

Susan G. Komen for the Cure® has been successful in influencing the national conversation about breast cancer, and about cancer in general. The foundation has successfully positioned itself and its employees and board members as top-of-mind resources in the discussion. Additionally, the foundation has been successful in its construction of the frame around itself and its mission.

However, the foundation was not successful in actually receiving coverage of any of its stories. Considering that one of the goals of a public relations professional writing a press release is to have the media copy the release directly into the story, this is a remarkable failure. The reasons behind this finding are unclear. As previously noted, it could be that regional affiliates are pitching stories about local people and events that are more relevant to the media outlets’ audiences. However, though this explanation would cover why the media covered what it did, it does not answer why the media did not cover the stories put forth by the foundation. Future research would be necessary to fully understand the inconsistency.

**2012: Analysis of Media Coverage of Susan G. Komen for the Cure®**

After completing the analysis of 2008, a parallel analysis was completed looking at media coverage of the foundation from January 1, 2012 to March 31, 2012. As with the data pulled for 2008, the media coverage data were gathered using the database search tools LexisNexis and Factiva. Data were pulled from both newspaper and television coverage of the foundation. The themes and trends that became apparent in this analysis centered on patterns of tone and content.
Specific content choices, word choices, and choices about the arrangement of those pieces revealed the following findings.

“Feelings of disappointment and betrayal.” Throughout the 2012 data, media spoke about Susan G. Komen for the Cure® with tones of disappointment and annoyance. It was clear that the media were surprised at the decision that had been made as well as by the fumbled retraction and reversal of the decision. The situation was framed as a major mistake as well as a betrayal.

Authors and anchors repeatedly used phrases such as “feelings of disappointment and betrayal” (Holmes, 2012), ”reinforced the disappointment” (Singer, 2012), and “a total shock and a real disappointment” (Richards, 2012). It is notable that the majority of the coverage shied away from expressing any real sense of finality of superlative judgments that the foundation was doomed. The tone was more sad than angry and of annoyance more than hatred. This finding communicates the idea that all is not lost for the foundation, and that the media decision makers likely felt it was premature to write off the foundation entirely. Or, it could mean that the media were unwilling to give up on an organization that had been one of the nation’s top charities for decades.

Additionally, in contrast to the tone of 2008 coverage, the foundation was often described with words of doubt. Donors were concerned about their funding, supporters were disconcerted about the flip-flopping decision makers, and other tones of unease and mistrust were abundant in the 2012 coverage. Multiple articles and broadcasts addressed “Brinker's daunting task… to rebuild trust in the organization” (The Reliable Source, 2012).

The shadow of doubt cast upon the foundation was a major difference between the coverage in 2008 and that in 2012. In 2008 the foundation was referred to with respect and used
as a go-to resource for quotes about cancer. Susan G. Komen for the Cure was so large and respected in 2008 that it was used as a key resource for coverage that was not even directly related to breast cancer. It owned the entire breast cancer conversation and a large portion of the general cancer conversation. In 2008, it seemed as if nothing could harm the foundation’s reputation.

The absolute trust put into the foundation in 2008 is an extreme contrast from what became evident in 2012. The public and the media were questioning the foundation and whether or not it could continue its important work. Laura Bassett described the importance of those doubts in a segment on CNN in February of 2012, “If you're a cancer charity, you have to be really careful about what you're telling people and about your transparency because people want to be able to trust you” (Bassett, 2012). Trust in the foundation was clearly shaken. Given that trust in an organization and in a brand is so important (Haefner, Deli-Gray, & Rosenbloom, 2011), the mistrust evident in 2012 could have a long-term impact on Susan G. Komen for the Cure’s reputation for years to come.

“Playing politics.” After doubt and disappointment, the next largest tone of frustration expressed by the media was an agitation about the presence of politics in the decision to defund Planned Parenthood. The foundation was repeatedly accused of making a politically motivated decision. Newspaper articles and television coverage alike accused the foundation of “playing politics with women’s health” (Lautenburg, 2012). It was quite clear that political motivation was something deemed intolerable by the media. The insult or accusation of politicization occurred even more frequently than complaints about what the decision would mean for Planned Parenthood.
This finding leads me to the conclusion that the major point of contention here was not so much the decision that was made, but the reasons behind it. Had the foundation offered a different reason, it is possible that the public relations crisis could have been avoided, or at least minimized. However, politics are often seen as so corrupt and unethical in the Unites States that any association between a perceived benevolent entity such as a major nonprofit and the controversial political atmosphere is seen as completely intolerable. Factors such as the foundation’s commitment to advocacy or outside pressure put upon its decision makers were seemingly unimportant compared with the sin of being political.

Interestingly, as time progressed the media started playing politics as well, so to speak, with the controversy. Later articles and broadcasts mentioning the issue used it as a citation supporting political commentary about women’s health or minority issues. The issue’s presence in the media was perpetuated by its usefulness as an example for other relevant social issues. Coverage such as the example below were common.

In recent months we’ve seen plenty of former friends abandon long-standing positions of support for women’s issues. First, Susan G. Komen for the cure threatened to stop partnering with Planned Parenthood on breast cancer initiatives. Then Texas Gov. Rick Perry vowed to stop accepting millions of dollars in federal Medicaid money because some of it was funding women’s health services, ‘but not abortion’ at some Planned parenthood clinics. (Stahl, 2012)

Examples such as this underline the idea that the big fascination with the foundation’s decision and subsequent reversal was the fact that the foundation in question was Susan G. Komen for the Cure®. It was almost as if the foundation had been put on a pedestal and regarded as a too-big-
to-fail organization. It’s fall, or at least falter, created a fascination factor that was too big for the media to let go for quite some time.

**A strong brand.** Continuing with the idea that the foundation had previously been put on a pedestal, it was interesting to see that, despite the massive amount of censure and criticism, the most basic components of the foundation’s brand stayed strong. Though the frequency of use of taglines and descriptors declined, when the coverage of the foundation included a tagline or a descriptor it kept to the names and descriptors it used back in 2008. The foundation was still referred to as “the leading breast cancer charity” (Evening News for March 23, CBS), “the largest breast cancer advocacy group,”(Newspaper Pulls 2012) or other similar descriptors.

It seemed that the foundation had been able to retain the halo, so to speak, of its brand. Clearly the halo had been tarnished, but it still existed. The brand had been built and nurtured to such strength that even the mighty blow of the controversy could not break it completely. This shows that building a strong brand is crucial not only to the short-term success of an organization, but also in creating a plan for a potential crisis. These findings show that a strong brand can help an organization stay somewhat afloat amidst a public relations crisis.

The foundation cemented its association with taglines and descriptors such as the examples used above years ago. For that reason, the media used those phrases to identify the organization to their viewers and readers. On the surface, it was simply a way to further name the organization, making sure the audience knew just who the coverage was about. However, a deeper analysis reveals that the use of those identifiers tempered the tone of censure a little. It clearly did not cancel out the negative tone, but it inserted a small amount of trustworthiness or positivity into an otherwise completely negative piece of coverage. The lesson here is that a
strong brand, and a strong positive message attached to the brand, could aid in surviving a public relations crisis.

Placing appropriate blame. Despite the strength of the brand, there was a clearly identifiable split between the national organization and its local affiliates. Local affiliates took out ads expressing their dissent, CEOs of affiliates resigned, and, interestingly, the affiliates made a much larger appearance during the crisis than they did in 2008. Despite their likely existence in media coverage in 2008 (walks, local stories etc.), they were rarely explicitly named.

However, in this situation, the newspapers gave a lot of explicit space to the local affiliates. For example, in an article in the Washington Post, the dissent of local affiliates was highlighted:

At Komen headquarters, where staff members have been asked to review budgets for the coming fiscal year because of anticipated revenue decreases, morale is extremely low, according to individuals familiar with the budgeting process. The chief executives of the Greater New York and Oregon affiliates, among the most outspoken in their criticism of national headquarters' handling of the controversy, are leaving. Three officials at the headquarters in Dallas have left or announced their resignations, a spokeswoman said.

(Sun & Kliff, 2012)

It seemed that the media framed the affiliates specifically as separate entities from the national organization. The exponential increase in the percentage of times affiliates were explicitly mentioned in 2012 vs. 2008 illustrated a desire to point the finger at the correct entity. This leads to another trend I will discuss later on about the refusal to completely dismiss the entire foundation and all of its work.
Still first billed. In almost all of the data, when the text mentioned the situation between the foundation and Planned Parenthood, the foundation was always mentioned first. Admittedly, in this situation an organization may not want its name to be the first mention. However, it does say something about the importance of the foundation that it was the star of the story. To expand upon the metaphor, billing order is very important in the entertainment industry. It is based upon which actor is going to earn the show/movie the most money and gather the largest audience. The billing order is an explicit declaration of who is the biggest star and who people actually care about.

The same concept applies in this situation. The controversy was almost always referred to with the name of the foundation as the lead descriptor. Different accounts called it the “Komen-Planned Parenthood clash” (The New York Post, 2012), the “Komen-Planned Parenthood controversy” (Dorell, 2012), or other variations on the same idea. Regardless of the specifics of the latter part of the name, the beginning order remained the same. This demonstrates that the foundation is the star. Fallen or not, Komen was the biggest star and the most important player in the show. Though the foundation may have preferred to have been second-billed and would have preferred not to have all the attention, the fact remains that its success in previous awareness efforts elevated it to stardom.

It also reinforces the idea that the number one story wasn’t so much about the decision, its reversal or any of the actual events, though they certainly were mentioned and important. In contrast, the biggest story about the situation was, in fact, that the foundation was involved. The public seemed to feel particularly betrayed by the organization and what was perceived as a decision that contradicted the foundation’s mission. It is an idea worth exploring that the public
outrage wasn’t so much about what had happened, though it certainly was not happy about that, but more so outrage about who had made the controversial decision.

**Social media.** The power of social media was often pointed to when texts described the catalysts of the situation and factors that fueled the fire. Howard Kurtz made the observation, “Komen Foundation moves to cut off Planned Parenthood. Twenty-four hours after it hit social networks, the media erupted” (Kurtz, 2012). This is notable because the foundation was framed as being, for the most part, inadequate when it came to its handling of social media.

Additionally, the situation was used as an example in other articles (in conjunction with KONY 12) to illustrate the social-changing power of social media. For example, in a segment in which she was speaking about Super PACs, Maria Theresa Kumar made the statement, “what is really happening is that there could potentially be a backlash against these Super PACs and negative ads on social media. Let’s not forget what happened recently with Komen” (Kumar, 2012). The media and the public know that social media is important and can be used as a powerful agent of social change, and the foundation was used as an example of what not to do. This failure contrasts directly with the foundation’s previous image as a young, hip organization. It could also have a long-lasting impact on the foundation’s reputation if the situation is brought as an example in future situations.

**Apologies.** An overwhelming trend in the coverage of the individuals at the foundation was an apologetic tone. Nancy Brinker’s apology to the public was repeatedly referred to throughout the media coverage. Some coverage framed the apology as overdue, such as “Nancy Brinker has finally apologized for the Planned Parenthood funding flap” (O'Donnell, 2012). Others included the direct quote from Brinker, “I apologize to all who are disappointed in us, and will work hard to restore your trust” (O'Donnell, The last word for February 9, 2012).
Regardless of the manner in which the sentiment was communicated, it appeared in abundance throughout the 2012 data.

This is in no way unexpected, but it is notable because the tone was picked up directly from interviews with foundation employees and the corporate statements that made up the entirety of press release texts available for analysis in 2012. The foundation was solidly framed as an apologetic entity that wanted to fix its mistake. Throughout the coverage of both 2008 and 2012, Brinker’s apology and the apologetic tone of the foundation is nearly the only message put forth by the foundation that was directly picked up by media outlets. It raises the question about whether or not the media and the public really wanted to stay angry at the foundation.

This finding supports the idea that the foundation and its commitment to a worthy cause were so highly valued in the past that the public and the media outlets were hesitant to completely dismiss the organization. Susan G. Komen for the Cure had been such a solid, good brand for so many years that its apology was received in a way that might not have been the same had it been a weaker brand. An example of an organization on the other side of the coin would be Livestrong. It was popular, but it did not have the brand strength, the ownership of the conversation, and the public trust that Susan G. Komen for the Cure did. We saw that Livestrong could not survive the failure of its figurehead, Lance Armstrong. Time will tell how well Susan G. Komen for the Cure recovers in the years following the 2012 situation, but the media framing of its apology could indicate that the foundation will survive.

**Cause above crisis.** Regardless of the negative comments about the foundation, there was often a redirect to the issue of wanting women to be healthy. Sometimes this manifested itself through an assertion that donations would go to a different breast cancer charity. Other times it was in the foundation’s own redirection of the conversation to focus on the mission of
ending breast cancer, such as the first sentence of a statement by Nancy Brinker on February 7, “Susan G. Komen for the Cure’s mission is the same today as it was the day of its founding: to find a cure and eradicate breast cancer” (Susan G. Komen for the Cure, 2012).

Regardless of its manifestation, the framing of the cause as one that should be supported was solid and consistent. As with the framing of the foundation’s apology, this finding could indicate a hopeful future for the foundation. This finding reinforces the previous brand strength idea, and the thought that Susan G. Komen for the Cure® was just too good and too big to fail.
Chapter V

Discussion

Had Susan G. Komen for the Cure recognized its brand strength and framed its explanation to focus on the cause, the backlash might not have been quite as bad. Regardless of how they framed the original decision, there would have been some pushback from the public and the media. The decision to defund an organization whose main prerogative was to help women is inconsistent with the foundation’s strong brand. I cannot imagine a way to escape that kind of dissonance without any negative feedback. However the foundation’s decision makers might have had a little more room to defend their decision if they had presented it differently.

For example, had the foundation originally come out with a statement describing the decision in terms of protecting women and strengthening the fight against breast cancer, it would have been a little more in line with the foundation’s mission. Instead, the foundation only referenced the cause and mission in later apologies. As described in the findings, that certainly helped in the recovery process, but it would have been more effective had the original message been framed in such a way instead of only the apologies.

That leads to the main takeaway of this research project – a lesson on brand strength and reputation management. The strength of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure® brand defined the foundation as one that is dedicated to, focused on, and successful at helping women who have breast cancer and working to end breast cancer forever. In 2008, the brand was almost the only correlation between foundation-produced material and media coverage. In 2012, despite the massive amount of censure and negative press, the brand remained.

In the years preceding and surrounding 2008, Susan G. Komen for the Cure had engaged in very successful reputation management techniques, and enjoyed the benefits of its success. As
Gaultier-Gaillard & Louisot described in their 2006 article, “Enjoying a good reputation yields many rewards: not least the continuing trust and confidence of customers, investors, suppliers, regulators, employees and other stakeholders, the ability to differentiate the business and create competitive advantage” (Gaultier-Gaillard & Louisot, 2006). This certainly proved to be true for the organization. Additionally, the foundation’s efforts at solidifying its brand and maintaining its reputation allowed it to become a primary and likely permanent place in the discussion of breast cancer and women’s health.

The foundation had done such a good job at framing itself as an organization with a higher calling, so to speak, even the failures of its high-level executives could not break the connection the public made between the organization and its worthwhile cause. In fact, the most negative coverage of the situation centered on the accusation that the foundation could be endangering the cause. People seemed to be more willing to forgive the failings of the top-ranking officials because they believed in what the foundation stood for.

This is important for nonprofit organizations to know. As described in the literature review, the current economic climate combined with the recent 2008 economic crash makes for a very difficult road upon which nonprofits must tread. It can be difficult to justify spending money on branding efforts, not to mention spending the time to teach employees and volunteers about what exactly branding means. However, this research study has proven that a strong brand, solidly attached to the mission of the organization has the potential to pull a nonprofit through a national public relations crisis.

Conclusion

The research conducted revealed that brand framing can be a crucial element to surviving a public relations crisis. I learned that, though semantics and specific messaging is important and
certainly have an impact upon media coverage, the overall brand strength is a key component in
influencing media frames and public perception. This is useful information both for nonprofit
professionals looking to solve a problem or avert a crisis and academics looking to understand
more about the nonprofit world and how it works.

However, as all studies do, this research study had limitations upon which future research
could be built. The study was limited to official press releases created and posted by Susan G.
Komen for the Cure at a national level. Future research could build upon this study by looking at
public relations efforts at a local level. Additionally, further research could examine coverage of
the foundation in the years following the 2012 Planned Parenthood situation to see how the
brand either continues to grow or begins to falter.
## Appendix A

### Coding Scheme

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Codes</th>
<th>Personal Story Codes</th>
<th>Organizational Speech Codes</th>
<th>Other Codes</th>
<th>Fighting Text Codes</th>
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<td>Fundraiser</td>
<td>Lay stories</td>
<td>Organizational Update</td>
<td>Health-related messaging</td>
<td>War Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Celebrity stories</td>
<td>Self-description</td>
<td>Mission-related messaging</td>
<td>Survivor Narrative</td>
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<td>Race for the Cure</td>
<td>Partnership</td>
<td>Medical Research Updates/Info</td>
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