Do You Like it On The…?: A Case-Study of Reactions to a Facebook Campaign for Breast Cancer Awareness Month

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Abstract

Awareness is a common goal of public health campaigns. However, awareness as an end goal may be counter-productive and may lead to slactivism instead of action. The purpose of the present research was to analyze reactions to the Facebook breast cancer "Do You Like it on the …"game via feedback to an article stating that the game is not cute/sexy/informative. Thematic analysis revealed several themes: Support or Disagreement with the author's points, the Game is Ineffective, the Game Spreads Awareness, and Awareness is the Beginning. The researchers suggested (1) a distinction be made between awareness and attention and awareness and knowledge and (2) campaigns should communicate specific informative messages and move beyond simply gaining attention and creating general awareness.

Keywords

Awareness, Health Campaigns, Slacktivism, Thematic Analysis

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Awareness is a common goal of public health campaigns. However, awareness as an end goal may be counter-productive and may lead to slactivism instead of action. The purpose of the present research was to analyze reactions to the Facebook breast cancer "Do You Like it on the …" game via feedback to an article stating that the game is not cute/sexy/informative. Thematic analysis revealed several themes: Support or Disagreement with the author's points, the Game is Ineffective, the Game Spreads Awareness, and Awareness is the Beginning. The researchers suggested (1) a distinction be made between awareness and attention and awareness and knowledge and (2) campaigns should communicate specific informative messages and move beyond simply gaining attention and creating general awareness. Keywords: Awareness, Health Campaigns, Slacktivism, Thematic Analysis

Awareness has long been a primary element of public relations and communications campaigns. For example, Grunig and Hunt (1984) classified publics as latent, aware, and active, with an aware public being described as recognizing there is a problem. Additionally, Rogers (2003) mentioned awareness, defined as exposure to an idea, as part of the first step toward adoption of a new concept in the diffusion of innovation model. Scholars and educators have incorporated awareness into the public relations lexicon as, at a minimum, a gateway into other activities, but also, increasingly, an outcome in its own right. For example, Lattimore, Basin, Heiman, and Toth (2012) list "increasing awareness" as an example objective in a public relations textbook.

The emphasis on awareness in public relations circles coincided with an increase in education initiatives in the health and medical fields. For example, *Media Advocacy and Public Health: Power for Prevention* outlines strategies and "the skills public health advocates need to amplify the voice of public health and ensure that the stories being told reflect basic public health goals and values" (Wallack, Dorfman, Jernigan, Themba-Nixon, 1993, pp. 2-3). Perhaps the most prominent of the initiatives are related to cancer, such as Georgia's Cancer Awareness and Education Campaign featured on the National Institute of Health website (Parker, 2004). The intersection of public relations and health initiatives has also occurred as social media has proliferated, giving rise to discussions of "slactivisim" – a criticism that people interact on social media but do not take actual action.

"Awareness" has proliferated, with more than 1,000 Facebook pages including the word "awareness" in the page name. However, a limited amount of research exists on the effectiveness of the awareness campaigns. Of course, studying "effectiveness" presumes that the campaign will have some effect in increasing awareness. Even less studied is the possibility that campaigns could have an unintended or even negative impact in the creation of "counter publics" (Pezzullo, 2003).

Hill and Hayes (2014) conducted a case study of the *Huffington Post's* publication of stories related to Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, sponsored by the American Childhood Cancer Organization each September. The case-study analyzed reactions to Childhood Cancer Awareness Month through feedback to the article published September 10, 2013, in *Huffington Post* entitled "Awareness…What a Bullsh*t Word" and found two

themes emerged from responses to the article: "Action is Needed" and "Slacktivism and Misinformation as a Barrier to Action." An additional finding was that "Personal Experience Motivates Action." The results indicated that perhaps awareness as an end goal in cancer campaigns is misdirected. The researchers recommended that "awareness months" might better be advocated as "action campaigns" and noted the need for an earnest scholarly and practically driven conversation regarding the role of awareness in public health campaigns.

While there are seemingly endless health related awareness campaigns for a variety of conditions, Breast Cancer Awareness, which was the initial focus of the Georgia initiative, is arguably the most visible campaign. In summer of 2014 for example, there were more than 1,000 groups on Facebook that included the phrase "Breast Cancer Awareness." A page entitled "Breast Cancer Awareness" had more than 4 million likes, and the "Breast Cancer Awareness Month" site had more than 400,000 likes.

Literature Review

"Awareness" is a common goal of public relations campaigns. In fact, awareness is often seemingly the main goal of some communication campaigns as can be seen through the proliferation of "awareness months" for various health and medical conditions, particularly cancer. However, a sentiment has also developed that awareness is setting the bar too low. A growing chorus is lamenting "slacktivism" and saying campaigns should include more definitive action steps. The traditional importance placed on awareness can be seen in the fact that awareness is mentioned as an initial step in some theories and models of persuasion. For example, Grunig and Hunt (1984) describe publics as latent, aware, and active. The awareness months are attempting to move people from latent, or unknowing, publics to an aware category, but the effectiveness could be suspect in that an aware public is one that recognizes a situation but is not necessarily going to take action. Additionally, Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003) mentions awareness in discussing knowledge as the first step in the decision making process. In fact, critical paths in Diffusion of Innovations Theory hold that mass media are best at creating awareness.

Awareness and Persuasion

Scholars and educators have identified awareness as an important, arguably essential, element in persuasion. Common sense seems to indicate that a person or public must be aware of an issue before forming an attitude or taking action. Early in their education, public relations students could learn from a textbook that "awareness: accepting information for the first time" (p. 56) is one of four terms used to discuss persuasion, with the others being attitudes, beliefs, and behavior. Grunig's Situational Theory and the AIDA – Awareness, Interest, Desire, Action - model provide examples of how awareness can be the gateway to enable changes of the other factors. However, the Diffusion of Innovations Theory, while mentioning awareness, leads to a more complete look at how awareness fits into a decision making process.

In the Situational Theory, Grunig (1979) identified publics based on level of involvement. Grunig and Hunt (1984) classified people into four publics based on their awareness of and involvement in an issue: Nonpublic, latent public, aware public, and active public. They proposed that an organization tailor messages to better address a particular public. While with a nonpublic, no problem exists, with a latent public, a problem exists but isn't recognized. An aware public recognizes that a problem exists but does not take action, while an active public both recognizes the problem and organizes to address it. Although

there is only one more category of public after the aware public, awareness can still be viewed as an essential gateway step toward an active public.

A consideration of the AIDA model borrowed from the advertising and marketing fields is appropriate given that awareness campaigns can include paid media tactics such as advertisements in traditional and new media. AIDA is a hierarchical model, which has caused it to be criticized for being too lock-step and not taking into account that sometimes action can be taken for other reasons than interest or desire (Moriarity, Mitchell, & Wells, 2012). Still, it provides a useful model in considering health education initiatives in the emphasis placed on awareness as an initial step leading to subsequent steps. In the AIDA model, which is often viewed as the first formal advertising model, awareness is an essential first step in getting a product or cause noticed (Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999). Any action that would follow would be based on this initial awareness that led to desire and finally taking action.

Diffusion of Innovations (Rogers, 1972) provides an explication of how people accept new ideas by going through five separate steps of a decision-making process. The steps - awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption – occur over a period of time among people in a social system and are diffused through communication channels. Diffusion describes awareness as being exposed to an idea, which is not necessarily easy or automatic to achieve given all the factors competing for attention. Mass media is identified as a "critical path" in being effective at awareness, but mass media are less effective at adoption, which is best accomplished through interaction. In diffusion, awareness is not an end in itself but leads to interest, evaluation, trial, and, finally, adoption.

In fact, in addition to the steps in the decision-making process, Rogers outlines five stages through which an innovation is adopted. These stages are:

1) *Knowledge* occurs when an individual (or other decision-making unit) is exposed on an innovation's existence and gains an understanding of how it functions.
2) *Persuasion* occurs when an individual (or other decision-making unit) forms a favorable or an unfavorable attitude toward the innovation.
3) *Decision* takes place when an individual (or other decision-making unit) engages in activities that lead to a choice to adopt or reject the innovation.
4) *Implementation* occurs when an individual (or other decision-making unit) puts a new idea into use.
5) *Confirmatio*n takes place when an individual seeks reinforcement of an innovation-decision already made, but he or she may reverse this previous decision if exposed to conflicting messages about the innovation (Rogers, 1995, p. 162).

The knowledge step acknowledges, but also questions, the role of awareness in the knowledge stage. Under the heading "Which Comes First, Needs or Awareness of an Innovation?" (Rogers, 1995, p. 162). Rogers states, "Some observers claim that an individual plays a relatively passive role when being exposed to awareness-knowledge about an innovation. It is argued that an individual becomes aware of an innovation by accident, since the individual cannot actively seek an innovation until he/she knows that it exists" (Rogers, 1995, p. 162).

The relevance of Diffusion of Innovations in researching health campaigns can be seen in the special edition of *The Journal of Health Communication: International Perspectives* highlighting "Forty Years of Diffusion of Innovations: Utility and Value in Public Health" (Haider & Kreps, 2004). The edition included an analysis of what effects mediated health communication campaigns had on behavior change in the United States

(Snyder, et all, 2004) and recommended incorporation of the Diffusion of Innovations Theory to improve health programs (Dearing, 2004). The same year, *Preventive Medicine* considered how Diffusion of Innovations might help alleviate barriers to cancer screening (Rutten, Nelson, & Meissner, 2004). These studies indicate the appropriateness of the Diffusion of Innovations Theory for studying health communication campaigns, and also point to the need for updated research on the impact of awareness campaigns.

Overview of Breast Cancer Awareness Campaigns

The current landscape of breast cancer awareness campaigns can perhaps best be viewed through social media. For example, on Instagram a search for #breastcancerawareness resulted in more than 750,000 posts. A Twitter search in summer of 2014 found more than 200 profiles included the hashtag #breastcancer as a handle or in profile descriptions. Pinterest included hundreds of "pins" displaying pink products from pink high heel platform shoes to pink awareness crosses to nail polish to hope rings. And, Facebook, in addition to the thousand plus breast cancer related pages, included the Breast Cancer Awareness page with more than 4 million followers.

Some of the social media awareness activities have been met with mixed reactions. For example, in a campaign that a Facebook described as "grassroots," women were asked to post the color of their bra as their status – just the word with no explanation (Aarthun, 2010). In another version, women posted where they kept their purses with the suggestive phrase, "I like it on the…(Hough, 2010). While a representative for a breast cancer awareness organization said her organization did not start the campaign but was "all for it" (Aarthun, 2010, p. 1), a blogger on *The Gloss* took issue with the campaign in a post with the headline "You Don't Need Facebook to Raise Awareness about Breast Cancer (Wright, 2010). The blog included a picture of a woman after a mastectomy in saying, "Breast cancer isn't cute, no matter how much pink crap they make to go along with it (Wright, 2010, p. 1). The blog and the subsequent comments provide a case study of reactions to the social media awareness campaigns for breast cancer awareness.

As the campaign entered its fourth year, Huffington Post published a blog by a woman with stage four breast cancer entitled "Breast Cancer is not a Facebook Status Game" (Adams, 2013, p. 1). The author noted that a Facebook status did little to promote awareness, and even if it did amount to some awareness, it did not lead to education. As a case in point, she emphasized that the instructions were to forward the post only to women, when in fact men can get breast cancer as well. The post received 34,000 "likes" and was shared 657 times on Facebook as well as being Tweeted on Twitter 247 times.

These examples indicate how cancer awareness campaigns have proliferated and evolved in recent years, but their history can be traced back more than a century. In 1913, the American Society for the Control of Cancer, precursor to the American Cancer Society, was established to promote educational efforts concerning cancer surgery (Aronowitz, 2007). The group began with an initial focus on breast cancer education but broadened its approach. Subsequently, groups dedicated to specific cancer types were established and proliferated. One hundred years later, more than 1,000 pages on the social media site Facebook include the term "cancer awareness" in their name. Still, breast cancer awareness remained a highly visible campaign, with a Google search for "breast cancer awareness" resulting in more than 17 million hits.

In *Unnatural History: Breast Cancer and American Society*, Aronowitz (2007) provides details of the development of cancer education in the United States from a time where it was not discussed to the seemingly ubiquitous awareness months and promotions for screenings. In the early years of the 20th Century, some surgeons were beginning to advocate

seeking surgery without delay when cancer signs or symptoms were spotted. "Spreading this educational message was the raison detre for the establishment of the American Society for the Control of Cancer (ASCC) in 1913, the organization that would become the American Cancer Society in the 1940s" (Aronowitz, 2007, p. 144). The ASCC established a Women's Field Army of more than 100,00 that went door-to-door in joint fund-raising and education efforts, encouraging women to be prompt in seeking immediate medical attention for *suspicious symptoms*, like lumps or irregular bleeding" (Orenstein, 2013), p. 1). The emphasis on not delaying in seeking medical attention or surgery has continued to be a staple in cancer awareness programs (Aronowitz, 2007).

The current landscape of breast cancer awareness initiatives was arguably launched with the Susan G. Komen for the Cure, a foundation established by Nancy G. Brinker in 1982 to honor her sister who had died of cancer at the age of 36 (Orenstein, 2013). The organization credits the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure as helping to raise almost $2 billion toward "working to end breast cancer in the U.S. and throughout the world through ground-breaking research, community health outreach, advocacy, and programs in more than 50 countries (komen.org., 2014, p. 1). In 1984, Breast Cancer Awareness Week was instituted in October, and the signature color of pink came to dominate the landscape of all sorts of products (Orenstein, 2013). Orenstein also noted that whereas in the early years of the ASCC, women were "khaki-clad *soldiers*" going door-to-door in educational efforts, now there were "millions of pink-garbed racers *for the cure*" (p. 1).

Benefits of and Challenges to Cancer Awareness Months and Initiatives

Success of the cancer awareness campaigns seems undeniable in that there is discussion where there was once silence and treatment with hope of survival where there once were few options. However, the awareness, while well-established, is not without critics. On one hand there is an increasing body of literature assessing the evidence of effectiveness of awareness campaigns, but on the other hand, some scholars and advocated question the amount of resources spent on the campaigns for the payoff – and even argue that the campaigns can be counter-productive. Additionally, there is concern that the explosion of social media has led to what is called slacktivism, where with a click followers can indicate support without investment (Sellek, 2010).

Evaluating Effectiveness of Breast Cancer Awareness and Health Communication Campaigns

Campaigns undertaken by health organizations can have a variety of purposes ranging from "simply to raise general awareness of a particular disease…to more specific goals" (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2011, p. 55). While empirical assessment has lagged behind the proliferation of the awareness campaigns, there is a growing body of literature evaluated the effectiveness of the campaigns.

Much of the assessment of health campaigns focuses on breast cancer awareness due to its far-reaching and well-publicized nature. In fact, its prominence is something of a sign of success in terms of entering public consciousness. But, beyond that, the data is somewhat mixed. As recently as 2003, a full generation after the establishment of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Catalano, Winett, Wallack, and Satariano (2003) noted that "the scholarly literature includes no assessments of the effect on the program on the actual detection of early stage breast tumors" (p. 545). Their subsequent research found an increase in the detection of tumors during quarters that corresponded to the awareness month, but, as will be discussed in more detail in the next section, they also caution and unintended costs. Somewhat similarly,

in a 2011 study of diagnoses made in November, the month following Breast Cancer Awareness Month, there was an increase in diagnoses from 1993-1995 but not in other years.

Broadening out from only looking at breast cancer, a team of researchers studied the effectiveness of multiple cancer awareness initiatives (Austoker, Bankhead, Forbes, Atkins, Martin, Robb, Wardle, & Ramirez, 2009). Their results included evidence of a modest increase in short-term awareness but not enough evidence to conclude that the awareness programs resulted in early presentation. Their results were summarized as "limited evidence" related to the effectiveness of public education campaigns. In a study of ten-years of health mass media campaigns, Noar (2006) noted that health campaigns when targeted and executed properly can have "small-to-moderate" effects.

Challenging Awareness

While the cancer awareness movements have taken hold even with limited empirical evidence of there success, some researchers and advocates have begun to challenge their benefits and even point out some drawbacks. For example, Catalano, Winett, Wallack, and Satariano (2003) noted, along with some limited positive outcomes, unintended consequences and the emotional and psychological impact that can come from false positives in early stage breast tumors. Other critics go further in calling for a resistance to the awareness movements because they distract attention from causes or have become too commercialized (Orenstein, 2013).

Pezzullo (2003) pointed out that resistance to National Breast Cancer Awareness Month is difficult precisely because of how popular the initiative is. "Because opposition to NBCAM is rarely heard, the discourse promoted by NBCAM arguably has become institutionalized as hegemonic *common sense* in the current approach to breast cancer in the U.S." (p. 346). Pezzollo credits NBCAM with raising public awareness so that breast cancer can be discussed publically but says that it has also shifted attention to screening and support rather than looking at potential causes, such as environmental toxins, which is described as "greenwashing" and "pinkwashing."

The title of Sulik's 2012 book, *Pink Ribbon Blues: How Breast Cancer Culture Undermines Women's Health*, makes a strong claim that the awareness month is not just limited in effectiveness but is also counterproductive. Sulik (2013a) took issue with the public announcement that an on-air mammogram on Good Morning America had saved a correspondent's life. In a *Psychology Today* article, she called the phrase "That mammogram just saved your life" a "false narrative." In a subsequent article, Sulik (2013b) said the GMA story spread "Heartfelt Misinformation" and that rather than looking at the complexities of the range of types of breast cancer and responses to treatments, the coverage reinforced the notion that breast cancer progresses in a linear fashion.

Breast cancer awareness is the most prominent of the initiatives, and it has arguably spawned a multitude of awareness campaigns that could also be viewed as distracting from substance of treating the disease while trying on the surface to bring attention to it. Orenstein (2013) summarized a range of issues for these movements in a cover story for the *New York Times Magazine*:

> Before the pink ribbon, awareness as an end in itself was not the default goal for health-related causes. Now you'd be hard-pressed to find a major illness without a logo, a wearable ornament and a roster of consumer-product tie-ins. Heart disease has its red dress, testicular cancer its yellow bracelet. During "Movember" — a portmanteau of "mustache" and "November" — men are urged to grow their facial hair to "spark conversation and raise awareness" of

prostate cancer (another illness for which early detection has led to large-scale overtreatment) and testicular cancer. "These campaigns all have a similar superficiality in terms of the response they require from the public," said Samantha King, associate professor of kinesiology and health at Queen's University in Ontario and author of "Pink Ribbons, Inc." "They're divorced from any critique of health care policy or the politics of funding biomedical research. They reinforce a single-issue competitive model of fund-raising. And they whitewash illness: we're made *aware* of a disease yet totally removed from the challenging and often devastating realities of its sufferers."

Social Media: Social Currency or Slacktivism

Social media has provided awareness campaigns with a convenient medium for communicating with publics. As previously noted, there are more than 1,000 pages on Facebook that include the term "awareness" in the page name. Increasing the number of "likes" on a Facebook page and followers on sites such as Twitter are obvious goals of organizations trying to reach the most people. These "likes" and "followers" can be seen as a form of social status increasingly the popularity of the campaign. *Forbes* stated that "social currency" is a term used to define how involved users are in sharing information about a brand or organization with others (Badenhausen, 2013). The *Forbes* article, however, reported a study by the marketing research firm Vivaldi that said there was more to social currency than Facebook likes. In other words, generating "likes" or "followers" would make for a suspect goal of an awareness campaign.

While references to slacktivism predate social media, it has taken on a growing role in scholarly research with the ability to hit "Like" on Facebook and similarly all but effortless activities. Kristofferson, White, and Peloza (2014) reference Davis (2011) and Morozov (2009) in defining slacktivism, a merging of the words "slacker" and "activism," as a "willingness to perform a relatively costless, token display of support for a social cause, with an accompanying lack of willingness to devote significant effort to enact meaningful change" (000). In a five part study, the researchers found evidence of slacktivism – to the point that some who publicly showed token support for a cause were LESS likely to donate money than those whose token support was private - and recommended that charitable organizations align values between a supporter and a cause to combat slacktivism.

The profile of a "slacktivist" is often seen as young people, in part because they have traditionally been the most Internet savvy (Skoric, 2012). Some have criticized the slacktivists as a "lazy generation," while others have compared clicking "like" with putting a bumper sticker on a car. The Breast Cancer Action group has argued that organizations such as Komen that have extensive corporate and commercial tie-ins are promoting "slacktivism and pinkwashing tactics" (Sellek, 2010, p. 132). Even with acknowledging the limits of slacktivism, there are benefits to online awareness movements. "One of the key advantages of digital campaigns is their ability reach a large number of people with minimal effort and at low cost, hence potentially increasing public awareness of a social or political issue/movement" (Skoric, 2012, p. 83). One on hand, as was mentioned earlier, awareness can be a gateway to action. On the other, as has been discussed, this kind of minimal if not nonexistent involvement can be pointless.

There appears to be confusion as to the role of awareness in persuasive health campaigns in terms of whether or not awareness is an end goal of campaigns or actually translates into action, given that slacktivism may occur instead of action. In other words, in the awareness campaigns, does awareness actually lead to action or function as an end in and of itself?

The present research attempts to shed a first light on this confusion through a case study of reactions to an article entitled *You Don't Need Facebook to Raise Awareness about Breast Cancer*. Research questions are:

1) What are the reactions to the Wright (2010) article, *You Don't Need Facebook to Raise Awareness about Breast Cancer?*
2) How do the respondents view the effectiveness of the "I like it on the…" Facebook game in raising breast cancer awareness?

Our interest in the effects of awareness health campaigns grew out of our reactions to a *Huffington Post* article written by Erin Santos, a mother of a child who had died of pediatric cancer called "Awareness…What a Bullsh*t Word." The grieving mother stated that awareness did not help her child live any longer but that actual action (e.g., donations for research) will save lives. One of the present authors, as a professor of strategic communication who was a public relations undergraduate major and now teaches advertising courses, had developed a growing skepticism of awareness as communication campaign objectives. She noticed how frequently "awareness" was listed as an objective in professional and student public relations campaigns. Campaign organizers could seldom identify clear targets and measurements. She came to see "awareness objectives" as a "throw away goal" – one with both a bar too low in that campaign planners could almost always claim increased awareness but also a high bar in that there were no measurable outcomes to provide evidence of the benefits of increased awareness.

Awareness became personal to the strategic communication faculty member when her mom was diagnosed with breast cancer. The diagnosis came in early fall, with follow-up appointments and surgery coming during October, which serves as Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The onslaught of pink everything – T-shirts, key chains, fundraisers, etc., - along with an endless variety of social media posts and games grew to be grating. Her mother secretly confided that she and another friend, who had been diagnosed with breast cancer around the same time, were not fans of the proliferation of pink and didn't quite understand it. Breast Cancer Awareness Month? Aware of what? That there's cancer? Fundraisers made some sense, sure. But, what exactly was the benefit of football players wearing hot pink socks?

The other author, a mother of a child with autism, who has participated in awareness walks and helped spread awareness, felt that the awareness as a public health campaign goal was limiting and could actually be counterproductive. For example, a person may repost an autism awareness image without really doing anything to help autism treatment or research. Moreover, a person could think he or she knows more about autism because he or she is aware of it but may not fully be able to empathize with people who struggle with autism in their lives in some way. For example, one author had conversations with people who thought they knew more about autism than they really did because they were exposed to mass media awareness messages though they had little to no first-hand experience with people with autism. Such well-intentioned people can come across as uninformed, unhelpful, and not at all empathic. In one instance a person told the author "there are things you can do to keep your child from acting like that" as if the author had not been raising her child and seeking out treatments. She attributed this to a limited understanding of people with autism. All people with autism are different and not all high functioning and not all respond to treatment but this is not communicated in simple awareness campaigns. Still, awareness campaigns are pervasive and taken for granted as "good" for their respective causes. However, this may not be the case. We undertake a line of research on the role of awareness in public health campaigns with the goal of making such campaigns to be more informative and effective.

The reactions to the Wright article provide another case study (in addition to Hill & Hayes, 2014, on the Santos article reactions) that may shed light on the role of awareness in public health. Although the Facebook game is not a full, strategic public health campaign, given the potential backlash against "awareness" by some people, public health campaign organizers should consider how awareness messages be perceived. The present research investigates this issue.

Method

In order to answer the research questions, the researchers employed a case study approach. Case study, as a methodology, has been defined in various ways as noted by Rowley (2002). According to Yin, case studies are well suited for "how" questions and for investigating phenomena in its real life context. Case studies are also appropriate for "new research areas" or "when existing theory seems inadequate" (Eisenhardt, 1989, 548).

Reactions to the Wright (2010) article, *You Don't Need Facebook to Raise Awareness about Breast Cancer*? was chosen for this analysis because it can be considered a "critical case" (Creswell, 2013) in which to study the issue of awareness campaign effectiveness. As stated previously, although not an official campaign, Facebook status games aim to create breast cancer awareness at a grass roots level. These games started with the bra color game. In this game, women simply posted the color of their bra in their Facebook status. This version of the game was featured on national news outlets such as *Good Morning America*. Other versions of the game have asked women to post a certain type of fruit to indicate their relationship status or where they would be traveling based on the month and year of their birth. The instructions for the games state that the game should be kept secret from men. These games, while popular, have their critics as can be seen from some of the posts to the Arthan (2010) or Nieber (2010) articles. The most provocative of these games was the one in which women were asked where they put their purses when they first get home and were instructed women to state it in the form of "I like it on the _____" in their Facebook status. Women's Facebook status' read for example, *I like it on the floor* or *I like it on the couch*. In response to this game, Wright (2010) wrote an article featuring a photo of a woman with a mastectomy stating that breast cancer is not cute nor sexy but serious and deadly.

That dataset was comprised of the 63 comments to the Wright (2010) article. The unit of analysis was the individual post. The length of reaction comments ranged from one word ("agreed") to 288 words with an average post being 85 words. The entire data set was comprised of approximately 13 single spaced pages and 5,341 words. We cut and pasted the 63 article comments into a Microsoft Word file which comprised our dataset to analyze.

We analyzed the data through thematic analysis using grounded theory procedures. A theme is a category that classifies data into discrete concepts (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) and attempts to capture the experience of the phenomenon understudy—in this case reactions to the "Do You Like it on the …" Facebook game on breast cancer awareness. We did not use software to process the data but processed it by hand. Our first step was to read and re-read the data and using "memoing" (i.e., informal reflective notes) to make comments in the margins of our first impressions to form initial categories (Singh, 1996). Memoing took the form of a word or phrase that seemed to capture the meaning of the passage. For example, the word "defending" was written next to posts that seemed to defend the author's position if the author's arguments were being attacked. The phrase "poor taste" was written next to posts that indicated that the respondent was indicating that the Facebook game was in poor taste.

Occasionally, if the authors had a strong reaction to something, it was bracketed with a reflective note. For example one author wrote, "Are donations actions? Yes, donations are tangible but when we donate do we know the value of what we gave. Where did the money

go? If we bake a sick person food we know the value of what we did." Thus, we were careful to note our reactions but our reactions are not the basis of the present paper. Next, we then read the entire dataset with our memos and conducted thematic analysis using constant comparison. Constant comparison (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) involves reading the data in order to identify similarities and differences. The similarities and differences among the posts comprised themes.

We made attempts to ensure the trustworthiness of our findings. Trustworthiness refers to the credibility of the findings. A deliberate attempt was made to consider negative evidence (Miles & Huberman, 1994) as a measure of trustworthiness Considering negative evidence means that we considered evidence that did not seem to fit into our preliminary categories or findings. We noted for example, many people agreeing with Wright's point of view. However, several respondents did not. We formed two broad themes called "Support" and Disagreement" and then we found themes that expanded these ideas into broad concepts and created a more rich understanding of the factors that seemed to underlie support for/disagreement with Wright's point of view. For example, one theme that emerged was "Awareness is the Beginning" meaning that awareness of a problem was generally helpful but that awareness in and of itself was not. Still others noted that the Wright post ironically helped to spread awareness. We discussed this under the theme of "Disagreement." We also used another procedure taken from Lincoln and Guba (1985), *clarifying researcher bias*, which entailed the use of memos and bracketing as discussed previously. In other words, we acknowledged our reactions but wanted to endure our findings were shaped by the respondents and not our own reactions.

Results

In answer to the first research question, (What are the reactions to the Wright (2010) article, *You Don't Need Facebook to Raise Awareness about Breast Cancer*?) two main themes emerged: Disagreement and Support.

Theme 1: Disagreement

Many posts expressed disagreement with the author's points or even indicated a level of "backlash" towards the author. For example, one respondent wrote, "You are a cold-hearted b*tch and that is the only awareness I'm getting from this article, you probably know nothing about breast cancer." While another wrote, "So your bad jokes throughout are totally acceptable but this in bad taste? Shut up!" Yet another person wrote, "Well, the Facebook status thing this year was about our power as women…Pull your purse and stick out of you're a** and don't insult our intelligence." Another respondent also said "You insult everyone's intelligence by assuming they treat it as a joke because of the medium of the message." Comments such as these indicate not only disagreement with Wright but also a feeling of being insulted by her article. There was also a perception the author was taking a "game" too seriously... For example, one responder wrote, "Wow. That's a lot of anger over some Facebook trend" while two people wrote, "you need to relax" and yet another respondent said "So, is something as harmless as a Facebook status really going to bother you that much?" One person indicated that the author is actually creating awareness through her article in an ironic way. This respondent wrote, "Go ahead and hate all the updates and the "nymphomaniacs" because all it is doing is creating more awareness."

Theme 2: Support

In spite of the disagreement and backlash, some responders showed agreement and/or support/defense for the content of the Wright's (2010) article. Four posts mentioned the words "thank you. For example, one respondent wrote "I just want to say THANK YOU for saying this. I find these Facebook memes entirely intolerable and I think they completely just miss the mark" while another wrote, "THANK YOU! Finally someone else wants to admit that posting where you place your purse after work (???) DOES NOT RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT ANYTHING." Two posts indicated agreement with the phrase "hear, hear" Other examples of support are, "Great read! I've been waiting for someone to share these same sentiments" and "I agree with you! This trend is just phony awareness."

In order to answer the second research question, (How do the respondents view the effectiveness of the "I like it on the…" Facebook game in raising breast cancer awareness?) all 63 comments were re-read focusing on the effectiveness of the Facebook game and awareness. Three themes emerged: T*he Game is Ineffective, the Game Spreads Awareness, and Awareness is a Beginning.*

Theme 1: The Game Is Ineffective

Some posters expressed that the Facebook game was ineffective in that is did not raise awareness. For example, one person commented, "I think if they actually had an ounce of interest to raise actual awareness they would post about, you guessed it, BREAST CANCER, not bra colors, or purses, or I'm sure it'll be shoes next year" while another wrote, "Something that is supposed to create awareness should be somewhat easy to figure out. At least when women were posting the color of their bra I was thinking about breasts. There was a clear connection between that and breast cancer." In this same sentiment, another person wrote, "Finally someone else wants to admit that posting where you place your purse after work (???) DOES NOT RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT ANYTHING. Except, of course, which window the burglar should hop through while you're sleeping. I mean, honestly, what does this tell us about the terrible, heart-wrenching murderer that is breast cancer? NOTHING. Again, thank you." Moreover, someone wrote, "I don't think the games by any means spreads awareness, and that's the real kicker. If you want to have fun memes, that's one thing, but don't use the excuse that you're raising awareness form breast cancer when the game has nothing to do with and doesn't even mention the disease."
Thus, these respondents indicate that the game to raise awareness about breast cancer involving purses had no relationship to breast cancer and did not help spread awareness of anything. As one person put it, "At least the bra thing was tangentially related to breasts." The game involving purses did not clearly connect with the subject of breast cancer in the minds of these respondents.

Theme 2: The Game Spreads Awareness

Conversely, others reported a perception that the game created awareness, which was the point of the game. For example, one person wrote, "To raise awareness of any subject it's good to keep refreshing the approach and this way it raises peoples curiosity as opposed to having it rammed in their face" while another person wrote, "but my biggest reward is seeing the smile on my mothers face when she see's "these silly little game" on Facebook and you are also contradicting if you had to google *I like it on* to figure out what something was on Facebook isn't that awareness? You looked it up and now you are aware of what it is for." Still another person wrote, "Funny, but one of my nearest and dearest friends is a breast

cancer survivor and loved the status campaign. I've had so many people as me about it and just by spreading the word, they are a little more informed of the breast cancer awareness movement." To these respondents, the novelty of these games promoted awareness since it piqued curiosity through a lighthearted approach. In addition to the game itself, one person noted that the Wright article created awareness, "The point of the status updates is to create awareness, which it has. These are the types of things that get covered by the news and talked about within our community. Even this article has created awareness, which is awesome."

Theme 3: Awareness Is the Beginning

Only one post indicated that awareness is an end in and of itself, *When all is said and done, the goal of an awareness campaign is awareness.* Many posts indicated that awareness is a first step on the way to actual learning about the disease or action and that everyone is aware that people can and do have breast cancer. One respondent wrote, "Everyone's pretty hyped up on it "causing awareness," but it seems you'd be hard put to find someone who wasn't aware of breast cancer" while another wrote, "I think the status thing is stupid, but if people were genuinely unaware of the disease it were about, I would see the point of the awareness - that people would google it or ask their friends and thus find out. But I don't think it's particularly helpful in the case of breast cancer, a disease that I think has progressed from the "awareness of its existence" stage into the "facts about the disease" stage." One person said that, " We need to go deeper. Awareness is only the first step. What can we do should be the next see more." Yet another person said, "I've always thought that "raising awareness" about things like this was stupid. Everyone is aware, we need to make them do something. Besides, how can it raise awareness when it doesn't even mention the disease." These examples indicate that for some respondents, people being aware of the disease may not mean they are be informed/educated about it per se.

A few posts provided suggestions for action. For example, one person wrote, "You know how I helped? I donated breast tissue to the ONLY healthy breast tissue bank in the world" while another wrote, "You want to do something to raise awareness? Encourage people you know to get a mammogram. Donate money to one of the cancer societies. Participate in an event, such as a Race for the Cure. If you go to church, ask your priest or pastor to make an announcement about breast cancer awareness…There are countless things that people can do to raise awareness that will actually get the word out or raise money for research." Thus, these respondents seemed to think that awareness should translate into action.

Discussion

Regarding the first RQ1 (What are the reactions to the Wright (2010) article, *You Don't Need Facebook to Raise Awareness about Breast Cancer*?) two themes emerged: *Disagreement* and *Support.* Some comments indicated agreement with Wright (2010) and even a feeling of support or gratitude for her expressing her views. However, some comments indicated disagreement and stated Wright was either being rude or was taking the Facebook game too seriously. Several comments suggested that Wright (2010) was ironically creating breast cancer awareness by writing against the Facebook game.

Regarding RQ2 (How do the respondents view the effectiveness of the "I like it on the…" Facebook game in raising breast cancer awareness?), three themes emerged: *The Game is Ineffective*, *The Game Spreads Awareness*, and *Awareness Is The Beginning*. Some comments indicated the game was offensive and/or had no connection to breast cancer. However, some comments suggested that the game was leading to breast cancer awareness

because people were talking about it. Finally, many comments suggested that "awareness" as an end goal does not translate into action and some posts even provided suggestions for action.

The results of this study suggest that when conducting awareness campaigns, grassroots or otherwise, it is important to consider the distinction between awareness and attention as well as awareness and knowledge. Awareness is a first step and major component in many decision making models such as AIDA, Grunig's Situational Theory (Grunig & Hunt, 1984), and Diffusion of Innovations (Rodgers, 1972). In AIDA awareness is a first step in getting a product noticed and in Situation Theory awareness of a problem is a means to action. In Diffusion of Innovations awareness refers to being exposed to an idea. However, in Diffusion of Innovations, knowledge is the first of five steps by which innovation is adopted. Knowledge is not defined as just exposure to an innovations existence but also refers to an understanding of how the innovation functions. The results reported here suggest that gaining attention may be necessary for eventual action but that attention needs to be linked to information or it may be have negative side-effects. An analysis of comments to the Wright (2010) post and those in a previous study (Hill & Hayes, 2014) suggest that many people consider situating awareness as an end point in campaigns and games as being counter-productive. Moreover, for some people, playing the Facebook games may a form of slacktivism in that people may think they are contributing to the cause of breast cancer but are not enacting any meaningful change (Selleck, 2010).

Thus, public health campaign planners should consider what specifically they want the public to be aware of. In the case of breast cancer awareness, the question of what specific message about breast cancer should be communicated. People are aware that people have or can get breast cancer. However, they may not be aware, for example, of the extent to which men can get the disease, the role of genes, etc. There many messages about breast cancer that the public could be potentially aware of that would be truly informative. Such information may lead to action of some kind. Other than the bra game perhaps, the Facebook games seem to have no logical connection to breast cancer and are not educational. They tell us nothing about the disease. Public health campaigns planners should be selective as to what it wants the public to be aware of.

A standard limitation in all case study research is its limited generalizability. However, our aim is to describe the reactions to a specific article about the "Do You Like it on the…?" Facebook game. Our case study research (see Hill and Hayes, 2014) is conducted in order to gain a better understanding of the role of awareness in public health campaigns. On a grass roots level via social media, we are seeing public reactions to "awareness" in various forms. A grass roots perspective may be a good starting point to eventually build theory and models that incorporate awareness in some form.

In terms of future theory building, we have some evidence to suggest that instead of the word *awareness* perhaps the word *attention* would best capture the idea that people do need to attend to a message. However, our results also suggest that people want to be informed of an issue. Thus, beyond *attention*, perhaps the next step in decision making models would be *knowledge* which could lead to eventual *action*, consistent with Rodgers (1995). Thus, the current study proves heuristic for future decision making model development.

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