

WHEN PETA COMES TO CAMPUS: A STUDY OF ISSUES
MANAGEMENT AT A LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITY

By

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Abstract: In today's world, land-grant universities no longer deal solely with those involved in agriculture. They have been charged with providing unbiased information to a population that is growing more and more diverse each day. Due to this, controversial issues that land-grant universities must face are bound to arise. Implementing the practice of issues management can benefit the land-grant university during these times. The purpose of this study was to describe the use of issues management when peta2 brought its Glass Walls Exhibit to the campus of Oklahoma State University. The study poses research questions that ask what the need for issues management was, what aspects of the event fell in the realm of issues management, and benefits that could be gained from its use. The findings for this study were determined through a qualitative research method that utilized semi-structured interviews. Finally, it was concluded that issues management could have benefitted this particular event and others like it. It is recommended that issues management be implemented into the daily practices of land-grant universities.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Setting

The 1862 Morrill Act provided federal land that states could sell to fund institutions that would “teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanical arts” (Brown, Pendleton-Jullian, & Adler, 2010, p. 9). As the public increased its investment in universities, its public demand for access to university services increased (Bishop, 1978). This was solved through the “service to society” concept developed through the land-grant university (Bonnen, 1998). According to Bonnen (1998), “The earliest successes of the land-grant university occurred in agriculture and developed into the experiment stations, the extension service, and an ever-changing set of research and extension programs” (p. 30). More than 1.5 million undergraduate and graduate students annually attend land-grant universities, which are known today as some of the leading academic research institutions in the country (Brown et al., 2010).

The unique contribution of land-grant universities is to develop knowledge and understanding (Bishop, 1978). Land-grant universities are leaders in helping quench society’s thirst for knowledge as it prepares and, often, retools itself for an economy that is under constant change (Smith, 1986). The land-grant mission has endured since its inception when the Morrill Act of 1862 was passed, yet these institutions operate in a complex public arena in which their voices can be misinterpreted or muted in the media din (Ponce de Leon & Tucker, 2011).

The history of Oklahoma State University began when legislation was signed providing for the establishment of an agricultural and mechanical college in the Oklahoma Territory (Kamm, Hanneman, & Hiner, 1990). The Agricultural Experiment Station soon followed with the basic mission of providing research for farmers (Green, 1990). To disseminate research results, Oklahoma was one of the first states chosen for the USDA's Cooperative Demonstration, with the development of Cooperative Extension soon following (Green, 1990). Today, the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources seeks to meet the challenge of serving its constituency as an institution of teaching, research, and extension (Green, 1990).

As Oklahoma State University was growing through the 19th and 20th centuries, so was a movement for animal rights. In the mid to late 19th century, organized efforts for addressing the humane care and treatment of animals started to come to the forefront (Silberman, 1988). From those efforts grew the animal rights movement. Rollin (1990) explained: "The animal rights view attempts to apply the moral notion we all share about people to animals. Though application of this ethic focused first on science, it soon extended to agriculture" (p. 3549). This resulted in the movement being the "first organized movement to challenge the livestock industry primarily on ethical grounds" (Reisner, 1992, p. 38). A key player in this movement is the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). PETA states that it is not "afraid to make the difficult comparisons, say the unpopular thing, or point out the uncomfortable truth, if it means that animals will benefit" ("Animal Rights," n.d.).

One of the most important abilities of land-grant universities is being in touch with the needs of society (Smith, 1986, p.811), and Bishop (1978) recognized this cannot occur "without confronting controversial issues." Because of this unique role of the land-grant university, it is crucial for land-grant universities to anticipate controversial issues and develop management plans to appropriately handle them (Ponce de Leon & Tucker, 2011, p.5). Parker, Greenbaum,

and Pister concluded, “A sobering scenario for the land-grant university is one in which its legitimacy and funding are questioned” (p. 17).

The mission of land-grant universities can be progressed through the use of issues management (Peppers & Sigurdson, 2011). The primary goals of issues management are early identification of issues that may have an effect upon an organization and guidance of those issues to prevent a major consequence to the organization (Meng, 1992). Ponce de Leon and Tucker (2011) pointed out that though many case studies treating particular issues and organizations in-depth exist, their findings cannot be readily generalized, and studies focused on the unique role of the land-grant university are virtually nonexistent (p. 4).

On February 28 and March 1, 2013, peta2 displayed its Glass Walls exhibit on the campus of Oklahoma State University. On these same days, The FARM Theory, a student group from the OSU College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources displayed its own exhibit. The FARM Theory exhibit promoted animal agriculture, while the Glass Walls exhibit denounced it.

Statement of the Problem

“Land-grant universities fulfill a critical role in society by generating and providing science-based information to help consumers make educated decisions about matters affecting the quality and safety of their lives” (Ponce de Leon & Tucker, 2011, p. 3). Patrick Boyle, chancellor emeritus of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, wrote, “Our universities’ most vital role is to help people develop broadened perspectives and reasoned judgments on the critical public issues we face today” (Boyle, 1993).

Land-grant universities have been charged with disseminating important, unbiased information to the public each day. These universities often handle controversial issues and

information. This study addressed problems land-grant universities face when addressing controversies while holding true to the principle of maintaining objectivity.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to describe the use of issues management when peta2 brought its Glass Walls exhibit to the campus of Oklahoma State University. The following research questions were developed to satisfy the purpose of this study:

1. What was the need for issues management?
2. What aspects of this event fell within the realm of issues management?
3. How could DASNR have benefitted from the use of issues management?

Scope of the Study

This study included students, staff, faculty, and administrators from the Oklahoma State University Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

Significance of the Study

Issues management is the daunting realization that a better way of finding, using, and responding to issues always exists (Heath, 2002). “Used responsibly, issues management can help illuminate complex social issues and bring about more deliberate and informed public decision-making while minimizing the negative consequences of rash or emotional public responses” (Ponce de Leon & Tucker, 2011, p. 10). The land-grant mission can benefit from the use of issues management (Peppers & Sigurdson, 2011). This study examined a land-grant university’s application of issues management and reactions to a controversial event on campus. This information will help land-grant universities better understand the benefits of implementing issues management as a daily practice.

Assumptions

The following statements were assumed to be true throughout the study:

1. All participants were aware of the exhibits prior to the initial interview. ‘
2. Participants’ spoke only of their knowledge of events.
3. Participants willingly participated in all interviews.
4. Participants provided truthful answers in all interviews.
5. Participants did not withhold any information during the interviews.

Limitations

This study is limited to the following statements:

1. The data collected in this study relied on participants’ memories and recollections of events.
2. The statements in this study are independent from the Oklahoma State University Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

Definition of Terms

Controversial: Relating to or causing much discussion, disagreement, or argument (Merriam-Webster, 2013).

DASNR: Oklahoma State University Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

The Division comprises the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, the Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station, and the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (DASNR, 2013).

Issues management: Issues management is a proactive approach to business that identifies issues early and influences decisions regarding them in order to prevent negative public reactions (Gaunt & Ollenburger, 1995).

Land-grant university: The land-grant universities were established through the Morrill Act, which gave legislators from each state 30,000 acres of federal land and stipulated that “income from that land be used for the endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college ... to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life” (Hanson, 1999).

PETA: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, founded in 1980, is an international nonprofit charitable organization is dedicated to establishing and defending the rights of all animals (“About PETA,” 2013).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter one described an exhibit held on the campus of Oklahoma State University by peta2 that directly and indirectly impacted the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. From this, the purpose and problem of this study were developed relating to the use of issues management at a land-grant university.

Advocacy

The question of what advocacy is can bring about a multitude of answers based on experience, knowledge, values, and agenda (Boylan & Dalrymple, 2009). According to Merriam-Webster (2014), advocacy is “the act or process of advocating or supporting a cause or proposal.” Herbert (1989) said:

“Advocacy is the act of speaking in support of human concerns or needs. Where people have their own voice advocacy means making sure they are heard; where they have difficulty speaking up it means providing help; where they have no voice it means speaking for them.” (p. 49)

Advocacy is used to challenge social injustice and to promote voice and action (Boylan & Dalrymple, 2009). The goal of advocacy is to convince people to care about an issue (Daly, 2011). The Nua Research Services Report (2003) wrote: “Advocacy, which has always existed

in human relationships, is a process of empowerment and can take on many forms. It generally means representing the view of a person or supporting them to exercise or secure their rights” (p. 7). McLeod (1997) further explained this when she wrote, “Advocacy is being willing to promote an idea or belief, embrace a cause or uphold an issue” (p. 37A).

From Advocacy to Agvocacy

Around 2009, advocacy was combined with agriculture to create the term “agvocacy” to describe the practice of advocating for agriculture (Just Farmers, 2012). According to the AgChat Foundation (2014), “Agvocacy is not about targeting any selected group, such as media or elected officials – it’s representative of ag proactively telling our story” (AgChat, 2014). Agricultural advocates or “agvocates,” as they are commonly called, strive to position the agricultural industry in a positive light and to discredit critics of the industry (Fraser, 2001).

Agvocacy is accomplished through a variety of methods, including advertisements, brochures, videos, and other promotional materials (Fraser, 2001). Social media could be considered the most utilized medium for agvocacy: “These social tools are a resource that agriculture is increasingly tapping into in order to connect with the public” (Hubbart, 2012). This includes numerous blogs and groups to assist people interested in agvocacy. An example is the AgChat Foundation, which “is designed to help those who produce food, fuel, fiber, and feed tell agriculture’s story from their point of view” (AgChat, 2014). Social media tools like this are the same tools that organizations such as PETA and the Humane Society of the United States use to protest agriculture, particularly animal agriculture (Gold, 2012). In 2012, lawyer Trent Thomas told *The Weekly Times*, “The animal welfare groups will continue to target issues where they can change public sentiments, the time is right to begin a campaign of agvocacy to refute some of the more spurious claims made by animal rights activists” (Gold, 2012).

The Animal Rights Movement

The escalation of animal rights interests can be correlated to the exploration of and activism against other social inequalities in the United States, such as the civil rights and women's rights movements (Black, 2008). According to Beers (2006), "Some of the larger sociocultural forces that facilitated the ethical consideration of animals across the Atlantic – the philosophy of natural rights, abolition and other reform movements, and industrialization and urbanization – did not thoroughly root themselves in the United States until the middle of the nineteenth century" (p. 15). This, however, would signify the beginning of the American struggle for animal rights (Beers, 2006).

"The beginnings of the modern animal rights idea can be traced back to the writings and philosophy of Henry Salt, a nineteenth-century humanitarian, who borrowed many of his premises from earlier generations of animal rights proponents" (Black, 2008, p. 124). Salt laid the philosophical foundation for animals' rights with his book *Animal Rights* and later observers credit him with establishing the right of domestic animals to be treated fairly (Guither, 1998). New York in 1828 and Massachusetts in 1835 passed the first laws banning cruelty toward domestic animals, and other states quickly followed suit (Beers, 2006).

In 1866 the organized animal advocacy movement emerged with the formation of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Black, 2008). The formation of several other animal welfare groups soon followed, including the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1870, the American Humane Association in 1877, and the Anti-Cruelty Society in 1899 (Guither, 1998).

By 1922, there were approximately 300 animal advocacy groups in the United States (Beers, 2006). As the movement grew, so did the pressure for legislative action. During the next decades, legislation to protect animals was passed, including legislation in 1948 that set standards

for shipping animals; the Humane Slaughter Act in 1958; the Animal Welfare Act in 1966; and the Wild, Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act in 1977 (Silberman, 1988). According to Beers (2006), “The period from 1945 to 1975 was a crucial juncture for the movement in terms of its monumental legislative achievements, as well as the doors those achievements opened for the subsequent and more radical generations of activists that would follow” (p. 148).

In 1975, Peter Singer, a professor of philosophy and director of the Center of Human Bioethics at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, wrote *Animal Liberation* (Guither, 1998), a book often seen as signaling the birth of the modern animal rights movement (Simonson, 1996, p. 169). In his book, Singer concludes that it is because animals share with humans the characteristic of suffering that makes the two species equal (Tuahey & Ma, 1992). Guither (1998) concluded, “For Singer, the animal rights movement is an expansion of humans’ moral horizons beyond our own species and thus a significant stage in the development of human ethics.” (p. 16) According to Beers (2006), Henry Spira of Animal Rights International, in assessing Singer’s influence, stated, “I felt that animal liberation was the logical extension of what my life was all about – identifying with the powerless and the vulnerable, the victims, dominated and oppressed” (p. 199). *Animal Liberation* has become known as the “bible” of the animal rights movement and has no doubt “played an important role in shaping the animal rights movement in the United States” (Tuohey & Ma, 1992, p. 88).

Simonson (2001) explained, “Drawing upon Singer’s writings and Henry Spira’s pioneering efforts of the late 1970s, the new animal rights groups tend to be more aggressive in their tactics, less sentimental in their rhetoric, and more radically egalitarian than their humane society predecessors about the relationship between human and non-human animals” (p. 402). According to Groves (1999), “Modern animal rights activists believe that animals should be treated as moral equals, comparing the use of animals in research and industry to slavery, and believe that animals should not be used in any way for human ends” (p. 347). Jacobsson and

Lindblom (2013) added, “The animal rights movement pursues a historically new idea for which there is, as yet, no consensus in society: that animals have the same rights in parallel with and, as an extension of, human rights” (p. 57).

On an organizational level, the animal rights movement originated in the 1980s and “often self-consciously distinguished itself from the more established and staid cause of animal welfare” (Simonson, 2001, p. 401). The 1980s will be remembered for being the “era of animal rights activist genesis” (Silberman, 1988, p. 162), when groups like the Animal Political Action Committee, Animals in Politics, National Alliance for Animal Legislation, Mobilization for Animals, United Action for Animals, Human/Animal Liberation Front, Culture and Animals Foundation, and the Voice of Nature Network all originated (Silberman, 1988). “These newer animal organizations stressed rights and respect over compassion and cruelty, engaged in direct protest and public confrontation, and advocated fundamental changes in human lifestyles, all of which distinguished them from older animal welfare groups” (Simonson, 1996, p. 187). In an effort to stimulate moral feelings and recruit members, activists began using visually and emotionally laden media and rhetoric (Jacobsson & Lindblom, 2013), as well as, celebrities and bold public events to broadcast their messages (Simonson, 1996). Animal rights activism did not stop at campaigning and advertising; arson, break-ins at research facilities, and theft of research facility materials also began at this time (Guither, 1998).

According to Guither (1998), “The animal rights movement of the 1990s built upon earlier anticruelty and animal welfare efforts, covering many issues from many different perspectives” (p. 6). As the 1990s progressed, most animal activist organizations undertook specific program goals focused on advocacy, education, litigation on behalf of animals, and stopping vivisection (Guither, 1998). Among these specific program goals was the opposition of intensive food animal confinement production (Guither, 1998). Today, the animal rights

movement is able to utilize modern technologies, such as the internet, as an additional platform for their messages (Wrenn, 2013).

PETA, peta2, and the Glass Walls Exhibit

According to Simonson (1996),

Though histories often date the birth of the animal rights movement to Peter Singer's 1975 *Animal Liberation*, the 1980 founding of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) was "in some ways more significant, as it signaled a process of ongoing, organized activism that eventually would turn animal rights into the hottest left political cause of the late 1980s and 1990s. (p. 184)

Founded in 1980 by Ingrid Newkirk, former chief of Animal Disease Control for the District of Columbia, and Alex Pacheco, formerly of the Catholic priesthood (Guither, 1998), PETA began as a "small, grassroots group and quickly became the largest, most energetic, and highest profile animal rights organization in the world" (Simonson, 2001, p. 400). With more than 850,000 members, making animal rights a hot topic of discussion has been PETA's greatest success (Atkins-Sayre, 2010).

PETA believes that "animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, or use for entertainment" ("Animal Issues," 2013). Atkins-Sayre (2010) reported, "Although it pushes for economic and political outcomes, PETA attempts to change fundamentally the way people view animals to create a groundswell of support for animal rights" (p. 311). Through public events and media coverage, PETA seeks to gain attention for its cause (Guither, 1998). In their earliest successes PETA utilized celebrity testimonials and protests-turned-media events (Simonson, 2001).

According to Atkins-Sayre (2010), “PETA is best known for media stunts such as creating spectacles in the streets, unfurling anti-fur banners at fashion shows, launching shocking campaigns comparing factory farming to the Holocaust, and producing television advertisements that end up being “banned” from the airwaves” (p. 309). Examples of this have included “throwing a pie in the face of the Iowa pork queen during the World Pork Expo; nude models holding a sign that said “We’d rather go naked than wear fur;” and an advertisement in the *Des Moines Register* comparing the slayings committed by confessed murderer Jeffrey Dahmer to the slaughter of livestock” (Guither, 1998, p. 49). Guither (1998) reported that “PETA has served as the news outlet for incidents of vandalism and laboratory break-ins, but none of its members have been implicated in any of these actions’ (p. 50).

PETA’s website states, “PETA focuses its attention on the four areas in which the largest number of animals suffer the most intensely for the longest periods of time: on factory farms, in the clothing trade, in laboratories, and in the entertainment industry” (“About PETA,” n.d.). Through its campaigns and activism, PETA encourages people to adopt vegan diets as a way to combat the use of animals for food. According to Guither (1998), Ingrid Newkirk, founder of PETA, has stated, “The livestock industry is the single most destructive problem in the U.S. Eventually, if our dream comes true, there will no longer be a livestock industry” (p. 50).

PETA operates as an umbrella organization to smaller organizations it uses to cater to different age groups (Kokinos-Havel, 2012). Started in 2002, PETA’s group aimed at teenagers and college students is *peta2* (Kokinos-Havel, 2012). “The *peta2* website targets adolescents with its “question authority” theme, featuring skateboarders, violent imagery, and street lingo for maximum appeal” (Center for Consumer Freedom, 2008). The *peta2* site lists the organization’s mission as:

We believe that it's wrong to hurt animals. They aren't dinner or clothing or anything else for us to use – they're individuals who can feel pain and suffer, just like you. YOU hold the power to make a huge difference for them and we're here to help you every step of the way. Free for all! (“Our Mission,” n.d.)

peta2 allows users to begin to “see themselves as part of the group when some shared characteristic [like an affinity for being rebellious] becomes salient and is defined as important” (Kokinos-Havel, 2012, p. 113). Peta2 lists multiple ways to promote animal rights and to learn more: advice lists PETA-friendly bands, food, and make-up choices, and message boards; videos include interviews with celebrities and undercover investigations; contests lists giveaways ranging from free t-shirts to concert tickets; and free stuff has DVDs and stickers available. The most active way of promoting animal rights on the site is through the “Street Team,” which is described as “*the* place to go for campaign updates and any tips that you need on being a better animal rights activist” (“Our Mission,” n.d.). On the Street Team page, youth can join message boards to meet other activists, find new ideas to help animal rights, complete animal rights missions to earn free stuff, and learn about new campaigns (“Street Team,” n.d.).

PETA uses peta2 to campaign against the livestock industry and factory farming in one of its newest campaigns, “Glass Walls.” The campaign is based on a statement Paul McCartney once made, “If slaughterhouses had glass walls, everyone would be a vegetarian” (“Glass Walls Petition,” n.d.). PETA used these words as inspiration to develop a video of undercover footage taken from confined animal factory operations to expose cruelty toward animals. The video is narrated by McCartney and details feelings of the animals while encouraging viewers to “leave meat off their plates” (“Glass Walls,” n.d.).

Not long after the Glass Walls video was developed, the Glass Walls exhibit was launched in the fall of 2012 as the “first factory-farming experience to put people in animals’

shoes” (“Factory Farming,” n.d.) as a traveling extension of the video. The exhibit consists of an inflatable tent that lets participants see what life is like for animals on factory farms by sitting in chairs surrounded by cage walls while watching a high-definition version of the Glass Walls exposé (“Glass Walls Exhibit,” n.d.). The barn also features panels of graphic images of animals and an actual pig gestation crate. After watching the video, participants receive a free vegetarian/vegan starter kit, peta2 stickers, and free vegan food (“Glass Walls Exhibit,” n.d.). The exhibit travels to college campuses with peta2.

“The goal of the Glass Walls Exhibit is to provide every student with the information and the inspiration they need to go vegan,” Shannon Soper, a peta2 college campaign coordinator, explained as the purpose of the exhibit (“Glass Walls Visits Georgetown University,” 2013). PETA describes the role of college campaign coordinators “using peta2’s 3-D ‘Glass Walls’ exhibit to educate college students about the philosophy and principles of animal rights as well as what they can do in their own lives to stop animal suffering” (“Glass Walls Exhibit Coordinator, 2013). Since its inception in the fall of 2012, the Glass Walls Exhibit has made appearances on more than 50 campuses across the nation (“Glass Walls Petition,” n.d.). Many of these campuses are land-grant universities and home to agricultural colleges, including Pennsylvania State University, Louisiana State University, and the University of Minnesota (“Glass Walls Petition,” n.d.).

History of Land-grant Universities

“The land-grant university evolved as an idea and then as an institution and national system over many decades between 1850 and 1920.” Representative Justin Smith Morrill, a self-educated son of a blacksmith, developed the land-grant act (Loss, 2012). According to Hanson (1999), “Morrill wanted education to change society, to reach out to the common people, and to serve the community” (Hanson, 1999). Duemer (2007) reported that Morrill wrote that he drafted

the Morrill Act with the desire to “open college doors to farmers’ sons and others who lacked the means to attend colleges then existing” (p. 136). He first introduced the land-grant bill in Congress in 1857 (Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities [APLU], 2008). The bill titled “An Act donating public lands to the several States and Territories which may provide colleges for the benefit of Agriculture and mechanic Arts” passed both houses of Congress on February 18, 1859 (Martin, 1942). President Lincoln signed the Morrill Act into law July 2, 1862 (Billings, 2012).

The original federal involvement in public education in the United States began with the Morrill Act (Hanson, 1999). Each state was granted 30,000 acres of public land, per senator and representative in Congress, to fund the universities (Billings, 2012). The Morrill Act required states participating in the benefits of the act to establish a university within five years (Martin, 1942). In 1890, a second Morrill Act permitted land-grant universities that did not include race as a factor in admissions to benefit from additional endowments (Billings, 2012). These acts resulted in well-regarded, state-run agricultural and engineering colleges, such as the universities of California, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming, as well as Iowa State, Purdue, Penn State, and Texas A & M (Hanson, 1999).

“Agricultural influence played a powerful role in the creation of the Morrill Act of 1862” (Duemer, 2007, p. 144). This resulted in a land-grant principle that many perceive as abundantly agricultural (McDowell, 2003). Recognizing the need for research as a basis for developing agriculture, Congress passed the Hatch Act of 1887, which authorized federal funding for an agricultural experiment station in connection with each land-grant institution (APLU, 2008). As agricultural problems began being solved by agricultural scientists through research, farmers became hungry for access to this research and knowledge (McDowell, 2003).

In 1914, the benefits of agricultural research were brought to the people with the passing of the Smith-Lever Act and establishment of the cooperative extension service (APLU, 2008). Duemer (2007) explained, “The benefits of agricultural education extended beyond universities, to extensions that would affect change on individual homes and farm lifestyles across the country” (p. 144). The Smith-Lever Act established what is known today as the land-grant universities’ outreach system.

At the time of the 1862 Morrill Act, 60% of the people of the nation were engaged in farming, while today, less than two percent of the population are involved in agriculture (McDowell, 2003). Today, approximately three million students attend 105 land-grant universities with less than 10% enrolled in agricultural programs, yet nearly one-third of all master’s degrees, 60% of all doctorate’s, and 70% of all engineering degrees are awarded through the land-grant university system (Billings, 2012).

The Morrill Act was “the charter of America’s quietest revolution” (Taylor, 1981, p. 37). It is credited with uniting practical training with classical studies to provide education to everyone (Hanson, 1999). According to the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, its land-grant university members enroll more than 4.5 million undergraduate and graduate students; employ more than 645,000 faculty members; and conduct nearly two-thirds of all federally-funded academic research, totaling more than \$34 billion annually (APLU, 2013).

Loss (2012) wrote, “The Morrill Act symbolizes the public trust that has given life to America’s entire educational system for the past 150 years” (Loss, 2012). In summation of the land-grant university, McDowell (2003) said, “Both by virtue of the character of their scholarship and whom they serve, the land-grant universities were established as the people’s universities” (p. 33).

Agriculture and Oklahoma State University

On December 24, 1890, Oklahoma Territory's legislature passed an act establishing the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College and the Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station ("Agricultural Experiment Stations," n.d.). The legislature placed the land-grant college in Payne County but did not specify an exact location, resulting in several towns vying for the college and Stillwater emerging as the ultimate victor (Kamm, Hanneman, & Hiner, 1990). In the fall of 1891, the Agricultural Experiment Station broke sod on 200 donated acres, predating any classroom or administrative facilities ("Agricultural Experiment Stations," n.d.). The first day of class followed on December 14, 1891, with 45 students and a handful of teachers at a local church in Stillwater (Kamm, Hanneman, & Hiner, 1990). Oklahoma A. and M. College's original role was to primarily serve agriculture (Green, 1990). The institution was "to be an *industrial* college because "agriculture is the leading industry of Oklahoma and will be so for years to come," President Henry Alvord said to the board of regents in 1894 (Green, 1990). The college was fortunate many of its beginning faculty members had attended or taught in land-grant universities (Kamm, Hanneman, & Hiner, 1990). By the summer of 1895, a curriculum, a college farm, and an agricultural experiment station had been established, and the initial steps had been taken toward bringing the results of agricultural research to the farm (Green, 1990).

The initial primary objectives of Oklahoma's "agricultural college" reflected the desires and needs of the vast majority of Oklahoma's overwhelmingly rural population (Green, 1990, p. 9). The Division of Agriculture was created in 1906 (Green, 1990). The influence of Oklahoma A. and M. College spread through the political leadership of William H. Murray in the Oklahoma State Legislature of 1907-1908, with Murray leading the charge to establish agricultural education in schools across the state (Fischer, 1988). Oklahoma was also one of the first states targeted for the USDA's Cooperative Demonstration work (Green, 1990). This early form of agricultural extension provided farmers the opportunity to hear lectures presented by faculty and

staff from agricultural colleges and experiment stations, farm journalists, and prominent farmers (Kamm, Hanneman, & Hiner, 1990). Dr. James C. Neal, the first director of the Agricultural Experiment Station, emphasized that its purpose was “to obtain a crop of information, reliable, suggestive, and practical and to disseminate that knowledge to farmers at no cost” (Green, 1990, p. 20). By 1914, agricultural agents were traveling the state on trains, disseminating knowledge to people on the farm.

In July 1914, the USDA and Oklahoma A. and M. signed an agreement creating the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (“Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Services,” n.d.). By the 1920s, Extension was firmly entrenched as part of the mission of the School of Agriculture (Green, 1990). The radio had made its way into most farm families’ homes by this time, allowing market reports and agricultural news to be heard daily. This offered a new medium for extension specialists, as well as staff members of the School of Agriculture, to reach farmers (Green, 1990).

In 1928, the Bachelor’s in Science in agricultural journalism was introduced as an interdisciplinary degree in the School of Agriculture and the Department of Publications (Green, 1990). As the demands of state farmers for faster communication increased in the 1940s farm departments were established in major radio stations, which obtained most of their “copy” from the staff radio specialist in the extension division and making agricultural journalism one of the most important tools of the cooperative extension (Green, 1990).

During the World War I era the Department of Agricultural Education was created, the Division of Cooperative Extension expanded into every county, and agricultural graduates became part of a growing trend of agribusiness (Green, 1990). Extension agents were able to bring valuable agricultural and domestic science information to farmers while indirectly guiding

youth from the farm into the land-grant university, and eventually positions of leadership in the country upon graduation (Green, 1990).

Following World War II, the Division of Agriculture was a significant contributor to the development of international agriculture (Danbom, 1992). The extension concept that had early roots in Oklahoma was brought full circle through educational programs for agriculture, science, and technology abroad by Oklahoma State University, in places such as Ethiopia, Pakistan, Thailand, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Brazil (Fischer, 1988). In 1952, Oklahoma A. and M. pledged to assist in the establishment and operation of a college of agriculture, a nationwide system of agricultural extension services, and agricultural research and experiment stations in Ethiopia (Fite, 1991). The university was evolving and expanding, and so in 1957, it became Oklahoma State University and the School of Agriculture became the College of Agriculture (Green, 1990).

The College of Agriculture's international outreach and responsibility to agriculture domestically and internationally was signified during the dedication of Agricultural Hall in 1969 when dignitaries broke a loaf of bread that was 12 feet in length (Green, 1990). Shortly after, the College of Agriculture, the Agricultural Experiment Station, and Cooperative Extension were brought together under as the newly formed Division of Agriculture (Green, 1990). In the 1980s, the institution announced it was developing a more balanced research program that would include both applied research to solving problems of Oklahoma agriculture and vital directed research (Green, 1990).

The Division of Agriculture has matured a great deal since its beginning as the Department of Agriculture in terms of program development and expansion (Green, 1990). By the 1990s, however, only 2% of the population lived on farms, requiring agricultural programs to

rise to the challenge of educating urban communities (“Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Services,” n.d.).

In 1894, only a major in agriculture was offered. Today, more than 200 academic majors are offered (“OSU Admissions,” n.d.). In 2008, a marketing campaign was launched that emphasizes the university’s land-grant mission of research, instruction, and extension with a fresh approach (“New OSU Marketing Campaign,” 2008). At the launch of the campaign, OSU President Burns Hargis said, “[This campaign] speaks to OSU’s land-grant heritage and mission. Since its beginning, OSU has worked in innovative and creative ways to solve problems and deliver solutions that have changed lives and offered lasting value to our state and our world” (“New OSU Marketing Campaign,” 2008).

As Fischer (1988) concluded:

The concepts and goals of Oklahoma State University have not changed fundamentally since the faculty and administration prepared the first comprehensive annual catalog, which expressed appreciation for the generous financial support of the territorial and federal governments and for “the great work committed” to the college, and invited young men and women to enter the institution to “learn the great lessons for a life of usefulness such as she has to teach.” (p. 276)

Land-grant Universities, Outreach, and Issues

In 1981, John F. Taylor wrote in his book *The Public Commission of the University*,

Of this only are we perfectly assured, that in the new relation of science and society there can be no such thing as a university beyond politics. A mere silence on public questions will not prove its innocence; quarantine will not prove its

loyalty. The path of a university is unavoidably a political path for the reason that neutrality is unavoidably a political role. The problem of a neutral is not how to be out of the world but how to be in it – how to be in it without being of it. (p. 29)

Of this, McDowell (2003) wrote, “According to this notion of the public commission of the university, part of scholarship is to be aware of societal issues related to the particular area of scholarship” (p. 42). Land-grant universities are primary sources of research and patentable ideas, thus holding responsibility for education and dissemination of information (Bishop, 1978). Bishop explained that land-grant universities are “concerned with the problems of people and are committed to using the knowledge of the university to improve people’s well-being” (Barrows, 1984). More and more decisions that affect people’s lives are being decided “in the public arena, through public policy decisions on matters such as international trade, farm programs, welfare reform, and education” (Barrows, 1984).

The many societal issues and developments that can affect the university require adequate responses to maintain institutional credibility (Plein, Williams, & Harwick, 2000). However, university outreach should be utilized for responses to societal issues with a high degree of public interest (Bonnen, 1998). Though universities have been charged with educating the public on societal issues, Bishop (1978) explained that the land-grant university does not benefit from becoming “embroiled in the heated controversies of the day” (p. 112). Brown et al (2010) concluded, “The key challenge is to glean maximum value from serendipitous encounters: to shape serendipity through preparedness, to decide which encounters to pursue and which to file away for possible use later, and to use the encounters to catalyze new avenues of inquiry and action” (p. 11).

“Since outreach involves an intimate embrace with society,” risks for the university and its reputation increase (Bonnen, 1998). Land-grant universities understand that their continued existence relies heavily on reputation (Abrams, Meyers, Irani, & Baker, 2010). Therefore, involvement in controversy is not recommended for researchers and educators (Bishop, 1978). As Bonnen (1998) stated, “Both the roles of societal problem solving and social critique are risky and can involve conflict over strongly held political and value beliefs” (Bonnen, 1998). Appropriate educational responses to societal issues are the universities’ responsibility to develop (Bishop, 1978).

It is important for professionals within the land-grant university, and the Cooperative Extension, to remember that the university is a public trust and they are accountable for what they express to the public (Auvermann & Sweeten, 1998). For example, an agricultural agent must be aware of the debate about surrounding the use of pesticides and environmental protection before recommending a pesticide to a farmer (Barrows, 1984). “The highest level of risk involves the ultimate step to public advocacy of a particular position” (Bonnen, 1998), and an agent must realize that his or her “technical” advice has the potential to be viewed as taking a stand a specific stand in the debate (Barrows, 1984).

It is important for the land-grant university to be able to serve one or all sides in a debate, while maintaining neutrality (Bonnen, 1998). As an institution of the public, the land-grant university must be able to relate to all social needs and be aware of those ever-changing needs (Bishop, 1978). Bishop (1978) wrote:

As a center of learning, the university is dedicated to searching for truth and making knowledge accessible to people. Its mission is to develop the intellect of people while only indirectly developing the society. The value of a university rests in the fact that it produces and tests ideas. By its nature, therefore, the

university seeks to impart a questioning and challenging attitude. In such an institution, tolerance is much more appropriate than advocacy. The university, therefore, is by its nature, better equipped to serve as a social critic than as a guide to social progress. (p. 113)

The land-grant university is obligated to protecting its integrity and will always be held accountable for its actions by society (Bonnen, 1998). It is important for the university to participate only in those roles that are legitimate for a university and benefit only socially significant issues (Bonnen, 1998).

Issues Management

Issues management developed in the 1970s as “a response strategy and early warning tool for dealing with the emergent and robust protest against business in the USA” (Heath, 2002, p. 209). On April 15, 1976, Howard Chase, an achieved public relations professional, released a new publication *Corporate Public Issues and their Management* and in it, introduced the term “issues management” (Jaques, 2008). In 1978, the Public Affairs Council defined issues management as “a program which a company uses to increase its knowledge of the public policy process and enhance the sophistication and effectiveness of its involvement in that process” (Heath & Cousino, 1990, p. 8). Chase (1982), himself, defined the activity of issues management:

Issues management is the capacity to understand, mobilize, coordinate, and direct all strategic policy and planning functions, and all public affairs/public relations skills, toward achievement of one objective: meaningful participation in creation of public policy that affects personal and institutional destiny. (p. 1)

Issues management is a core management function that is not confined to a single function or department (“IMC Best Practices,” 2013). Issues management emerged from terms such as issue advertising, advocacy communication, single-issue advertising, and controversy

advertising (Heath, 2002). “It was first and foremost a management strategy, not merely one devoted to communication or issue monitoring” (Heath, 2002, p. 209). Evaluation results inform the issues management system, which in turn advises the organization’s strategic initiatives and planning (Peppers & Sigurdson, 2011). Heath (2002) reported, “The essence of issues management is the daunting realization that a better way of finding, using, and responding to issues exists” (p. 214). According to Gregory (1999), “Issues management provides leaders with the opportunity to enhance reputation, whereas followers find that their failure to manage issues at best maintains their reputations or damages them” (p. 134).

Further clarifying issues management, Gaunt and Ollenburger (1995) determined, “Issues management is not crisis management, and the two terms should be used interchangeably” (p. 202). The two differ in the fact that issues management is proactive, rather than reactive like crisis management, and attempts to change the course of an issue before it causes damage (Gaunt & Ollenburger, 1995). Heath (1994) said crisis communication is “the enactment of control (at least its appearance) in the face of high uncertainty in an effort to win external audiences’ confidences” (p. 259). Gaunt and Ollenburger concluded, “The difference between crisis management and issues management is that in issues management corporations try to eliminate any possibility of outrage. This is done by identifying and dealing with issues as they emerge before they become public knowledge” (p.202).

Ponce de Leon and Tucker (2011) explained, “Improperly managed social issues can generate unfavorable media coverage and negative public sentiments that severely damage or destroy relationships with customers and collaborators” (p. 3). Potential issues should be identified early, and it is crucial to be cognizant of the manner in which information about an issue is collected and used (Gregory, 1999). As Kay (2013) explained, “Those involved must not only respond to issues that suddenly arise, but also construct strategies to deal with topics that

could threaten an organization's well-being and decide how to be proactive about them" (Kay, 2013).

Though issues management was developed as a corporate business practice, land-grant universities can benefit from its use since their mission requires maintaining trust and goodwill with constituents, media, legislators, and other stakeholders (Ponce de Leon & Tucker, 2011). Using issues management practices, land-grant universities can manage and direct public discourse to avoid negative sentiments (Peppers & Sigurdson, 2011). "Issues management strategies can help land-grant universities fulfill their mission if they are used to help slow and guide the formation of public opinion so that relevant facts and science-based information can be brought to light and made more transparent" (Ponce de Leon & Tucker, 2011, p. 4).

About issues management Heath (2002) wrote: "It is a way of thinking from management down and operations up. It brings many disciplines together to make the organization smarter, more nimble, and visionary" (p. 211). Hainsworth and Meng (1988) furthered that:

Issues management, then, can be best understood as an action oriented management function which seeks to identify potential or emerging issues (legislative, regulatory, political, or social) that may impact the organization, and then mobilizes and coordinates organizational resources to strategically influence the development of those issues. (p. 28)

Ponce de Leon and Tucker (2011) point out that "if issues management is to take root in the land-grant system, it must be viewed as a strategic initiative – not simply an activity to be implemented in emergencies" (p. 6). The purpose of effective issues management is to enable the public by adequately educating them about an issue, rather than just trying to make the issue disappear (Pepper & Sigurdson, 2011). Ponce de Leon and Tucker (2011) detail this involves a strategy that includes engaging the public by providing science-based unbiased information for

decision making related to complex issues and serving as the neutral facilitator of discussions of issues (p. 7). Facilitating this engagement is “entirely consistent with the land-grant mission” (Ponce de Leon & Tucker, 2011, p. 7). This can be accomplished by developing strong relationships and communication with the media, stakeholders, and all representatives of the university including students and faculty (Peppers & Sigurdson, 2011). In conclusion, Ponce de Leon and Tucker (2011) point out issues management can “advance the land-grant mission, not by enabling universities to sidestep difficult and controversial issues, but in providing a proven methodology to help deal with these issues proactively and responsibly” (p. 10).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Chapter one described an exhibit held on the campus of Oklahoma State University by peta2 that directly and indirectly impacted the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. From this, the purpose and problem of this study were developed relating to the use of issues management at a land-grant university. Chapter two builds upon this foundation with a thorough review of all related topics, including the history of the land-grant university, the animal rights movement, and PETA, as well as a review of outreach and controversial issues at land-grant universities and an overview of issues management.

Institutional Review Board

Selected participants were initially contacted to determine his or her willingness to participate in the study. Per Institutional Review Board Policy, participants were provided consent forms before the interview and collected on-site during each interview. This study was approved by the IRB with a protocol number of AG-13-11.

Research Design

“Qualitative research is concerned with the quality or nature of human experiences and what these phenomena mean to individuals” (Draper, 2004, p. 642). This type of research involves questions that ask what, how, and why rather than how much or how many (Draper,

2004). Understanding and conducting qualitative research, which does not cover statistics and numbers, is important (Watkins, 2012). Qualitative research is naturalistic and “seeks to understand and explain beliefs and behaviors within the context that they occur” (Draper, 2004, p. 642). Chase and Mandle (2001) wrote, “Qualitative research is contextual and subjective versus generalizable and objective” (p. 524). The data extracted from this study involved an experience and was best captured through qualitative research methods.

Scenario

In the fall of 2012, a College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources student attended a vegetarian’s club meeting on the campus of Oklahoma State University. At this meeting, the student discovered that the club intended to bring peta2 and its Glass Walls Exhibit to campus the following semester. Learning this, the student returned to her college and spoke with several other students, as well as faculty, about what they could do to counter-act the peta2 visit as students and advocates of agriculture. This was the initial planning for The FARM Theory exhibit, as well as the formation of the group itself.

In early January 2013, the group determined the peta2 exhibit would be on campus February 28 and March 1. At this point, it was decided that The FARM Theory would hold its own exhibit in support of agriculture. The students involved began planning the exhibit. By mid-January a DASNR staff member had heard about the two exhibits and a meeting was called to discuss the overall event. This meeting included DASNR faculty and staff, as well as the student leader of The FARM Theory group. At this meeting, the plans for The FARM Theory exhibit were detailed, which included having an area with byproduct information, a grill to provide free meat samples, and an area with other animal food products, such as cheese.

After this meeting, planning for The FARM Theory exhibit continued. The group developed educational materials that it distributed to CASNR students via e-mail and began

utilizing social media to share its cause. During this time I began scheduling pre-event interviews with all subjects. All pre-event interviews were conducted within a 10-day window prior to the event. At this time The FARM Theory exhibit was to be held February 27-28. This meant that The FARM Theory would be up one day before the peta2 exhibit and one day during the peta2 exhibit. During this this time the location of their exhibit changed, as well. Initially, the exhibits were to be across campus from each other, but at some point a change was made moving The FARM Theory exhibit across a sidewalk from the peta2 exhibit. In the days leading up to the event, poor weather hit the area and classes and activities were cancelled on campus. This led to The FARM Theory exhibit being re-scheduled to the same two days as the peta2 exhibit.

On February 28, I attended the event early in the day. The exhibits were set up north of the Classroom Building. This is right around the corner from the Student Union and a high traffic area. I toured the peta2 exhibit first. The exhibit was a blow-up red barn that you walked through. Inside there were pictures of animals in what a representative inside the tent called “factory farms.” Also inside was a large projection screen with chairs sat closely together, but separated with chicken wire. It was explained that this was to emulate how animals in, again, “factory farms” lived. The video “Glass Walls” was shown on the projection screen. It is a 10-12 minute video with an opening by Paul McCartney. There were a handful of people waiting for the video to start and as it did I noticed several students from The FARM Theory group slip in and take seats. After the video, the peta2 representatives pointed to vegan and vegetarian snacks out the back door of the barn, as well as other representatives that could tell you more about becoming involved. Several people, but The FARM Theory students stayed, so I stayed. They began questioning the peta2 representatives on facts, figures, and beliefs related to agriculture and PETA. The discussion remained friendly and I listened for a few minutes before leaving.

Outside, I picked up a few PETA brochures and a vegan cookie, and then walked across the sidewalk to The FARM Theory exhibit. The FARM Theory group had a grill set up and the

smell of cooking meat was filling the air. The exhibit was set up so that you approached the grill first. I accepted a piece of chicken and a stick of string cheese. I continued through the exhibit, which held the theme “Surviving without Ag.” This area had byproducts that the group assumed people did not realize contained animal byproducts, such as mascara. I walked through this area, but noticed that most people were getting food and then leaving. There were approximately 20 people around, most appeared to be agricultural students. This was determined by previous sightings of them at CASNR or specific CASNR or DASNR related clothing they were wearing. I was at the event for approximately one hour.

On March 1, I attended the event later in the day. This day was very windy and peta2 and taken their barn down by the time I arrived and had just a table with brochures and food samples set up. There wasn't anyone at their exhibit, excluding their representatives. The FARM Theory group had rearranged their exhibit on this day so that visitors had to walk through the byproducts information area to get to the grill. There was also a small television set up that was playing a video about working with cattle humanely. There were very few people walking around, most seemed to be representatives of the group.

All of the post-event interviews were conducted within a ten day window following the event.

Purposive Sample

“Purposive sampling is suitable for qualitative studies where the researcher is interested in informants who have the best knowledge concerning the research topic” (Elo et al., 2014). Subjects were selected according to their affiliation with the Oklahoma State University Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. The subjects selected had varying degrees of authority and status in DASNR. The sample included administrators, faculty members, key student organizers and advisers for the response, and staff members representing facilities within

the Division that could have been affected by the overall event. Thirteen subjects were selected based on their involvement with or knowledge of *peta2* and The FARM Theory exhibits.

Data Collection

Data was collected in 2013. Each participant was interviewed in the week prior to the event and after the event. All interviews were conducted in person in various locations on the campus of Oklahoma State University. Audio files were recorded during each interview and transcribed immediately following the interviews. Observations during the interviews were recorded in field notes. Documents and materials related to the overall event were provided by participants.

Interviews

Data collection techniques of qualitative research vary, but the most commonly used are interviews and observations of life experiences (Draper, 2004). According to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), “The purpose of the qualitative research interview is to contribute to a body of knowledge that is conceptual and theoretical and is based on the meanings that life experiences hold for the interviews” (p. 314). Interviewing is an important tool for all social scientists (Says, 1998).

The most common interviewing method for qualitative research is semi-structured interviews (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Typically, these are scheduled interviews conducted with a set of predetermined open-ended questions that allow additional questions to emerge during the interview (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The semi-structured interview process was used to conduct all interviews. Interviews were scheduled at times and places that were most convenient for the participants. Open-ended questions were used to allow participants to expand on all questions and for researchers to gain better understanding and clarification of responses. Each participant was interviewed prior to the event and following it. This allowed the

data to come full circle, therefore presenting a more accurate representation of the event. Participants were permitted one week to review their transcribed interview to ensure all responses were accurately understood and recorded. This step ensured data was as accurate as possible. None of the participants made changes to the transcripts.

Document Analysis

According to Erlandson et al. (1993), “Data obtained directly from statements of individuals should be checked against observed behavior and various records and documents” (p. 31). Several documentary materials were gathered related to this study that led to the verification of data. These included notes from the initial meeting regarding The FARM Theory exhibit amongst DASNR administration, faculty, and students, training materials sent via e-mail to students from The FARM Theory group, as well as a video from The FARM Theory group that was sent with the training materials.

Data Analysis Procedures

“Rigorous analysis of interview data is a necessary component of the research endeavor and is critical to the generation of good evidence” (Green et al., 2007, p. 549). According to LeCompte (2000):

The task of analysis, which makes interpretation possible, requires researchers first to determine how to organize their data and use it to construct an intact portrait of the original phenomenon under study, and second, to tell readers what that portrait means. (p. 147)

To accomplish this, researchers must take qualitative data, which is initially unstructured, and determine how to structure it (LeCompte, 2000).

Collected data must go through a methodical process of organization and classification (Green et al., 2007). There are four key steps that must occur during the data analysis: immersion in the data, coding, creating categories, and the identification of themes (Green et al., 2007). The first step of the data analysis was transcribing all interviews. This also began the first key step of data immersion. The foundation for painting a clearer picture of the issue at hand is built with immersion in the data (Green et al., 2007). Transcription began after the first interview. This gave the researcher the opportunity to begin thinking more in-depth about the data that was collected at an early stage. Through transcription, the researcher was able to get a firm grasp on the data emerging from the interviews. According to Green et al. (2007), “Having a thorough knowledge of the data enables researchers to capitalize on opportunities to broaden and diversify the sample” (p. 546).

The step of coding the data requires separation of the collected data into units and determining codes in which the units will be catalogued (Guetzkow, 1950). The unitization of the data consisted of separating the transcribed interviews into smaller units of data, consisting of phrases, sentences, and small paragraphs. Guetzkow (1950) explained, “The process of unitizing may be likened to the problem of breaking a long chain of beads into short chain segments” (p. 54). The final step of this stage consisted of removing all identifying information about the interviewee from each unit and compiling all units into a single document, where the units were then numbered. The total number of data units was 1,728.

The next step in the process of data analysis was coding the data units. Codes are different labels that accurately describe the units of data, thus requiring a strong grasp on the context of the interviews (Green et al., 2007). The goal of coding is to allow codes or themes to emerge on their own by permitting the data to speak for itself instead of predetermining codes (Draper, 2004). The data units in this study were not subjected to predetermined codes, therefore the codes were able to present themselves from the data.

After initial analysis of the data units, the researcher had separated the units into 23 codes. To add credibility to the study, a graduate assistant from the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications, and Leadership coded the units independently. The graduate assistance and I then compared and discussed the codes that each had determined. Twenty codes were finalized for the study. Working independently once again, we coded the data units a second time, this time using the finalized codes. The final step in coding occurred when we compared our second codings of the data units. All units that matched were left alone. The units that we had coded differently were discussed and a code was agreed upon. This completed coding of the units.

Trustworthiness of the Study

“Good qualitative data are as unbiased as possible” (LeCompte, 2000, p. 146). Through the utilization of specific criteria, trustworthiness can be established in qualitative research (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are the most widely used criteria for establishing trustworthiness (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Credibility

Credibility ensures that the interview subjects are identified and depicted correctly (Elo et al., 2014). Through persistent effort, credibility instills confidence in the data through accurate interpretations (Carboni, 1995). Six checks have been established to ensure credibility. The first check of credibility is prolonged engagement, which requires the researcher to become immersed in the issue being studied in order to overcome distortions or biases (Erlandson et al., 1993). By conducting interviews with all subjects before and after the event, prolonged engagement was achieved. This allowed a clear picture and representation of the event to be presented. Next, the researcher must “identify events and relationships that are most relevant for solving a particular

problem or resolving a particular issue” (Erlandson et al., 1993), therefore demonstrating persistent observation. This was demonstrated in this study, once again, through interviews that occurred before and after the event, which afforded opportunities to delve further into seemingly unimportant statements. Through the use of varying types of data, including interviews and related documents triangulation occurs (Erlandson et al., 1993). Triangulation of this study occurred through the use of interviews and the review of documents related to the event, as well as the review of The FARM Theory training video. The next criteria is referential adequacy materials, which refers to ensuring the collection of all materials related to the issue being studied to provide a richer understanding for the reader (Erlandson et al., 1993). Through the collection of documents related to the event, this was achieved. The final criteria two criteria for establishing credibility are peer debriefing and member checks. Peer debriefing is the concept of stepping away from the study at times to consult with professionals who can “provide feedback that will refine and, frequently, redirect the inquiry process” (Erlandson et al., p. 31). Peer debriefing occurred with the use of a second coder in the data analysis portion of the study. Member checks are the verification of data by those involved in the study (Erlandson et al., 1993). This was ensured through the participants’ review of their transcripts.

Transferability

According to Elo et al. (2014), “Transferability relies on the reasoning that findings can be generalized or transferred to other settings or groups” (p. 2). Transferability is demonstrated through thick description and purposive sampling. “Effective thick description brings the reader vicariously into the context being described” (Erlandson et al., p. 33) Detailed descriptions of events included in this study allow the reader to better understand the study as a whole. Purposive sampling, as described earlier in this chapter, was achieved through the selection of subjects most knowledgeable about the event. Selecting subjects with varying degrees of authority and status allowed for a more holistic set of data.

Dependability

Dependability is the consistency criteria of trustworthiness (Erlandson et al., 1993). It is the ability of the data to remain stable under different conditions and times (Elo et al., 2014). Dependability is demonstrated in this study through the use of an audit trail. The audit trail requires six categories of materials: raw data, data reduction and analysis products, data reconstruction and synthesis products, process notes, intentions and dispositions materials, and information relative to any instrument development. Data from all these categories is present in this study through interviews, researcher observations and notes, related material analysis, and notes from multiple rounds of data analysis.

Confirmability

Elo et al. (2014) explain, “Confirmability refers to objectivity and implies that the data accurately represent the information that the participants provided and interpretations of those data are not invented by the inquirer” (p. 6). Lincoln and Guba (1985) further explain, “This means that data can be tracked to their sources and that the logic used to assemble the interpretations into structurally coherent and corroborating wholes is both explicit and implicit” (p. 243). Confirmability is displayed through the use of two persons to independently analyze and code the data. A third person was used to randomize the units. Finally, the use of direct quotations in the findings lends to confirmability.

Erlandson et al. (1993) wrote, “Valid inquiry must demonstrate its truth value, provide the basis for applying it, and allow for external judgments to be made about the consistency of its procedures and the neutrality of its findings or decisions” (p. 29). Every step was taken to assure trustworthiness of this study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Chapter one described an exhibit held on the campus of Oklahoma State University by peta2 that directly and indirectly impacted the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. From this, the purpose and problem of this study were developed relating to the use of issues management at a land-grant university. Chapter two builds upon this foundation with a thorough review of all related topics, including the history of the land-grant university, the animal rights movement, and PETA, as well as a review of land-grant universities history with controversial issues, and issues management. The qualitative research method used for this study was described in chapter three. The methodology involved interviews with subjects involved with the event and a thorough analysis of the data from these interviews through unitization and coding.

Themes Generated during Data Analysis

Analysis of the data gained from the interviews associated with the study revealed 20 total themes. The themes were generated through coding of the data. Through this procedure, data units were coded according to the overall theme of the unit. This allowed the units to reveal the themes themselves, rather than forcing the units into pre-established themes. Table 1 lists the themes and their parameters.

Table 1
Descriptions and Frequencies of Themes

Theme	Description	Units
Agvocacy	Units that carry a “pro-agvocacy” tone or that speak directly of combatting anti-agriculture groups through agricultural advocacy. These units may speak directly about the use of agvocacy in the events of this study or advocacy theories that led to the development of the events.	94
Advice	Units may give advice and/or plans for future events, future CASNR groups, and/or groups on other campuses.	104
Animal Rights	Units that discuss animal rights groups, how they function, what they believe, opinions of animal rights groups, etc.	39
Communication	Units that discuss communication amongst other groups, other departments, individuals, etc.	67
Concerns	Units that discuss concerns associated with the event.	170
Evaluation	Units that make evaluations of the event	24
Expectations	Units that relate directly to the expectations of the event and discuss proposed outcomes of the event.	89
Free Speech	Units about or alluding to free speech.	26
Issues Management	Units that describe issues management, including what it is, how it can or should be used, etc.	79
Land-grant/Universities	Units that discuss university services, including the mission, role, and/or function of land-grant universities.	50
Media	Units about media, including broadcast and social media.	91
Non-Event	Units with a direct statement or tone that implies the commenter does not agree with The FARM Theory exhibit and comments or tones disagreeing with agvocacy.	22
Other	Units with statements that are off topic.	9
People Mentioned	Units that include names of people, usually associated with their role in the university.	35
Perceptions	Units that discuss the perception of the event, including what is perceived as the reason for the event.	127
Plan/Event Details	Units that discuss the event plan and details related to the event, including logistics, people, etc.	232
Reactions	Units that discuss the reaction to the event, including the, if any, emotional response to the event.	110
Reason	Units that discuss the reason for the event.	60
Time	Units that discuss the time frame of the event, including when people found out and how it affected planning of the event.	44
Training/Education	Units that discuss training and/or education that was conducted prior to the event.	54

Findings for Research Question One: What Was the Need for Issues Management?

The following themes fell under this research question: concerns, advocacy, land-grant/university, animal rights, and free speech. Findings are arranged in order of themes with the greatest number of units to the least number of units.

Concerns

This theme encompassed 170 units that described the concerns held about the event. One of the key questions that led to this theme asked what relationships could be affected by the event, if any. The statement ““Nothing we do happens in a vacuum, it always affects someone” summarized this theme. All of the statements in this theme demonstrated that many relationships could be affected, both positively and negatively. These relationships included the college of agriculture and higher administration at Oklahoma State University, PETA, livestock producers, funding sources, and the public and constituents. Nearly all of the statements expressed concern that DASNR’s reputation or credibility could be damaged, therefore damaging relationships.

One statement said, “I’m not sure that we have impressed even within our own division and with the students the philosophy of why we remain unbiased as possible and as factual as possible and as non-political as possible in many events.” This concern was voiced by the majority of statements in this theme. Statements that supported this included:

- “Because we are a land-grant university we have to be very careful in how we handle responses.”
- “There is potential for damage to our mission and how people feel about us as a source of information for their farming and other interests.”
- “It’s a much bigger picture than what maybe people who are organizing this understand”

- “It is crucial to make sure it is distinguished that these are students doing this and it is not the division of agriculture.”

Safety was another key concern that was found throughout this theme. This ranged from safety of those involved with the event itself to safety of the farms and harvest house to proper food safety of the food being served at The FARM Theory exhibit. Statements that supported this included:

- “When people’s safety is a concern and when the reputation of the division of agriculture and this university is potentially threatened I don’t think you can overreact.”
- “One thing we have to consider is we have all of our school farms and since apparently it seems PETA will be here overnight, we are going to inform the OSU Police to make sure they go through that making sure no one’s in there trying to sneak in.”

Other statements focused on the “very nature of our students choosing to engage with PETA, which is what they’re doing; they may say they’re not, but they are.” Another statement said “a little bit of a confrontational under current if not right in your face kind of thing, which is advocacy in itself” existed. While another statement said, “Advocacy is a fantastic thing, but if you’re doing it at a public institution there are certain concerns that need to be addressed ahead of time whenever these are putting together. It is important that the students involved are aware of and become aware of them earlier on.”

Concern about discord within the division and “discussion about how the college would react to the exhibit” also appeared in this theme. Statements that discussed this included:

- “There are still people in DASNR that don’t understand what we’re doing, so we have to be prepared that someone within our own community might get defensive with us. We have to not be reactive towards them.”
- “It’s not just the animal science students it’s the whole college plus its two state agencies that answer to state lawmakers and federal lawmakers. There are a lot of other interests here.”
- “There’s upper administration – they’re really leery about this.”

One statement detailed a scenario in which “some e-mails were not appropriate and that the individual sending them should have known they were not appropriate.” This scenario was further explained as a concern because “the passion of certain individuals caused them to function a little covertly on these things.”

Other concerns included the controversy of grilling next to a vegetarian event, the location of the event itself being in such close quarters to the PETA event, and the challenge of meeting the needs of all constituents.

Advocacy

This theme included 94 units. There was a great deal of disagreement amongst the statements in this theme. A majority of the statements were strongly for advocating for agriculture or what has been termed “advocacy.” “If you asked me 20 years ago, I would have never guessed in a million years that we would need to advocate for agriculture,” one statement said.

There were several statements that promoted student advocating. Statements included:

- “Students have to go out and advocate for animal agriculture.”

- “For so many years we have been on the defense, I think it will show that agriculture is being proactive.”
- “It was also good for some administrators and students to remind themselves that we are an ag university and have a strong voice here.”
- “This is a university and this is part of what we do at a university and the students have an opportunity to advocate things for things they believe at a variety of levels.”

An important facet of this theme that emerged was that The FARM Theory “philosophy had changed because initially it was just basically a preparation effort to make sure students weren’t going to be aggressive towards the PETA activists, but then it turned into “Well, we probably need to step up and do a better job of advocating for agriculture.”” Statements that emphasized this included:

- “I think that because it’s a land-grant university, because our students feel very, very strongly about agriculture and animal agriculture they feel that they need to advocate for animal agriculture and I think that’s their response.”
- “We’ve always known that OSU needed an advocacy group, but I mean really the purpose of this club was for the PETA event.”
- “We’ve gotten together and worked with advocacy leaders to come up with the best strategy to combat PETA.”

Other statements discussed concerns about OSU and advocacy. It was pointed out that “commodity groups want the division and Oklahoma State University to take more of an active advocacy stand.” One statement said, “Advocating ties into what commodity groups really want OSU to do all the time. OSU just can’t go do it and be professional and ethical.” Another statement said that “advocacy started from anger around the nation that “we’re not appreciated,

more people need to know what we do, and if they just knew what we did they would love us.”
It’s kind of that in a synopsis kind of thing. In truth, it’s not that simple.”

Reason

There were 60 units that carried the theme of reason. It was reported under this theme that the event was “a student response to a student event.” This statement was repeated multiple times throughout this theme. Statements that detailed this included:

- “Our students just want to provide the facts about animal agriculture.”
- “They . . . the students . . . decided that they needed to have a response or to advocate for animal agriculture.”
- “That they felt threatened by a group of folks who, in our students’ opinions want to shut down animal agriculture.”
- “The reason students felt that there needed to be a response was tied to a much bigger concern and that concern is about agriculture literacy and making sure that people do know something about agriculture even though they’re far removed from that kind of an environment and that’s really the big issue. This just happened to be an event coming on campus.”

These findings revealed the basic reason for the event, while others further explained the motive behind it. “When someone challenges you, then you’re going to make sure you have your best game possible,” one statement said. This response mirrored a common thread throughout this theme – a response was necessary because “there are fewer and fewer people to tell the story of agriculture, so it’s even more important to spread the word because we have a bigger audience who need to understand the importance of agriculture.” Throughout this theme, statements alluded to the idea that “we kind of went into it with the attitude that we had to represent

ourselves and our industry,” but it was noted that “we weren’t attacking PETA, but we were just sharing the other side of the story.”

One statement said, “I think that they’re doing this . . . the agriculture display . . . because of advocacy.” This prediction was supported by statements including:

- “This shows we’re actually going to step up and stand up for ourselves and be prepared for this to come instead of ignoring these people.”
- “We’re going to have our say, our best way to have our say is to counter what they’re saying at the date and time they’re doing it.”
- “This gives these students a chance to put into action what they’ve been learning the last several years.”

It was important to “recognize that this whole event is about students exploring ideas and understanding different points of view” to best understand the exact meaning of this theme. This theme was also crucial to understanding the other research questions and themes.

Land-grant/Universities

There were 50 units in this theme. “As a land-grant university, our mission was established a long time ago,” said one statement. Many statements in this theme carried a tone of pride as knowledge and understanding of the land-grant mission was discussed. This theme also included any units that pertained to university services that were not necessarily related to the university as a land-grant or the land-grant mission.

While many of the statements spoke of the different aspects of the land-grant mission, the educational role of the mission took precedent. “Our role is to educate,” said one statement. Other examples that spoke of the land-grant mission included:

- “Of course as a land-grant university we serve the people with our teaching and research and extension programs.”
- “Well, the land-grant mission is to disseminate information at the university level to the people of the state and the region.”
- “Supporting students and training students is part of the land-grant mission.”
- “What you see in a land-grant university is students are exposed to important research and outreach efforts as well.”
- “There are strong linkages that a land-grant university has across teaching and research and extension and how they impact one another.”

Many statements discussed the connection land-grant universities hold with agriculture.

- “From my perspective, a lot of the land-grant heritage is grounded in agriculture and natural resources, so we have strong ties to the agricultural community throughout the state, which is very appropriate.”
- “When we say DASNRR we also talk about our research program through the experiment station and our extension program through the cooperative extension service, which is much broader. We have both research and outreach going on not only with animal agriculture but with plant agriculture and also with natural resources.”

Still it was cautioned that this does not give land-grant universities the right or ability to take stands on one side or another of an issue. Many statements warned that there is a constant question, due to the level of emotion certain issues carry and the ties to agriculture, of “OSU, you’re the land-grant why didn’t you stand up for us?” One statement further explained,

“That is a long-standing kind of stance, it’s one that there are shades of gray on. I think you’ll find out whether or not any of the administration has different

variations in that shade. I think you'll find it's fairly uniform in the shades that we take. You may find other individuals that work within the division taking a little bit different slant or shades of gray, so to speak. I think even they understand fundamentally where a land-grant stands and why."

Another statement answered this question, "We count on the state legislature to fund what we do and also the federal government in some capacity with grant money for research and projects."

A small portion of the statements expressed the belief that the land-grant mission aided the student group in their cause. Examples of this included:

- "My first response when I found out – or reaction when I found out is, "Don't they know this is a land-grant university?""
- "As far as relationships with us being a land-grant, I think it kind of gives us a leg up I mean we have those resources and we do have a large rural and agricultural student population."
- "We'd really like people to be at our booth instead of PETA's to kind of show them that we are a land-grant school and a ag state and people are going to support us."
- "The land-grant mission would be teaching research and extension and I think again this was student driven so it focuses on teaching."

Many statements concluded that the land-grant mission could benefit from the use of issues management. Most statements demonstrated that it could with one stating, "I've not considered it in context of a land-grant university; I think any institution whether it's land-grant, private, public, non-profit, profit, should have an issues management plan for all eventualities."

Another statement said, "Issues management . . . protects the land-grant mission by allowing us to make plans for any events that might occur that would affect our research operations."

Animal Rights

This theme included 39 units. The statement “They . . . animal rights activists . . . are all different extremes, some are more extreme than others and we definitely have to be prepared to deal with the ones that aren’t very extreme and the ones that are moderate and then the ones that are very extreme,” set the tone for this theme. It was clear through the statements in this theme that all of the interviewees had been directly exposed to animal rights groups, but were well educated on the different animal rights groups, how they function, and their basic tactics. Statements in this theme demonstrated a high level of knowledge about PETA. “PETA is very organized, it’s a national organization, they notify media, they have all those contacts and all those channels and all those mechanisms,” one statement explained. A second statement said, “You never know what they . . . PETA . . . are going to do.”

It was also clear through the statements in this theme that the interviewees knew the difference between peta2 and PETA and had viewed the Glass Walls video that is shown in the peta2 Glass Walls Exhibit.

- “peta2 is the group that goes around to various college campuses.”
- “peta2 is really looking to recruit.”
- “Peta2 is really geared toward the younger audience and they have traveled with the Glass Walls exhibit to other universities and other land-grants.”
- “So that’s why they go around, that’s why they do this – to recruit. Most colleges ignore it because they recognize that’s really what it is and it’s not worth a blow up.”

Statements also revealed another layer of this theme – that it was recognized that peta2 was looking for attention.

“The peta2 display and video are designed to get an emotional response from someone without experience in production agriculture and that’s what it will do. So that’s PETA’s goal and the vegetarian club’s goal, which is fine,” said one statement, which was echoed by other statements. A few statements warned of “playing into the hands of PETA.” One statement explained, “If you have something on the line very long and I am a radical activist PETA person as opposed to the normal, more normal PETA person, I can whip up a crowd, just walk over to you. You’ve made it very easy for me to do that.”

Free Speech

There were 26 units in this theme, which discussed the rights that are granted through the First Amendment. All of the statements demonstrated that “it’s important that everyone gets to share their message.” There were several direct statements that everyone should “be heard.” This was further expounded by multiple statements.

- “We’re a university and it does seem to me to be appropriate for students to express ideas and exchange ideas on virtually any and all topics.”
- “Yes, they’re doing it, yes they’re students, they have a right to do this, we don’t want to in anyway infringe on their First Amendment constitutional right.”
- “Nobody was saying don’t do something, that’d be a censorship of First Amendment rights which, long as the student group does everything it’s supposed to do, it has every right to say whatever it wants to.”

Statements in this theme demonstrated a collective thought that the administration did not want to keep the students from holding an event. A statement explained this, “It’s not that administration doesn’t want the students to do it, because students have the right to plan things and have events, it’s just they don’t want any surprises either.” Another statement displayed disagreement with the administration’s reaction, “The administration also has to keep in mind,

too, that you know people have the right to their opinion and if they want to have an exhibit they need to have an exhibit.”

Though some dismay that PETA was coming to campus was expressed in other themes, the statements in this theme demonstrated that both student groups were well within their rights to hold events on campus.

- “It is a student group in our college that is expressing some thoughts that they have and that’s their right.”
- “It’s a student group that is on campus that has invited the PETA group on campus and that is their right.”

Findings for Research Question Two: What Aspects of the Event Fell within the Realm of Issues Management?

The following themes fell under this research question: plan/event details, perceptions, media, expectations, training/education, time and non-event. Findings are arranged in order of themes with the greatest number of units to the least number of units.

Plan/Event Details

This theme had 232 units. Units within this theme discussed the plans and event details. The FARM Theory group had for the exhibit it would be holding during the peta2 exhibit and DASNR’s plans during the two exhibits. This theme lays the foundation for a clear understanding of the event by detailing the steps to plan and deploy the event. This included details of logistics, key stakeholders in the planning, collateral used, etc.

“DASNR is not responding to PETA.” This was directly stated and reiterated throughout multiple statements in this theme. Each time this was stated, the importance of the statement became clearer. DASNR’s plan was detailed through statements such as, “DASNR’s response

involves anticipating that there might be questions from the media or the public or even higher administration regarding questions of animal agriculture, how DASNR operates, and involvement DASNR has with animal agriculture.”

Plans for an exhibit held by The FARM Theory group were first brought to light in a meeting which one statement detailed, “They wanted to create a response and at that point in time weren’t fully prepared to do that, but they had begun to put together a plan. And I think it was that plan that we were sort of discussing or being made aware of.” Several meetings “amongst management, including department heads that might be affected, and the executive group within the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources” followed the initial meeting and discussion of The FARM Theory exhibit. A statement furthered that “the dean made sure the vice president – our dean vice president – made sure that they were aware that this was happening and that we had a student activity that students were planning on the same day.”

In further reiteration and explanation of the event it was detailed that “it’s a student centered event and that’s CASNR – the College of Ag Sciences and Resources, which are our students.” Though it was said to involve CASNR, it was still made clear that CASNR is part of DASNR and therefore, not directly responding to the peta2 exhibit or the event as a whole. In regards to that position one statement explained, “CASNR is, of course the college which is part of DASNR, and CASNR and DASNR are positioned to respond to any questions that we might have to support our students and encourage our students to be quite professional in their approach to any subject they might broach.”

Most of the statements demonstrated a basic understanding of the plans of The FARM Theory exhibit. One statement best explained the basic knowledge of the event, “There are going to be students that will have a booth set up near there and will be advocating for agriculture, but it is completely a student run activity.”

Event details were explained through multiple statements including:

- “The ultimate plan was to serve food, there were a lot of things discussed, but the ultimate plan at that time was to have it the same two days and be serving food, having a number of student groups involved out of the college of ag.”
- “What we will be doing is grilling and providing free meat samples, as well as having some byproducts information and just general ag facts about what we do in our industry, so that when people who aren’t as familiar with ag come and visit we can inform them of what we really do.”
- “You know it was more perception, we just wanted to have a lot of people at our booth all the time versus people down the way at the PETA exhibit.”

Several statements demonstrated the thought in the statement, “The main thing that I saw is they . . . the administration . . . were a little caught off guard that so much planning had already been underway before they knew about it.”

Perceptions

There were 127 units in this theme. This statements in this theme characterized thoughts on a multitude of factors involving the peta2 and The FARM Theory exhibits, including the agricultural industry, PETA, and the roles of the students, university, and bystanders.

“Agriculture is a livelihood we’ve known and been familiar with growing up” was a statement that summarized a tone throughout this theme. Another statement reiterated this, “I’ve always had the thought that if Americans could go hungry for a week and understand what it’s like to not have food they would have a totally different perspective on the agricultural industry.”

This “pro-agriculture” sentiment segmented into the perspectives of peta2 coming to the campus of OSU. This was described through statements such as

- “The portrayal in the PETA video makes agriculturalists angry, it makes me angry.”
- “I mean they’re . . . PETA . . . taking people’s emotions and trying to sway how they feel and what they think about something.”
- “In a state like Oklahoma, PETA is not going to have a lot of traction, unless there is some sort of confrontation.”
- “I mean this is a land-grant university, so I really think there’s going to be more people who are on the “pro-agriculture” side, but there’s definitely people out there who have no clue what’s going on or they don’t understand production agriculture.”

Many statements characterized the event of the exhibits as a learning experience for students. Statements that supported this included:

- “I don’t view it as an advantage or disadvantage that the group invited PETA.”
- “I think the great advantage is our students have the opportunity to be on a major college campus where they are exposed to a lot of different ideas. And this is one. This is an idea . . . PETA’s beliefs . . . and this is an idea that some people have.”
- “I think that’s, again, what universities are for . . . to learn to have professional exchanges of ideas.”

As in other themes, the concept that The FARM Theory exhibit was student-planned was stressed. It was again stressed that the DASNR was not taking a stand in the event.

- “From our standpoint we’re quite pleased that the opportunity is there for students, college students, to learn and experience, participate, but the division is

such that's not a role we have to enter into a differing viewpoints of differing individuals in society.”

- “Helping the students who are involved see that their actions or the things that they choose to do reflect, even though it's a student activity reflect upon this particular college and this division.”

A variance in opinion occurred here with other statements demonstrating sentiments such as, “We need to understand that our students know what they're doing.”

A disagreement emerged in this theme regarding DASNR's feelings on The FARM Theory having an exhibit coinciding with the peta2 exhibit. This was demonstrated through several statements, including

- “The administration is glad that this effort on our is going on.”
- “You have to think of everyone you're dealing with because a lot of times the people think that everyone in DASNR is on our side with this and that they are automatically going to think this is a great thing.”
- “Even if we didn't have all of this stuff planned and we weren't going to go to these lengths to educate people, anything we did would be better than nothing.”

The final concept that materialized in this theme was the perception of issues management and the event. As noted before and in other themes, most statements agreed that the event was developed and planned with advocacy in mind. In this theme, several statements discussed the difference between advocacy and issues management. An example of these statements was. “We're in an anger angst kind of thing, which is not issues management.”

Still the majority of statements reflected the idea in this statement, “The really big piece of the benefits for the students doing a project like this for the first time helped them see the big

picture of the event - all the different groups that could potentially be affected by the event, all the different types of resources that might need to be in place in order to make an event go off well.”

Media

The theme of media touched on the concept of broadcast and social media involvement in the event. There were 91 units in this theme. Nearly all of the statements discussed research that had been conducted regarding the reaction to the Glass Walls exhibit at other land-grant university campuses. The statements based on this research concluded that there was little media coverage of the exhibit at other land-grant universities. Several direct statements confirmed this finding and explained that from the experience of other campuses; only coverage in the university newspaper was expected.

Still, many of the statements expressed the belief that there is no way to predict media coverage and that there would be media coverage would only occur if a conflict or confrontation arose. Therefore, statements discussed plans for media training. These steps were detailed through multiple statements.

- “We also developed a media kit too, and we had a few reporters come and talk to us.”
- “We were having people monitor Facebook and Twitter to make sure no one was posting bad things or could end up being a crisis on it and we didn’t really have anything like that.”
- “Different people have different levels of experience talking to the media, either in a planned way or an unplanned.”

The risk associated with The FARM Theory holding an exhibit coinciding with the peta2 exhibit echoed throughout this theme as well. Statements that expressed this included:

- “If the media finds out there’s an ag response then it gets to be what we call in the business a sexier story, it’s more appealing, it has the elements that make for good stories.”
- “That’s what I worry about because I think like I said earlier, if anybody’s going to get press it’s going to be the PETA2 people because they are dealing with the emotions.”

While the only media coverage that occurred was from the student newspaper, concern about it was expressed in the statement, “It you all the way down to the fifth paragraph to figure out it was a student group and not OSU taking this advocacy stand.”

Though media coverage was often discussed with a tone of concern in this theme, some of the statements also discussed it as a tool for positive reinforcement of the FARM Theory message.

- “We have to look at the videos and things we’ve been promoting on social media from every angle because a lot of our social media followers are agricultural people, but we want to educate those who aren’t familiar with the ag industry and we need to reach out to those and we need to figure out ways to reach out to those people.”
- “I feel that we have to be prepared and I hope that if there is media coverage that it will be equal and that agriculture will get the coverage that they need and the story will be said like it needs to be said.”

The interviewees were all still aware of the realization that “a lot of reporters coming into this situation would have no knowledge of agriculture and be on deadline.” A statement said, “You know the right sound bite and the media perspective could have a real impact on the

perception of an industry is a very responsible industry and cares about animal welfare and respects the animals that they raise. So, you know there's that kind of potential fall back."

The majority of statements still echoed the idea of the statement, "We hope to have some support, but we are preparing for the worst, but hoping for the best."

Expectations

This theme allowed interviewees to predict their outcome of the event or their expected outcome. There were 89 units in this theme. Statements that summarized this theme included:

- "I hope everybody goes in with an open mind and they don't have any perceptions going into it."
- "I hope that students, even if they don't like what peta2 is saying or the agricultural students are saying, are able to maintain themselves in a professional manner and not cause any problems."
- "I expect that our students at Oklahoma State University will realize this is a higher education campus where you have different ideas and you exchange different ideas and you respect the ideas of others - that's what I expect or hope for."

The majority of statements displayed confidence that there would not be any confrontation during the event. Several statements supported this.

- "I would be very surprised if there is any kind of confrontation."
- "We don't expect any controversy, we don't expect any confrontation, we don't expect those kind of things as a college."
- "I don't anticipate safety being an issue."

While the majority of statements expressed the thought that a confrontation would not occur, several statements demonstrated that no one was sure how other students on campus would react to either exhibit.

Most statements agreed with the statement, “I appreciate the professionalism I have seen from our students and from our administrative team and our teachers, our instructors that are involved in one way or another in this topic. I expect that to continue.” Another statement summarized, “We’re trying to anticipate any questions that might come to DASNR administration regarding our agriculture operations and how we might respond in a positive and professional way.” The majority of statements concluded that, though a DASNR plan would be ready, they didn’t expect it to be used. One statement said, “From DASNR’s standpoint, I think they were overly worried about what really was going to go on.”

It was a common consensus throughout the statements that free food samples would help bring a larger crowd to The FARM Theory exhibit.

- “I think the fact that we are giving out free food is just going to be phenomenal because even if students don’t maybe necessarily agree or want to know about our cause free food is going to attract students.”
- “I think from a non-ag student perspective we can really touch some people in regards you know to not only giving them – providing them a free sample of meat, but if we can at least draw them in to our tent then they will be able to learn quite a bit more about our industry and have that opportunity.”
- “From a visual perception to see that we’re attracting a lot of people and hopefully have more people than PETA does at their booth. Because we think that’ll just draw more people and will just kind of build on itself.”

Training/Education

The training and education leading up to the event was an important aspect of the planning of the event. This theme included 54 units. The central idea in this theme was that agricultural students were being trained to avoid confrontation. The idea of training and education was expressed in one statement, “We . . . The FARM Theory . . . first want to educate all of DASNR’s students that when being approached by the animal rights activists or any group when your around them, we have to be professional, we have to be positive, we can’t be aggressive and we have to stay as non-controversial as possible.”

It was very clear in this theme that a substantial amount of time and effort went into the training and education of all parties involved with the student response. Statement examples of this included:

- “There was a lot of, a lot of effort put in up front with our students to prep them and to make sure they were ready for anything that might happen.”
- “They handled that by working with commodity groups and national trainers to make sure they knew how they needed to handle themselves and what they needed to say in circumstances and just how to advocate correctly.”
- “A lot of my efforts have been on training fellow students to make sure that they act appropriately with these activists.”
- “I’d also met with the students and we went over media training.”

A training video developed by the students was one of the specific educational tools used for education of other students and was discussed throughout this theme. One statement described this, “We put together a training video that we asked a lot of professors to share and that’s up on our Facebook and our Twitter. It is just to show that ag students or people involved in agriculture

and that's their passion not to be confrontational, not to try to pick a fight, not to step on anybody's toes while PETA2 is here."

Statements also expressed thoughts on the importance of the training.

- "It's a good experience for club members to work together because . . . you're dealing with groups, you're dealing with bringing speakers in, you're dealing with all this educational stuff you're learning in class anyway and parting it and stretching it out beyond."
- "The students did the research to back up what their message was, there was teaching involved with the students as well, from industry as well as other professors to teach to be professional, how to act, how to maintain your composure, things like that."

A final collective sentiment in this theme was that OSU was a place for students to learn and that was happening in this situation. "It happens in life that you occasionally hear ideas that you don't agree with, that's what our students are here for, to learn how to process that," explained one statement.

Time

The theme of time detailed when interviewees were first made aware of the peta2 and The FARM Theory exhibits to be held February 28 and March 1. It also explained the timeline of the events. There were 44 units within this theme. Time was an important factor in the planning and implementation of the event.

"Basically one of the students went to a vegetarian club meeting last fall and they were told at that that peta2 the Glass Walls exhibit would be coming to the OSU campus sometime this spring," a statement explained. It was determined that meetings for the planning of The FARM

Theory exhibit began the beginning of January. The group then learned the dates the peta2 Glass Walls exhibit would be on campus in mid-January. This led to the official formation of The FARM Theory group at the same time.

Following this, the majority of statements revealed that a majority of those involved did not learn of the peta2 exhibit coming to campus or the plans for The FARM Theory exhibit until after the formation of the group, approximately mid-January. A few statements explained that the persons had heard in early January that peta2 was bringing an exhibit to campus, but were still unaware of The FARM Theory exhibit plans. Statements in this theme demonstrated that most persons, excluding students, involved were unaware of the peta2 exhibit until January and that planning for The FARM Theory exhibit was already underway when they learned of it. Examples of this include the following statements:

- “I knew we needed to find out more about this . . . the peta2 exhibit . . . , who is hosting it, what’s the exhibit, all that kind of stuff. Then shortly after that I found out our agricultural students were planning their own event to educate people.”
- “I found out PETA was coming, figured out what they were doing, then a few days later I found out that CASNR students were doing stuff – or were planning something.”

Non-Event

Though this theme held only 22 units, the statements that emerged were nearly identical. Examples included:

- “I still would have preferred they . . . The FARM Theory . . . not do anything on those days . . . that PETA would be on campus.”
- “If you’re not trying to be controversial, in terms of issues management, why are you holding it on the same 2 days?”

- “I get that students should be able to put theory into practice. I just hate it comes during a time when another group is doing the same thing on a different level or to a different audience.”

It was reiterated through statements that DASNR was not involved in either exhibit. One statement explained, “Trying to balance the line between having an educational student-led response to a student event versus helping the division see that we didn’t, it wasn’t appropriate necessarily for us to have a response as administrators or as the college to take a stand.”

Statements that supported the idea of not holding any coinciding exhibits included:

- “I think the colleges, the universities of which those colleges are a part at other institutions, actually had the right idea from an issues management forum. Don’t draw attention to it. That’s actually what PETA wants.”
- “Most colleges as I pointed out, and others pointed out throughout the meeting, tend to do nothing because it just brings attention to the misrepresentation in their video.”
- “I think my advice would be just because an event or somebody’s coming to campus, that shouldn’t make you do something different than what you’re already doing.”

The following statements summarized this theme:

- “Actually taking, again this fine line thing, a position about people’s consumption preferences is not part of our mission.
- “We . . . DASNR and OSU . . . get public monies; we’re not allowed to do that . . . advocate. It’s against the law.”

Findings for Research Question Three: How Could DASNR Have Benefitted from the Use of Issues Management?

The following themes fell under this research question: evaluation, reactions, advice/future, issues management, and communication. Findings are arranged in order of themes with the greatest number of units to the least number of units.

Evaluation

There were 24 units in this theme. This theme again demonstrated disagreement amongst the statements. A large portion of the statements concluded that the event went well.

- “I think it went off better than we could have every imagined and we were really pleased with the outcome.”
- “I think the students did an excellent job, not just because the event in a sense went well but because they carried something through you know to the end.”
- “Nothing should have been done differently”
- “We did our own version of the extension and were able to really get out there and teach people things.”

Several other statements expressed uncertainty of the success of the event.

- “We were reactive.”
- “It came off really well and not a lot of people knew that it was a reactive event, but looking back I think we could have been, we could have done some things better had we been able to plan it ourselves and have it, instead of having to work around like the PETA event.”

- “I haven’t heard a good amount of assessment of just how much attention paid to the displays and the information that were being put out by the FARM Theory group, as opposed to getting something to eat.”
- “The majority of people were there for the free food and we need to find effective ways to get them to take note of things.”

A smaller portion of the statements did not consider the event a success at all.

- “The perceived success and favored response by outside groups that were just pleased as punch.”
- “As I said, the students are nice people, they were great people, but boy did they overlook a lot.”
- “Their stated goal of FARM Theory is to promote, market, increase awareness about agriculture and its role in society. I’m not so sure they really did much about that at all and they won’t with one event.”

The concept of issues management versus advocacy was discussed in several statements. A statement said, “There was some effort put into that, a lot of thought put into that, but the advocacy part trumped the issues management part.” Another statement explained, “From the advocacy standpoint it probably did what they wanted it to do, but from an issues management standpoint it leaves some things to be desired.”

This idea seemed to be confirmed by other statements in this theme such as, “This was really a good event just to get started on the advocacy thing” and “We should already be practicing advocacy.”

Reactions

This theme contained 110 units. This theme encompassed reactions to several different aspects of the event including peta2's reaction to The FARM Theory exhibit, stakeholders' reactions, and interview subjects' reactions. Several statements demonstrated that peta2 was surprised to see The FARM Theory exhibit. "When the day was over the people who were there representing PETA came over and went through the exhibit and even they were surprised and some of the things they had found and I think they even took some things away," one statement said. Statements also demonstrated that a majority of the non-agricultural students that passed through the booth reacted in much the same way, "They were surprised at what all products they use every day that use animal products."

Nearly all of the statements agreed with the statement, "Basically, the overwhelming concept seemed to be "Oh, free food!" by students, which is a great way that you can often get people interested."

Statements in this theme revealed that no controversy or confrontation occurred between the two exhibits. Many of statements expressed a pleasant reaction to the outcome of the overall event. "I just think that the fact that our generation is stepping up and doing this is important. I think we need to continue to do that," noted one statement. Other statements expressed pride in the students involved with The FARM Theory exhibit.

Still, there was a hint of discord in this theme. Statements that demonstrated this included:

- "It has made the students realize that not everybody's in their corner."
- "I think the challenges that some administrators and people were worried about were never there."
- "I have come to realize that CASNR or DASNR has a separate view."

- “See they . . . The FARM Theory . . . could have lost, they got lucky.”
- “They’ve just been patted on the head and slapped on the back and all these wonderful things, that you guys are just great because they’ve tied into this wish . . . of commodity groups . . . that Oklahoma State University lend its weight of its name.”

Advice

This theme contained 104 units and ranged from advice on logistics of the event to planning of the event. Many of the statements offered advice for bettering The FARM Theory exhibit by stockpiling meat so that it didn’t run out and improving the products and signs that were displayed. The most significant findings in this theme, though, related to the planning of the exhibit itself. The most important statement that was repeated throughout was to “communicate what you are doing earlier.” Many other statements supported this:

- “Individuals within your organization, who become aware of these types of events, need to share that knowledge rather than forging ahead with a narrow group that does the planning and involvement.”
- “Advocacy is a fantastic thing, but if you’re doing it at a public institution there are certain concerns that need to be addressed ahead of time whenever these are putting together. It is important that the students involved are aware of and become aware of them earlier on.”
- “The students could have informed administration earlier.”
- “In terms of advice I would talk to them about the importance of communication and, if they have an agricultural communications unit, involving them in particular because they are in the practice of communicating outside just the academic realm.”

Another significant thought that emerged from a majority of statements was to be proactive. Statements that supported this included:

- “For future events I think it’s really important to be proactive instead of having to be reactive.”
- “I would say don’t wait until there’s an event to tell your story.”
- “It’s important to have an event, but it doesn’t just stop after an event – it should continue all semester.”

Other significant findings included advice to start planning early, communicate, and not to overreact. Several statements displayed the concept of finding ways to engage students on the mission of land-grant universities. One statement demonstrated this, “Provide context for students to be able to understand what they need to think about as they decide what to do or not do about having an event like this on their campus.”

It was also advised by several statements in this theme for an issues management plan to be developed and implemented, as well as identifying key people and getting them involved quickly. A statement reflected, “I think is something moving forward, and even as we look back on it there’s probably some key stakeholders we didn’t reach out to and I think that’s kind of a shame, but looking forward we need to make sure we get those people and have those people for a little longer.”

Issues Management

This theme included 79 units. The statement, “You’ve got to be ready for anything that might happen; you know the best case scenario is you know everything is going to be fine, the student group does their display, PETA does their display and we don’t have any controversy,” summarized the tone of this theme.

It was clear in this theme that there existed several levels of understanding of issues management. There were a few statements that demonstrated a high level of familiarity with issues management and its goal and practices. Several more statements demonstrated an awareness of issues management, but a very basic knowledge. Other statements revealed no knowledge of issues management, its definition, practices, or goals. It was noted that statements revealing little to no understanding of the issues management practice at times used the term interchangeably with “crisis management.”

Statements that expressed clear, definitive understandings of issues management thoroughly described issues management. These statements presented a clear picture of the purpose and goal of issues management, including:

- “Issues management needs to be a living, breathing thing.”
- “It’s important because it helps you refine your message.”
- “It’s beneficial for understanding how all the players interact.”
- “I guess you could say gets the right people to the table faster.”

Several interviewees noted that there was confusion between advocacy and issues management. Statements that discussed this included:

- “Issues management when you boil it down is thinking of everything possible that can happen good and bad and planning for it accordingly, you can always back up if you don’t need it, it’s tough to go forward if you don’t have it and that really wasn’t happening.”
- “It . . . The FARM Theory exhibit . . . was done with an eye towards advocacy and less of an eye towards issues management.”

Aspects of The FARM Theory exhibit that conflicted with issues management were pointed out in several statements. These aspects were said to be the location that was too close to the peta2 exhibit to prevent any confrontation and the timing which was said to have been better to do something the whole semester, rather than just during the peta2 exhibit.

Nearly all of the statements agreed that The FARM Theory group could benefit from the development and implementation of an issues management plan.

- “From an issues management perspective, if they are going to continue to do these types of things and The FARM Theory is actually going to become part of CASNR groups working together here and then promoting it at other institutions, which they’ve stated they want to do, they need to develop and have in hand an issues management plan that they can pass out as an example to those other institutions and their student groups.”
- “I think . . . developing an issues management plan . . . is something that we are going to need to do, especially as The FARM Theory gets bigger.”

Several of the interviewees discussed the importance of issues management in terms of communication. “An issues management plan really helps you see how the pieces are interrelated and the importance of the role that each group would play and how we need to communicate with one another,” said one statement. As another described that “it facilitates communication and makes people aware that they do need to communicate, keep everyone informed of what they are doing.”

The overall sentiment of the statements agreed with the statement, “The issues management plan would have been the next logical step because it is not just crisis – don’t wait for the crisis.”

Communication

This theme, and its 67 units, revealed some of the most significant findings. In this theme, nearly all of the statements agreed that communication is critical. Nearly all of the statements in this theme discussed the lack of communication between the students and the administration in the beginning phases of The FARM Theory exhibit development. Statements that demonstrated this included:

- “I saw it as a student event, a student activity on campus and so I didn’t think about who might be communicating with the dean in terms of outside groups about their concern about these events and what the college or the division was doing.”
- “We all, in our organization – in this case DASNR, need to strive to communicate.”
- “I just think the importance of communicating, you know talking about it early on and coming up with the direction that you want to go early on and keeping everybody in the loop.”
- “Not everybody needs to be involved in the plan, but everybody needs to be aware.”
- “Communicating is important on small issues, as well as something potentially big like this event.”

This theme revealed a common sentiment displayed in the statement, “It was at the . . . initial . . . meeting that the Division decided they wanted to know more about what the students were doing and what was going to be communicated and . . . thought . . . maybe we should be more aware of that.” Another statement said:

“There’s a teachable side, too. Not just . . . that the Division . . . wanted to know what they are going to do at the event, but rather understanding that they have a responsibility to communicate, not to conform you know to any suggestions that were made necessarily from DASNR, but to communicate with us just as they would communicate with one another and so that we’re aware of what their activities are going to be and how they’re presenting their information.”

Several of the statements revealed that the communication aspect of the overall event had been a learning experience.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Chapter one described the background and setting, purpose and problem of this study. An event held on the campus of Oklahoma State University by PETA directly and indirectly impacted the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. Chapter two builds upon this foundation with a thorough review of all related topics, including the history of the land-grant university, the animal rights movement, and PETA, as well as a review of land-grant universities history with controversial issues, and issues management. Chapter three compounds upon chapters one and two by describing the methodology used in the study. This consisted of a qualitative research study involving interviews with subjects that were related to the event. The findings of the study are detailed in chapter four with more than 1,700 data units analyzed and coded, leading to the respective findings.

Conclusions for Research Question One: What Was the Need for Issues Management?

The following themes fell into the findings for research question one: concerns, advocacy, reason, land-grant/university, animal rights, and free speech.

The land-grant university role is often a double-edged sword. Land-grant universities hold deep roots in agriculture and therefore command a strong agricultural presence and reputation. However, their basic mission still remains to provide *unbiased* information and

research to the public. In today's world, this means a public that is largely uneducated and unaware of agricultural practices and methods. According to Bonnen (1998), "The land-grant idea was not conceived solely for agriculture," rather he concluded, "It is a set of beliefs about the social role of the university" (Bonnen, 1998).

Because animal rights issues and its respective movement tend to be controversial topics, especially in terms of agricultural advancements, it is crucial for land-grant universities to be prepared for their arrival at any time. Groves (1999) said, "Modern animal rights activists believe that animals should be treated as moral equals, comparing the use of animals in research and industry to slavery, and believe that animals should not be used in any way for human ends" (p. 347). This is in direct disagreement with the beliefs of animal agriculturists and the research that typically occurs at agricultural colleges. Therefore, it is easy to understand where the conviction driving The FARM Theory exhibit, as well as the group itself, derived from. However, Bishop (1978) explained that though land-grant universities have a clear responsibility to educate the public, "little can be gained by becoming embroiled in the heated controversies of the day" (p. 112).

Though the land-grant mission was easily recited throughout this study, it was clear that the land-grant mission was not fully understood by many of the participants. There was a clear failure of true understanding that the mission charges land-grant universities with the role of disseminating information to the public as an *unbiased, trustworthy* source of research and extension. There was a further failure to grasp that though land-grant university heritage is steeped in agriculture, the mission does not speak solely to agricultural colleges. It is crucial for all involved in the land-grant university to remember that the land-grant university answers to an increasingly diverse public. This means that the concept of responding to the peta2 exhibit in defense of animal agriculture was not in line with land-grant mission because as charged, the land-grant university would not take a stance on either side but would present viable, useful data

from both sides to allow the consumer to decide. While it may be argued that this is what occurred, it was clearly demonstrated in this study that The FARM Theory exhibit had not been clearly presented as a student-driven event to the rest of Oklahoma State University or the general public, rather it appeared to be DASNR sponsored. Through this it could be perceived that DASNR was advocating for a particular side, since that it was The FARM Theory group admitted it was doing. Since DASNR is publicly funded and supported it is inappropriate for it to take a stand or advocate for any particular issue. This extends to faculty and staff, as well. As Bishop (1978) said, “Researchers and educators can be neither content with repeated involvement in controversy nor analyzing current problems” (p. 112). Considering that land-grant universities are publicly funded, the perception that DASNR was choosing a side on such a controversial issue could lead to suffering for DASNR, as well as the entire university.

Due to this, it is crucial that land-grant universities are prepared at all time for controversies to arise and appear at their door. The greatest concern for any land-grant university is damage to its credible, which would in turn damage its mission. Brown et al. (2010) explained, “The key challenge is to glean maximum value from serendipitous encounters: to shape serendipity through preparedness, to decide which encounters to pursue and which to file away for possible use later, and to use the encounters to catalyze new avenues of inquiry and action” (p. 11). Through preparedness the land-grant university can thwart or minimize the damage caused by a controversial issue.

The need for issues management for issues management was easily summarized through a statement explaining that The FARM Theory group was “playing into the hands of PETA” by holding an exhibit in response to the peta2 exhibit.

Conclusions for Research Question Two: What Aspects of This Event Fell within the Realm of Issues Management?

The following themes fell into the conclusions and findings for this research question: plan/event details, perceptions, media, expectations, training/education, time, and non-event. All of these themes are important aspects in an issues management plan.

According to Gregory (1999), “The way an organization gathers and uses information is absolutely critical” (p. 133). Time is crucial to the practice of issues management. Issues management allows practitioners to anticipate issues before they arise and develop plans thus being proactive, rather than responding as they arise in a reactionary manner. Therefore, identifying issues early and determining how to deal with them is important. In order to achieve this, all involved and affected parties should be informed of any arising issues in a timely manner. It was concluded that a great deal of the planning for The FARM Theory exhibit had occurred before administrators and key faculty members of DASNR were aware that the peta2 exhibit was even coming to campus. This further added to the confusion that the exhibit was being held by DASNR. Bonnen (1998) pointed that it is the job of the land-grant university to be able to serve one or all sides in a debate, while maintaining neutrality.

As with time and planning, media is a key interest group in any issues management plan. Ponce de Leon and Tucker (2011) said, “Improperly managed social issues can generate unfavorable media coverage and negative public sentiments that severely damage or destroy relationships with customers and collaborators” (Ponce de Leon & Tucker, 2011). Due to the controversial nature of the peta2 exhibit media interest would be possible, but that interest was further elevated with The FARM Theory exhibit on the same days and in the same location. The risks associated with media involvement need to be fully understood by all stakeholders.

A great deal of training and education went into the preparation of The FARM Theory exhibit. The training most discussed was said to teach students how to “avoid controversy,” yet rather it seemed to prepare students to advocate for agriculture. This was determined through several statements and solidified by the electronic distribution of a training document entitled “The ABC’s of Advocacy.” The disclaimer with this document explained that it was the reader’s job to advocate for agriculture. It was concluded that The FARM Theory group had accepted, what they deemed as theirs, the role of educating their fellow students on how to advocate.

Though hopes were high for the exhibit, as it was being deemed an educational opportunity, there existed a slight tone of uncertainty of what would actually happen at the overall event. By utilizing issues management practices, this uncertainty could be avoided.

This theme was summarized through one of the most telling statements in these findings that “taking a position about people’s consumption preferences is not part of our mission.” This confirmed the existence of concern that the exhibit ran counter to the land-grant mission. As Bonnen (1998) said, “The highest level of risk involves the ultimate step to public advocacy of a particular position” (Bonnen, 1998).

Conclusions for Research Question Three: How Could DASNR Have Benefitted from the Use of Issues Management?

The following themes fell into the findings and conclusions of research question three: evaluation, reactions, advice/future, issues management, and communication. This concludes what benefits could have been realized from the use of issues management for this particular event.

While no controversy occurred during this event, the risk for it was elevated through the students’ choice to hold a direct response to the peta2 exhibit. This left the success of the event up to debate. It was clear through statements and observations that most of the attendees of The

FARM Theory exhibit were there for the free food resulting in an unsuccessful education model. Still it seemed that the exhibit had been deemed satisfactory, leading to the conclusion that other exhibits and events will modeled after it. It must be realized, as Heath (2002) said, “The essence of issues management is the daunting realization that a better way of finding, using, and responding to issues exists” (p. 214).

Issues management is recognized and organizationally positioned as a core management function that is not confined to a single function or department (“IMC Best Practices,” 2013). Therefore, it is crucial that everyone that could be potentially affected by an event or issue is informed as soon as possible. The overall frustration that administration and faculty were not informed in a timely manner clearly demonstrated that communication between all those involved was lacking. The students did a poor job of reporting the discovery of the peta2 exhibit plans and their own plans of an exhibit in a timely manner to all those who may have been affected by the event. Communication should exist not only on issues and events, but every day relations. A lack of understanding of what constituted communication and who should always be informed was evident. Through multiple statements it was emphasized that DASNR was not trying to stifle the students’ response, but rather trying to instill in the students the importance of ensuring everyone is aware in case of emergencies, controversies, or issues. Communication is a crucial aspect of issues management, one that can be greatly improved through the practice. The implementation of issues management could have only benefitted this event. As Peppers and Sigurdson (2011) stated, “Strong relationships, trust and open communication should be developed long before an issue arises” (p. 35). The key piece of advice that emerged from this finding was just this.

Simple education of issues management practices could have benefitted this group greatly. Several statements using the terms “crisis management” and “issues management” interchangeably contradicted other statements that described issues management clearly. The event could have benefitted greatly had these two groups met and thoroughly discussed issues

management before any plans had been set. Issues management education could have also clarified the difference between advocacy and issues management. As pointed out in the findings, many of the plans for The FARM Theory exhibit directly negated issues management, including the chosen location and dates of the event. This clearly demonstrates that issues management should be extended to all departments and stakeholders within the university. Peppers and Sigurdson (2011) explained that by implementing the issues management as “a strategic priority, the cycle will be set into motion that will strengthen the organization, protect the brand and reputation, and move the organization toward a more crisis-prepared, less crisis-prone, effective institution” (p. 35).

Recommendations for Research

The following recommendations for research were proposed based on the findings of this study:

1. It is recommended that this study be replicated at other land-grant universities when similar issues arise.
2. It is recommended that this study be replicated at land-grant universities when similar issues arise in which issues management is used.
3. It is recommended that a study be conducted to determine which land-grant universities are currently using issues management.

Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations for practice were proposed based on the findings of this study:

1. Issues management should be implemented into the daily practices of land-grant universities.

2. Further education of all stakeholders on the land-grant mission and why the land-grant university remains unbiased should occur.
3. Students should be included as a key group in issues management practices due to their role within the university.
4. Student activity should be monitored as students are also a group or source of information.

Implications

According to Ponce de Leon and Tucker (2011), “The dramatic ascension of some topics and issues onto the media stage can be likened to a “perfect storm,” where a number of dynamic factors come together, sometimes suddenly, triggering the event” (p. 5). Though this event did not turn confrontational or controversial, it very easily could have. It is crucial that land-grant universities take note of issues management practices and take the steps necessary to implement them into their daily practices.

When implementing issues management land-grant universities must be aware of and include all stakeholders. This study showed that land-grant universities may be leaving out a key demographic to evaluate – their own students. Students are an important demographic for two reasons. First, issues management entails anticipating issues that may arise through a watchful eye on media and adversary groups, yet students can just as easily and unwittingly stir up issues that warrant issues management utilization. Secondly, students are a source of information themselves considering in today’s world they are very tapped into what is happening, not only close to home but globally due to social media. Peppers and Sigurdson (2011) suggest that land-grant universities should “establish a part of employee and student orientation that provides information about how each is a representative of the institution’s brand, image and reputation” (Peppers & Sigurdson, 2011, p. 36).

The most important take-away from this study is the imperativeness of everyone from students to faculty to administration to clearly understand the mission of the land-grant university. The importance of this cannot be fully expressed or stressed. Bonnen (1998), wrote, “I used to believe that neither society nor university faculty understood the land-grant idea. But, today, I am convinced that it is even worse than that. It is the university as an historical institution that is not understood” (Bonnen, 1998). While it cannot be denied that the land-grant university is heavily steeped in agriculture and always will be, it must be recognized that the mission was not solely developed for it. Immersing everyone involved with the land-grant university in education and study that teaches the *true* mission of providing education and research to the public as a whole, as well as providing unbiased information that allowed that public to make informed decisions, will only benefit the university. McDowell (2003) wrote, “Both by virtue of the character of their scholarship and whom they serve, the land-grant universities were established as the people’s universities” (p. 33). It is important for all of us involved with the land-grant university to remember that it is the people’s university.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Monday, February 18, 2013
IRB Application No AG1311
Proposal Title: Advancing the Land-grant Mission Through Issues Management

Reviewed and Exempt
Processed as:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 2/17/2014

Principal
Investigator(s):

Michelle Hamilton	Traci Naile
414 E 89th St	437 Ag Hall
Perkins, OK 74059	Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Shelia Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW REQUEST

Interview request (email)

Dear [Subject]:

As my thesis project, I am conducting a study about issues management procedures used in response to the upcoming PETA2 event on campus. Would you be willing to let me interview you about your views of the DASNR's response to the event?

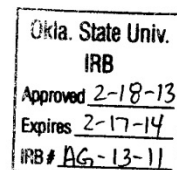
If possible, I would like to conduct two individual interviews with you. The first interview will take place prior to the DASNR and PETA2 exhibits scheduled for the end of February, and the second interview will take place in March. Each interview will last approximately 30 minutes, and your participation is voluntary. I plan to audio record the interview, but your responses will be confidential and all identifying information will be removed before I report my findings. All recordings, transcripts and identifying information will be stored securely and will be available only to my adviser, Dr. Traci Naile, and me.

If you are willing to be interviewed, please respond to this email, and I will work with you and/or your administrative assistant, whom I copied on this email, to arrange times and locations for your interviews.

If you have any questions about this study, please call me at 812-844-0471 or call Dr. Naile at 744-8135. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair at 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078; 744-3377; or irb@okstate.edu.

Thank you,

Michelle Hamilton, graduate student
Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership



APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

**ADULT CONSENT FORM
OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY**

Title: Advancing the land-grant mission through issues management

Investigators: Michelle Hamilton (graduate student and interviewer); Traci L. Naile, assistant professor of agricultural communications

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to describe the response of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources to a potentially controversial agriculture-related event on campus. Information will be collected via interview with participants who were selected based on their responsibilities or involvement in the response to the event.

Procedures: Participation in this study will involve completion of two individual semi-structured interviews. The first interview will take place prior to the DASNR and PETA2 exhibits scheduled for the end of February, and the second interview will take place in March. Each interview will last approximately 30 minutes. Interviews will be audio recorded. You will have the opportunity to review each one of your interview transcripts and request changes prior to data analysis.

Risks: No risks associated with this project are expected to be greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

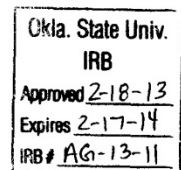
Benefits: The data will provide insights into how a land-grant university may respond to controversial agriculture-related events while maintaining objectivity and advancing the land-grant mission. The outcomes also will help a national committee on issues management refine and implement recommended issues management practices for land-grant and other publicly funded institutions, and will help DASNR be prepared for similar future situations.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. The investigators listed above will be responsible for transcribing your interviews. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you, including comparisons between the pre-event and post-event interviews. Research records will be stored securely in 437 Agricultural Hall for approximately three years, and only the investigators responsible for research oversight will have access to the records.

Compensation: You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.

Contacts: You may contact any of the following researchers to discuss your participation in this study and/or request information about the results of this study: Michelle Hamilton, graduate student, 812-844-0471 or michelle.hamilton@okstate.edu; or Traci L. Naile, assistant professor, 744-8135 or traci.naile@okstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, at 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078; 405-744-3377; or irb@okstate.edu.

Participant rights: I understand that my participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project



at any time, without penalty.

Consent documentation: I have been fully informed about the procedures listed here. I am aware of what I will be asked to do and of the benefits of my participation. I also understand the following statements:

I affirm that I am 18 years of age or older.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form will be given to me. I hereby give permission for my participation in this study.

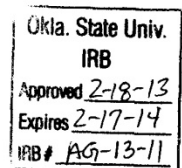
Signature of participant

Date

I certify that I have explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

Signature of researcher

Date



VITA

Michelle Lee Hamilton

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: WHEN PETA COMES TO CAMPUS: THE USE OF ISSUES MANAGEMENT AT
LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITIES

Major Field: Agricultural Communications

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Agricultural Communications at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2014.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Animal Science at Murray State University, Murray, Kentucky in 2010.

Experience:

Manager of Marketing and Membership, American Quarter Horse Association, 2013 to present.