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# IMC Portfolio Rationale

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COM 590: IMC Graduate Capstone

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## **Executive Summary**

For my capstone project, I have developed a comprehensive curated professional portfolio to display my abilities in the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) field. This portfolio highlights my expertise in various IMC areas, such as digital storytelling, crisis communication, communication ethics, and organizational culture. My primary objective for my portfolio is to build credibility within the IMC industry, so that I may form meaningful relationships with my peers in the industry. Moreover, I aim to prove my creative abilities and strategic thinking in crafting narratives that align with an organization's core values. I intend to demonstrate my capacity in creating diverse and impactful content within the IMC field.

## **Introduction**

For my capstone, I chose to do a portfolio, as a comprehensive and well-curated professional portfolio is essential to display my capabilities in the Integrated Marketing Communication field. This rationale goes into why my portfolio, which has been designed to highlight my ability in several types of IMC related content such as digital storytelling, crisis communication, and communication ethics, addresses the IMC application I intend to use my portfolio for. Moreover, developing my portfolio, I aim to build my credibility within my industry and to build meaningful connections with the peers in my industry. I hope to not only prove my creative abilities, but also, my strategic thinking in crafting emotional narratives that tell stories that align with an organization's core values. My portfolio aims to serve as an example of my abilities to produce diverse, creative, and impactful content within the IMC industry.

As previously mentioned, one reason that I chose to do a portfolio is because a portfolio is an important asset for networking and professional growth within my industry. My portfolio provides a platform for me to reflect on my current and past work, find any potential areas for improvement, and connect with my peers within my industry. Furthermore, keeping records of my progress and work throughout the years enables me to track my professional growth and set new goals for my professional life that are realistic and attainable. In other words, a portfolio allows me to display my talents in an honest and transparent way.

My goal for this portfolio is also to ease my transition into the academic field, where I hope to one day get my PhD and become a professor within the University of North Carolina system. Moreover, I also hope to contribute to the education and development of future professionals within the IMC field by entering the academic field. Throughout my portfolio, I highlight a comprehensive showcase of my IMC skills, strategic and critical thinking, and display a clear

trajectory of my professional goals and journey. This portfolio not only is my past and present accomplishments as an undergraduate and graduate student, but also serves as a foundation for my future endeavors in the IMC field.

## **Project Rationale**

### ***Group One: Digital Storytelling***

The first group of artifacts comes from my *Digital Storytelling & IMC* course. More specifically, I chose my Longform Video Layout and Planned Social Media Posts from this course. My Longform Video Layout centers around a commercial script for Starbucks that emphasizes their “Third Place” narrative, which is that Starbucks is the place in-between work and home. This script has camera directions, dialogue, and a clear plot and setting. Moreover, my Planned Social Media Posts are about a hypothetical drink launch that Starbucks could do that aligns with their goals as a company and their core values. This was revised to ensure it was clear to read, accessible to different audiences, and aligned with the core values of the company. These posts also follow the Starbucks brand guidelines and colors and the typical dialect for a social media post from the company. While I am confident that both artifacts fit the criteria for professional standards, I reviewed and revised the artifacts so that I could ensure it is up to professional standards.

The intended audience for these artifacts is marketing and advertising professionals, as well as creative directors and videographers. This audience can use the Longform Video Layout to understand the narrative approach that Starbucks is taking for their campaign and how to tell a story without having to tell the audience outright what the story is. Moreover, the visual storytelling techniques and clear camera directions provide a sharp vision for the commercial, making it clear what is being advertised and the benefits it has for Starbucks customers. By emphasizing the “Third Place” narrative, this commercial reinforces Starbucks brand values and brand identity, and keeps it aligned with the core values of the company. Moreover, my Planned Social Media posts offer valuable insight on how social media campaigns align with the overall values and goals for a company. This also emphasizes how important that consistent branding is across all channels for a company, as it makes the message clear and consistent across all outlets of the company.

### ***Rationale for Group One***

Each group of artifacts was designed with a specific IMC application in mind. My group one artifacts are used to emphasize brand messaging, visual and narrative coherence, and brand consistency. Each artifact within group one follows the brand guidelines and colors for Starbucks, ensuring that each piece of content is not only recognizable as part of the Starbucks brand, but also, the message is consistent across all channels. Moreover, my longform video layout emphasizes how important the application of brand messaging, as well as visual and narrative coherence is in IMC, as there is consistent visual and narrative style that aligns with Starbucks core values.

Furthermore, the longform video layout not only emphasizes how important that visual and narrative coherence is, but it also highlights how it is an especially useful tool in creating meaningful and emotional connections in advertising. By having the product create this powerful emotional connection with its narrative coherence, it fosters a relationship between the company and its consumers. Aaker (2018) emphasizes how important an emotional connection is to build brand loyalty. My longform video layout and social media posts aim to create an emotional connection with Starbucks consumers by portraying Starbucks as the place between work and home for the consumers. Aaker (2018) also emphasizes that social media can be used to increase brand awareness and to differentiate the products from their competitors (p.25). This was seen in the planned social media posts, as I made sure each post was not only recognizable as Starbucks, but also unique and stood out amongst the Starbucks competitors. Moreover, according to Aaker (2020), social media is highly effective in conveying a brand's personality (p.96-98), which is seen with the use of bright, vivid, colors and positive language used in the advertising materials.

As ethical communication requires honesty and transparency, it is essential that any messages or statements made by Starbucks portrayed within the longform video and planned social media posts are truthful and reflect Starbucks' core values as a company. I made sure this was clear in the artifacts I provided for my portfolio by reading Starbucks core values, provided on their marketing materials pages. Moreover, given the diverse audience of Starbucks consumers, it is important to ensure that all content within the longform video and social media posts are culturally sensitive, which could be done by training Starbucks employees on diverse cultures, world views, and diverse cultural norms.

### ***Group Two: Crisis Communication***

The second group of artifacts comes from my *Crisis Communication & IMC* course. These artifacts include my Paracrisis Identification and Response and my White Paper. My Paracrisis Identification and Response analyzes Nivea, a skincare brand, and how the brand faced a

paracrisis due to their advertisement with the statement “White is Purity.” This statement was considered offensive by many consumers, who then began to spread their outrage over the insensitive advertisement on Nivea’s social media platform. My response analyzes the brand’s reaction and statements addressing the paracrisis, and I also provided insight on how the brand could have improved their response to their outraged consumers. Moreover, my White Paper artifact addresses the lack of a customer centric focus in IMC campaigns, and how brands can develop a seamless and streamlined approach to address this lack of focus. I made sure to revise these artifacts, as they are from a few graduate school courses ago. Upon revising, I made sure the artifacts met a professional standard that would be considered acceptable for my portfolio.

The intended audience for this group of artifacts is PR Managers, Corporate Trainers, and Crisis Communication Professionals. These artifacts have analyses, as well as valuable insights on paracrisis, that can help companies understand effective, as well as ineffective strategies in crisis management. Moreover, these artifacts have proposed strategies to better connect with their target audience’s needs, such as proposed customer centric IMC methods to improve relations with consumers. Furthermore, this audience can receive help from insights provided around the response to the crisis, to better prepare and manage similar situations in their company. Furthermore, corporate trainers can use these artifacts in training sessions to illustrate real-life examples of crisis responses from brands to highlight what not to do when addressing paracrisis, as well as what can be done better to address a paracrisis in the future.

### ***Rationale for Group Two***

According to Coombs & Holladay (2012), a paracrisis is defined as a “publicly visible crisis threat that charges an organization with irresponsible or unethical behavior.” Finne & Gronroos (2017) state that a customer-integrated marketing communication (CIMC) approach could help design campaigns with consumer’s beliefs and values in mind, which could prevent a paracrisis before it happens. My paracrisis identification and response emphasizes the importance of effective crisis management in keeping a brand’s reputation. In my paper, I analyze the brand’s first response and suggest improvements, which is crucial for understanding how to manage a paracrisis. Moreover, my white paper addresses the lack of CIMC approaches, which is especially important in today’s market, as consumer preferences, ease of access, and engagement are essential for a brand to succeed.

There are a few ethical considerations to take into mind when it comes to this group of artifacts. Firstly, the paracrisis response must be free from bias. Even though I had analyzed the paracrisis caused by an advertisement from the brand posted directly by the brand itself, it is important to

still be bias free so that there is a balanced view of what exactly happened and how it was managed. Moreover, my white paper must have complete transparency in it and avoid any language that “hides” the action of a brand. Nhedzi & Gombarume (2021) emphasize that during a crisis, it is extremely important to prioritize the ethics of the language used, as it is crucial to ethically communicate equally to everyone affected by a crisis. This is to prevent one group or community’s help being unfairly prioritized over other communities.

### ***Group Three: Communication Ethics***

The third group of artifacts comes from my *Communication Ethics & IMC* course. These artifacts include my BGC Canada Final Project & Memo and my Infographic about Universal / Humanitarian Communication Ethics and Codes, Procedures, and Standard Communication Ethics. My final project was about BGC Canada’s rebrand as a non-profit organization, the methods they employed before, during and after their rebrand, and the implications that their communication ethics had for the future of the study and practice of IMC. My infographic compares the Universal / Humanitarian Communication Ethics to the Codes, Procedures, and Standard Communication Ethics and discusses the implications of using these communication ethics to communicate internally and externally in an organization. I made sure to revise my infographic, as I felt I have improved on graphic design since I first took this course. I made a more visually appealing and cleaner infographic to meet professional standards for my portfolio.

One potential intended audience for these artifacts is for non-profit organizations, as my memo can give valuable insights into what a successful rebranding strategy looks like. Moreover, my memo and final project highlight the impact that communication ethics have on rebranding and why it is important to choose a form of ethical communication that aligns with the brand’s core values. Moreover, another intended audience is for IMC professionals and IMC students. IMC professionals and students can learn the application of communication ethics in rebranding, or in general internal and external communication within an organization. Furthermore, my infographic can be used as a tool to compare different approaches within communication ethics to best decide which ethical communication method works best for an organization.

### ***Rationale for Group Three***

Arnett, Harden-Fritz & Bell (2023) introduces the “dialogic learning model”, which I believe is an essential part of IMC. The dialogic learning model gives guidelines on ethical decision

making in several different communication contexts, such as interpersonal, intercultural, and organizational settings. This model was used to examine the ethical implications of BGC Canada's rebrand in my final project & memo. BGC Canada needed to ensure that their stakeholders were engaged within the rebrand, but also, that their core values were reflected in their rebrand so that they could keep their communities' trust (Chad, 2016). My infographic addresses the question of how exactly different communication ethics influence communication practices within organizations. With ethical communication, it is important to use bias-free language to ensure that your communication stays ethical and does not perpetrate any biases towards anyone. Moreover, to ensure ethical communication with the relevant audience, it is important to know which "good" that your choice of ethical communication is protecting. This is to not only build credibility, but to ensure that the correct choice of ethical communication is used, as it is important to ensure that a brand has consistent ethical communication across all channels. This is to keep credibility in times of a crisis too, as ethical communication is also essential.

#### ***Group Four: Organizational Culture***

The fourth group of artifacts comes from my *Organizational Culture Identity & Brand* course. The first artifact is a communication audit, which was for UNCW's new College of Humanities, Social Sciences, & the Arts, also known as CHSSA. This audit was to evaluate CHSSA's communication, both internally and externally, to find ways to improve their communication as an organization. This is especially important for a large organization, as communication audits ensure that the brand's communication aligns with their core values. My second artifact is an infographic comparing organizational culture and organizational identity theory. These two concepts are compared to point out how while they are similar in theory, they are different in execution and experiences. I needed to revise my infographic and my communication audit, as I wanted to ensure they were of a professional standard for my portfolio. I made my infographic more consistent and professional, as well as editing it for accessibility to all readers. Moreover, I made sure my recommendations within my communication audit were clearer for readers to find.

The intended audience for this group of artifacts would be communication consultants. A communication audit evaluates the methods that an organization uses to communicate externally and internally, which makes it useful in understanding and improving an organization's communication practices, whether internally within the organization or externally with shareholders or consumers. Moreover, another intended audience is human resource professionals. Human resource professionals aim to manage all aspects of employee relations within the organization. However, employee relations are reliant on the organizational culture



and identity of the company (Tilley et al., 2012), which both my infographic and communication audit emphasize and make sure to highlight the importance of an organizational culture that fosters and strengthens employee relations.

### ***Rationale for Group Four***

My communication audit aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of CHSSA's internal and external communication practices. My primary goal was to ensure that CHSSA's communication practices do not have any gaps or identifiable areas of improvement. This was not only to ensure that the college's communication strategies align with their core values, but also that the college has an effective and coherent communication strategy to keep a consistent brand image across all channels. Organizational culture itself has a few distinct layers to it, such as norms, values, and behaviors, which must be kept in mind when conducting a communication audit (Hogan & Coote, 2014). My infographic addresses that while organizational culture and organizational identity are similar in concept and theory, they are quite different in many ways as well. Organizational culture and identity are also closely tied to my communication audit, as they both focus on communication both internally and externally in an organization (Tilley et al., 2012).

It is important to keep in mind that organizational culture and identity are profoundly affected by the digitalization of the modern world, including but not limited to social media, television advertisements, and text message advertising campaigns (Grover et al., 2022). When keeping ethical implications in mind, it is especially important to respect others' beliefs, attitudes, and values within the organization. Organizational culture and identity are important to decision making within brands, as the beliefs, attitudes, and values of shareholders and consumers matter as much as the organization's employee's attitudes, beliefs, and values. This group of artifacts is especially important to IMC, as the core values of an organization must be kept in mind when designing signature stories, advertising campaigns, etc. (Aaker, 2018).

### **Narrative/Rationale for the Portfolio**

My proposed portfolio relates to IMC in multiple ways. By applying and analyzing many distinct types of IMC theories and applications, it displays versatility by proving my ability to create many types of IMC content. This content includes examples such as public relations, organizational culture, and digital storytelling. My portfolio also builds up my credibility by proving high quality IMC artifacts that are relevant to today's market. Furthermore, this portfolio can highlight my creativity within my IMC work with my cohesive and emotional narratives displayed within my artifacts. I also prove my strategic thinking when it comes to marketing



strategies aligning with the brand's core values so that messaging is consistent across all channels in an organization. My portfolio will be helpful when it comes to networking and professional growth, as I can reflect on my work and find areas on where to improve it. Moreover, my portfolio can be shared in professional settings to connect with peers within the industry I currently am in. A portfolio is a fantastic way to track my professional growth, as I keep records of my progress and achievements over time. This will help me set and reach new goals within my career.

This product is relevant to the COM 590 capstone learning outcomes. More specifically, it relates to exploring the rhetorical dimensions of communication strategies within IMC, such as how different approaches affect audience perception and behavior. For instance, an emotional signature story can appeal and captivate an audience quickly, but so would an advertisement that relies on fear mongering, the former creating a strong emotional connection and fostering consumer loyalty, with the latter having immediate effects, but could have negative long-term consequences for the brand's reputation. By examining how these different approaches impact audience perception and behavior, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding on how exactly to craft emotional and meaningful marketing materials and artifacts. My artifacts would align with the IMC groups they are categorized in and emphasize their usefulness in different IMC concepts. For example, my paracrisis identification and response delves into how a brand can navigate their messaging to mitigate the negative impacts a paracrisis has on them.

Moreover, I proved my mastery of IMC vocabulary, theories, and research methods by successfully revising my artifacts that needed revision. I showed this by having high-quality artifacts that correctly use IMC vocabulary. Each artifact was created and revised to accurately reflect the essential concepts and terminology for IMC. Furthermore, my artifacts proved this by correctly analyzing the theories and concepts they are rooted in, such as my communication audit artifact or my analysis of BGC Canada's rebrand.

My deliverable, which is my portfolio, encompasses a wide variety of IMC artifacts throughout my time within the IMC graduate program. These artifacts are a thorough analysis of my artifacts through an application of different concepts and areas of IMC. In other words, the IMC artifacts I chose are relevant to IMC concepts and theories that can be analyzed and applied to real-world scenarios, such as my communication audit and my paracrisis identification and analysis. I aim to prove my understanding of IMC concepts and their application in the real world. My portfolio serves as a showcase of my ability to analyze, interpret, and apply IMC theories and terminology to many real-world professional contexts.

The final capstone learning outcome, which focuses on the ethical dimensions of communication, is seen throughout my portfolio in several ways. First, I tried to avoid biased language throughout my portfolio. Secondly, in selecting the artifacts for my portfolio, I also made sure to consider all viewpoints when choosing these artifacts to include in, as I wanted to make sure I did not choose an artifact that could potentially exclude any type of audience. Moreover, I made sure to consider ethical communication towards the intended audience of each group of artifacts. This was to ensure there is no unethical language or treatment towards any audience viewing my portfolio.

### **Methodology/Process**

My portfolio encompasses a comprehensive collection of my skillset with IMC. I have artifacts of digital storytelling, crisis communication, communication ethics, and organizational culture. The methodology I employed to create, choose, and revise each artifact is rooted in IMC theories, vocabulary, and ability.

#### ***Digital Storytelling***

The methodology for my digital storytelling artifacts focuses on my strengths in digital storytelling. As digital storytelling is a crucial part of IMC, as it can evoke strong emotional connections from consumers, I chose artifacts that reflected this. I ensured that I chose artifacts that not only had a strong, compelling, and cohesive narrative, but also, intended to have an emotional narrative within the artifact. This was to foster trust and a meaningful connection with the consumers who the digital storytelling materials would be intended for.

#### ***Crisis Communication***

My methodology for choosing my crisis communication artifacts involved analyzing and revising my artifacts for examples of very well-developed effective response strategies for crises. Moreover, I wanted to ensure my artifacts were detailed communication plans as well. This means that they outlined the key messages, target audiences, and channels to address the crises on. Furthermore, I wanted to have artifacts that assessed the effectiveness of the response from the brands, as it is important to analyze and critique what was said to learn and develop a more effective response for it.

#### ***Communication Ethics***

My methodology for communication ethics involved my analysis of different ethical frameworks, their application in conjunction with IMC, and their implications for the future study of IMC. My process for choosing these artifacts involved a comparative analysis of these artifacts compared to the other ones from my communication ethics course. I chose artifacts that I felt best showed a real-life analysis of what communication ethics can do for a company. Moreover, the artifacts I chose also intended to highlight why communication ethics are so important for brands to utilize when rebranding or advertising in general.

### ***Organizational Culture***

My methodology for choosing my organizational culture artifacts involved me analyzing different artifacts from my coursework and their impact on communication practices within an organization. I chose my communication audit as it is a comprehensive and detailed analysis on the organizational culture, as well as the internal and external communication, for UNCW'S CHSSA. This allowed for me to gather data on the communication practices and provided research-backed solutions to improve CHSSA's communication practices. I chose artifacts that dealt with real-world examples to highlight how important and impactful organizational culture is for the brand itself.

### **Conclusions**

My capstone portfolio serves as a comprehensive overview of my proficiency and versatility in IMC. By curating a diverse collection of artifacts, I can demonstrate my ability to not only apply IMC principles across various domains of IMC, but I am able to continuously improve on them. This portfolio has been instrumental in refining my skills and reinforcing my professional identity. I can highlight my ability to craft compelling and emotional narratives that align with organizational values, identify, and analyze a response to a paracrisis to save a brand's reputation, and navigate complex communication ethics considerations. My portfolio reflects my understanding of the importance of maintaining a coherent brand identity. Moreover, it demonstrated my understanding of fostering a positive organizational culture, as demonstrated by the artifacts I chose.

As I transition towards a future in academia, my portfolio serves as a foundation of my professional journey. Not only am I able to encapsulate my past achievements and current capabilities, but it also sets me up for my future contributions for IMC. Through my portfolio, I aspire to build meaningful connections with peers in my industry, continuously learn and grow in my professional work, and display my expertise in IMC. As I move forward in my professional

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career, I aim to continue to build upon the foundation my portfolio has built for me, so that I am able to make a lasting impact on the field of IMC.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A

[Longform Video Layout: Starbucks](#)

## Appendix B





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## Appendix C

[Paracrisis Identification and Response](#)

## Appendix D

[Aligning Marketing Strategies: Addressing the Lack of Customer Centric Focus in Integrated Marketing Campaigns](#)

## Appendix E

### Approaches to Communication Ethics

#### Universal/Humanitarian versus Codes, Procedures, and Standards.

##### Universal/Humanitarian

- Based off of the ethical reason of principle from the Enlightenment (Arnett, Harden-Fritz, & Bell, 2009).
- Follows the rules of rationality, which is considered an essential part of human nature that requires protection and promotion for the good of humans, which is what this approach seeks to promote and protect.
- Immanuel Kant, a philosopher, stated that the moral law, which is a part of rationality, is a truth of reason, and hence that all rational creatures are bound by the same moral law (Jankowiak, 2024).
- A universal-humanitarian communication ethic cares more about the principles that prescribe or dictate one's duty (Jankowiak, 2024).

##### Codes, Procedures, and Standards

- The defining guidelines on which appropriate ethical conducts can be evaluated (Arnett, Harden-Fritz, & Bell, 2009). For example, an HR guideline book on how to professionally conduct yourself.
- NCA Legislative Council (1999) gave forth a set of "rules" for ethical communication, such as integrity, fairness, honesty, respect for others, etc.
- The main types of codes of ethics include compliance-based, value-based, and professional (Hayes, 2023). This ethical communication seeks to protect the values of ethical communication, such as being honest, being respectful, etc.
- This approach promotes being open and honest and adhering to guidelines of what an organization or person feels is ethical.

##### How Are Both Approaches Similar?

- Both are based upon the belief that humans are bound by moral laws.
- Both are seeking to protect and promote the principles that dictate one's duty, such as their career.
- Both are centered around a following an inherent set of rules

##### How Are Both Approaches Different?

- Codes in communication ethics are made around compliance-based ethics, in other words, to promote what the company thinks is ethical behavior, while Universal communication ethics are made around the principles that are instilled at birth
- Universal communication ethics will always choose the "morally correct" option, such as never lying (Arnett, Harden Fritz, & Bell, 2009). However, codes in communication ethics does not have any "morally correct" options, but rather, is more of a set of rules to follow in an organization, such as a code of conduct.

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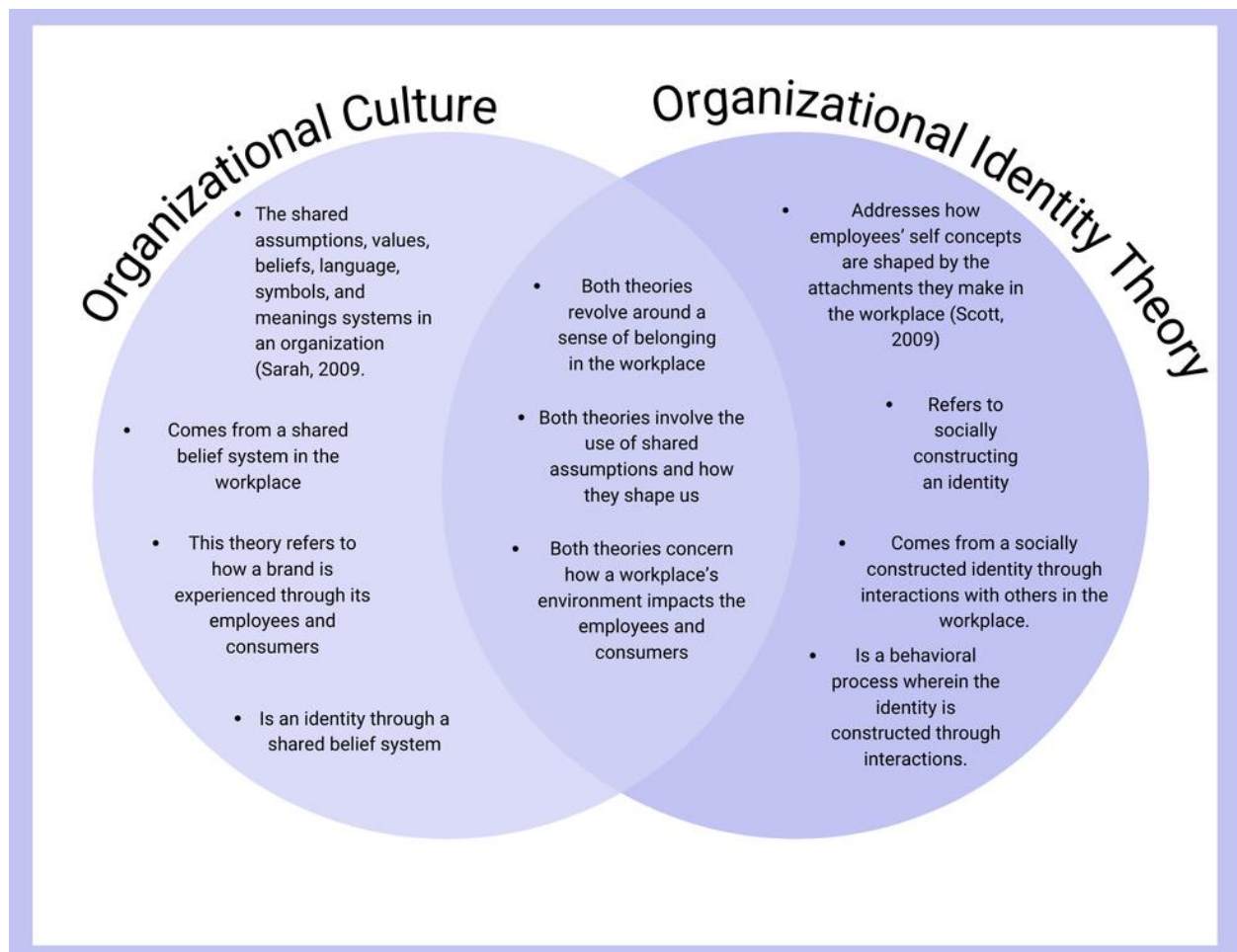
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## Appendix F

[BGC Canada Final Project & Memo](#)

## Appendix G



## Appendix H

[Communication Audit for CHSSA](#)

## Appendix I

[Portfolio Link](#)