

Forging Relationships:  
How Communication Theories  
can help long-term residents in  
animal shelters get adopted

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By

Andrea Francesca Tucker

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Lauren Kolodziejcki

Senior Project Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Bernard Duffy

Department Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## Introduction

Kittens and puppies don't have to wait long before they're adopted. They're desirable and are often the ones potential adopters seek out when visiting a shelter. The ones who spend the most time in shelters and have the least likely chance of being adopted are those who aren't of a preferential breed (Lepper et al. 2002), such as pit bulls or some variation of them (Gunter et al., 2016). Older cats also have a hard time getting adopted. One study showed that the likelihood of a shelter cat getting adopted progressively decreased as the cat's age increased (Lepper et al. 2002). Studies show that people who adopt pets from animal shelters have demonstrable preferences for animals of certain ages, sexes, breeds, coat colors, and histories (Lepper et al.) that they bring with them to the shelters. These could be stigmas from society, like those surrounding pit bulls, or misinformation. No matter the origin, these preferences leave animals with certain characteristics to become at-risk residents. Some shelters have a time limit on how long an animal can stay. Others have no limit as long as the animals are healthy and don't have behavioral issues. But the longer they stay in the shelter, the higher the chance that they'll develop health or behavioral problems that will prevent them from getting adopted (Pederson et al., 2004). This means that older cats, pit bulls, and misunderstood animals are not receiving a second chance at life like other younger, fluffier, happier animals are. They either live the rest of their lives in a shelter or become euthanized. Communication theories, especially theories of persuasion, can help to increase the likelihood of at-risk animals being adopted. If shelters were to adopt promotional practices coupled with communication theories, fewer animals would live out their lives in shelters, and fewer animals would be killed simply because people have preconceived notions about them.

This study aims to answer the following research question: How can communication theories be used to create content for promotional videos in order to increase the chances of long-time residents being adopted? To answer this research question, I carried out a social media campaign with the Woods Humane Society in San Luis Obispo to help their oldest residents get adopted. I made two videos – one for a cat named Lovins, and one for a dog named Lucy – in which I used Burke’s theory of identification, along with theories of inoculation and visualization, to create the content of the videos. These communication theories, specifically identification, served as tools to decrease the uncertainty that potential adopters/viewers might feel towards the animals by building a sense of a relationship with them. Woods Humane Society then published the Lucy video on their Facebook, and I monitored the response through Facebook’s business analytics and used the data from those analytics to make a conclusion about whether the video was successful or not. I also took into account the Woods Humane Society staff’s opinions of whether my videos were helpful/successful, and then made a conclusion on the success of this project. Throughout this paper, different sections discuss relevant literature, the methodology used in this project, the resulting observations/findings, and a conclusion.

### **Review of Literature**

Due to the intrinsic role of social media in this project, it is important to look at the literature on how social media is used in advocacy work. Since its birth, social media has fast become an integral and powerful tool. As such a powerful communication tool, it has been adopted by individuals, organizations, and businesses alike to influence their audiences. One of the most notable uses of social media is in the field of advocacy due to advocates’ needs for strong public support in order to achieve their goals. Organizations use social media for promotional purposes, such as to let people know of their fundraising events or other activities,

as well as to educate their audience. The appeal of social media as an advocacy tool comes partly from its ability to reach a wide audience with little effort and little cost (Obar, Zube, and Lampe, 2012). Despite being a fairly new communication style, scholars have already devoted their lives to understanding how powerful social media is in our society. This paper will focus on the use of social media in humane societies specifically as a tool for persuasion. Before moving forward, it is necessary to provide definitions.

### *Definitions*

Obar, Zube, and Lampe (2012) defined advocacy as the “systematic effort by specific actors who aim to further or achieve specific policy goals” (p. 4). Yazdanparast, Joseph, and Qureshi (2015) provide a complimentary definition of social media. They define it as “virtual communities that allow individuals to present themselves, articulate their social networks and establish or maintain connections with others” (p. 468). For this project, I chose to focus on the social media platform Facebook, which I will discuss in the methodological section. Facebook is defined by Google as “an American online social media and social networking service company based in Menlo Park, California” (Google).

### *Social Media and Advocacy*

Why is social media so popular in advocacy efforts? Because it demands minimal costs with big outcomes. Bresciani and Schmeil (2012) contend that, “Social technologies can empower anyone to have a positive impact on the society by creating networking effects and initiating community engagement: low (if not null) budget and few technological skills, coupled with creativity and innovation can transform a social campaign into a worldwide movement with hundreds of millions of followers” (p. 2). Guo and Saxton (2014), too, wrote about the cost-effective nature of social media, stating it allows organizations to “mobilize supporters, foster

dialogic interactions with large audiences, and attract attention to issues” (p. 4) in ways that traditional media cannot replicate. For this reason, this project uses social media as a tool to distribute a message to a wide audience.

Scholars Obar, Zube, and Lampe (2012) as well as Guo and Saxton (2014) contend that current literature addresses the prevalence of social media usage in the field of advocacy, but not how it is used in such scenarios. In their article, Guo and Saxton analyze how advocacy groups use social media to spur social change by looking at the adoption of social media by 188 “Civil Rights and Advocacy” organizations rated in 2011 by Charity Navigator. In the study, they focused on the social media platform Twitter because of its similarities to the general social media platform. Twitter, they found, like many other platforms, provided the tools of connections and messages. Connections could be made through reciprocation, which was defined as returning an act of communication (Guo & Saxton, 2014). This could be done by responding to direct messages, a message system similar to chats or email, or by retweeting, which is when a person forwards or posts another person’s post on their Twitter. It was also used for its ability to send messages and information in small capacities. Tweets, as Twitter posts are called, have a character maximum of 140, forcing users to make their messages short and concise. This also makes them easy to read. Guo and Saxton concluded that this tool is used to demonstrate responsiveness of an organization and establishes a dialogue between them and users.

By surveying 1000 advocacy groups operating in the United States Obar, Zube, and Lampe (2012) found that social media had two purposes: civic engagement and collective action. They define civic engagement as a process that involves “moving an individual away from disinterest, distraction, ignorance, and apathy and towards education, understanding, motivation, and action” (p. 2). Collective engagement was defined as “the pursuit of a single goal or multiple

goals by more than one individual” (p. 3). Based on their survey data, Facebook and Twitter were by far the most effective tools in influencing collective action. Arguably, the short-term goal of an animal shelter, such as Woods Humane Society, is to help its residents get adopted by persuading potential adopters to look at their animals versus purchasing one from a breeder. However, the long-term goal of an animal shelter is not only to save homeless animals, but to inspire collective engagement towards educating, and ultimately adopting out, shelter animals. For the purpose of this project, civic engagement can be understood as having potential adopters look at the oldest residents at Woods Humane Society versus animals that will potentially have an easier time getting attention. I will use identification as a theory to achieve this goal.

### ***Identification as a Theory***

Also called Burkean identification, this theory was conceptualized by Kenneth Burke in his book *A Rhetoric of Motives*. He contends that people are divided and must use language to promote identification and overcome this division. If two people have different interests, with the use of rhetoric, which Burke states is transposable with persuasion, one can use identification to persuade the other that their interests are the same (Jasinski, 2001). As explained by Rosenfield (1969), the theory of identification is more than just taking into account the audience’s point of view; it involves the sharing of values that belong to the people with whom you’re trying to connect. He states that there are many different ways to understand Burke’s identification because of the many ways he conceptualizes it in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, but that it can be concluded that “an underlying similarity among the various definitions of identification exists” (p. 183). Ultimately, identification is about finding shared elements or convincing the audience of the existence of shared elements, even when it may seem there are none.

Identification is always provisional, according to Jasinski (2001), because people can never completely share everything about themselves, be it interests, motives, values, etc. Jasinski goes on to describe how identification can be both a means and an end, which leads to identification strategies. Here, he brings up Cheney's use of three key strategies of identification: "(a) a common ground technique focusing on shared interests and/or values; (b) identification through antithesis which focuses on uniting in the face of a shared enemy; and (c) forms of transcendence such as the collective 'we' (as quoted in Jasinski, 2001, p. 306). These techniques were considered to be appropriate and were incorporated directly into the scripts of the videos created. In particular, scripts were curated to use the collective "we" as much as possible and to focus on shared interests and values. Using identification in relation to animals is not a new concept, which I will discuss below.

Tema Milstein's (2011) study, in which she observed a whale watcher guide's use of identification to facilitate close, familial relationships with whales by identifying specific whales by name, is a helpful and interesting example of the power of identification in human-animal relationship. Milstein discussed how it is evident through insider interactions with visitors that identification can form new connections between the whales and humans. Milstein likens insiders identifying whales to people catching up on mutual friends or acquaintances and that in such communication, some friends or acquaintances are more likely to be talked about than others. She found that similarly, some whales were more popular to talk about than others (Milstein, 2011). My goal is to similarly make Lucy and Lovins popular to increase their chances of getting adopted. I also hope to facilitate a connection between Lucy/Lovins and their viewers, also in hopes of getting them adopted.



### **Methodology**

For this project, I created a social media campaign to promote the adoption of several long-term residents at the Woods Human Society. The campaign consists of a video for a cat named Lovins and a dog named Lucy. These animals were picked from a list of those who has been at the shelter the longest and were at risk of developing adverse behaviors due to the stress of the shelter environment. Two other animals were also originally included in the campaign, but time restrictions only allowed for two videos to be finished. While the Woods staff planned to put the videos on all their social media platforms, I decided to focus my attention on the results of the video on their Facebook page. One of the reasons I decided to focus on Facebook is because of its prevalence. According to Duggan et al. (2015), it is the most used social media site among adults. Since children are not capable of adopting animals and adults are, I think a focus on the social media site most used by adults is appropriate for this study.

#### ***Summary of videos***

I created the Lovins video with her personality in mind. I wanted to display the absolute loving nature of her personality and the reason she got her name, so I created a script that emphasized this. The video consists of Lovins introducing herself as a very loving cat and a mature lady who has a refined taste and good hygiene. Throughout the video, Lovins demonstrates these facets of her personality through different shots, which ultimately ends with a zoomed in shot of her face seemingly smiling at the camera and enticing the viewer to adopt her so that they can “love and purr together.”

I created the Lucy video also with her personality in mind. The Woods staff described Lucy as a very energetic girl who is eager to please people, so I wanted to capture that as much as possible. Lucy’s video begins with an upbeat introduction by herself and an eager call for the

viewer to see all the things she can do. She then lists out the different activities she can do while demonstrating them in different shots. The video ends with Lucy telling the viewer that she's been at the shelter for a long time and for the viewer to visit her at Woods Humane Society.

### *Use of identification*

The videos were curated with a focus on Cheney's third key strategy of Burke's theory of identification - forms of transcendence, such as the collective "we." For example, in the Lovins video the voiceover states, "This is how we'll sit by the fire, watch movies, and keep each other company." In another section, the voiceover says, "Come pick me up so we can love and purr together. Our options are unlimited" (Tucker, 2018). My hope in using the collective "we" is to overcome the lack of commonality that a viewer might have with Lovins. "We" language is inclusive and inviting, creating a sense of togetherness. These sentences were designed to accomplish this sense of togetherness. My goal by using identification was to reduce uncertainty by creating a relationship with the viewer. In the Lucy video, examples of the collective "we" are seen in the introduction ("Hi! My name is Lucy and we're going to be best friends") and the video's conclusion ("visit me at Woods so I can show you just how great a team we'll be"). The last sentence was designed to invoke the collective "we" while also serving as a call to action by inviting viewers to visit her at the shelter. The introduction in which Lucy tells the viewer that they'll be best friends was designed to open up the idea of a new companion or best friend.

By evoking the sense of a relationship between Lucy and the viewer, or Lovins and the viewer, through identification, I hoped to encourage the viewers to think of the animals less as another animal at the shelter and more as Lucy, the energetic puppy, and Lovins, the extremely affectionate cat, both who were looking to come home with them.

### *Use of visualization*

I incorporated visualization in the video content because of its potential to help lessen the uncertainty potential adopters may feel. In incorporating visualization, or the act of producing images in the mind (Dictionary), viewers can imagine what life would be like if they adopted Lucy or Lovins, instead of blindly bringing them into their home. Overall shots of Lucy and Lovins acting in their natural environment on their own help the viewer imagine what they would be like in that viewer's home. For example, Lucy demonstrates how she likes to give kisses and run around with her toys. Lovins demonstrates how she'll react when she is approached with food, when she is groomed, and how she'll sit with her adopter when they relax together. Long-term residents like Lovins and Lucy possess personality or physical characteristics that make most potential adopters overlook them, hence the reason they are long-term residents. Using visualization was an important strategy in these videos because it encourages the viewer to see why those characteristics are not reasons to overlook the animals. Visualization reduces uncertainty by helping the viewer see how those characteristics could perhaps actually be a good fit for their lifestyle or personality.

### *Use of inoculation theory*

I included inoculation theory when creating these videos because I felt this strategy would be helpful with Lucy and Lovins' status as long-term residents. They are both animals that have undesirable characteristics, which prevent them from getting adopted. Since the mission of these videos was to help them get adopted, it made sense to use inoculation theory as a strategy to help potential adopters look past these characteristics. Inoculation theory suggests that people can be inoculated against persuasive attacks that aim to change their beliefs and attitudes. Like how medical vaccinations expose the body to weakened forms of a virus to help the body build immunity against it, "attitudinal resistance can be similarly induced by forewarning an individual

of an impending attack on an attitude he or she holds and presenting a weakened argument against the attitude” (Banas & Rains, 2010, pg. 283). In using this theory, I hoped to be able to inoculate potential adopters from Lucy and Lovins’ undesirable traits by exposing viewers to Lucy and Lovins’ undesirable traits in a weakened form, as I will discuss next.

Originally, the Lucy video included facets of inoculation theory. One of the issues with Lucy was that she would bark aggressively every time someone passed her kennel. While the staff knew that this behavior was only present when she was in the shelter kennel and would disappear once she was outside of it, visitors saw this behavior as undesirable and would immediately turn their attention to other animals. When I first met Lucy, I myself was shocked by the sheer volume and excitement of her barks, so I knew this was an important obstacle to overcome. To do this, I created an introduction in which Lucy stated "I may be loud when I first see you, but that's just because I need you to open my kennel so that I can show you how great I am! Once I'm with you, I promise I'll be as quiet as a mouse. They don't call me a people pleaser for nothing!" This part of the video was crafted to take away the surprise of Lucy's aggressive barks when visitors saw her in the shelter and, in theory, inoculate them against letting the “undesirable behavior” influence their judgment of Lucy as a suitable pet. However, before posting the video, I had to take this section out because a Woods staff member did not want any negative aspects of Lucy in the videos.

The Lovins video also included facets of inoculation theory, but in this case, these elements remained in the video. As mentioned in the introduction, the older a cat is, the less desirable they get, and the higher the risk that they will be euthanized or live their life in the shelter. Lovins is eight years old, which is what the Woods staff deemed as her biggest obstacle in getting adopted. They believed that if she were younger, she would have been adopted right

away because of her extremely affectionate personality. Because of this information, I decided it was important to try and inoculate viewers to her age and did so with the statement, "I am a mature lady with a refined taste... and great hygiene, with a little help." This statement alerts the viewers to her age so that when they come and visit her, they already know that she is an older cat and it doesn't terminate their interest in her.

According to the Woods staff, one of the most common themes that occur with animals that have been residents for a long time is that people would visit the animals and then be deterred from adopting them because they embodied undesirable traits such as old age or missing limbs. My goal in using inoculation theory was to inoculate viewers before they came to the shelter against the undesirable characteristics in Lucy and Lovins, which was Lucy's aggressive barking and Lovins' age. My goal was to introduce their undesirable traits in a light-hearted way so that potential adopters would see that these traits were not so bad. Additionally, if they were to visit Lucy and Lovins in the shelter as a result of the videos, they would already know about their "undesirable" traits and hopefully wouldn't be as affected by them.

### *Use of pathos*

Pathos is one of Aristotle's three artistic proofs, or modes of persuasion, used to influence an audience. In rhetoric the use of pathos lies in emotion, as it uses the listeners' emotion to influence their judgement. (Braet, 1992). Pity has somewhat of a negative connotation but should not always be viewed that way. In the case of animals in a shelter, playing on pity is an effective way of getting animals adopted.

Lucy's promotional video was a perfect place to use pathos because she is a dog who has been at the shelter for a long time. Dogs are known to elicit a heartfelt response because of their reputation for being loving and wanting to please humans. This is why dogs are traditionally

used as emotional support and therapy animals (Coren, 2016). By having Lucy talk about being at the shelter for a long time, I hoped to elicit empathy from the audience towards her situation in the shelter. The Woods staff described Lucy as a tough dog because of how she handled the stress of shelter life. For this reason, I ended the video with the statement, “I’m a tough cookie, but I’ve been at the shelter for a long time now, and I’m ready to find my human.” The section “I’ve been at the shelter for a long time now” was designed to prompt a pathos response from the audience and make them feel bad that Lucy has been overlooked at the shelter. My goal by doing this was to prompt viewers to take a closer look at Lucy rather than other animals at the shelter, or even to plant the idea of adopting Lucy in their minds, even if they weren’t thinking of a new companion at all.

### **Findings/Outcomes**

The Lucy video was posted to the Woods Humane Society Facebook page on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Lovins the cat was adopted shortly before the completion of her video. Therefore, her video was not posted to the Woods Humane Society Facebook page. I was granted analytical access to the Woods Humane Society’s Facebook analytics for business pages. These analytics provide various data—such as number of reactions, post reach, post views, and engagement. The analytics I used for my evaluation were total reactions (likes, loves, sadness, etc.), video views, and link clicks. While I would have liked to include how many people came in to look at the animals in response to the video by asking all those who came in for Lucy why they decided to visit, this kind of data collection would not have been realistically obtained because of the level of communication between positions at Woods Humane Society. I would also have liked to include whether Lucy and Lovins ultimately got adopted but did not pursue such data because of the time constraints of this project.

Video Data

Data for Lucy's video was taken at one hour, two hour, five hour, twenty-four hour, and forty-eight hour intervals. Data for comparison was taken from Facebook's 'Published Posts' page, which details each of that page's post reach and clicks/actions (see Table 1). Comparisons to Wood' Facebook posts containing multiple pictures were not considered because clicks/action data would be skewed by the necessity of clicking to view the multiple photos. Posts containing promotions for kittens and puppies were also excluded because people really like baby animals and these posts will inevitably gain more attention than posts with older animals. Screenshots of other content analytics from other animal posts as well as other Lucy posts can be found in the appendix. These were used to make an evaluation on the efficacy of the Lucy post.

Table 1: Video Data Chart

Time Frame	Reactions	Video Views	Link Clicks	Comments	Shares
<b>1 hour after posting</b>	62	524	7	12	20
<b>2 hours after posting</b>	85	1,749	19	20	43
<b>5 hours after posting</b>	183	1,861	21	21	68
<b>24 hours after posting</b>	306	3,708	23	25	119
<b>48 hours after posting</b>	380	5,126	30	26	156

**Evaluation***Likeability Evaluation*

To make an evaluation on the likeability of the video, I looked at the number of reactions, and video views as an overall indicator of the likeability of the video. I interpreted their interest in the video as an interest in Lucy. I used reactions, or the overall number of people who clicked "like" on the post, as an indicator of likeability because reactions are one of the most notable and

traditional ways a person can evaluate how well their content is received. Overall, I believe the video performed exceptionally. Among all the posts the shelter has done in the past few months, the video surpassed most of them in general attention. It got more reactions and views than other posts. Additionally, even after other animals were posted to the shelter's Facebook page, the Lucy video continued to gain attention—as evidenced by the increase in all metrics even at 24 and 48 hours after posting.

### ***Theory Performance Evaluation***

To make an evaluation on the performance of the communication theories used in the video script, I looked at link clicks and shares. Link clicks refers to how many people clicked the link provided in the video post for Lucy's adoption page. I made the assumption that people clicked the link leading to Lucy's adoption page for more information about her, and so interpreted link clicks as an indicator of interest towards Lucy. I used the number of shares as an indicator of the relationship made between the viewer and Lucy. Sharing the video wouldn't necessarily mean the viewer was interested in adopting Lucy themselves, but that they understood that Lucy was an at-risk resident of the humane society and needed a home. They would have felt enough compassion and familiarity with Lucy to want to help her get a home, hence they shared the video. As a result, I used the number of shares as an indicator of the success of the theories as well. Compared to the other posts for Lucy, this video elicited significantly more clicks to Lucy's profile. In Lucy posts that had more comments, the more comments on the video I made were indicated interest in Lucy through questions about her, explicit commitment to visit her, and more.

In addition to using Facebook's business analytics, I observed the comments people made on the video. The content of the comments can be seen as a window into the minds of the



viewers. Many of the comments showed interest in Lucy and as such, three of the comments showed potential for adoption by asking questions about Lucy's personality. Five people tagged another person in the comment and made indications to that person that can be interpreted as interest to adopt Lucy. One comment explicitly stated that they would visit Lucy for potential adoption when they came back from their trip. These statements show that a connection was made between the viewer and Lucy because they display the viewer's interest. Asking questions shows that a viewer is interested in learning more about Lucy, and statements made in conjunction with tagging another person shows interest because there is discussion about whether Lucy could be a potential companion or not. These indicators would not be present if a relationship was not made.

In comparison to other promotional posts for Lucy, overall, this video outperformed them in how well it was received and in inspiring potential adopters to consider Lucy. This success can in part be connected to the use of communication theories in constructing the video. The overall goal of the communication theories used was to reduce uncertainty potential adopters felt due to the undesirable qualities Lucy has. I believe these theories worked because the video elicited curiosity from viewers about Lucy. Based on the other posts about Lucy as well as other animal promotional content in general, the video seemed to spark behavior consistent with those who are interested in Lucy.

### *Personal Assessment*

There were many unforeseen obstacles, including lack of communication from the shelter staff at times, during the completion of this project that made this journey frustrating. Yet, the skills and material I gained from this project prompt me to conclude that this project was a success. In evaluation of the final videos, I am extremely happy with how they turned out.

Although I had very little idea of what they would look like coming into this project and had little to no video editing and producing skills, they turned out nicely. The Lucy video was received well on Facebook and performed better than other posts created for Lucy. The feedback I received from the Woods staff was also positive. My primary contact stated that he loved the videos I created and immediately posted the Lucy video. He also asked me to continue making videos for Woods Human Society as long as I was able to, which I believe indicates he thinks my videos are valuable for the animals.

### **Limitations**

There are various limitations presented in this study. In respect to technical skills, I started out with little to no knowledge on how to shoot and edit videos. However, I was able to teach myself how to use editing software fairly quickly. Conversely, equipment to shoot and edit videos is needed as well. I was able to rent a camera and tripod from Cal Poly's tech rental but others may not have such easy access to video equipment. There is plenty of free video editing software, so this aspect of the campaign is not an issue. I used a free version of editing software called Da Vinci Resolve that downloaded in less than a minute. While I was able to work around these technical limitations, each added to the amount of time it took to finish the videos, which contributed to my inability to complete the two other videos that I had desired to create.

Another limitation was the lack of communication available to me when I was completing this project. The amount of time it took to complete this project was significantly longer than I expected because of the time it took to receive responses to emails, and the lack of communication between the shelter staff, as well as between physical shelters, i.e. the primary Woods Humane Society and the Woods North County shelter. The lack of communication also led to a significant hinderance in my project. For example, the director at the North County

Woods Humane Society did not communicate with me that one of the animals I had created a video for, Lovins, had been adopted. This resulted in a loss of data for my project, and although I will use the video for my portfolio, it was frustrating learning that I put a lot of time and effort into a video that wouldn't be used.

### **Insights and Areas for Improvement**

Now that this project is complete, I have a few comments on how I would have done this project differently. First, it was very helpful to discuss the animal's personalities and fallbacks in person with a Woods staff member who knew them well. At first, I was only given the animal's biographies that are posted on the Woods main adoption website. At the end of this project, I conclude that this information was not enough to make these videos and speaking to a volunteer or staff person who deeply knows the animals is imperative for these videos to have substance and effect. Second, I learned that animals have very little attention spans and so multiple days may be needed to obtain the footage necessary to create the videos.

As I am lucky enough to have been invited back to create more videos, the scripts for the animals are an area that I will improve on in future videos for Woods Humane Society. I mistakenly thought it would be easy to create the scripts and did not leave nearly enough time to create them. As a result, they did not have the depth, nor did they utilize the theories I chose as much as I would have liked. For future video scripts, a strategy I would like to employ is to learn as much as possible about the animal I am making the video for from volunteers so that I can really capture their personalities.

### **Note of Finality**

Overall, I am satisfied with the conclusion of this project. I gained invaluable skills by learning how to direct, edit, and produce promotional videos, and proved that I am able to work

with an organization to create videos to their benefit. I can also use the resulting videos in my portfolio for future employers to view. As noted in my evaluation, I think the potential for communication theories, especially persuasive theories, is immense for animal shelters. Identification, visualization, inoculation theory, and pathos appeals are all communication theories that have the potential to make a positive impact on long-term residents because of their ability to reduce uncertainty and forge a relationship with viewers when used in promotional content. They work specifically well with long-term residents because they can be used to help potential adopters overlook or even see the benefit in the characteristics that make animals traditionally undesirable. One can make the claim that the main role of an animal shelter is to persuade people to adopt the animals in their care. They do so through promotional content on their social media, physical and internet advertisements, and promotional events. While puppies and kittens need very little help getting adopted, older animals and animals with characteristics that carry negative stigmas may need more help and would vastly benefit from the use of communication theories in promotional content.

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Appendix A: Data from Woods Humane Society content for all animals

Posts	Reach	Clicks/Actions	Published	Posts	Reach	Clicks/Actions	Published
Less than a month until our Spring Break...	2.1K	90	Mar 6, 2018 at 5:58pm Jamie Reith	Check out the happy ever after adoptors...	5.6K	1K	Feb 26, 2018 at 2:30pm Jill Tucker
A round of a-paws to our good friends at T...	1.6K	51	Mar 6, 2018 at 1:51pm Steve Kragenbrink	Please share. NO ADOPTION FEE!	6.7K	461	Feb 26, 2018 at 1:06pm Jill Tucker
PLEASE SHARE- Pecan has been at...	3.6K	334	Mar 6, 2018 at 9:30am Cat Armstrong	It's Missed Connection Monday and together...	4.4K	497	Feb 26, 2018 at 10:56am Steve Kragenbrink
Hello, friend! My name is Bubbles. I'm a fluff...	2.5K	118	Mar 5, 2018 at 7:03pm Steve Kragenbrink	February is Pet Dental Awareness Month an...	3.4K	237	Feb 23, 2018 at 4:56pm Steve Kragenbrink
Another Puppy! Is Hank your Lucky Charm?...	8.3K	798	Mar 5, 2018 at 3:39pm Joy Miller	Learn more or buy tickets today at...	2.2K	57	Feb 23, 2018 at 4:30pm
Check out all of these recent happy stories...	4.2K	463	Mar 5, 2018 at 1:00pm Steve Kragenbrink	Check out some of the new furry faces who...	13.5K	2.3K	Feb 23, 2018 at 12:15pm Steve Kragenbrink
Three puppies, Almond, Hazel and...	21.4K	3K	Mar 5, 2018 at 11:51am Joy Miller	Greetings 'umans! De name is Buxton. O'm...	4.8K	292	Feb 23, 2018 at 11:30am Steve Kragenbrink
Wine 4 Paws is just around the corner ...	2K	73	Mar 5, 2018 at 11:02am	Who's ready for Spring BREAK?! Limited sp...	9.1K	515	Feb 23, 2018 at 8:59am Jamie Reith
The name is Shiloh. Before you get ahead...	4.5K	335	Mar 5, 2018 at 9:46am Steve Kragenbrink	You're invited to a Special Evening with...	3K	103	Feb 23, 2018 at 4:20am
So many new faces looking to you for a...	11.7K	1.8K	Mar 2, 2018 at 4:56pm Joy Miller	PLEASE SHARE - Midas has been in th...	2.6K	171	Feb 22, 2018 at 7:13pm Steve Kragenbrink
The name is Vladimir, but Mr. reliable is wh...	3.3K	163	Mar 2, 2018 at 3:20pm Steve Kragenbrink	Life Hack - Do you have something to do...	3.2K	129	Feb 22, 2018 at 4:30pm Steve Kragenbrink
Greetings humans! The name is Juno. I'm on...	6.2K	428	Mar 2, 2018 at 11:00am Steve Kragenbrink	Please SHARE! Rusty urgently needs a ho...	16.3K	1.7K	Feb 22, 2018 at 1:01pm
Hey there, I'm Johnny. If there's one thing yo...	3.3K	179	Mar 1, 2018 at 4:24pm Steve Kragenbrink	Voting is open for the 32nd Annual NewTim...	2.1K	49	Feb 22, 2018 at 12:19pm Steve Kragenbrink
Wine 4 Paws is just around the corner ...	2K	44	Mar 1, 2018 at 3:25pm	The name is Rudie. I'm such a cute, unique...	10.9K	1.3K	Feb 22, 2018 at 9:57am Steve Kragenbrink
Sometimes you just need to take a chanc...	6.1K	828	Mar 1, 2018 at 2:30pm Steve Kragenbrink	Have you got a lap? I will be there! Hi, I am...	5.7K	324	Feb 21, 2018 at 3:45pm Steve Kragenbrink
5 KITTENS! 7 PUPPIES! What coul...	22.9K	5.6K	Mar 1, 2018 at 12:10pm Joy Miller	Monarch here - a beautiful, loving, and...	6.2K	451	Feb 21, 2018 at 9:28am Steve Kragenbrink
The name is Zayley. I'm one gorgeous girl wh...	5.9K	413	Mar 1, 2018 at 9:09am Steve Kragenbrink	Did someone mention a cat that is beautiful...	4.6K	377	Feb 20, 2018 at 4:30pm Steve Kragenbrink
Woods Humane Society is celebrating...	13.7K	920	Feb 28, 2018 at 7:01pm Steve Kragenbrink	You're invited to a Special Evening with...	2.2K	92	Feb 20, 2018 at 11:00am
Meet Lucy...in her own words! She is getting...	12.5K	1.3K	Feb 28, 2018 at 2:25pm	Woods Humane Society updated their...	1.1K	36	Feb 20, 2018 at 10:49am
Well hey there! My name is Jake...Jake...	8K	811	Feb 28, 2018 at 11:42am Steve Kragenbrink	Today, February 20th, is National Love Your...	10.7K	1.1K	Feb 20, 2018 at 9:17am Steve Kragenbrink
Looking for a new best friend? Check out so...	11.4K	2K	Feb 27, 2018 at 5:12pm Jill Tucker				
Hello, friends! My name is Marti. I'm a sweet...	2.7K	106	Feb 27, 2018 at 4:46pm Steve Kragenbrink				



**Appendix B: Data from other promotional content for Lucy**

**Comparison Post 1**



**Performance for Your Post**

**8,227** People Reached

**264** Reactions, Comments & Shares

<b>15</b> Like	<b>15</b> On Post	<b>0</b> On Shares
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<b>3</b> Love	<b>3</b> On Post	<b>0</b> On Shares
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<b>7</b> Comments	<b>1</b> On Post	<b>6</b> On Shares
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<b>57</b> Shares	<b>0</b> On Post	<b>57</b> On Shares
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**2,703** Post Clicks

<b>1,322</b> Photo Views	<b>78</b> Link Clicks	<b>1,303</b> Other Clicks
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**NEGATIVE FEEDBACK**

<b>10</b> Hide Post	<b>0</b> Hide All Posts
<b>0</b> Report as Spam	<b>0</b> Unlike Page

Reported stats may be delayed from what appears on posts

**Comparison Post 2**



**Performance for Your Post**

**7,423** People Reached

**262** Reactions, Comments & Shares

<b>130</b> Like	<b>91</b> On Post	<b>39</b> On Shares
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<b>42</b> Love	<b>35</b> On Post	<b>7</b> On Shares
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<b>1</b> Wow	<b>0</b> On Post	<b>1</b> On Shares
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<b>1</b> Sad	<b>0</b> On Post	<b>1</b> On Shares
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<b>14</b> Comments	<b>9</b> On Post	<b>5</b> On Shares
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<b>75</b> Shares	<b>72</b> On Post	<b>3</b> On Shares
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**445** Post Clicks

<b>136</b> Photo Views	<b>7</b> Link Clicks	<b>302</b> Other Clicks
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**NEGATIVE FEEDBACK**

<b>7</b> Hide Post	<b>1</b> Hide All Posts
<b>0</b> Report as Spam	<b>0</b> Unlike Page

Reported stats may be delayed from what appears on posts

Comparison post 3

**Woods Humane Society**

February 12 · 🌐

Like Page

Lucy - SLO



12

Like

Comment

Share

Performance for Your Post

**18,530** People Reached

**733** Reactions, Comments & Shares

<b>8</b> Like	<b>8</b> On Post	<b>0</b> On Shares
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<b>4</b> Love	<b>4</b> On Post	<b>0</b> On Shares
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<b>50</b> Comments	<b>0</b> On Post	<b>50</b> On Shares
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<b>245</b> Shares	<b>0</b> On Post	<b>245</b> On Shares
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**3,880** Post Clicks

<b>2,273</b> Photo Views	<b>116</b> Link Clicks	<b>1,491</b> Other Clicks
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NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

<b>11</b> Hide Post	<b>1</b> Hide All Posts
<b>0</b> Report as Spam	<b>0</b> Unlike Page

Insights activity is reported in the Pacific time zone. Ads activity is reported in the time zone of your ad account.