## Views from the Branch: Faculty, Staff, and Students' Perspectives of Communication and Competition with a Main Campus

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**Abstract**
        The current study attempted to identify a major problem in the management and functioning of branch campuses that result because of perceptions of cooperation and competition with a main campus. This study found that branch campus participants' perceptions of the main campus' cooperativeness or competitiveness directly impacted how they interacted with and experienced the main campus. Specifically, this study found that cooperativeness positively related and competitiveness negatively related to branch campus participants' perceptions of communication satisfaction with the main campus, the belief in branch and main campus cohesion, positive attitudes towards the main campus, and the belief that the six campuses of Ohio University (5 branch and 1 main) were truly "one-university." Furthermore, the study qualitatively illustrated some of the problems Ohio University's branch campuses have with their main campus.

**Review of the Literature**
        In 1862 the United States Congress passed the Morrill Act that universalized higher education within the United States by providing land and money for every state to establish institutions of higher education. For the almost a century, most states relied on their flagship institutions to provide higher education opportunities to its states citizenry. According to The College Board (2008) there are currently

over 2,000 institutions that offer baccalaureate degrees or higher and over 1,700 community and technical colleges. Of this nearly 4,000 institutions of higher learning within the United States, 640 of these institutions providing baccalaureate degrees belong to some kind of university system, and more than 1,000 of the two-year institutions belong to some kind of system. A profound organizational change has taken place in many post-secondary educational institutions over the last four decades; single institutions have formed public multi-campus systems in order to coordinate statewide systems of higher education (Creswell, 1985).

According to Schuman (2009), a "branch" campus is one that is exists within a university system of some kind. One of the most interesting relationships then becomes the one that exists between a system's main campus and its various branches. While Schuman (2009) notes that the term "branch" is not a term agreed upon universally by various institutions of higher education, he argues that branch is "…probably the most common descriptor used by the public and perhaps by system administrators and inhabitants of main campuses. Because it implies a kind of dependency and subsidiary role, it tends to be a term that is viewed unfavorably by those it describes" (p. 5). Other commonly used terms are affiliate units, coordinate campuses, regional campuses, and satellite campuses. For the purposes of most academic work examining university systems, the terms "main campus" and "branch campus" are typically used to describe the superordinate and subordinate positions within the system, so we will use those terms within this paper as well. No matter what we call these types of campuses, Schuman (2009) notes that "Branch campuses are an important, large, and diverse segment of our higher education universe, but they are poorly understood and often undervalued" (p. 8). One major reason for the poor understanding of branch campuses is because they are largely ignored in academic literature (Fonseca & Bird, 2007).

The goal of the current project is to provide an empirical analysis of the faculty, staff, and students on branch campuses' perceptions of their relationship and interaction with a main campus. To understand these relationships, an analysis of the research

examining university campus systems will occur, which will be followed by an analysis of the Ohio University system.

**University Campus Systems**

McCroskey and Richmond (1992) define an organization as "as a group of people working together to achieve common goals" (p. 1). McCroskey and Richmond (1992) further state that all educational organizations are systems, and the units or parts within the educational organization are interrelated and depend upon one another to make the whole organization function. While McCroskey and Richmond's (1992) book examines educational organizations in the context of public education and higher education institutions, branch campuses function as independent organizations that belong to one overarching organization. Each branch campus has many parts of a traditional organization (e.g., hierarchies, norms, networks, cultures, and environments), but branch campuses also belong to a overarching organization that has its own set of hierarchies, norms, networks, cultures, and environments. To understand how branch campuses function as both autonomous organizations and as organizations within a larger system, a discussion of the nature of university campus systems will be explored.

University campus systems (also referred to as branch, multi-site, or multicampus systems) have multiple locations that generally have a single head who is also the head of the largest, or main, campus, which serves as the single faculty governance body that speaks for all of the faculty on matters of curriculum, academic policies, and faculty membership (Schuman, 2009). Campuses with branches are characteristic of large flagship universities that formed these branches in response to demands for regional coverage often before the full flourishing of their states' comprehensive college and university systems. Multi-site institutions are characteristic of large urban community colleges that have enrollments and geographic catchment areas that are too large, or political districts that are too disparate, to be served by a single site. In such cases, it is possible to have "system like," multi-site campuses within true multi-campus systems (Gaither, 1999).

According to Gaither (1999), the essential function of public multi-campus systems is to advocate on behalf of certain state needs and perspectives that may not otherwise hold high priority with faculty and campus presidents. These needs commonly include issues related to accessibility or racial and gender diversity. Branch campuses serve accessibility and state needs for nontraditional students with personal, employment, and distance limitations. For example, Morrill's (1991) results of a survey concerning the University of Washington and the adult population of the state led to the creation of a regional campus in Tacoma, Washington. Morrill found over 250,000 adults between the ages of 25 and 44 had some community college or university education, but were geographically bound and could not pursue their baccalaureates, so the "issue this became one of social injustice and regional equity" (p. 2).  The students who attend the Tacoma campus are "mostly older, working people with families, people who simply couldn't go to school if they had to go far from home" (Rivera, 2000, p. B1). This situation exemplifies the need for regional campuses, and demonstrates how important such sites are to nontraditional students with other responsibilities.

Thus far this discussion of multi-site campuses has been fairly general and lumped the various types of complex universities into one overarching category "multi-campus systems." McGuinness (1991) proposed that differentiating between the different types of multi-campus systems is important. For the purposes of this discussion, McGuinness describes three distinct multi-campus systems: multicampus universities, university systems, and multisite universities. Multisite universities generally have one chief administrator who functions as the head of the system but is not the chief administrator on one of the campuses within the system. The University of California and the State University of New York systems both fall into this category.

The second type of multi-campus system is the university system. A university system is differentiated from the other two systems because of three characteristics: 1) the system head is not the senior academic leader for all campuses within the system; 2) the various institutions within the system vary in terms of mission

and prestige; and 3) the evolution of these systems occurred because of consolidation of institutions and not as a result of specific system planning. The most notable system that falls into this category is the University of North Carolina system.

The final type of multi-campus system is the multisite university. A multisite university is characterized by strong, centralized control over academic programs emanating from the main campus. "All academic policies and programs are those of the main campus and faculty members are linked to the academic departments of that campus" (McGuinness, 1991, p. 2). For these institutions, the branch campus functions as an offshoot of the main campus and attempts to replicate the curriculum of the main campus. According to Dengerink (2009), the term "branch" for multisite universities refers to something like a tree branch, "an entity that is part of or an extension of a larger group located in a different part of a geographic area from the parent organization, somewhat like a bank branch" (p. 17). The three major systems in the state of Ohio are all examples of multisite universities (e.g., Kent State University, Ohio State University, and Ohio University).

**Basic Structural Problems in Multi-campus Systems**

As with any large, diverse organization, multi-campus systems are plagued with a number of problems. The two most commonly articulated problems relate to mission and treatment of branch faculty and students. As Kalikow (2009) noted, individuals working within a campus system will innately run into situations where the goals of the branch and the goals of the main campus are in competition with one another. Generally, the goals of the branch campus will be usurped by the goals of the main campus. Furthermore, in all multi-campus systems there is a finite resource pool. The more sites that exist within the system, the greater the strain placed on this resource pool. In essence, various branches often end up competing not only with the main campus for resources but with other branch campuses as well.

The second most commonly articulated problem that exists between branch campuses and main campuses is the treatment of branch campus faculty and students. There are inherent differences

between teaching at a main campus and teaching at a branch campus (Poling, LoSchiavo, & Shatz, 2009). Not only is there a stronger emphasis placed on teaching on branch campuses, but branch campuses also have higher teaching loads when compared with their main-campus counterparts. Additionally, Schuman (2009) noted that branch campus faculty generally have greater advising and service expectations when compared with their main campus counterparts. Historically, the increase in teaching, advising, and service by branch campus faculty was offset by a decrease in research expectations. However, as branch campuses have attempted to become more competitive in an increasing market, the need to set themselves apart by attracting top-notch teacher-scholars has increased the requirements for research in the promotion and tenure process at branch campuses in the United States (Padilla, 2009; Poling et al., 2009). While the nature of branch campuses has changed, there is still a perception within academia that individuals who teach on branch campuses are somehow "less than" those who teach on main campuses (Esterberg & Wooding, 2008; Padilla, 2009; Wolfe & Strange, 2003). Wolfe and Strange (2003) note that this perception that faculty on branches are seen as "less than" can also impact how branch campus faculty view themselves with some faculty viewing a job on a branch campus as a "'second-rate' appointment" (p. 357).

**Ineffective Branch-Main Campus Communication**

One of the most problematic areas that can occur within the branch-main campus relationship is the quality of the communication between the various entities within a multi-site system. Several factors play a part for any regional campus system to communicate effectively with its main campus. If these factors are not adequately met, communication problems can lead to poor relationships within any dispersed organizational system (Doerfel & Taylor, 2004). The two most prominent communication problems that exist within a multi-site university system are consistency of branding and competitive versus cooperative communicative messages.

## University Branding

Barton, Book, and Heaphy (2009) note, "One of the major communication challenges we face in academic administration is to maintain the appropriate balance in blending the university's 'family brand' and serving the needs of constituents of diverse regional campus communities" (p. 196). Specifically, Barton et al. (2009) note that within the Kent State University system students on the various branch campuses are receiving Kent State University degrees. As such, "This requires a degree of control being exercised by the central campus and administration to make sure that certain standards are maintained in advertising and that the message sent out is consistent with Kent State's overall image" (Barton et al., 2009, p. 196). While the degree may be a Kent State University degree, Barton et al. note that students on branch campuses tend to identify more closely with their local branch than with the main campus. In essence, while the Kent State brand is clear on all promotional materials, the various branches must have flexibility in advertising and promotion to reach their specific target audiences. As differing needs and goals are recognized, branch and main campuses often end up in a situation where both competitive and cooperative communicative messages are sent and received.

## Competitive vs. Cooperative Communicative Messages

Kalikow (2009) noted that branch and main-campuses often have incongruent goals. These incongruent goals innately create an atmosphere of competition. Deutsch (1973) originally proposed competition-cooperation theory to explain the impact that competitive and cooperative messages have on organizational communication. Specifically, "competitive climates beget deceitful, coercive, threatening, suspicious communication, while cooperative climates beget supportive and empathetic communication, trust, and openness" (Doerfel & Fitzgerald, 2004, p. 554). Additionally, Pfeffer and Salancik's (1978) resource dependency theory posits that organizations that are reliant on another organization for resources will be more cooperative in their interactions with the organization that has the resources. On the other hand, those organizations that have

the resources will be viewed as competitive by those organizations needing resources. In the case of branch and main campuses, the main campus is viewed as the resource-rich organization and the branches are dependent upon the main campus for resources. Barney and Hesterly (2006) noted that "more and more frequently, competition seems to manifest itself between groups of co-operating firms rather than simply between firms" (p. 133). Ultimately, multi-campus systems emphasize competition between the branch and main campuses because of the resource structure.

However, not all institutions existing in competitive networks must behave in a competitive manner. Lindskold, Betz, and Walters (1986) found that competitive conflict behaviors could become cooperative if one of the interactants behaved in a cooperative manner. Specifically, Lindskold et al. defined cooperative communication behaviors as ones that are honest, conciliatory, and responsive. Overall, "cooperative and competitive relationships produce processes and acts that encourage continuation of the established atmosphere that may provide an intuitive bias telling us that conflicts are intractable and difficult to change once escalation spirals begin" (Lindskold et al., 1986, p. 113). Furthermore, "Our naïve understanding of social interaction tells us not to ruin a trusting and cooperative relationship with deceit and exploitation; perhaps it should tell us to 'ruin' competitive and distrusting relationships with honest, conciliation, and responsiveness – all unambiguously communicated"(Lindskold et al., 1986, p. 113). In essence, Lindskold et al. believe that competitive communication behaviors beget competitive behaviors and cooperative communication behaviors beget cooperative communication behaviors. Additionally, Doerfel and Taylor (2004) found the same pattern of cooperative/competitive behaviors in their study examining the Croatian Civil Society Movement. In essence, if individuals within a multi-site university system perceive the main campus as cooperative, their communicative behavior will be different from those individuals who see the main campus as competitive.

**Ohio University Campus System**
        McGuinness (1991) proposed that there are three common

ways for multi-site systems to be established. For the purposes of the current study, one multisite university was chosen for analysis. Ohio University is a multisite university because the control over academic programs is relegated to the main campus in Athens, Ohio. In addition to the main campus, Ohio University has five regional campuses that were established 1940's and 1950's: Ohio University-Chillicothe (established in 1946), Ohio University-Eastern (established in 1957), Ohio University-Lancaster (established in 1956), Ohio University-Southern (established in 1956), and Ohio University-Zanesville (established in 1939 - Regional Higher Education, 2004). In addition to the five regional campuses, many of the regional campuses also have what Fonseca and Bird (2007) refer to as twigs or "branches of branch campuses served by branch campus faculty commuting from nearby sites" (¶ 4).

The Ohio University system was designed after World War II to help traditional and nontraditional students with personal, employment, and distance limitations seek baccalaureate and a handful of graduate degrees. According to Fonseca and Bird (2007), "79 percent of students attend college in their home state, most within a few hours drive of home" (¶ 3). Students at Ohio University branch campuses are "fundamentally place-bound: limited in their opportunities by financial constraints, family responsibilities, personal characteristics, lifestyle choices, or combinations of these factors" (Fonseca & Bird, 2007, ¶ 3). Because of the place-bound characteristics of the students who attend Ohio University's branch campuses, most of the students desire an education within a 30-minute commuting range. In fact, Leff (2004) quoted Kip Howard, former assistant vice president for enrollment services of Ohio University, as saying "It is possible for a person to stay at home and get an OU education; they can keep their job, go to school part time, work part time and get their degree." As for the actual make up of Ohio University's Regional Campuses and Centers system, Dr. Charles P. Bird (2003), Vice President for Ohio University's Regional Campuses and Centers notes that the regional campuses enroll "approximately 8,000 students per quarter, with an unduplicated annual headcount of nearly 12,000" (p. 4). As an organization that has one main campus

and five branch campuses, the university has attempted to stress the cooperation and collaboration of all six of the campuses through its "One University" branding approach.

According to Rodrick J. McDavis, president of Ohio University, as quoted by Lockhart (2009), "'We may have six campuses, but are one university,' he said. 'We do the same work. We're all about the education of students. We should never forget that each and every day, it's all about the education of students.'" While the branding idea of "one university" is consistent with the university's goals, not all students at Ohio University buy into this idea. In a 2005 article in *Outlook: Ohio University News and Information*, one branch campus student noted, "'The call for regional campus inclusion needs to be addressed … Often regional students feel disconnected from the main campus.'" Overall, the institutionalization of branch campuses is a growing phenomenon, but one that has not been adequately researched.

**Rationale**

The current study was performed to determine the nature of the communicative relationships between the branch campuses and the main campus at Ohio University. For the purposes of this study, a series of hypotheses and research questions have been posed.

According to Deutsch's (1973) competition-cooperation theory, individuals who enact cooperative behaviors are going to exhibit communication that is supportive and empathetic. Furthermore cooperative communication is also filled with trust and openness. On the contrary, individuals in competitive organizations engage in deceitful, coercive, threatening, suspicious communication. As such, faculty, staff, and students at Ohio University's branch campuses who perceive the main campus as engaging in cooperative communication will have higher levels of satisfaction with the main campus, perceptions of university cohesion, attitudes about the main campus, and the belief in the "one-university" brand when compared with individuals who perceive a competitive orientation with the main campus. Based on Deutsch's (1973) competition-cooperation theory, the following hypotheses are posed:

H1:     There will be a positive relationship between faculty, staff, and student perceptions of main campus cooperative behaviors and communication satisfaction with the main campus, perceptions of university cohesion, attitudes about the main campus, and the belief in the "one-university" brand.

H2:     There will be a negative relationship between faculty, staff, and student perceptions of main campus competitive behaviors and communication satisfaction with the main campus, perceptions of university cohesion, attitudes about the main campus, and the belief in the "one-university" brand.

In addition to the predicted hypotheses, the current study set out to explore qualitative perceptions of the various issues addressed in this study as well.

There are hierarchies, norms, networks, cultures, and environments that play a part in regional campus systems functioning as organizations (McCroskey & Richmond, 1992). [Successful regional campus systems] viewed each other as part of the whole rather than an "us verses them" mentality (Mallon, 2003).

RQ1:    Is there a sense of cohesiveness between Ohio University's regional and main campuses?

According to Mallon (2003), successful branch campuses perceived a sense of independence and openness in their communication with the main campus. On the other hand, individuals who felt they were being micromanaged by the main campus typically reported greater feelings of resentment and alienation from the main campus.

RQ2:    Are the regional campuses satisfied with the communication practices between Ohio University's regional and main campuses?

Criswell (1985) in his study of statewide multi-campus systems found that institutions in these systems maintain their own separate identity. The idea of branding and individual branch identity was also noted as an area of contention by Barton, Book, and Heaphy (2009). "It is our role to create educational opportunities [for the Ohio University regional campuses] in a wide variety of locations, using whatever delivery methods may be available to us that are consistent with our expectations for quality" (Bird, 2003).

RQ3:   Are regional campuses satisfied with the communication within their own campus?

Lastly, the study is setting out to determine if the qualitative comments obtained resemble the quantitative evidence found in this study related to the impact of competitiveness or cooperation with the main campus.

RQ4:   Do regional campuses feel there is a competitive relationship between Ohio University's regional and main campuses?

## METHODS

### Procedure and Participants

Participants in this study were recruited through a series of e-mails that were sent out at all five of the Ohio University regional campuses (Chillicothe, Eastern, Lancaster, Southern, & Zanesville) to all students, faculty, and staff. All potential participants were informed about the study and encouraged to participate. To participate in this study, participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire online.

Participants in this study were students, faculty, and staff from each of Ohio University's five branch campuses. A series of demographic questions were asked of all participants examining biological sex, age, campus, and length of time on that campus. The overall sample consisted of 284 females (75.5 %), 87 males (23.1

%), and 5 participants (1.3 %) who did not answer the biological sex question. The mean age for the sample was 29.86 ($SD$ = 11.17). The next demographic question examined the campus location of each participant:  111 (29.5 %) participants were from Ohio University-Chillicothe, 89 (23.7 %) participants were from Ohio University-Eastern, 27 (7.2 %) participants were from Ohio University-Lancaster, 130 (34.6 %) participants were from Ohio University-Southern, 5 (1.3 %) participants were from Ohio University-Zanesville, and 14 (3.7 %) did not respond to the campus location question. The last demographic question asked participants to write down how long they had been on that campus. The mean length of time on a campus was 3.99 ($SD$ = 5.14) years. These demographics can also be broken down by the demographic category of faculty, staff, and students.

        The faculty demographics for the current study consisted of 15 females (51.7 %) and 14 males (78.3 %). The mean age for the sample was 46.76 ($SD$ = 10.76). The last demographic question examined the campus location of each participant: 2 (6.9 %) participants were from Ohio University-Chillicothe, 8 (27.6 %) participants were from Ohio University-Eastern, 10 (34.5 %) participants were from Ohio University-Lancaster, 7 (24.1 %) participants were from Ohio University-Southern, and 2 (6.9 %) participants were from Ohio University-Zanesville. The mean length of time on a campus was 11.90 ($SD$ = 9.60) years.

        The staff demographics for the current study consisted of 21 females (67.7 %), 9 males (29 %), and 1 participants (3.2 %) who did not answer the biological sex question. The mean age for the sample was 44.03 ($SD$ = 11.50). The last demographic question examined the campus location of each participant: 1 (3.2 %) participants were from Ohio University-Chillicothe, 4 (12.9 %) participants were from Ohio University-Eastern, 9 (29 %) participants were from Ohio University-Lancaster, and 16 (51.6 %) participants were from Ohio University-Southern. The mean length of time on a campus was 10.31 ($SD$ = 6.23) years.

        The student demographics for the current study consisted of 246 females (79.6 %), 62 males (20.1 %), and 1 participants (.3 %) who did not answer the biological sex question. The mean age for

the sample was 27.20 (*SD* = 8.82). The next demographic question examined the campus location of each participant: 108  (35 %) participants were from Ohio University-Chillicothe, 77 (24.9 %) participants were from Ohio University-Eastern, 7 (2.3 %) participants were from Ohio University-Lancaster, 106 (34.3 %) participants were from Ohio University-Southern, 2 (.6 %) participants were from Ohio University-Zanesville, and 9 (2.9 %) did not respond to the campus location question. The mean length of time on a campus was 2.58 (*SD* = 2.65) years.

In addition to the above demographic questions, students were also asked to respond to additional demographic questions. First, students were asked their school classification:  66 of the participants (21.4 %) were first year students, 70 of the participants (22.7 %) were sophomores, 59 of the participants (19.1 %) were juniors, 106 of the participants (34.3 %) were seniors, 3 of the participants (1 %) were graduate students, and 5 of the participants (1.6 %) did not answer the question. Next, students were asked if they planned on finishing their degree on their campus. 216 (69.9 %) planned on finishing their degrees on their regional campus, 66 (21.4 %) did not plan on finishing their degrees on their regional campus, 22 (7.1 %) were undecided, and 5 (1.6 %) did not respond to the question. Of those students who did not plan on finishing their degrees on their regional campus, 26 (38.8 %) planned on transferring to Athens to complete their degree, 20 (29.9 %) did not plan on transferring to Athens, and 21 (31.4 %) were still undecided.

## QUANTITATIVE MEASUREMENT

### Cooperation and Competition Survey

The Cooperation and Competition Survey was created by Doerfel and Taylor (2004) as a way to measure the extent to which an organizational member perceives her or his organization competing or cooperating with another organization. For the purposes of this study, participants were asked about the cooperative or competitive nature that exists between their regional campus and the Ohio University-Athens campus. The scale consists of 16 Likert-type items

ranging from 1 *strongly disagree* to 5 *strongly agree*. A principle components analysis was conducted of the original scale to verify the existence of two factors, however, one item, "This organization helps my organization gain access to funding," did not account for any of the variance in the two subscales (cooperative vs. competitive). The Cooperative Organizational Behaviors sub-scale consists of 10 items and had an alpha reliability of .90 ($M = 32.78$, $SD = 7.47$). The Competitive Organizational Behaviors sub-scale consists of 6 items and had an alpha reliability of .82 ($M = 13.88$, $SD = 4.13$). The combination of the two factors accounted for 54.76% of the variance.

**Communication Satisfaction**

Communication Satisfaction in this study was measured using the Generalized Belief Measure created by McCroskey (1966) and Richmond and McCroskey (1996). The Generalized Belief Measure was created by McCroskey (1966) as a way to measure beliefs about specific concepts. By attaining an individual's general belief about a given topic, the researcher can measure the degree to which an individual believes in a given statement. The statement measured in this study was "I am satisfied with my communicative relationship with Ohio University-Athens." The belief statement is then measured using a five item semantic differential scale with seven steps. The Cronbach's alpha reliability for the scale was .97 ($M = 17.02$, $SD = 9.70$).

**University Cohesiveness Scale**

The University Cohesiveness Scale was created for this study to measure the degree to which individuals perceived a cohesive nature among the various campuses. The scale consists of 8 Likert-type items range from 1 *strongly disagree* to 5 *strongly agree*. A principle component factor analysis of the 8 items was conducted (Table 1), which clearly indicated one primary factor that accounted for 46.28% of the variance. The Cronbach's alpha reliability for the scale was .83 ($M = 20.25$, $SD = 6.26$).

**Generalized Attitude Measure**

The Generalized Attitude Measure was a scale originally created by McCroskey (1966b) and later validated by McCroskey and Richmond (1989) as a tool for determining someone's overall attitude about a specific subject. The Generalized Attitude Measure is measured using a six item semantic differential scale with seven steps. For the purposes of this study, the Generalized Attitude Measure was utilized to determine the attitude of participants about their own campus (Chillicothe, Eastern, Lancaster, Southern, & Zanesville) and about the Athens campus. The alpha reliability for participants' attitudes about their own campus was .95 ($M = 31.73$, $SD = 11.25$); whereas, the alpha reliability for participants attitudes about Ohio University-Athens was .96 ($M = 25.03$, $SD = 10.73$).

**One-University Belief**

Participants' beliefs that Ohio University is made up of six campuses that create one university is commonly referred to as the "one-university" philosophy. To measures participants' perceptions of the one-university concept, the Generalized Belief Measure was utilized. The Generalized Belief Measure was created by McCroskey (1966a) and Richmond and McCroskey (1996) to measure beliefs about specific concepts. By attaining an individual's general belief about a given topic, the researcher can measure the degree to which an individual believes in a given statement. The statement measured in this study was "It doesn't matter if you're in Athens or on a regional campus, we're truly One University." The belief statement is then measured using a five item semantic differential scale with seven steps. The Cronbach's alpha reliability for the scale was .98 ($M = 16.79$, $SD = 10.96$).

**Qualitative Questions**

In addition to the above mentioned quantitative measures, participants were asked to respond to four qualitative questions: (1) "What do you feel would make you and your campus feel more "connected" with the main campus in Athens?" (2) "What Ohio University events do you attend, and at what campus(es) do you attend

events?" (3) "What changes would you like to see made involving the Athens campus and the regional campus you attend?" and (4) "Please list any additional comments you would like to make about communication at Ohio University that this survey may have helped generate." Participants were given ample room on the web-based survey for supplying their answers to the four qualitative questions.

## RESULTS

### Quantitative Results

To examine the two hypotheses, first a series of Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated between the cooperative and competitive organizational behaviors and the five dependent variables of interest in this study (communication satisfaction, university cohesion, attitude about the main campus, and belief in the one-university brand). Based on the correlational results, the first and second hypotheses were confirmed. Cooperative organizational behaviors were found to be positively related while competitive organizational behaviors were found to be negatively related to communication satisfaction, university cohesion, attitude about the main campus and belief in the "one-university" brand. These correlations can be found in Table 2.

### Qualitative Results

To examine the qualitative research questions within this study, dominant themes from the participants that either supported or negated the overarching ideas are presented in italics. For the purposes of our analysis, the comments were not altered in any form. The exact grammatical structure and spelling reported here comes directly from the written comments of the participants. After reading comments from all participants, select quotations that clearly emphasize general themes seen throughout the entire set of answers and not just specific individual opinions were chosen as general representations of the dataset as a whole. The entire set of qualitative data can be gained from the lead author of this study. Furthermore, to limit the amount of space the results take up three answers for each of the research questions were chosen for use in this written analysis.

RQ1:   Is there a sense of cohesiveness between Ohio University's regional and main campuses?
*In order for the students of regional campuses to feel like part of the Ohio University family, we need to be offered the same opportunities as Athens students when it comes to academia. I realize that some things, like over 50 majors at regional campuses are impossible but at least provide all the curriculum for the majors offered at regional campuses.*

*I would like to see a change in the way students and personnel look at the branches. We ARE a part of Ohio University. The names "Branch" and "twig" (Proctorville Center) are not accurate descriptions as to the education you can receive here.*

*Although we do have different staff, etc., visit from the Athens campus it might help to have more of this. For example, Athens Career Services office is willing to come to regionals and do workshops. This would give our students more access to Athens personnel and programs. Also, when possible staff/faculty from regionals should attend meetings, workshops, etc., in Athens that are appropriate to their job duties. From my point of view our campus maintains a pretty good link to Athens staff for information and help.*

RQ2:   Are the regional campuses satisfied with the communication practices between Ohio University's regional and main campuses?
*It would be nice to get an e-mail once in a while from Athens that isn't trying to get me a date or telling me that the parking lot is closed for a football game. How about art shows and poetry readings. College is supposed to open your mind to new experiences and develop your personal culture, I have seen crowded parking lots plenty.*

*I wish I would quit receiving emails for free pizza at places on the Athens campus. It is hardly worth a drive from Ironton, OH to Athens, OH for pizza.*

*I am in a major program that I cannot finish at the Southern campus. So, I have emailed the corresponding department with my questions and concerns. But I never get an answer, so f\*\*k Athens man, but I have no other options but to go there to fulfill all my educational dreams. Plus, I've never been there; it might not be as bad as I think it will be. Hope this helps.*

RQ3:  Are regional campuses satisfied with the communication within their own campus?

*First of all, I am attending 3 campuses this quarter: Chillicothe, Lancaster and Zanesville, so it was difficult to answer questions pertaining to 1 campus. In the intermittent 30 years that I've attended Ohio University, I've never felt connected, so I don't believe it is generational problem. It just seems that each branch is its own school. When people ask me where I received my (first) degree, I always feel it's necessary to say OU-C - as if it is a different school.*

*Frankly, I love going to school at OUS, I make very good grades and take my education very seriously. I am concerned with transferring to the Athens campus for a number of different reasons. The overall atmosphere in Athens is that of "partying", "drinking", "skipping class" and generally "screwing up". I'm concerned that even with the best of intentions and study habits upon attending Athens campus my grades will drop. As well, financially, I am not able to live in Athens, or commute. Another big concern for me, and relative to communication is that of being lost in the masses.*

*At OUS I have and maintain a very close, personal, and positive relationship with the students, professors and staff, I do not think that this will apply at Athens. Finally, I feel that I am an OUS student (not an Athens student) and I would like to be able to have my graduation ceremony at the Southern Campus, where my friends (students and teachers alike) are present and to be recognized along with other OUS students and faculty as well as the ability to formally display my gratitude to the "OUS people" for all of their support and positive reinforcement. I hope that these concerns and comments will be communicated and represented to Athens, since being an OUS student my voice is not often heard.*

RQ4:  Do regional campuses feel there is a competitive relationship between Ohio University's regional and main campuses? *This may be a sensitive area and may not relate to this survey. However, in certain Degree program offerings, OU-S is losing students to Marshall, Shawnee State, etc. when the last two years of a given degree offered in Athens is not fully available on/at OU-S Campus be it Telecommunication/Satellite/ Distance Learning, etc. (e.g. BSW in Social Work). It would be nice if those students could finish through OU system/regional campuses. This could potentially generate more candidates for graduate degrees through OU.*

*The professors in Athens are no better than the professors on my campus just because they are on the Athens campus. I would put any of my professors in Athens and they would be just as successful as they are here.*

*Faculty with appropriate degrees and experiences should be able to teach any courses taught by equivalent faculty on the Athens Campus. Regional Faculty should receive regular electronic access to departmental minutes, etc. and be invited to collaborate in departmental decision-making.*

## Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to examine branch-campus faculty, staff, and student perceptions of their interaction and relationships with the main campus in the Ohio University system. The first part of the study tested whether or not Deutsch's (1973) competition-cooperation theory could be utilized to understand individual perceptions of the branch/main-campus interactions. The second part of the study then examined specific qualitative data to see how individuals on the Ohio University system branch-campuses actually perceived these interactions through open-ended responses. To help us analyze the information gathered in this study, we will examine the quantitative and qualitative results separately.

## Quantitative Results Discussion

Deutsch (1973) originally proposed competition-cooperation theory to explain the impact that competitive and cooperative messages have on organizational communication. Specifically, "competitive climates beget deceitful, coercive, threatening, suspicious communication, while cooperative climates beget supportive and empathetic communication, trust, and openness" (Doerfel & Fitzgerald, 2004, p. 554). In the current study, we hypothesized that branch-campus participants who viewed their campus' interactions with the main-campus as cooperative would be more satisfied with their interactions, have stronger beliefs of university cohesion, have a more positive attitude towards the main campus, and more likely believe that the six campuses (5 branch and 1 main) were truly "one-university." Overall, our findings supported this hypothesis through the correlational analysis seen in Table 2. Conversely, the second hypothesis predicted that branch-campus participants who viewed their campus' interactions with the main-campus as competitive would be less satisfied with their interactions, have weaker beliefs of university cohesion, have a less positive attitude towards the main campus, and less likely to believe that the six campuses were truly "one-university." Overall, our findings supported this hypothesis as well (see the correlational analysis in Table 2).

Based on these results we can further understand why some

individuals at branch-campuses feel discouraged by or alienated from their main campuses. As an individual's perception that her or his main campus is directly competing with the branch campus increases, the need to compete for resources and the attainment of specific goals occurs. As Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) note, the more competitive a branch perceives the main campus to be, the more likely they are start viewing the relationship with the main campus as innately negative. Furthermore, when an individual sees the relationship between a branch and main campus as competitive, there is an increase in deceitful, coercive, threatening, and suspicious communication (Doerfel & Fitzgerald, 2004, p. 554). The converse is also true. In essence, if campuses in a multi-site system are to effectively communicate, both the branch campuses and the main campus must attempt to establish a relationship built on cooperation.

**Qualitative Results Discussion**

Most of the comments contributed by faculty, staff, and students on the branch campuses were either negative or critical about the main campus. Numerous concerns of the branch campuses, which were not the focus of this study, were also recognized and analyzed. Many branch campus members feel that Athens looks down on them, treats them like children, or holds back classes or degree programs to force branch students to attend the main campus. Communication from the main campus to the branch campuses can also stand to improve in several areas, and suggestions were made to improve the communication process between the campuses.

Nontraditional students voiced their concerns about being misunderstood by the main campus, and they cited specific examples of how they were being subjugated and apparently punished for being nontraditional students. As the regional campuses were partly created in order to service nontraditional students in underrepresented areas, the nontraditional students' concerns and comments provide a valuable insight into their viewpoint.

Competition can be seen between the main campus and the branch campuses in how comments were made about how the main campus would seem to prefer students transferring to "other

universities" rather than complete their degrees at a branch campus. Faculty, staff, and students of branch campuses also felt there was a lack of respect in the communication from the main campus. This finding is similar to the lack of respect from individuals on main campuses towards branch campus members previously discussed in the literature (Esterberg & Wooding, 2008; Padilla, 2009; Wolfe & Strange, 2003).

Overall, the individuals who participated within this study clearly believed that there is a disconnect that is occurring between the branch campuses and the main campus at Ohio University. While the university purports to be one-university with six campuses (Lockhart, 2009), there is a clear disconnect that is occurring. While this disconnect may be an inevitable part of the branch/main-campus relationship as has been theorized (Kalikow, 2009), the particular disconnect at Ohio University could be an indication of a much wider and systemic problem at Ohio University.

**Limitations**

The first major limitation to this study involves the use of an internet-based survey as a tool for gathering data. While the internet is a great way for gathering data, it is plausible that the individuals who opted to participate in the study were more likely to have grievances about the branch/main-campus relationship. If there was an actual difference between the population at Ohio University's branch campuses and the sample drawn in this study, the results of this study could be limited. Unfortunately, there is no way to ascertain the difference between the sample and population within this study, so we recommend caution when attempting to politicize the results from this study.

A second limitation arose with regard to problems with the dissemination of the original survey. Several campuses sent the message to their students, faculty, and staff diligently, but other campuses either sent the e-mail late, attached it into the body of another e-mail, or included a faulty URL link. The chain of command at each campus regarding the sending of the campus-wide e-mails also differed at each location, as contacting the person that could

grant permission to send such messages many times did not follow the formal structure normally associated with such institutions. Communication problems involving the university e-mail system also inhibited progress, and the lack of strong participation at the Lancaster and Zanesville campuses limited the number of respondents for our study.

**Future Research**

From the results of this study, there is evidence that further research could be conducted:

1. Determine if the size of the Ohio University branch campuses is a determining factor for types and the extent of services provided by the main campus.
2. Assess specific working relationships between the main and regional campuses of Ohio University.
3. Determine how students, faculty, and staff at the Ohio University main campus perceive the regional campuses and their relationship with them.

**Conclusion**

The current study attempted to identify a major problem in the management and functioning of branch campuses that result because of perceptions of cooperation and competition with a main campus. Overall, this study found that branch campus participants' perceptions of the main campus' cooperativeness or competitiveness directly impacted how they interacted with and experienced the main campus. Furthermore, the study qualitatively illustrated some of the problems Ohio University's branch campuses have with their main campus. As a whole, there is little research that empirically attempts to analyze the experience of individuals in this unique organizational context. We hope that this study will cause others to join in the scientific analysis of branch campuses.

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**Table 1**
**University Cohesiveness Scale**

| Items | Factor Loading |
|---|---|
| 1. All of the campuses truly function as One University. | .78 |
| 2. The communication and involvement between all campuses of Ohio University is satisfactory. | .70 |
| 3. My interaction with the main campus in Athens has been positive. | .74 |
| 4. I feel a sense of community with the main campus in Athens. | .71 |
| 5. I feel the university community in Athens views my regional campus in a positive light. | .69 |
| 6. I participate in activities at the main campus in Athens. | .59 |
| 7. The students, faculty, & staff of my regional campus view the main campus in Athens in a positive light. | .58 |
| 8. I feel the main campus in Athens makes an effort to invite/publicize student events and activities to students and faculty at the regional campus I attend. | .63 |

**Table 2**
**Cooperative & Competitive Organizational Behavior**
        **Relationships**

| | Cooperative Organizational Behaviors | | Competitive Organizational Behaviors | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *r*-value | *p*-value | *r*-value | *p*-value |
| **Communication Satisfaction** | .37 | .001 | -.38 | .001 |
| **University Cohesion** | .62 | .001 | -.33 | .001 |
| **Attitude about the Main Campus** | .45 | .001 | -.49 | .001 |
| **Belief in the One-University Brand** | .33 | .001 | -.28 | .001 |

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