

ABSTRACT

Title of the Document: EXPLORING THE EMPOWERMENT EFFECTS
OF THE INTERNET ON ACTIVE PUBLICS

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The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of the Internet on the power of active publics using qualitative in-depth interviews with 19 human rights advocates. The study examines how the participants make meaning of power, use the Internet to achieve their goals, and the extent to which they feel empowered by the Internet. The results suggested four types of power in human rights advocacy, while advocates themselves rely primarily on the power of persuasion to achieve objectives. While the Internet has led to empowerment in some limited instances, no uniform empowerment for advocates was suggested by the data. The findings suggest numerous practical uses for Internet technologies in advocacy as well as important themes and theories to be incorporated into future studies.

Exploring the Empowerment Effects of the Internet on Active Publics

by

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Chapter 1- Introduction

Research Problem

Since the advent of mass Internet use in the mid-1990's, the Internet has provided a scope of communication possibilities that were unimaginable to practitioners and researchers of public relations less than two decades ago. While access to Internet communication tools for research and practice has clearly had an effect on public relations, the full extent of that effect remains unknown. Affirming the view that public relations research has insufficiently studied the role of the Internet in public relations, Kent and Taylor argued that the Internet remains, "underexamined by scholars as a tool for building organization-public relationships." (1998, p. 322). Despite the passage of almost a decade since that observation, research continues to lag behind the technological advances of Internet science.

The research on Internet use that has been conducted is largely descriptive. While much of the analysis incorporates developed theory to explain findings, very little theory is built to explain the specific technologies that practitioners and public use, why they use them and any effects that they have had on the practice. As a result, the research continues to develop piecemeal, with few studies expanding upon any other or working towards a common objective.

The purpose of this thesis is to address a small portion of the research gap, by enhancing our knowledge of the effects that the growth of the Internet has on the power in organizational-active public relationships. The literature indicates that the Internet has long been anticipated by researchers to have an empowering effect on publics. While this study does not conclusively determine if such empowerment has occurred, I

hope that it does begin to address that question and begin to build a more comprehensive understanding of the role that the Internet and computer-mediated technologies play in the field of public relations.

Implications of the Study

It is my hope that this research extends the body of research focused on understanding and theorizing the effects of the Internet on the practice of public relations. While its contribution is limited, I hope that it provides a first step towards a fuller understanding of the effects of the Internet on power in relationships. Most importantly, I hope that other scholars will find this study useful in providing insight into how future research may be shaped to achieve more significant and detailed findings. Because this study is highly exploratory, I hope that its most valuable contribution will be towards framing the approach of later studies in this increasingly important area of research. Finally, I have used this study to uncover what I believe are findings that provide practical insight into active publics, their Internet use, and the complexities of power in relationships between publics and organizations.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to improve my understanding of the effect of Internet technologies on the power of publics in relation to organizations. Specifically, I am concerned with understanding the perceptions of publics about how the Internet has altered power in their inter-organizational relationships. To achieve this goal, I have conducted research with the objective of answering the following questions:

RQ1: How do active publics make meaning of the concept of power?

RQ2: How do active publics understand and make meaning of their power in relationships with the organizations involved in their focal issue?

RQ3: How do active publics use the Internet to enhance their pursuit of objectives?

RQ4: To what extent do active publics see the Internet as having an empowering effect in their relationships with the organizations with whom they interact?

These research questions are inspired by a variety of sources in the literature.

This thesis includes a literature review to support this research. The review examines 1) the body of research on the use of Internet technologies in public relations, 2) research that informs my conception of human rights advocates as members of an active public, 3) research on power that informs my conception of research questions and interview protocol. It is based on this literature that I selected human rights advocates as my research public and framed my interview questions. Of particular importance is the literature on power. The thorough review of literature allowed me to fully explore the ways in which the Internet has changed the organizational-public power dynamic in human rights advocacy. Most importantly, it prevented me from too narrowly framing questions. Instead, it enriched and expanded my conception of power, allowing me to recognize more conceptions of power than I would have on my own. This has resulted in elements of power from emerging the data that is reflective of multiple perspectives.

Although I have not used the literature to impose a particular theoretical definition of power upon the interview participants of this research, the variety of theoretical definitions was used to ensure that my questions elicited a broad range of

views on power from the participants. Additionally, this literature helped me prepare probes for potential responses, and imbued my interviews with the flexibility to incorporate multiple perspectives on power. Finally, the literature helped me identify themes in the data as I conducted my analysis of the research.

Following this literature review, I provide a discussion of my qualitative methodological approach, which includes data gathering methods, analysis methods and sample interview questions. This methodological review includes discussions of validity, bias and reflexivity. I then share the results of the study, and a discussion of their value to theory and to practical communication. Finally, I include a discussion of the questions used in the interview protocol (see Appendix for complete protocol).

Chapter 2- Literature Review

In this section I summarize three important areas of literature that inform this study. First, I provide a broad overview of trends in public relations research about the Internet. Second, I summarize the current research that defines and explains active publics. Finally, I provide a broad summary of research on power. In this final section, I examine general theories of power, public relations theories of power, and finally, public relations research exploring the empowerment effects of the Internet on active publics.

The Internet and Public Relations

The Internet as a Tool of Public Relations

There is a growing body of research that examines the ways in which the Internet is being used as a tool by both practitioners and active publics. These studies are primarily descriptive and provide insights into the current and past Internet practices of organizations. Unfortunately, the relative amount of research is limited, given the scope of the Internet's expansion into all areas of public relations. The studies that do examine the use of the Internet in public relations provide an excellent starting point for understanding the current state of the research and indicate useful approaches to future research.

The majority of studies of the Internet in public relations are content analyses of various organizational web sites. The organizations examined are diverse, and vary from universities to Fortune 100 corporations (Ayish, 2005; Cooley, 1999; Esrock & Leichty, 1999; Perry & Bodkin, 2000; and Will & Callison, 2006). In most cases, the studies describe the content found in a particular type of organizational web site. Ayish

(2005), for example, examine the web sites of 20 corporate and government organizations in the United Arab Emirates. He examined each site for the availability of particular content items: an organizational profile, press releases, services, photographs, search capabilities, feedback functions and bilingual messages. Unfortunately, there was little or no theory incorporated into the study to explain the choice of content examined or the implications for the findings. The most significant finding to the larger field, that public relations staffs rarely managed the sites, was little more than a note.

The weaknesses of this research are common among studies of the Internet in public relations. While there is no doubt that they contribute greatly to understanding the field, their potential is not fully realized, as it might be if they worked towards building greater comprehensive themes and theories. Because these content studies are so often not based on a larger theoretical concept, and are not generalizable, they are only a snapshot of the particular sites studied at a particular moment in time. This is particularly troubling given the rapid changes that occur in web site technologies as the particular features of web sites are likely to change in very short time periods. The result is that these studies quickly become irrelevant as technologies change.

Some of studies of online Internet practices do expand beyond content description and provide more complex analysis that yields additional insights into theoretical concepts. Kent and Taylor (1998) examined how organizations use the Internet in relationship building with various publics and how it is used to enhance dialogic and relationship theory. Esrock and Leichty (1998) examined the use of the Internet by organizations in light of corporate social responsibility theory. Both of these

studies provide examples of how so much of the research on the Internet seeks to demonstrate pre-existing theory as it is enhanced by Internet technology rather than on building new theory to explain how the Internet has changed relationships and practice. Additionally, the dates of these studies make their current value limited, as Internet use has significantly expanded among organizations and publics in the years since they were completed.

Further studies examining the Internet as a tool of public relations focus on explaining how organizations use the Internet to achieve their goals. Taylor, Kent and White (2001) examined the ways in which activist organizations use web sites to build relationships with publics. They found that the Internet was widely used by these groups, but that the full potential of the sites remained untapped. Specifically, they found that although the web sites were relatively effective at providing information to visitors, they rarely used dialogic principles to enhance the relationship building characteristics of their sites.

Reber, Gower and Robinson (2006) examined the emergence of personal web sites in celebrity litigation cases through case studies of Michael Jackson and Martha Stewart. The study was very interesting in demonstrating new Internet trends, but did little to build or extend theory. Purcell (2005) expanded the research to a more global scale and looked at how the Slovenian military used web sites to achieve national objectives in the international community. Gonzalez-Herrero and Ruiz de Valbuena (2006) also examined Internet use from a global perspective by comparing differing national practices on web sites. In an analysis of 120 companies in eight countries, they were unable to find that any particular national web use practices had any major

advantage over any other. Importantly, the found that web site quality may be more closely linked to resources than national origin.

Porter and Sallot (2003) studied how practitioners of different roles and genders use the Internet in practice. Taylor and Perry (2005) examined ways in which practitioners use the Internet and new-media in crisis communication situations. They found that “overwhelmingly, when organizations decide to integrate the Internet into their crisis response, they are adopting the traditional tactics” such as press releases and fact sheets posted on their sites (p. 214). They did note, however, that “Over time, the use of new media tactics appears to be increasing” (p.214).

These finding suggest that the Internet has not fundamentally changed the way that public relations is conducted, particularly in times of crisis, and that organizations are prone to returning to tried and true methods in time of crisis. The studies findings are also important in suggesting that the field is still within a transitional period, and despite the rapid adoption of the Internet as a tool, it is too early to view the transition as complete.

Two additional authors examined the use of blogging as a public relations tool. Smudde (2005) provided general research and introduced ethics theory to understanding the use of blogs. The article provides no primary data however, and remains vague in establishing a research based argument for or against blogging. His argument is most simply that blogging must be part of a greater public relations strategy, and as such, must incorporate ethical and dialogic principles into practice. Trammell (2006) analyzed the content of two political campaign blogs in the 2004 presidential elections for negative content. She found that negative attacks were used more commonly by the

challenger than the incumbent and that the attacks increased in regularity from the primaries to the national elections. While not providing any sort of comprehensive review of blogging, the article did provide an insightful first step towards a better understanding of the use of blogs in political public relations.

The Internet as an External Influence on Public Relations

A significant portion of the research on the public relations-Internet relationship seeks to explain or describe how the growth of Internet technologies has had an external environmental influence on the practice of public relations. This portion of the research continues to demonstrate the lack of theory found in research on the Internet and consists of many studies that rarely build upon each other. Many researchers have recognized that the world of communication and particularly public relations has changed as a result of these new technologies. In spite of this recognition, the approach to research has lacked a systematic structure.

Gustafson and Thomson (1996) provided early public relations education research that included an examination of how technology has changed the nature of public relations education. This article, while non-theoretical did address important questions about public relations education, arguing that education has not kept pace with technology changes and that improved use of technology in the class room would improve education. Barry (2005) also contributed to this research field and examined the effects of new-media technologies on public relations education in Egypt and demonstrated the global applicability of this line of research. Despite the seeming importance of the topic, these two studies define the extent of research on education and Internet. The issues raised by these articles demonstrate the clear need for additional

research in the various elements of public relations education and practice, and stress the importance of a global perspective in understanding the Internet.

Other researchers have examined the effects of the Internet on the nature of modern crisis communication. Cho and Cameron (2006) provided a case study examining “Netizen pressure (online grassroots uproar)” as a product of Internet development (p. 199). The case study used a timeline approach to demonstrating how rapidly a crisis can expand within the context of the modern Internet environment.

Heath used a similar case study approach in his research of the effects of the Internet on crisis communication (1998) in a conflict between a major oil company and a leading environmentalist activist group. The study identified several ways in which the Internet has improved issues management, such as earlier communication, improved dialogue, and allows for more flexible policy making. Additionally, the study “demonstrates how the web can open an issue for public scrutiny” and suggests that the growth of the Internet will empower all publics and organizations and give equal standing to all parties (p. 282). While valuable in introducing concepts that merit consideration in a greater theory about the effects of the Internet, neither case study directly advances the call for greater theory building. Additionally, both studies take an external, outsider view of the relationships examined, and don’t succeed in penetrating the deeper meaning making of the participants on the effects of the Internet on their practice.

A number of other researchers have focused on examining the role of Internet technologies in altering the formation of relationships. Jo and Kim (2003) examined the effect of website characteristics on organizational and public relationships by positing

two hypotheses. They suggested that high interactivity and high multi-media orientation would more positively effect relationships between organization and publics than would text-oriented web sites. The researchers found that interactivity did enhance the relationship, multimedia use did not. This study took an important step toward linking theory with Internet studies, and used the dimensions of relationships from relationship theory to complete the study. Wright (2001) and Shin and Cameron (2003) specifically examined the effect of the Internet on the relationship between practitioners and journalists, to determine how these relationships have changed as a result of new methods of communication and web sites.

The remaining research focuses on understanding how the Internet has complicated power and influence distribution among parties and organizations. Casarez (2002) looked at the legal implications of online smear campaigns and suggested legal and public relations methods for dealing with gripe sites and anonymous message boards. The article provides an excellent critique of the challenges and complexities of the new media environment, and suggests ways in which organizations can adapt, even to what are now perceived as negative changes. Van der Merwe, Pitt and Abratt (2005) also examined the effect of the Internet on the increasing complexity of communication exchanges between organizations and stakeholders, suggesting that while old communication relationships were largely unidirectional and simple, they are now substantially more complex, as stakeholders are increasingly able to communicate directly with each other about organizations, and no longer rely on the organization to serve a mediator for communication.

User Perceptions.

A number of studies have examined the influx of Internet technologies into public relations from the viewpoint of the users. Rather than focusing on external views of how the Internet has changed public relations as a practice, or how practitioners have used the Internet as a tool, these studies have attempted to find how public relations users of the Internet make meaning of the Internet and its effects. These studies attempt to provide further insight into how Web users value the new technology, and how they understand its role in their many duties and relationships.

Porter, Sallot, Cameron and Shamp (2001) used qualitative methods to relate changes in technology to intra-organizational power shifts. The researchers used a four type measure of decision making power that consisted of structural power, expertise power, prestige power, and ownership power. They found a positive correlation between those practitioners engaging in extensive Internet use and perceptions that Internet use improved their decision making power. Porter and Sallot (2005) examined the perceptions of practitioners regarding the effect of the Internet as it relates to power and role within the organization. Their research examined the interaction of World Wide Web use, practitioner's roles within the organization and gender. They found that managers use the Web for more functions than technicians within organizations and that women and men use the Internet equally in performing their functions.

Porter, Trammell, Chung, & Kim (2007) later extended this research to include blogging as an additional Internet tool in public relations and found that "Practitioners who blog feel they have more expertise and prestige power than those who do not blog" (p. 94). This article and general research approach instructively demonstrates a

perception based approach to understanding how the Internet has altered power in relationships and has changed the practice.

Hill and White's (2000) research provides early general insight into practitioner views of how the Internet functions as a tool, explicating their views of its importance and use. Woodall (2006) took a media relations focus on Internet effects, and studied journalist perceptions of online newsrooms and examined what content they believed to be important to their work. Garrison (2000) also examined journalists' perceptions, although he focused on their understanding of the problems associated with conducting online journalistic research, in an attempt to provide the practice of public relations with greater comprehension of journalist needs. Kiouisis and Dimitrova (2006) studied college students' perceptions of web site credibility based on design elements embedded in the site. They found that source, whether organizational site or news agency site, was generally irrelevant to student's perceptions of credibility, but that interactivity and graphics helped create an impression of credibility among the users no matter the source. The study is important because it does demonstrate the potential ability of effective public relations practitioners to use the web to bypass traditional media outlets in direct efforts to inform publics.

Practitioner Opinions

A number of practitioner essays express opinions about the power of the Internet and public relations. These essays range from the highly theoretical (Galloway, 2005) to the practical (Marken, 2002, 2005). Galloway (2005) proposed a postmodern understanding of the role of the Internet in public relations and a theoretical conception of hand-held technologies, while Howard (2000) identified the Internet-journalism

relationship as the force that is changing public relations. Pinkham (2004) discussed the new skill sets that public relations practitioners need to do their jobs in the new-media world, however, additional research must be conducted to determine if the proposed skills are in fact required as the author suggests.

Cobb (2006), Marken (2005), and Hanson (2006) all dispensed advice regarding specific technologies such as new online video capabilities and blogging. Ryan's (1999) essay discusses the role and level of control that a public relations practitioner should exercise in the development of organizational web site. The author argued that while direct control may remain in the hands of information technology personnel, the public relations practitioners must embrace technology and maintain strategic influence over organizational web sites. The indirect implication of this article is that public relations as both an academic and practicing field must develop its theoretical and practical competence for using this critical communication tool.

The Extent of the Research.

In general, while there are a significant number of studies that have provided research on the Internet in public relations, these studies are varied in focus and do not work towards any unified theory. No aspect of the Internet has been thoroughly explored, and few of the studies have built off of each other. Three consistent thematic approaches to the research do emerge. Studies examine how the Internet can be used as a tool, it's effects on the practice of public relations, or how participants, both organizations and publics, make meaning of the Internet. This study will build upon these three approaches to research, incorporating each in an effort to more thoroughly understand the effect of the Internet on power in relationships.

Porter, Sallot, Cameron and Shamp's (2001) and Porter and Sallot's (2003, 2005) research regarding the relationship between roles, gender and power and the Internet illustrates this concept of a multiple-perspective approach. The 2001 research study focused on the Internet's external effects on practitioner's roles within the organization. The 2003 research focused on understanding how the Internet is used as a tool in practice and the 2005 study examined practitioner's perceptions of how the Internet affected their power. When used together, the three perspectives provide a rich and complex data set and ensure a more exhaustive treatment of the subject. As such, they provide a model for future research that examines the Internet as an external force, a tool for practice and seeks to understand it through an examination of how practitioners have made meaning of it.

Active Publics

According to Botan and Taylor (2004), the concept of publics is central to public relations, "publics and issues are core concepts in public relations and, we would argue, in most if not all applied communication situations" (p. 654). Grunig (1997) also stressed this centrality, writing "in essence, then, public opinion is both a cause and effect of public relations activities" (p. 4). He argued that "the study of public opinion has centered on two questions: What is the (or a) public? What is the nature of the 'opinions that the public or multiple publics hold' (p. 4)? The concept of the public and publics in general is critical to defining public relations. Similarly, the definition of the public is critical to answering the research questions of this study. Because this study examines the effects of the Internet on publics, a clear understanding of the nature of

publics is critical to ensuring that this study examines a public that is consistent with the literature.

The Organization Centered View of Publics.

The literature demonstrates the difficulty of defining publics. Often, public relations scholars adopt an organization centered view in which they describe the public in relation to the organization. In this view, public relations is a function of the organization, and publics only exist to the extent that they are recognized by the organization. As a result, publics have not always been defined in their own right, independent of organizations. Leitch and Neilson (2001) argued that “the organizational perspective has tended to overwhelm and marginalize publics within public relations theory. That is, publics have been viewed solely from the perspective of the organization and not from that of the publics themselves” (p. 127). Botan and Taylor (2004) suggested that such perspectives are misguided, “it is fundamentally wrong to think of publics as sitting and waiting to react to something that an organization does” (p. 655). This body of work suggests that public relations can more effectively understand publics with a more holistic understanding of the publics as they exist independently of organizations. Additionally, it underscores the need for additional research that examines publics independent of organizations.

The Issues Centered View of Publics

While most researchers still recognize that publics often do form in response to organizations and their actions, there is a growing body of research that supports a conception of publics as independent from the organization. This perspective defines publics in relation to issues rather than organizations. This approach elevates publics to

a higher level of equality and allows for greater theoretical description. Toth (2006) suggested that publics “organize and disperse around problems, issues, or actions that they recognize as being important enough so that they will become actively engaged in them” (p. 506). Therefore, rather than being solely defined by the organization, publics can form independently in response to the issues they perceive as important. Their relationship to organizations exists independently of the organization’s recognition, and is caused by the actions of the organization and the issues they generate. This view is important because it privileges the legitimacy of publics to equal status with that of the organization. By noting that publics form around the issues that they deem important, Toth recognizes publics’ high degree of self determination and effectively recognizes their role independent of the organization.

Incidental to this theoretical approach to publics is a greater need for understanding the definition of an issue. Hallahan (2001) provided a useful definition of an issue “as a dispute between two or more parties over the allocation of resources, which might be natural, financial, political, or symbolic” (28). Thus various publics form to advocate for resolution of the dispute, and often oppose organizations for the purpose of resolving an issue. This definition is consistent with the view that publics are equal to organizations as it does not inherently recognize any party as more important or powerful than any other.

The Situational Theory of Publics

The most fully developed and influential theory of publics in public relations is Grunig’s (1997) situational theory of publics. The tool was designed for organizational public relations practitioners, “the situational theory provides a useful strategy for

research that environment scanners can use to identify publics most likely to become activists and most likely to be strategic components of an organization's environment" (Grunig & Grunig, 1997). Despite this organizational management perspective, the theory recognizes the formation of publics in response to issues rather than existing in relation to organizations. Grunig (1997) specifically noted that "publics, therefore, begin as disconnected systems of individuals experiencing common problems" (p. 9). According to the situational theory, publics can best be understood in terms of communication behavior (active or passive) that is the result of variations in "problem recognition, constraint recognition and level of involvement" (p. 9). As individuals recognize problems, their own involvement in the issue and see few constraints to communication, they are increasingly likely to engage in communication activity (Grunig & Grunig, 1997).

Issue Advocates as an Organized Public

As the public increasingly organizes itself through communication behavior, it transitions from Grunig's "disconnected systems of individuals" into an organized active public. Hallahan (2001) wrote that, "organizing plays a critical role in transforming the merely aroused to the higher state of activism" (p. 39). On this basis, advocacy groups can be described as a specific type of public, still formed in response to an issue, but highly organized by communication behavior.

Issues Management

Botan and Taylor (2004), argued that issues management is public relations most important contribution to the larger communication field. According to their analysis, active issues management is the means by which advocacy groups can

overcome inequality in resources and influence. They argued that an issues management perspective “does not guarantee equal success, but it does confer the greatest chance of success for those finding themselves in inherently unequal positions” (p. 658). Unfortunately, in seeking to provide a general overview of the potential for public relations theory to contribute to applied communication, Botan and Taylor (2004) did not provide many specifics about issues management or how it is practiced.

Hallahan (2001) called for expansion of public relations theories of publics into a more general model of issues management that focuses on understanding the development of issues. He notes that “public relations lacks a comprehensive or integrated model of issue dynamics” (p. 28). As a result, he proposed a model of issue dynamics that sought to explain how issues form, are activated and responded to. His model identified four types of publics and a non-public. Based upon variations in levels of knowledge and involvement, he recognized inactive, aware, aroused, and active publics. Based off these types of publics, he theorized the techniques used to advance activity and appropriate organizational responses. This theory places issue advocates firmly within the definition of active public since, in accordance with Hallahan’s (2001) model, they possess both a high level of knowledge and a high level of involvement regarding an issue.

Hallahan (2001) focused heavily on organizational theory, particularly the role of “organizational structure, leadership, staffing, and fund development” (p. 39), in the development of active publics. His argument for the importance of organization is critical to understanding the highest level tactics of advocates. He explained that “organizational structure involves building a formal entity to carry out activist activities

(e.g., a neighborhood watch, club, or association). The existence of structure enables people to readily and positively identify with a cause, permits coordination of activities, and facilitates communication” (p. 39)

Based on Hallahan’s (2001) research, three high level functions of active publics can be seen as consensus building, coordination of tactics, and communication.

Additionally, the function of leader helps put a human face on the cause. Staffing is important to achieving the most direct resolution of the issue. Staffing allows the advocacy group to gain expertise in “legislation and regulation, community outreach, member recruitment, public relations, government relations and lobbying, and development” (p. 40). Finally, fundraising is the element of organization that allows the advocacy group to pursue its objectives, hire staff, and conduct communication.

Hallahan (2001), using the terms active public and activist group interchangeably, also prescribed that “a successful activist group must position itself as the sole legitimate representative of people (or other organized groups) affected by a problem. The group also must frame its claims effectively and demonstrate that it can exercise power (e.g., interrupt or otherwise pose a threat to the organization’s activities if its concerns are not addressed” (p. 42). Thus power or the threat of power is the ultimate end of organization, and the means by which issue resolution can be attained.

Research on Power

General Theories of Power

Several general theories of power hold promise for the development of more complete understanding of power in organizational-active public interactions. While these definitions have not been well tested in the public relations context, they can

ensure that studies of empowerment are rooted in substantial theory. The following perspectives yield important insights into the potential for research on power within public relations.

French and Raven (1968) provided perhaps the seminal chapter on definitions of social power. As such, their perspective deserves summary, as it lays the groundwork for a number of later studies on power. Their view is defined by five bases of power in a relationship. While the five bases of power examined in the chapter were not intended to be a conclusive list, the authors listed those they deemed most important and common. The five types of power are reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power. While each type of power is not absolutely independent, and overlaps frequently occur, each is here described separately.

Reward power is based on the person or organization's ability to influence another to act in a certain way on the basis of rewards or promised rewards, thus power is understood as the ability to provide desired rewards. Coercive power is closely related. In this case, when O and P are the two parties involved in the interaction or relationship, the power is derived "from the expectation on the part of P that he will be punished by O if he fails to conform to the influence attempt" (p. 263).

The legitimate power of a relationship between two parties is described as "that power which stems from the internalized values in P which dictate that O has a legitimate right to influence P and that P has an obligation to accept this influence." Legitimate power is rooted in the concepts of norms, standards and codes which pressure an individual or organization to comply with behavior request. Referent power is based on attraction, or a desire to be like another. In this case, the power is derived

from the fact that one organization or individual admires another, and as a result seeks to emulate them. Finally, expert power is based on a party's perception that another party has expertise that should be accepted as correct and truthful. Expert power can be derived from position, ability or control of knowledge. While French and Raven's conceptions of bases of power are dated, they continue to provide the most specific typology for studying the power that exists in organizational-active public relationships. These five bases allow for an initial expectation of the ways in which the Internet has altered power in these relationships.

Scott (2001), in his exhaustive summary of sociology's power theory provided a useful map of power types, as they are explained in the sociology literature, which is reproduced in Figure 1 (p. 23). In this summary, Scott went beyond the list of bases of power provided by French and Raven, and attempted to map power in terms of domination and counteraction.

Power

Elementary forms of power	Corrective Influence		Persuasive Influence	
	Force	Manipulation	Signification	Legitimation
Developed forms of power	Domination			
	Through Constraint		Through Discursive Formation	
	Coercion	Inducement	Expertise	Command
	Counteraction			
	Protest		Pressure	
	Interpersonal Power			

Figure 1.

Scott's (2001) map is based on an integration of what he calls mainstream and second stream power research. The mainstream approach is primarily concerned with the corrective influence modes of power, while the second stream is concerned with the persuasive influence modes. According to Scott (2001), each of the elementary forms of power involves the use of resources, but they differ according to what resources are used and how they are used. He additionally pointed out that these types of power are generally used in conjunction with each other, and rarely is one mode exercised exclusively.

Corrective influence is generally consistent with French and Ravens (1968) concepts of coercive power and reward power. Scott (2001) defined force as "the use of negative physical sanctions to prevent the actions of subalterns, the key resources being

weapons, prisons, and similar instruments” (p. 13). Manipulation on the other hand, can be both positive or negative, and is enacted through non-physical means, and might include “money, credit, and access to employment” (p. 13).

The other elementary form of power consists of signification and legitimation. By this mode, power is exercised through force of personality and the use of symbols to gain acquiescence to a course of action or inaction.

Where [persuasion] operates through cognitive symbols – ideas and representations that lead people to define situations in certain ways – it takes the form of signification. Where it operates through the building of value commitments to particular ideas or conditions, it takes the form of legitimation (p. 15).

Scott also presents more developed forms of power, which are rooted in the elementary forms but display more sophistication. These seven types, coercion, inducement, expertise, command, protest, pressure, and interpersonal are divided into two further categories, domination and counteraction. The patterns of power that compose domination are coercion, inducement, expertise, and command.

Scott (2001) identified domination as existing “where power is structured into the stable and enduring social relations that make up large-scale social structures” (p. 16), which is similar to Barbalet’s (1985) view of power as both structural and active. Similarly, Scott’s (2001) view of counteraction is consistent with Barbelet’s (1985) concept of resistance. In fact, he explicitly identified the importance of resistance in power relationships, “I have always argued that power always involves resistance, and particularly important forms of resistance arise in and around structures of domination”

(p. 25). Based upon this concept of counteraction as resistance, Scott (2001) argued that “fully developed counteraction...is co-ordinated or collective action against the leadership. It occurs where resources and commitments are mobilized for the pursuit of shared goals and interests and put to use in struggles against the established leadership” (p. 26).

The domination modes of power are sophisticated extensions of the more elementary forms. Coercion is essentially a more calculated use of force. Because of the high cost of the constant use of force, which results in high depletion of resources, sophisticated domination achieves a similar effect through the use of the threat of force. Coercion is the use of threatened force to convince the subordinated body to behave in a particular way. Obviously, the subalterns must believe that force can and will be used if they deviate from the pattern dictated by the more powerful agent. Thus the occasional use of actual force will often be used to reinforce perceptions of force capabilities and therefore maintain coercive capabilities.

Inducement, similarly to coercion relies on the judicious use of promises to promote certain behaviors. However, in this case, the subaltern is dominated through the use of promised rewards. As with coercion, however, it is necessary that promises are regularly kept for this method to be useful in the long term. Only as long as the subordinate perceives that promises will be kept, will inducement have a power effect.

Expertise as a mode of power is derived from signification. Expertise “occurs when cognitive symbols are structured into organised bodies of knowledge in terms of which some people are regarded as experts and other defer to their superior knowledge and skills” (pp. 22-23). This form of domination is dependent on the subaltern’s

perception that the principle has expert knowledge, and can be relied upon to dispense that knowledge truthfully and to use it properly.

Command is the final form of domination, and is based upon perceptions that certain individuals have a right to exercise judgment or decision making power. As Scott (2001) noted, “there is a willing compliance on the part of a subaltern because of a commitment to the legitimacy of the source of the command, not because of an independent and autonomous evaluation of its content” (p. 20). In this sense, command might be seen as power through faith or sense of duty, in which subordinates cede autonomy of certain decisions to a principle.

In addition to the structures of power as domination, Scott identified two principle forms of counteraction, which are essentially forms of resistance to domination. Protest “is organised as effective collective action through the construction of autonomous identities and forms of consciousness that overtly challenge the public transcripts of the principles” (p. 27). Protest is composed of collective attempts by a public to alter the current structure of power or domination. Thus protest can be seen to some degree as actions outside of the political structure and targeted at hegemonic powers.

Pressure, on the other hand, functions within the political system. According to Scott (2001), those using pressure as counteraction have no “right” to force the principle to act in a particular way; rather, they rely on persuasion and inducement to ensure that their views are taken into account. The success of pressure relies on the possession of sufficient resources to make their persuasion and inducements effective.

Scott (2001) additionally defined a third developed form of power, which is interpersonal power. He argued that while all other forms of power “occur within, between, and beyond formal structures of domination” (p. 135). Interpersonal power is derived not from the structure, but from the attributes of the individual. These attributes can be societal such as wealth, physical, such as strength, and psychological, such as intelligence. It is not the possession of these attributes that defines power. Interpersonal power is derived from the ability of the individual to draw upon these resources to gain influence. Scott (2001) additionally suggested that interpersonal power has a structure all its own. He pointed out that “interpersonal power relations...can also be remarkably enduring and are imbedded in larger structures such as those of class, ethnicity, and gender” (p. 136). Thus an individual’s gender, ethnicity and class impart certain power to their attributes based upon the dominant societal structure.

Scott’s (2001) framework of power is consistent with additional sociological theories of power. Although terms and focus change depending on the author, the literature suggests several consistent themes of power that can be used to frame research of power in public relations. These themes will be used in constructing the research approach used in this project, and inform the design of the interview protocol.

Barbalet (1985) provided an in depth analysis of sociological treatments of power. In his study of the term power, he sought to “demonstrate that there can be no adequate understanding of power and power relations without the concept of ‘resistance’” (p. 532). Barbalet (1985) did not provide a definitive conception of power, rather he demonstrated through summaries of various authors the disagreements on a

comprehensive definition. He did however state that, “in the broadest terms, power has to do with getting things done or with getting others to do them” (p. 538).

According to Barbalet (1985) the various definitions of power demonstrate that power is both structural and active “in terms of actor’s capacities and intentions” (p. 541). Both cases require an equal understanding of “‘power’ and ‘resistance’ as distinct but interdependent aspects of, or phenomena within the power relationship” (p. 535). In this view power is closely related to initiative, and is in fact “understood as the capacity to initiate” (p. 538). Similarly, “resistance implies the imposition of some limitation on the initiative of others” (p. 538).

Resistance can be the intentional resistance of actors, but also in structural terms “those factors which in limiting the exercise of power contribute to the outcome of the power relation” (p. 539). As a result, power relationships can be seen to be composed of initiative and resistance. Both aspects of the relationship are found in structural power and individual power. In both cases power is “a generative force” while “‘resistance’ refers to the factors which limit the effects of power” (p. 541).

Barbalet (1985) offers an integrative view of structural and active power that holds great potential for public relations. To the extent that inter-organizational relationships and organization-public relationships are power relationships, his summary of power and resistance provides a strong background for understanding the concept of empowerment.

In this conceptualization one group will be favored by the system, structure or society. This group “will have access to resources for action which simply are not available to those for whom the bias of the system is not favorable” (p. 541). This view

recognizes that the subordinates in this relationship still have influence in the relation, “the efficacious influence of those subordinate to power is resistance. The influence on social relationships exerted by powerless agents derives precisely from their resistance to power” (p. 542). As a result, empowerment can be understood as the increased ability of the subordinate party to resist the initiative of the favored party or the systemic conditions that determine the favored status of one group over another. Importantly, according to Barbalet (1995) even an imperfect democratic system distributes power to all parties, though in unequal quantities. In democratic systems, the “power in social and political systems has a number of nodal points and that an individual’s or a collective’s exclusion from one source of power does not necessarily entail exclusion from others” (pp. 544-545).

The implication of this analysis is that advocacy groups, although often less favored by the system, *status quo*, or resources are still capable of exerting influence in the power relationship. First, they can offer resistance to the power implicit in the system such as hegemonic or structural power. Second, advocacy groups possess the ability to resist the initiative of the favored, well-resourced, or more powerful organization. Finally, the advocacy group can exercise initiative power itself in accessing the “nodal points” of power available to it in the democratic system.

Public Relations Theories of Power

Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive theory of power in public relations that can be used to study the empowerment effects of computer-mediated communication on active publics. In fact, Leitch and Nielson (2001) noted a “complete absence of the concept of power in mainstream public relations theory” (p. 128). While

this assessment is no longer completely valid, and public relations research has begun to incorporate the concept of power, the overwhelming majority of this research examines power only within the organization, rather than between organizations or between organizations and publics (Berger, 2006; Berger & Reber, 2005; Holtzhausen, 2007; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002; O'Neill, 2003; Plowman, 1998).

Specifically, the field lacks a concrete operationalization of power that is consistently applied across the field. Despite this lack of theory, the term power is used quite frequently in public relations research, albeit in a wide variety of contexts and with inconsistent purpose. A roles theory perspective indirectly yields progress towards a definition of power as it exists in public relations. Although roles theory research, like most public relations discussions of power, is primarily concerned with intra-organizational power, important concepts can be mined from the theories treatment of the subject.

For Berger (2007) and other roles theory researchers, power in public relations is most important within the organization, and concepts of power are applied to understanding how practitioners can gain influence in the dominant coalition (Berger, 2005). Porter and Sallot (2004) researched “four types of decision making power” (p. 113) to help explain how practitioners could gain access to the dominant coalition. These types of power are expertise power, prestige power, structural power, and ownership power. Berger (2007) provides a definition of power, similar to Barbelet's (1985), “*Power* is often described as a capacity, or something possessed, that allows one to get things done or get others to do what you want them to do” (p. 222).

While this research in this line of theory has been able measure the effects of the Internet on power relationships within the organization's public relations function, it has not provided a universally applicable definition of power (Porter, Sallot, Cameron & Shamp, 2001; Porter & Sallot, 2003, 2005). Despite its primary concern with intra-organizational power, roles theory does provide the most in-depth development of power within public relations and simultaneously most explicitly calls for further research on the subject. Berger (2005) acknowledged the shortcomings of power theory in public relations, "we need more sophisticated theories that incorporate power relations and their manifold influences on public relations practitioners, practices, and strategies" (p. 23).

A number of other public relations approaches offer partial examination of power, though usually within organizations. One such alternative approach is the postmodern view advocated by Holtzhausen (2007), "As a result of this power perspective, communication for public relations activists is more conflict based and confrontational than in the two-way contingency model proposed in the Excellence Study" (pp. 366-367). In the postmodern view, power is found in all systems and relationships, although a specific definition is very difficult to identify. The critical nature of the postmodern perspective makes it useful in identifying the shortcomings of theory. Unfortunately, the very nature of the approach makes definitions and universal theory building something to be avoided. Holtzhausen did however, suggest that there does exist an "inevitable power imbalance between organizations, which often have unlimited resources, and activist groups, which have to essentially rely on the media to realize their goals" (p. 359).

The postmodern view of resources as central to defining power is consistent with other approaches. According to Dougherty & Kramer (2005), a systems rationality perspective of power states that “those with more resources exercise greater power.” This view, although seemingly simplistic does provide some value to an examination of changes in public power. From this view, any way in which the Internet allows publics to close the resource gap with other organizations would be empowering.

Relationship theory. Although lacking a comprehensive conception of power, relationship theory may offer the best opportunity to bridge general power theory with public relations. The theory currently offers the first attempt to include issues of power into a comprehensive understanding of interactions between publics and organizations. Because this study focuses so heavily on the relationships between active publics and organizations, I am including a brief synopsis of power in relationship theory.

Hon and Grunig (1999) first provided dimensions for measuring the strength of relationships, which are control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship and communal relationship. Different researchers have identified a varying number of relationship features, such as the eight measures studied by Jo, Hon, and Brunner (2004). Their variables were trust, control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, communal relationships, community involvement, reputation, exchange relationships. The dimension of control mutuality is where power currently resides in relationship theory. According to Jo, Hon, and Brunner, control mutuality “involves the influence of one party on the relative probabilities of actions by the other. In most relationships, one party has control in some contexts and shares or gives up power in others. The distribution of power in the relationship may be always under

negotiation...” (p. 16). Kelleher & Miller (2006) alternatively defined control mutuality as “the degree to which parties agree on issues of power and influence” (p. 401). Finally, Scott (2007) defined the concept as “the degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence the other” (p. 263). In fact, according to Huang (2001), control mutuality is the most important dimension in predicting relationships between organizations and publics.

While the idea of control mutuality includes power, it does not fully develop the concept of power to the extent that power can be studied independently. Rather than focusing on power itself, control mutuality looks at the extent to which power distribution is deemed fair by both parties in the relationship.

This study attempts to investigate the meaning making of active publics to further develop a public relations theory of power that while informed by outside research, contributes to a distinct public relations view of power as it exists in organization/public relationships.

Expectations for Empowerment from the Internet

The concept of power is particularly critical to understanding active publics, their relationship with organizations and issue resolution. The importance of power is particularly relevant to understanding the effect that the Internet has had on public relations practice, particularly from the active public’s perspective. Porter and Sallot (2003) noted that:

The Internet has increased the potential power of activist groups, making activist concerns more salient to organizations because of the Internet’s ‘democratizing effect,’ affording access to any and all who come online.

Accordingly, activists and critics may possess greater power to advance their causes and complaints via the Internet than with conventional media (p. 604). Such assessments are common in the global public relations literature. Woo-Young (2005) made similar observations regarding online media sources in Korea:

The avenue to be opened by the online media is expected to be a path that leads to a more vibrant form of citizen participatory democracy...to remedy or improve the defects of the existing media with democracy enhancing technological possibilities (p. 925).

Jha-Nambiar (2005) observed these anticipated effects of the Internet, “the Internet is seen to make significant contributions to political normalization, democratic pluralism” (p. 7). Consistently, the Internet is described as having either an explicit or implicit empowering effect directly or through democratization. Despite much speculation that the Internet has empowered publics and increasingly democratized the world, the research to back this view is significantly underdeveloped. This lack of research was identified by Grunig (1997) ten years ago, “One of the most unexplored aspects of activism is the role that the new forms of computer-mediated communication (the Internet, intranets, and the World Wide Web) play in empowering activists and extending the consequences that activists have on organizations” (p. 31). Despite the continued development of Internet based communication resources, the academic community has not yet embraced this challenge.

While the literature on active publics, the Internet and power are all explored in the public relations literature, plenty of room remains for additional research. I hope that this thesis takes a step towards integrating these three areas of research and

suggests opportunities for future research. The Internet has provided practitioners of public relations, both within organizations and within publics, a potentially revolutionary tool. While many researchers have suggested that the Internet will have an empowering effect, little research has sought to measure the nature or extent of the change. I hope that in a small way, this study provides a clearer picture of the effects of the Internet on active publics.

I have examined the effects on the Internet on active publics to find the ways in which it has altered power in their relationships with other organizations. By studying a distinct tool of relationship building, the Internet, within a specific active public, I hope to illuminate in detail the role that power plays in the larger field of public relations. While it is beyond the scope of this study to develop a comprehensive theory of power, I do hope that it will provide some further enhancement of power in relationship theory and a level of detail that may suggest further research.

Chapter 3- Method

Overview

I used qualitative methods to complete this study. I conducted in-depth interviews with members of active publics to build my data, and then analyzed this data through a grounded theory approach. My active public was composed of human rights advocates, who, though identified through their organizational affiliation, were interviewed regarding their personal views and observations regarding human rights advocacy.

Qualitative Research

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998):

The word *qualitative* implies an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined, or measured...in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency...Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry.

They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning (p. 8).

It is for these reasons that I have decided to approach my research in a qualitative manner. This study is exploratory, and designed to generate a rich data set.

Additionally, it seeks to examine the concept of power with detail and depth that quantitative measures cannot. Berg (2007) argued that:

Qualitative procedures provide a means of accessing unquantifiable facts about the actual people researchers observe and talk to...qualitative techniques allow researchers to share in the understandings and perceptions of others and to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives (pp. 8-9).

Such advantages are consistent with the purpose of this research. Although this study is rooted in theoretical literature, it does not seek to apply or test theory. Rather this study seeks to understand how active publics understand their use of the Internet and make meaning of its role in altering power relationships. To me the value and contribution of this research is its ability to give voice to members of an active public and to describe their sense of power in their relationships. Rather than trying to impose a structured concept of power on the participants, I have drawn from them the rich descriptions described by Denzin and Lincoln (1998).

Sample and Procedure

To complete this study, I conducted in-depth interviews with 19 individuals who displayed active involvement in human rights issues. I included participants who self-identified as human rights advocates. Although some of the participants also identified themselves as activists, the broader term advocate is used to describe the participants throughout this study. Human rights issues included the death penalty, slavery/human trafficking, general or geographic human rights, ethnic rights, women's rights and religious liberty.

The majority of participant's were members of small organizations, usually with 6 or fewer full-time staff members. In several cases, the organizations included 2 or fewer full time employees. In every case, participants told me that they were personally concerned with the human rights issue, had joined the organization because of the issue, and were not simply paid staff. To the best of my knowledge, all participants were paid, either as full or part time employees. Participants were evenly divided by gender, as the sample included nine women and ten men. The ages of participants varied

greatly, and I would estimate that participants ranged in age from their early twenties to well into their sixties.

Participants were included from a wide variety of human rights issues. In only one case were advocates affiliated with the same organization. As I sought to achieve saturation, it was necessary to expand my pool of participants to a larger segment of the active public than a single human rights issue. As a result of the diversity among my participants, I believe that I have been able to examine a richer sampling of advocate's meaning making about power and the Internet. I believe that this inclusiveness allowed me to develop a more precise understanding of power and relationship variables as they are related to the Internet.

Individual participants were selected based upon on the length of their time as an advocate, their management or executive level status, their knowledge of advocacy Internet uses, their availability, and their willingness to participate. Some interviews were scheduled using a snowball technique, with participants recommending other participants for interviews. However, the effectiveness of the snowball technique was very limited, and most interviews had to be solicited on an individual basis. Because this study is focused on individual advocate's use of Internet and not organizations, it was imperative to identify individuals with specific knowledge regarding Internet use and strategy, as well as participants who have been involved in human rights advocacy long enough to form reliable opinions about the impact of the Internet on their power as a public. Participants were asked to provide their personal views, and not the views of the organization. Though many expressed that their views were generally aligned with their organization's views, and other participants had even founded their organization to

help express their personal views, I am satisfied that the participants were able to distinguish and speak about their own views as individual advocates.

Each interview was approximately one hour in length, although some were shorter as required by participant schedules. Whenever possible, I conducted the interviews in person, however, several of the interviews were necessarily conducted over the phone. While I found that phone interviews were useful and allowed me to include participants that otherwise would not have been available, I believe that the interviews conducted in person allowed me to achieve greater depth. With some exceptions, I found that in phone interviews, the participants tended to answer questions directly and quickly. While this tendency still allowed me to gather excellent data, it did not allow for the depth obtained in person through longer, often unexpected and off topic answers. Overall, I found that when I sat down with a participant, the interview was more personal and conversational. Over the phone, the interviews had a much more businesslike and professional feel. Though it is difficult to say that either interview technique is better than the other, I found that I preferred in person interviews for the purposes of this research and that the data was slightly richer. When necessary, I contacted participants with follow up questions by phone or email.

Ethics

Ethics are an important component of communication, and have a specific application to this study. In relating to the participants in this study, it is of personal importance to me that our interactions reflect a high level of ethics. I have chosen to apply a Deontological standard to this research. The key application of Kantian ethics is found in the second formulation of the categorical imperative (Sullivan, p. 29). This

imperative demands that I treat the participants in this study with dignity, respecting them as ends. To accomplish this research ethically, I have taken a couple of specific actions.

First, I have attempted to use no deception to gain access to participants. To the best of my ability, I have tried to provide an accurate portrayal of my research, to ensure that interviews were conducted voluntarily, and not under false pretenses.

Second, I have attempted to document findings in this thesis that are of practical use to participants. While this is primarily an academic paper, it is my sincere hope that the participants in this study will benefit from its findings and conclusions. By doing this, I hope to make them beneficiaries of the research, and as such, the end of this project rather than a means.

Protocol

Interviews were semi-structured, in that they were guided by the use of an interview protocol. This protocol consisted of an arrangement of specific questions that I asked the participants to answer. Additionally, the protocol included anticipated probes and follow on questions. The protocol served as a guide only, and helped me ensure that my interviews were successful in gaining a consistent, rich and substantial data set.

I pre-tested my protocol prior commencing interviews to ensure that my questions elicited responses that were helpful in answering my research questions. The pretest consisted of several interviews with fellow students and relatives who have previously worked in advocacy. As a result of the pretest, I made only minor changes to the phrasing of my interview protocol, as well as the ordering of several questions.

In using a semi-structured approach to interviewing, I left myself free to depart from my protocol in order to follow unanticipated lines of thought and to pursue topics presented by participants. Although the protocol helped focus the interviews and ensure some level of consistency, I retained a sufficient level of agility to ensure that no emerging themes were precluded. My protocol evolved slightly over the course of my research, as I discovered which questions allowed me greater access to the views of the participants, and which were not effective.

The questions were drawn from the examination of the literature. They incorporated conceptions of power that include structural power, active power, initiative as power, power as resistance, resources as power and Scott's (2001) map of power. The purpose of this is to ensure that questions are framed so that no view of power was excluded due to my own narrow conception of power. Because the literature suggested far broader definitions of power than I had previously imagined, using the literature to posit questions helped me frame them such that a wide variety of participant observations and comments were solicited.

Consent and Confidentiality

Interviews were conducted in private to ensure that the identity and responses of participants are confidential. Interviews were recorded. Full or partial transcripts were made from the tapes to ensure accuracy. While names were noted on transcripts, names and organizational affiliation are not included in any final documentation. I included only anonymous descriptions of participants and pseudonyms in my final study.

I obtained IRB approval of my study before conducting any interviews. In accordance with IRB requirements, each participant was required to sign a consent form

guaranteeing confidentiality and granting me permission to audiotape the interview.

Additionally, all transcripts and audiotapes will be maintained in a locked drawer in my home for a period of five years following the completion of the study. These resources will then be destroyed at the end of that period.

Transcription

Notes and transcripts. Although each interview was recorded, I also took occasional notes during and immediately following the interviews. The purpose of these notes was to inform future interviews and to capture my thoughts, themes and other concepts requiring additional exploration. Additionally, the notes taken after the interviews allowed me to capture my thoughts and feelings from the interview for later inclusion in my analysis.

Each interview was transcribed from the audio tapes. The transcripts contain data from the interview that is relevant to the purpose of this study. Irrelevant material was not transcribed. The purpose of transcription was to maintain accuracy and to aid in coding and analysis

Observer comments. I inserted Observer Comments (OCs) into the transcripts upon completion. These OCs served as notes to myself regarding emerging themes and patterns, the interview environment, tone and the potential biases of both myself and the participant. The purpose of the OCs was to help me remember the details of the interview process along with the actual spoken words, and to allow me to later review the process of the research. These comments served the additional function of allowing me to critique each interview as it is transcribed, so that I was able to improve later interviews.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using grounded theory. Strauss (1998) provides a thorough description of the process in which open, axial and selective coding are used to identify concepts and themes, which are supported by the data for the purpose of answering the research questions. Thematic codes were selected for their ability to capture “the qualitative richness of the phenomenon” (p. 31) as described by Boyatzis (1998). I used hard copies of the transcripts to initially identify concepts within the data. These concepts were marked and labeled on the transcript. I then assemble coded concepts into themes. These themes are analyzed in the discussion chapter of the thesis. This final analysis lends cohesiveness to the findings and directly relates the data to the research questions. Additionally, I have attempted to place my findings within the relevant literature to ensure that context is provided. The discussion section includes my observations and opinions on the data and its relevance to theory. I include a discussion of existing theory, particularly regarding power, and where it was both consistent and inconsistent with my findings.

Validity

According to Kvale (1995), “‘validity’ refers to the truth and correctness of a statement. A valid argument is sound, well-grounded, justifiable, strong, and convincing. A valid inference is correctly derived from its premises” (p. 21). Kvale (1995) provided a detailed formulation for validity in qualitative research that includes three separate approaches. These three standards are quality of craftsmanship, communicative validity, and pragmatic validity. Craftsmanship means that the study is designed in such a way that its final conclusions can be trusted. “Validity is here not

some final product control or verification; verification is built into the research process with continual checks of the credibility, plausibility, and trustworthiness of the findings” (p. 27). Validity as craftsmanship is critical to the completion of this thesis, and is designed into its process. I myself am responsible for conducting each portion of this research with care and precision. To help improve validity through craftsmanship, each research question is drawn from the literature. Additionally, the literature is reflected in the actual interview questions that I asked, to ensure that my questions were consistent with the body of research and not overly influenced by my biases. This research has the additional benefit of been vetted by my advisor and Thesis Committee. This lends additional validity to the study and ensures that the study is checked and reviewed throughout its development.

Communication validity is seen by Kvale (1995) as “testing the validity of knowledge claims in dialogue” and is “established in a discourse through which the results of a study come to be viewed as sufficiently trustworthy” (p. 30). Thus, validity as determined by communication and discussion in this study will only be apparent following the completion of the study and defense of the thesis. Finally, pragmatic validity is determined through the actions that result from the study. Kvale (1995) described this complex concept “a pragmatic validation rests upon observations and interpretations, with a commitment to act on the interpretations- ‘Actions speak louder than words’” (p. 33). As a result, the pragmatic validity of this research will be found only in time, if its results and interpretations contribute to changes in practice of public relations, advocacy, or research.

Reflexivity

Qualitative research is highly personal and as a researcher, my participation in interviews and analysis means that my biases are reflected in my work. In order to minimize the negative impact of these biases, I included as much reflexivity in my writing as possible. My background, ethnicity, political views and experiences all impact the way in which I understand the participants in the study and make meaning of their responses to my questions. As a result, it is important that both I and the readers of my research are aware of potential influences on my research.

As a middle class white male, I come from a majority demographic. As a result, I have not faced the same struggles felt by many of different race and gender. This is important, because many of the participants in my research advocate for minority demographics. As a result, we are likely to differ in our experiences with hegemony, power, and justice. The very fact that I am a researcher indicates that my view of advocacy is acutely different from that of the advocates themselves. Their participation in opposition to human rights violations indicates a different level of problem recognition, involvement and constraint perception. My objectivist approach to their activity is not likely to be consistent with their focus on objectives. Thus it is important that I recognize these differences, and approach our interactions with humility and a willingness to listen to their perspectives with the hope of broadening my own perceptions of society.

Perhaps the greatest bias that influenced my work is my background and continued identity as a law enforcement officer. Prior to entry into graduate school, I spent four years conducting federal law enforcement activities. This included investigations, detentions and witnessing several deaths that occurred during the

commission of crimes. As a result, my perceptions of human rights and solutions to human rights abuses were not always fully consistent with the views of the participants. I believe that the effects of these differences of perspective were mitigated by the focus of the research, which is on the process and nature of advocacy, rather than on the particular objectives of the organization. The nature of my questions focuses on communication, techniques and power, rather than on the morality or effectiveness of, for example, capital punishment. Additionally, I believe that my awareness of my bias allowed me to minimize the influence of my views over the finding.

While I hope that this research will contribute to the fields of communication and public relations, I believe that its greatest value is in expanding my knowledge and preparing me to practice public relations. Following the completion of this degree, I will return to the field, where I will practice public affairs for the United States Coast Guard. In that function, I will exercise power over many publics. My status as a member of a military organization entrusted with great management authority both within the organization and with external publics brings with it great responsibility. I believe that by attempting to conduct this research from the perspective of a public often opposed to government policies, I have gained a valuable perspective. I have tried to make the most of this opportunity, and am grateful to the participants who allowed me to gain a better understanding of advocacy and the valuable role that it plays in democratic society.

Chapter 4- Results

The advocates for human rights that I spoke with held a very complex and rich understanding of the concept of power and the important role that the Internet plays in modern advocacy. Those who spoke with me were very willing to express conflicting thoughts, doubts, and uncertainty about the current place of human rights advocacy in the rapidly changing new-media environment. Almost uniformly, they were eager to learn more about how to use technology more effectively in support of their mission. As a result of their openness, they introduced me to ideas and ways of thinking that expanded my own way of thinking about power and new media technology. As a result, my data set was rich, conflicting, and illuminating. Although the inconsistencies and mixed opinions presented challenges in summarizing and organizing the results, they also resulted in a more practical understanding of the challenges that face human rights advocates, as well as both the advantages and limitations inherent to new media technologies.

RQ1: How do active publics make meaning of the concept of power?

While the participants in my study varied greatly by their focus on human rights issues, size, and geographical focus, they shared a number of common views about power, what it means, who holds it, and how it can be acquired. Additionally, they shared a common understanding of the limits to their own power, and generally, a sense of how to use the power they had to achieve their goals.

Inconsistent Meaning Making About Power

For many of the participants that I spoke with, use of the word power was used inconsistently, and, when used, did not reflect a consistent meaning. I anticipated this,

given the lack of consistent definition in communication research. As a result, I approached the concept more indirectly and asked about objectives, obstacles and strategy.

Despite this approach, the word power was occasionally used by participants, and this use was enlightening. Perhaps most interesting was the inconsistency about power that it revealed.

Craig, an advocate of abolishing the death penalty, provided the most clear example of this theme. He brought up the words power and empowerment without any prodding. He initially told me how his movement lacks power. “We’re a very marginalized movement, we have high hopes and we have low expectations. We want to abolish the death penalty, but deep down, we don’t necessarily believe that we can. We don’t feel very empowered.”

When I asked him why he felt this way, he gave me a rational answer, which is that the death penalty is not the hot button issue it once was, that it is not often a part of modern political discourse. Summing this frustration up, he said, “the fact of the matter is that the death penalty today has all the political saliency of what motto you’re going to put on your state license tags.”

Initially, I took this to mean that he felt pessimistic about the prospects for his cause. In fact, he felt just the opposite. He was energetic, optimistic, and singularly focused on ending capital punishment. When I asked him about the future of capital punishment, I was struck by the sense of empowerment that seemed so implicit in his words. He told me that, “in 5 or 10 or 15 years, we will have effectively abolished the death penalty in the U.S.”

This answer reflected a commonly inconsistent meaning making about power. Another advocate on the same issue pointed to a split in advocacy between the mindset of historical advocates, and more strategic approach to ending the death penalty in the United States. In describing the new movement, he told me that some in the movement had finally realized that, “we are not one more candle lit vigil in the rain away from world peace. You know, it’s not about kum ba yah.” In describing the new view of power in anti-death penalty advocacy, he said:

It was all about spending a lot of money on lobbying, and media, and really top-shelf P.R., and ran a political campaign, which is very different that traditional, you know, we are going to meet in somebody’s church basement, then we’ll have a prayer and then we’ll march, and then we’ll be in the paper. And then we’ll say, look, we’re in the paper so we won.

These quotes, and others like them, describe a very different view of power, in which the word power describes a feeling of recognition or efficacy. Throughout this study, when the word empowerment was used by participants, it described a feeling, or an internal sense of power. Very often, this feeling of power had little or no relation to the advocate’s ability to achieve goals.

Categories of Power

In human rights advocacy, the participants suggested that there are very few people or organizations that hold direct power to resolve an issue. It is these power holders who are principally able to determine victory or defeat for a cause. Power for the participants in this study lies in their ability to influence the decisions made by those with decision making power. In their words, their power is found in their ability to

access and effectively use available pressure points. As for the advocates themselves, they recognized that they did not have direct power to make change. As Craig said, “We’re not inseparable from the political process. We just have to make sure that when the political process affords us certain opportunities that we are poised to respond.” As a result, the participants suggested four types of power. The most direct power was held by decision makers who can affect policy and law to stop or punish human rights abuses. A second type is the power to persuade these decision makers. A third type is the power to enforce laws and regulations. A fourth type of power is the power to alter the system in which human rights abuses take place, achieved through facilitation of effective development.

Decision Making Power

The members of active publics that I spoke with were very clear about who held the most direct form of power to improve the human rights situations they dealt with. In every case, whether here in the U.S. or overseas, the local government was seen to hold the greatest and most direct power to enact rapid change. For Mitch, the primary power to correct human rights abuses in Guatemala lay with the Guatemalan government. Essentially all other objectives served to pressure this node to fix human rights failures:

I think that while we need to mobilize a grass roots effort... we also need diplomatic pressure, state to state pressure, where, the U.S. Government constantly brings up these issues with the Guatemalan government. And makes some things contingent upon whether or not they have improved.

The most sophisticated understanding of this type of power was seen in U.S. human rights advocacy, where the government is most accessible. The decision makers holding power on an issue varies. In some cases, the courts are seen as the power holders, in still others, executive and legislative power is seen as the most important. In the case of the death penalty, these nodes of decision making power are seen clearly.

One advocate, Glen, summed up the options:

The death penalty can be dismantled by either the courts, that say, 'this is unconstitutional,' or the governors, who say, 'I declare a moratorium,' like Ryan did in Illinois, or by the legislator, that says, 'we are going to stop this.' Those are the three ways that it can happen.

The sense of where the power is held is very fluid and strategic. "Well, we know that the key to abolishing the death penalty has shifted fundamentally from the U.S. Supreme Court to the state legislatures. So, state legislature by state legislature, we are going to try to abolish it."

For Rob, a religious liberty advocate, the decision making power to improve religious liberty in the United States lies in the courts:

We have some very specific legal goals. We target particular issues very strategically. We've been working on them for years...so, we've been pushing very hard to shape the law, on the religious land use side. And we're getting very close to getting it pushed through court.

Although the power of government decision makers was seen as primary for most of the human rights issues that I looked at, there were indications that other non governmental nodes of power may exist in other issues. Child labor is a human rights

issue in which corporations can make key decisions to end human rights abuses. For Tim, such decision making is seen as critical, and perhaps the best way to rapidly ending some abuses. In describing his efforts on one industry, he said, “we are working to get the middle level companies...to say, ‘ok, we’ll support that, and we’ll move in that direction.’ And then we are hoping to get the bigger companies.”

Enforcement Power

The second form of power that emerged in this study is the power to enforce. Even after members of an active public successfully persuades decision makers to pass a piece of legislation, policy or make a favorable ruling, compliance with human rights standards does not necessarily ensue. Particularly in international cases, the rule of law is not necessarily strongly in place. Often, laws and policies to protect human rights exist, but mean little, because they are not enforced. Similarly, a corporation can publish many correct policies, but words and action are often inconsistent. Terry told me that this is often a problem in fighting child labor violations:

I think that what we’re finding is that, one thing is when the company actually agrees to your demands. But the big question is, are they actually enforcing those standards they say they are going to enforce? Because, I think what we’ve seen is that every company has a code of conduct that often is quite good. But they are almost never actually applied. And so the question is, what do you do when the supplier is violating the code of conduct, and how do you get the company to fulfill their obligations?

Anti-human trafficking advocates face the same problem. Getting laws on the books of nations around the globe has proven to be only a first step for Manny:

There are 66 countries that changed their penal code and now have a provision making trafficking a crime, and there are 41 countries that now have comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation...there is not too much enforcement.

Pamela agreed, telling me: “Basically, we need governments to enforce their own laws, because it is outlawed everywhere. We need businesses to control their own supply chains.”

I asked the various human rights advocates that I interviewed how this problem of enforcement can be overcome. They provided me with three ways by which improvements can be made. Because many nations are dealing with so many problems, limited budgets, and unsettled political situations, international involvement is critical. Advocates attempt to encourage the exercise of enforcement power by encouraging international aid.

In discussing a key congressional resolution, an advocate stated:

It also urges the Guatemalan government to do more to investigate the cases and to prosecute the perpetrators. It offers, I would say, concrete ways for the Guatemalan government to do that. Through implementing a missing persons, an adequate, missing persons program. An adequate witness protection program. Funding the national institute on forensic sciences, which would help with DNA collecting, and actually analyzing the crime scene... we've encouraged the U.S. Government to offer, whether it be resources or offer technical assistance.

Through the provision of resources, training and oversight, many advocates believe that they can support transnational enforcement. In summing up the importance

of the international community and advocates in encouraging enforcement, Rob said, “If we had more NGO’s we’d be more amplified. Governments would think twice. Because they know people are watching.”

Persuasive Power

Recognizing that decision making power lies in limited nodes of power, the advocates that I spoke with held a clear understanding of their own power. Consistently, they saw persuasion of decision makers and enforcers as their own type of power.

Persuasion of key decision makers was achieved or attempted through a vast number of approaches, often used simultaneously to pressure decision makers to decide in their favor. As Glen explained, “In order to change things, you have to find the specific pressure points, which are few and far between and you have to marshal the correct assortment, the right coalition of people to push on that pressure point.”

Another advocate phrased it just as clearly. “What you are trying to do is persuade. You’re not paying people to do something. You don’t have that much power. You can’t force somebody, you have to persuade.”

There are several consistent persuasive techniques designed to influence decision making in support of ending human rights abuses. Although certainly not exhaustive, I have identified several of the most prominent persuasive techniques identified by the participants in this study.

Popular pressure. One of the most traditional and common persuasive techniques used is popular pressure. The objective of this technique is to mobilize a large group of citizens who feel that the issue is important, and that something must be done to fix it. Human rights advocates attempt to swell their ranks by building a shared

sense of outrage or purpose with a large segment of the public. This approach is perhaps the most indirect attempt at persuasion. Once popular support, or mobilization, is gained, it must be converted into “actions”. This technique is seen as the first step towards gaining legitimacy for more direct persuasion attempts and can be channeled into direct pressure, fundraising, issue promotion, and political threat through elections. In the case of Guatemalan human rights, Mitch described the process by which popular support is rallied and then used to support direct persuasion:

Ideally we would like to mobilize international citizens, people who are concerned about Guatemala to take action on behalf of poor marginalized Guatemalans...So, we try to educate people...but also provide them avenues where they can take action. So it might be sending a letter to the Guatemalan government. But it also might be pushing their own representatives here in the U.S. or other countries to put diplomatic pressure on Guatemala.

Threat. Various threats are often used to persuade decision makers to make and enforce human rights laws. Various forms of threat can be used, including the threat of legal action or United Nations and international pressure. This persuasive technique seems to be used most commonly in international human rights movements. Regularly, the voice of the United States, as voiced by the State Department is seen as the most persuasive and powerful threat available. As one participant explained:

The United States has such a powerful voice in the international community. No matter how much criticism there is of U.S. foreign policy, of whatever goes on, when the U.S. speaks, people around the world, they listen. The U.S. can't

be ignored, in so many areas. And so, the force of U.S. diplomacy has real impact, and simply raising the issues would often times be enough to get results.

The United Nations is another body that can pressure national decision makers to take a particular action. Although this can be useful, threats from the United Nations often have little influence. One advocate provided this example to explain the limitations of threat as a tool:

In international [advocacy]... we have to use the power of persuasion, more than the power of legal force. There's no real global court with actual enforcement powers. There are some treaty obligations that certain countries enter into, which do grant jurisdiction to the U.N., but they are often ignored. The U.N. doesn't have an army that will sweep in and force a country to comply. When you get a court order in America, if you don't comply, the sheriff comes and picks you up. Right? So, you can't do that with foreign governments.

Moral appeal. When appropriate, a moral appeal can be used to convince decision makers to accept a desired position. Glen described a case in which a Republican Catholic state legislator faced a public dilemma over how to vote on a key piece of capital punishment legislation. Glen told me that:

We sent people who had been exonerated from death row to speak with him. I don't think he got a call from the Pope, but he got a call from Bishops and Cardinals and stuff. And we had murder victims go and speak with him. That's an example of a pressure point.

Although moral appeals have a limited usefulness, at times, they can be used effectively in a case by case basis to persuade key decision makers.

Assistance. One of the things that many human rights organizations do is to provide legal aid to key decision makers. This can vary from amicus briefs, to writing legislation, to publishing legal arguments. Rob, a lawyer, explained it this way:

We provide all our legal documents, our work that is, free to the world. We essentially encourage people to plagiarize our stuff...we convince a lot of judges, so we want people to be able to use those arguments to further their own cases.

Manny, a lawyer and scholar, works to end human trafficking. For many years he helped governments around the globe develop and write strong anti-trafficking laws. In this case, although no government would publicly support human trafficking, and in fact most were against it, they lacked the expertise, or motivation to implement laws. By providing expert counsel and legal writing expertise, an overwhelming number of nations now have anti-trafficking laws. Although not yet universally enforced, Manny was able to persuade governments to take the first step in deciding on strong legal prohibitions to slavery. By offering assistance, Manny and his organization were able to make the proper decision almost unavoidable. This technique seems to be most useful on issues for which there is little debate, but not much positive movement.

In other cases, organizations have helped write congressional resolutions to pressure foreign governments. By making it easy for decision makers to essentially sign off of completed work, advocates for human rights are able to encourage and shape

positive developments for human rights. In cases where belief is shared, this technique helps advocates transform a position on an issue into a decision to act.

Story telling. For many, persuasion took a rhetorical bent. On some issues, the advocates told me how important it is to take a step back before acting. As Perry explained, “you’ve got to figure out the stories that make sense for the people you need to persuade, and bring your issue to that story.” In the case of the death penalty, this translated into changing the argument about the morality of the death penalty into an argument about cost and application. The movement recognized that most people are not morally opposed to the death penalty. They are however concerned about wrongful convictions, drunk defense lawyers and the cost of an unused capital punishment system:

For a long time, the death penalty was about morality... ..In the late 90’s, that began to change, rather intentionally. Into, ‘I don’t care what you think about the death penalty, but if someone is going to be sentenced to death, the lawyer out to be awake and sober.’ We really only ought to execute the guilty and trials ought to be fair. People believed in the death penalty, they still do.

Similarly, advocates of abolishing the death penalty have increasingly sought to personalize the issue of the death penalty. This is done by telling the stories of wrongfully executed men and women, and highlighting the flaws in the system through the telling of stories about individuals in a way that people can relate to. As a result, advocates have been able to demonstrate the flaws in the system, including the costs, the delays, and the wrongful executions. Craig explained how his organization issued a report that:

Looked at four cases in which we believe that an innocent person was executed...the reason for this is, Americans know that innocent people have been sent to death row. But its time to shift that conversation and expand it a little bit to make them realize that not only have innocent people been sent to death row, they've actually been executed.

By reducing the argument from an abstract, philosophical discussion, or statistical argument, and using personal stories to highlight flaws in the system, many anti-death penalty advocates feel that they have gained the upper hand in their cause. This technique has bridged the gap between moral supporters of the death penalty and those who oppose be illuminating a common ground in opposition to many aspects of the death penalty.

Reputation. Finally, perhaps the most repeated tool of persuasion was the importance of reputation. The persuasive power of a strong individual and organizational reputation was identified by an overwhelming number of the participants in this study. One advocate told me that:

Credibility is the coin of the realm. We live and breathe on people believing what we say. And we have a very strong reputation of being credible, competent, and doing the best quality work in terms of legal analysis and polish, etc. So, we've developed a reputation whereby when we call people up, they will listen to us.

Similarly, Karen, an opponent of capital punishment, took a lot of pride in knowing that her organization is very much trusted to provide disinterested and valid information about the death penalty to the public. "When people call us, they know we've

researched it, it's correct...So that aspect of our work, few could negate being fact based and impartial." She later told me, "We certainly cherish our reputation and are very, very cautious about who we get involved with, only because we want to maintain it."

In explaining the relative power of various non-profit organizations, another participant described the importance and function of reputation. "Organizations that have been around longer and continually produce quality reports and information and stuff are obviously seen as very reputable and I think catch the ear of those 'in power.'"

While a strong reputation has a favorable influence on the persuasiveness of an advocate, reputation can also impose limitations on effectiveness. Reputation also invites preconceptions about an organization that can be difficult to overcome. As one advocate explained about persuasion:

That can be challenging, especially if you are a known commodity. If the ACLU walks into a room, it really doesn't matter what they say, because half the people in the room are going to say, 'oh, it's them.' Regardless of what they say.

Development Power

The fourth type of power found in the data is largely unrelated to the previously three. This power is found in the cultural, political and economic system in which human rights abuses take place. For advocates of human rights, this approach largely circumvents the governmental and policy process, seeking instead to fundamentally alter the environment in which a particular human rights problem exists. The participants in this study suggested that this type of power lies primarily in international

advocacy. In some cases, advocates attempt to alter the political system, particularly closed, dictatorial systems in which human rights violations often flourish. In other cases, development is seen as the key to improvement. Often, the two go hand in hand. For many advocates, such changes are seen as the only way to fully achieve their human rights goals:

Overall, we want a sustainable democratic Guatemala. You know, one where all of the citizens have an opportunity to partake in the legislative process...if we could foster an environment where Guatemalans have the resources at the hands, whether it be education resources or health resources or employment opportunities. If they can really have an opportunity to take an advantage of those things, and have those advantages, and those opportunities, then I think that's what we are definitely striving for.

Another recognized the need to alter the system in which abuses occur through development, "Of course, in an ideal world, the end goal would be to effect some kind of change on the ground in [removed]. But that's a very utopian goal, that would probably depend on a fundamental change in the nature of the [removed] government."

This type of power is seen most clearly in human rights based development efforts. Rather than focusing on policy decisions as a means to improve human rights, this active public attempts to improve development efforts in nations with the belief that improved economic, health, and political development will lead to long term progress in human rights situations globally. This effort expands beyond humanitarian aid, and instead looks to sustainable efforts to improve opportunities and agency for people in undeveloped nations.

RQ2: How do active publics understand and make meaning of their power in relationships with the organizations involved in their focal issue?

Resources

“You know, unfortunately, it really does come down to resources.” Such quotes were common in my research. Participants told me that resources are critical to power in their relationships with other organizations. Resources determine the scope and scale of a human rights advocate’s work, funding determines the number of advocates an organization can hire, the technology they can employ, and their ability to travel, research and bring in expert assistance. Both successes and limitations were ascribed to a possession or lack of resources. A prime example was an effort described by Rob in which his organization, in collaboration with others, to block attempts in Sri Lanka to pass an anti-conversion law, which would have severely restricted religious liberty. While Rob was thankful for the resources that allowed his organization to succeed, he was also very aware of how resource limitations constrained their efforts. In discussing his inability to intervene in India, he said:

But in neighboring India, [anti-conversion laws] have proliferated like the plague. It just goes to show that had we been bigger...India would not have gone the way it did...I just wish we had the resources to do more countries.

Collaboration and Networking.

The ability to play a role or fill a niche in a human rights movement is seen as empowering for the movement as a whole. As a result, various organizations and individuals attempt to support each other and work together to share knowledge:

One of the main things we do is provide support. All sorts of support. We might do media training, or teach them how to write a press release or an op-ed. Participate in a fund raising strategy. I've taught a lot of people how to launch their own blogs.

Similarly, by working together, members of the active public are able to divide efforts into digestible pieces. Division of labor and focus seemed to improve advocate's sense of efficacy, and promote joint efforts:

In this type of work, because there are so many insurmountable obstacles...each organization has its niche... we all have different roles. WOLA is more of a policy organization...because we are a grassroots organization, we reached out to our grassroots base and had them call their representatives, and to get them to cosponsor. So you kind of need both organization, you need one to work the inside the beltway...we kind of work the outside the beltway angle, we try to mobilize a grassroots base to take action.

Rivalry for Attention/Resources

Although joint efforts can lead to success, shortages of resources and funding can lead to rivalry, both within a movement and between various human rights causes. Lupé told me that the rivalry within her movement was frustrating, but that it was unavoidable in the struggle for resources. "It is a lot of rivalry...you get so bombarded with this competitiveness, and it's the same thing with recruiting volunteers, is it becomes very cut-throat...because we are all vying for the same money."

Competition for resources between different human rights and civil rights causes is also seen as extremely competitive. Another advocate described the disparities in resources, and the difficulty of gaining a substantial share of the available funding:

Within the movement, it's a struggle. There are just a few organizations that are given foundation funding. There are only 4 or 5 foundations that fund this cause. And compared to other civil rights movements, there's no comparison. If you look at the funding for Gay and Lesbian causes, for every dollar we're getting, they're getting 500 to 1000 dollars. There's no comparison.

Another advocate agreed that rivalry exists, and in fact extends beyond funding. There was a clear sense that there is a strong rivalry for attention as well. Almost every community felt that their community would benefit from increased attention, and that, while other causes are important, theirs deserves more consideration than it receives.

Unfortunately, too many other groups that are in the human rights community, and say for example, the State Department, of the United States, treat religious liberty as the black sheep of human rights. There is this unwritten hierarchy of rights. And, unfortunately, in the human rights community, we've found that religious liberty gets short shrift.

Direct Opposition is Light

In human rights advocacy, direct opposition to human rights causes is very light. For example, many in the death penalty camp explained that they do not face an organized counterpart in debating or arguing over the issues of wrongful conviction and the death penalty. When asked about obstacles, an advocate told me that, even in the debate over the death penalty:

We don't really have organized oppositions... any other issue, you have two sides represented, but not this one. In fact, three times this year, I have been invited to debate the issue of the death penalty, in front of various groups of students, and three times the invitation was rescinded, because they couldn't find anyone to represent the other side.

Surprisingly, I could find almost no examples of organized opposition in any of the human rights issues that my participants advocated for. Although clearly, perpetrators of human rights violations oppose reform, there are few to no examples of organized counter-advocates to human rights issues.

The few examples of direct opposition that I did discover were surprising and mysterious. Ariel, an advocate for an indigenous Asian cultural group, recounted tales of sabotage, and underhanded attacks on information systems. Although the culprits could not be determined with certainty, her investigation into the attacks left her and her coworkers convinced that a foreign national government was responsible.

The only other human rights issue that does seem to face some direct opposition is child and labor rights. Because labor rights groups do target large international corporations, there is some direct opposition. Even in these cases, however, the opposition is often asymmetrical rather than direct. Rather than advocating for child labor, my participants indicated that large corporations take a less direct approach. On this issue for example, companies most commonly argue that they are unable to prevent child labor, or argue that they are doing everything that they can to prevent it, rather than directly engaging advocates or responding to their charges.

Resistance Found in the Status Quo

Despite a lack of direct opposition, the participants in this research still recognized intense resistance to their efforts. When I asked what this resistance was, and why it was so difficult to implement an agenda that encountered so little opposition, Glen responded in a way that summed up the resistant power well, “the power resides with the *status quo* I think. It requires an inordinate amount of power to actually change the *status quo*.” Although no one else summed the problem quite so concisely, the nature of the resistance was *understood* similarly by all of the advocates I spoke with. Most importantly, I believe, was their ability to highlight a number of the components of this *status quo*, and the reasons that it is so difficult to overcome.

Apathy. The first form of resistance that advocates identified was apathy. It is difficult to change the *status quo*, because it is often difficult to build support or energy for a cause. Speaking of his experiences with human rights in Guatemala, Mitch told me that, due to many years of civil war and human rights abuses, “Guatemalan’s...are very apathetic to violence, and I think that people have just lost their energy and their drive to denounce violence.” Similarly, anti-capital punishment groups in the U.S. have difficulty raising interest in their own issue. While talking about the difficulty of raising public and media interest over innocence stories, she told me, “now I call people and it’s like, ‘ho-hum’ what’s new about this story? Is there something unique? Because if it’s just another guy walking...it’s not really a story.”

Limited knowledge. Another problem faced by many advocates, is a lack of information. A lot of information is difficult to determine. This is particularly true of international human rights causes. Manny, in his attempts to end human trafficking told me that one of his biggest obstacles is lack of information. I asked him about the

difficulties he faced in his fight. “First, of course, is lack of information. Data collection, data gathering is very hard when you talk about a hidden market, underground. It’s very hard when you talk about governments that do not want to admit that there is a problem with human trafficking.”

Similarly, most advocates felt that there is a lack of education about the issues that concern them. They feel that if more people knew more about the issue, they would be significantly more successful in accomplishing their objectives.

You know, we recognize that more than 60% of Americans support the death penalty, although if you ask them about life without parole as an alternative, it’s closer. It’s more 50/50. If we could have a conversation with all 300 million Americans, and really sit down with them, and explain to them how it is, then we would actually prevail on this issue.

Competing issues. In attempting to implement human rights reforms, advocates commonly face competing concerns. The reality that active publics face, is that human rights objectives must be balanced against other economic, political, and military concerns, thus it is often very difficult to gain the support desired. Rob described some of the reasons that he has trouble gaining the support of the U.S. Government, “the State Department often will not take that step. They don’t want to rock the boat, it’s sensitive, it’s a domestic issue, don’t want to meddle with internal affairs, et cetera.” Too often, for human rights advocates, other priorities prevail over human rights, and too often, other human rights issues take precedence over the issue they advocate for.

Infrastructure. Limited infrastructure in a nation or region makes it difficult for human rights advocates to make change. Undeveloped infrastructure, a lack of roads,

limited electricity and other barriers make it difficult to gather and disseminate information. As a result, an organization's ability to identify allies and work for improved human rights is severely limited.

Advocates. In some cases, inefficiencies, poor strategies, or counter productive attitudes among the advocates themselves are seen as one of the key obstacles to success. Although they were very hesitant to say so, and I won't even identify which movements these comments came from, there was a very strong sense that one of the reasons that the *status quo* is so difficult to overcome is due to the challenges associated with fashioning an efficient, unified movement. As one advocate said, "the movement itself is fragmented, and...there's a real difficulty in figuring out who's supposed to do what." Likewise, philosophical disagreements within a movement, and varying standards and objects can slow down a movement's progress:

They get in their own way. You have arguments within movements about who is more pure. You know, 'You're not as pure as I am, so you're not as good.' So that's a big obstacle. They drive talent away, they drive funders away, and its just like, who wants to hang out with a person who every moments you are with them they remind you of how bad a person you are...If it's a piece of legislation, or a policy, or a rule, I don't care why the guy in charge of it changed it, I just want it changed. And there is sort of a lack of that. There is a notion that you'd rather be righteous and lose than right and win.

Competition for "mind space". As Rob explained to me, there is a difficulty in energizing even non-apathetic publics, "In a sense, there is only so much information people can take in at once, and...maybe we're all fighting for the same mind space."

Some of the advocates that I spoke with told me that even their best supporters have perhaps only five minutes a day to devote to a human rights issue. With so many issues needing support and attention, advocates find it very difficult to attract the interest and continued support of even concerned publics. With a limited number of people who are willing to contribute to human rights causes, there is some competition for a share of their consciousness.

RQ3: How do active publics use the Internet to enhance their pursuit of objectives?

Increased Networking

Amplification. Not surprisingly, advocates felt that one of the most valuable uses of the Internet is to network with other members of their active public and organizations. There were several types of networking that regularly occur.

I was almost constantly told in my interviews that the ability to coordinate, or amplify messages. The Internet allows advocates to identify each other and to communicate quickly and inexpensively. As a result, almost everyone that I spoke with suggested that the organization of human rights movements has greatly improved. Campaigns can now be coordinated to a degree that was impossible prior to the arrival of Internet technologies. This ability to coordinate also allows disparate organizations with common objectives to agree upon common themes and messages, and voice these messages with a much more unified voice. The result is a stronger, amplified message:

We forward other peoples action alerts, and they forward ours. So basically, what you're talking about in terms of coordination, I'm not so sure it is coordination as much as it is amplification. More groups getting the message out to more people, more people get it.

List building. The Internet allows human rights organizations to share information about members much more easily than before. If one organization identifies a member of the public that is interested in a cause, and is able to get that person to join their membership, it can then share that list with similar organizations. The Internet also allows organizations to identify potential new members from their office, and to advertise virally. According to several of the participants in this study, lists have become a sort of currency in modern advocacy:

You build lists. Because if you get a list, you can raise money from the list. And when funders want to know, “well, how big are you?” Well, we have 80,000 members. The more people you’ve got on your list, the more people you get to sell things to. The more people you get to ask for money, and the better you look to funders and other in the space. Which then turns into more lists and more money.

Lists also serve to help organize campaigns or to pressure decision makers on a national scale. A well organized database of members, and individuals interested in a cause can prove valuable. In an example given to me, if a particular congressman holds the key vote to an important vote, being able to identify active supporters in that district allows the advocate to very quickly mobilize local pressure to persuade the congressman to vote in a favorable manner. Well managed lists and databases are able regularly to supply this critical information in the Internet era.

Actions. Action alerts are used almost universally within the human rights movement. The Internet provides a way for advocates to provide supporters with almost instant updates on important developments, legislation or hearings, and

simultaneously, a call to perform a particular act, such as a phone call or email. The email format of action alerts allows them to be forwarded by allied organizations or between individual advocates. These alerts keep memberships informed and allow organized efforts and campaigns, and additionally, help to grow membership lists:

We have a...listserv of 27,000 people, it grows by about 30 people every day.

Completely virally, we don't really push it out there or anything, people just forward it to their friends. And we send legislative alerts, and execution alerts to that listserv.

Social networks. I was somewhat surprised by the number of advocates who are attempting to use social networks to increase their networks. In essentially every case however, the advocates felt very unsure about how to most effectively use these technologies, or how to measure their success. Terry told me, "we have a Facebook profile, and we have some 'groups' related to our campaigns, and 'causes' as well...it is very hard to tell if people you are communicating with on those pages are actually taking action." For all users, the social networks are seen as a way to introduce themselves and their cause to new potential advocates. These new acquaintances would then ideally take steps in support of the organization. At this point however, my participants uniformly stressed that they were not yet able to establish a clear link between an online "friendship" and increased action, let alone success for the movement or organization.

Dan summed up the attitude towards new Internet technologies very well:

We have a blog...Then I talked a little bit about MySpace and Facebook...The problem is you never know what the next big thing is going to be. So you have

to try a little bit of everything. YouTube is huge too...a lot of people, including us, that are going to be filming these videos, they are using their cell phones. So look at all the new media that is converging to do this one thing

The technologies change so rapidly, and increasingly interact in new ways, that advocates have a difficult time determining how to use them most effectively, and how to measure results. As a result, the general mentality among new media friendly advocates is to experiment, and see what works. Unfortunately, determining what is working has proven to be a great challenge. To some, social networking is a new frontier in advocacy, while others suspect that it may really just be another way to build constituencies.

Enhanced dialogue. For many advocates, the Internet offers an opportunity to increase dialogue about an issue and about potential solutions. Different from mere coordination or strategizing, this type of networking is focused on solution generation rather than implementation. The Internet has begun to offer opportunities for global brainstorming sessions in real time, local solutions to global problems, and feedback about previous efforts. Some attempts to use the Internet in this way have been incredibly creative. One organization has begun to use virtual spaces like Second Life to interact with constituents around the globe, in a live, interactive environment. Another organization has found that the use of videos to share best practices and experiences has greatly amplified dialogue by providing a face to the organization and to overcome some of the barriers found in large amounts of text.

Efficiency

“I would say that the Internet has been really positive for our organization. It’s reduced costs, as opposed to sending out an urgent action via mail, several times a year, we can do it through email now.” Everyone I spoke with clearly felt that the Internet improved the efficiency of their organization and their ability to advocate for their cause. The Internet has allowed advocates to perform more work per person, improved their ability to do research, and allows much faster response to developments in their movement.

Email. Continually, participants credited email with being the most positive Internet technology. It provides them with a very efficient way to communicate intra-office, inter-office, and to large groups of people with a single email. Advocates were enthusiastic about their reliance on email:

Oh, that’s easy. Email. Yeah, slam dunk. That might not ever change...I get four or five hundred emails a day. And I send two or three hundred... email is an incredibly efficient way to communicate to people. What if I had to make two to three hundred phone calls a day? Forget it.

Likewise, another advocate described the ubiquitous effect of email on his work, “Email is the single the most important [Internet tool]. We are email addicts, and we work remotely a lot. So, we are traveling all the time and the office wouldn’t work without it. Our culture is built around email.”

Research. In addition to the efficiency offered by email, the Internet has greatly increased efficiency in finding information. Examples include the ability to track down relevant legal cases, automated daily news feeds and searches and document searches.

As a result, a relatively small staff, or even an individual can access more information more efficiently than in years past:

It certainly makes data collection a lot easier. I don't know that it would be that we couldn't do the research, because there has always been a very strong network of people on the ground who would follow articles and things like that. But it would definitely be a much more cumbersome process.

Personalize the Issue

Many of the advocates I spoke with suggested that in addition to efficiently communicating with individuals through email, the Internet allows them to humanize their issue, and to increasingly use stories about people to highlight injustices and to motivate support. For Dan, the value of blogs lies in:

Being able to engage in story telling, and being able to develop a relationship with readers that's more informal and thus more trusting than if you're just throwing spin at them. You use your website to toss up a news article or a press release. You use your blog to tell personal stories. To go beyond the news article and the press release.

In the field of women's rights, Joy also highlighted the value of personalization:

Videos and audio clips are helping...Text, for certain parts of the population is not quite as pulling, as grabbing as video and audio...I think just the visual appeal and the personal side to it. If you have a video, you generally have somebody speaking in the video, and there's a rapport that's built instantly.

Whereas with text it may seem more formal. The same goes for blogs.

To Enhance Traditional Practices

The participants described several ways in which they use the Internet to supplement traditional methods and practices. In many cases, the Internet is seen as a tool to improve such things as fundraising, coalitions building and pressure. Rather than revolutionizing or eliminating traditional strategies, offline and online strategies are combined in hopes of improved effectiveness.

Direct mail. The traditional practice of mailing organization materials has not been eliminated by email. Direct mail is still seen by many as a necessary technique. Often however, direct mail is used to refer members to online information, and potential members who are identified online are asked to submit their information so they can be contacted through the mail. As Glen told me, “It seems like the most effective direct mail is being done in tandem with online outreach.” A similar comment was made by Mitch, who felt that many people still respond most positively to tangible mailings better than electronic communications, “we still do mail appeals. And that’s because, unless someone is getting something in their hand, it’s hard for them to get out their checkbook. If it’s out of sight, it’s out of mind.”

Phone and letter campaigns. Advocates also use email to coordinate unprecedented letter writing campaigns. Emails allow advocates to expand upon traditional letter writing and phone call campaigns by greatly increasing the number of participants. Where a hand written letter took a lot of time and effort, an email campaign requires a member of an organization to often do as little as click a button. Although there was some question among my participants as to the value of such campaigns, they appear to be regularly practiced:

If we are able to get a lot of people sending emails, companies do actually respond to that in some way. So I think that, since your ask of people is very small, it's just like take one minute and send an email. Then a lot of people will actually do it. And the volume of emails does make an impact with the company, and force them to talk to you or take you seriously.

Education. For many advocates, the Internet has proven to be useful in expanding educational efforts. The Internet offers new opportunities to forward information and curriculum at a very low cost. Additionally, teachers, schools and other interested parties are able to locate curriculums much more easily through Internet search engines than ever before. As a result, a limited staff can have an international educational reach. This ranges from sharing curriculum about an issue, to teaching human rights violation reporting, to teaching Internet use to rural women.

RQ4: To what extent do active publics see the Internet as having an empowering effect in their relationships with the organizations with whom they interact?

Although I've attempted to organize the comments of my participants into three general themes, this is not to suggest that the participants themselves are divided into three camps. Often, the interviewees expressed conflicting opinions, and seemed almost torn in their analysis of the overall empowerment effect of the Internet. While the participants universally recognized that the Internet improved their ability to perform many of their duties, they were less certain of its overall impact on their ability to achieve their ability to achieve their human rights goals.

Absolutely

Several of the human rights advocates that I spoke with made comments that certainly supported the idea that they were empowered by the Internet. The general enthusiasm for the benefits of the Internet indicated a sense that the advocates felt more powerful because of their access and ability to use this technology:

I wish all the information in the world was on the Internet. Because we use it so much. And it's an invaluable tool. Our operations wouldn't be anything like they are now, it's hard to imagine doing a third of what we do without the Internet. That is to say, we wouldn't even accomplish a third.

Advocates expressed reasons for thinking that the Internet does have an empowering effect. They pointed to several effects of the Internet as evidence for empowerment. They were perhaps most enthusiastic about the Internet's positive effect on the global expansion of their efforts. Their sense that their power to reach new parts of the globe in their efforts has been expanded was unequivocal.

It's really, I would say, enhanced the way that we can communicate with our counterparts in Guatemala. Not just through email, Skype has been great as well. We have two consultants. We have a consultant in Mexico. We have a consultant in Guatemala. So we communicate with them via Skype and via email. 5, 10, 15 years ago, it either would have been costly to have someone in those countries and communicating with them, or you wouldn't have been able to do it...you maybe would have gotten the information, just not as quickly as we do today.

Rob agreed completely in regard to this sentiment:

Without the Internet, we wouldn't be in other countries. Plain and simple. We communicate by email so much, we wouldn't be able to respond instantly to developments. And it's so important to be topical. And without the Internet, we wouldn't be able to do that. So, it's instrumental.

Small organizations and new causes. Many of the advocates I spoke with were convinced that at least for small organizations and movements, their ability to make change has dramatically increased. Rob was absolutely convinced of the empowerment effect of the Internet in this regard, "I do know for certain that the little guy now has an impact when they did not have one before. And that is a significant development in itself."

Similarly, Ollie told me that without the Internet, the indigenous population that advocated for had essentially no voice without the Internet. Although he felt that major obstacles still needed to be overcome, the Internet at least made some advocacy for the group possible. In that regard, he felt, there was no doubt about the Internet's empowerment of his movement.

Leverage. Most of the advocates were convinced that the Internet allowed good ideas to be leveraged to unprecedented levels.

If you're smart, you can leverage [the Internet] to magnify your voice. Way beyond your resources...we are transmitting our ideas in so many other ways now, including audio and video and it's much more compelling. And if you're smart, that's when you can leverage it. As long as you have a quality product to begin with.

For most advocates, the ability of the Internet to magnify a well planned effort is empowering. A well managed campaign or movement can create far more change than it might have before the Internet was available. “I think when you look at specific acts of congress and votes and members, pressure on the part of savvy organizers that used the online medium did change votes, did change the debate in Washington.”

Media circumvention. One effect of the Internet that many advocates found most empowering is its effect on the media. Many complained that they have historically enjoyed little or no coverage in the mainstream press as a result of systemic prejudices. They told me that as a result of the Internet, bloggers, and alternative news sources, they are now able to circumvent traditional media outlets to get their message out. As Glen worded it, “The Internet is a solution to a problem in the mainstream media.” Terry shared a very similar sentiment:

As I talked about before, one of our challenges is getting the mainstream media to address our issues...with people looking more and more, even at Facebook for their news, which is scary at some level, but it also is a way for us to get our message out there to people who are looking for it. And it’s the same thing for the blog.

Yes, but not absolutely or automatically!

The second theme that emerged regarding this research question was a more equivocal belief that the Internet empowers advocates. This sentiment was tempered however, with a number of caveats and limitations to that empowerment.

Learning curve. Many of the advocates that I spoke with stressed the steep learning curve associated with implementing online efforts in support of their cause.

While feeling that the Internet gave such advantages that it could not be ignored, they also were quick to point out the obstacles that limited effectiveness.

I just put an email message out to our affiliate listserv, telling them about the...video project. Well, a lot of them are going to freak out when they see that message, because they're going to be like, "I don't know how to upload a video to YouTube, I don't have a cell phone, I don't know how to do this." So, sometimes you're asking people to go a little bit out of their comfort level. And take the next step.

Guess work. Another common hesitation related to the difficulty of knowing which technologies are working. As a result, most advocates felt that they had to just try different technologies and hope to find some indication that their efforts were working:

We're kind of just like trying out all these different things, trying to see what works, and what doesn't. It's hard, also with a lot of these, especially Internet technologies that we don't control ourselves, to find out, to track if something is effective. I think that's the big challenge for us, finding out if how much time to put into this stuff.

This was the attitude of many advocates, and was seen as a clear limit to empowerment. In telling me about his attitude toward technology, Marvin said, "It's always been to do it. You know, let's go try it, and see what works and doesn't. We've tanked on some stuff and had other things that actually work." With this mentality, many advocates have embraced technology, yet, as Marvin also expressed, "we should be wary of big pronouncements."

Key functions are offline. A lot of the functions of human rights advocacy still are performed offline. Although technology has automated many advocate duties, and streamline others, most still require offline work. In work against wrongful convictions, advocates must manually review case files. In the anti-slavery movement, field research is still required to determine where and how slavery exists. While the Internet has sped up communication, many of the most fundamental activities of human rights advocacy still require intense human involvement and non-digital interaction. These requirements place a limit on the effects of the Internet, and for many, a cap on the empowerment effects of the Internet.

Skepticism, the jury is still out.

The third view of the empowerment effects of the Internet was marked by a strong skepticism. While all advocates found the Internet useful in many regards, many also expressed a pronounced doubt as to its net empowerment effect. A big proponent of the Internet, Rob still was unsure of the overall effect, “And the question is, it’s fantastic, but does that give us make us as powerful as large interests. It’s a tough question.” Mitch also professed some doubts about the end effect on empowerment.

So I think in some ways it’s altering advocacy, but I don’t know yet if it’s had more of a positive impact in that way of international pressure. Because I still think deep down, the most effective pressure is face to face contact, is talking about the issues, is saying listen, ‘change needs to happen.’...but I’d still say it’s kind of a new area. I don’t know if I can say.

Resources still matter online. One of the specific reasons for skepticism is a common belief that more resources allow for more effective use of the Internet.

Criticizing the idea that the Internet levels the playing field for advocates, Perry said:

That position assumes, that the big bad guys...don't also have access to the Internet. Surprisingly they do! There's this group out there called DontTaxOurWeb.Org and it's this, don't tax our Internet. It's funded by EBay, Google, on down the line...and they are doing the email action alerts, and sign up and tell your congressman...same stuff that the left is used to. And corporate America has more money. So they can buy more of the back end toys, they can hire the better talent.

Even within the human rights movement, many advocates don't feel that they are empowered by the Internet. In fact, some even suggested that rather than leveling the playing field, the Internet has disproportionately empowered wealthier, better funded organizations. Mitch provided a detailed example:

The Internet is a tool. But there are always power structures who control the tool, and have more resources, and have the ability to play a bigger role in shaping that tool or shaping an issue, and so while I would say that, sure, I can send out an email, just like a larger policy organization, or grassroots organization like Amnesty International, we can send out an email about the same issue, but, Amnesty has more resources to make their email look a little nicer, they have one person who is dedicated to just doing urgent action.

Whereas it's one small component of my time. I'm required to do an urgent action write up in an hour and a half, and send it out and hope that there's no

spelling errors, and hope that its worded appropriately, and hope that it captivates an audience.

Infrastructure. In discussing the limitations of the Internet, infrastructure was repeatedly cited as a great inhibitor of empowerment. For Marvin, one of the greatest obstacles to his advocacy is “an infrastructure issue. Which is, is there a way for people to get online to express themselves?...obviously that varies widely by country, and frankly, widely within countries.” The Internet can do little to empower an active public in places where electricity is limited, or access to computers and reasonable fast connections. Although emails can be, and sometimes are, sent, printed and passed around to overcome this infrastructure limitations, this reality mitigates some the value of technology.

“Balkanization.” For many advocates, the Internet clearly improves a movement’s ability to coalesce or galvanize their supporters. However, they expressed doubt as to whether this effect empowers democratic dialogue, or in fact merely reinforces preexisting divisions. Perry captured the confusion about the end effect of the Internet on power best, in this convoluted evaluation:

It allows more people to play, which is arguable good for democracy because you do create a national conversation. But people don’t listen randomly to conversations... So, I don’t know that it has started a conversation; I think being connected with people who agree with each other, again, creates balkanization...It might be good for political activism, which itself, arguable is good for democracy, because people are engaging the system. But if the point to a democracy is to engage the system, then it’s good. If it’s to engage the

system in ways that advance the system, then it might be good or it might be bad. If it's to solve problems collectively, then it's probably bad...is it people's political efficacy? It probably increases efficacy.

Perry was not alone in expressing doubt about whether or not human rights are advanced as a result of the Internet. For many, the positive effect on identifying and unifying a movement was clear. Beyond that observation however, many expressed doubt that causes were advanced, rather than just entrenched.

Online noise. The most commonly cited reason to doubt the empowering effect of the Internet on human rights advocacy is the volume of information. Rather than demonstrating empowerment, the Internet's public nature, and the ease with which individuals can email, create a web page, or blog has merely increased the 'noise' online. For many advocates, it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish between important and unimportant information, and to craft messages that will be heard above competing messages.

There were numerous examples of this observation in my data set. These quotes demonstrate some of the downside to high availability of information and the difficulties associated with attempting to be heard in the online environment. As Perry explained,

"Everybody in America now probably has a blog. So I'm now in the same position I was when no one had a blog. I can't hear all that noise." Glen shared the feeling,

"almost all political staffers acknowledge that email campaigns are useless. The emails accomplish nothing, the staff thinks that they look like spam and they are treated like spam."

Optimism

The final theme that I will highlight is a strong sense of optimism about the future of the Internet and its role in empowering advocates. For all their doubts about the Internet's current effects on empowerment, there is still a strong belief that empowerment is coming. As a result, there was a tendency among some to lapse into speculation about the future, and to envision ways in which the Internet will promote equality and alter the power structure, "Its going to make things a lot more equal...The Internet is going to make us believe that we can change every aspect of our society." Another told me, "It has the potential to do everything that it is hyped to do. It has the potential. The technology is there for sure to have a real democratic renaissance."

Chapter 5- Discussion

In this study, I used qualitative methods to examine the views of 19 human rights advocates. I interviewed each individual to learn about their views on power, advocacy, and the effects of the Internet on their practices. I focused on a strategic view of power, and explored the obstacles that advocates commonly face, as well as their meaning making about their ability to overcome these obstacles to achieve their objectives.

My analysis of the data suggested that advocates of human rights recognize four general types of power. While they were clear that the Internet has enhanced their capabilities to perform many of their functions, they expressed complex and conflicting views about the effects of the Internet on their empowerment. There were clear indications that some empowerment has occurred, at least in some limited instances. However, most advocates are also aware of great limitations to the extent of this empowerment. In general, advocates in small organizations felt that their ability to make change has expanded as a result of the Internet, though only because they previously held no influence. Likewise, those advocates who focus on development as a means of achieving human rights goals, felt empowered through their increased ability to communicate and network with global partners. Much of this empowerment is seen as a result of their ability to share strategies, and to increase the rate of development through greater situational sensitivity and locally generated development solutions.

For advocates who rely upon persuasion of decision makers to achieve their goals, the belief that the Internet has empowered them is less pronounced. Although communication, coordination and efficiency have improved as a result of the Internet,

they have improved for all organizations, even those that oppose advocates.

Additionally, most advocates felt that limited resources mean that they are not able to use the Internet to its full potential. This and other limitations have made any significant relative empowerment for human rights advocates doubtful, particularly in regard to their ability to effect any real change in the *status quo*. Likewise, for many, the traditional power structures and decision makers have not changed. Although the growth of the Internet has changed the environment in which advocates operate, they saw little clear evidence that their cause had benefited as a result.

Theoretical Implications

Although public relations scholars have regularly proposed that the Internet will serve to empower active publics and democratize political discourse, little research has been conducted to evaluate the accuracy of these predictions. This study has explored the views of human rights advocates on the empowerment effects of the Internet. The results provide insight into this particular active public's meaning making about power, as well as their views on the benefits and limitations of Internet use. The data adds depth and complexity to the existing research on active public-organizational power and the Internet as a tool of advocacy. I will review the results in the context of the relevant theory to highlight where findings were consistent with existing theory, as well as where they diverged. The purpose of this analysis is not to test theory, but to build a context for this research and to identify potential for future studies. The findings of this study demonstrated support for some public relations theories of power, but overall, indicated that large gaps in the theory remain. By contrasting my data with the literature review, I will highlight some cases in which my finding were consistent with

existing theory, and then identify areas where I believe that the theory was insufficient to help me interpret the data. Finally, I suggest additional areas of theory that are consistent with the data collected in this study and hold potential for further development of a public relations theory of power.

A Review of the Literature

Support for public relations theories of power. I found a few cases in which the existing public relations scholarship on power was useful in interpreting the data. The definition of power provided by Berger (2007) and the concept of control mutuality both seemed to have relevance for this study.

Berger's (2007) definition of power as "a capacity, or something possessed, that allows one to get things done or get others to do what you want them to do," proved useful (p. 222). This definition is rooted in other literature, such as Barbalet's (1985) definition. A definition of power is a useful starting point for further development of theory, and the fact that this definition was practically useful contributes to its validity, and suggests that it may be a valuable asset to theory development.

Berger's definition, however, was clearly not consistent with how many advocates used the word power. As the findings demonstrate, the idea of power was very confused among advocates. While claiming to hold the ability to achieve policy victory, an advocate would also simultaneously claim to be unempowered. It is not absolutely clear from the interviews why this inconsistency exists. I suspect that the answer reflects a tendency to focus on the short term objectives often sought by many advocates. As advocates rely heavily upon membership, volunteerism and personal motivations to drive their strategic vision, they often confuse the need to build efficacy

and find motivation through public recognition and media coverage with their more long term strategic goals. I believe that this explains the apparent contradiction between use of the terms “power” and “empowerment, and the reality of advocate’s sense of their actual ability to achieve objectives. These words often are used to reflect a feeling, rather than an ability to achieve objects. For many advocates, efficacy and a sense of fulfillment are vital to the movement’s continued existence. Because so much of an advocate’s time and energy are devoted to raising funds, and helping an organization continue its existence, the power to maintain relevance and purpose is often seen as more immediately important than the power to achieve long term goals. Thus, for many advocates, common usage of power has come to represent the internal feelings associated with the strength, recognition and public salience of their cause, rather than more objective strategic measures of their ability to achieve long term objectives. While this usage of the words will need additional research to be more completely understood, I believe that this explanation at least partially captures the reasons for the inconsistency.

The findings of this study were also generally consistent with the limited discussion of power in relationship theory, which is embedded in the concept of control mutuality. Throughout this study, I found that although various advocates are active in support of the same issue, they often compete with each other for resources and reputation. At the same time, they recognize the importance and necessity of working together to resolve an issue. Thus Hallahan’s (2001) assertion that, “a successful activist [issue advocacy] group must position itself as the sole legitimate representative of people (or other organized groups) affected by a problem” is only partially correct.

In fact, the participants in this study saw similar organizations as simultaneously allies and competitors. While advocates do compete to be recognized as legitimate representatives, they do not see it necessary to be the “sole representative.” This finding suggests that at least in the case of human rights advocacy, theory must be expanded to include a better understanding of the tension that exists within a cause, as groups struggle for influence and depend on each other for support. Relationship theory may solve this apparent conflict, as this finding seems to be consistent with the idea that a relationship can still be strong despite differences in power, as long as these differences are understood and accepted, as described by the concept of control mutuality. Further research of advocacy may find it useful to continue to explore the implications of relationship theory, and enrich the theory through the use of qualitative methods.

Shortcomings in the literature. In final analysis, I found that the public relations theories of power that I reviewed prior to commencing this research held little value in helping me to interpret the data. Although these theories did provide a basis for formulating interview questions and at times did correspond with specific findings, such as consistency with control mutuality, they did not provide a comprehensive theory of power that helped explain or organize the data. Thus, while Berger’s definition of power was useful, his focus on power within the organization did not provide a sufficient lens for examining the power between my subject public and other organizations. Similarly, public relations research that reduced power to access to resources was not useful to my analysis.

I did not find in this study that resources translate directly to power. Although Dougherty and Kramer (2005) suggested that this was the case, as did Holtzhausen (2007), the results of this study did not demonstrate a direct relationship between the two. Certainly resources were important to the effective employment of power, but appeared only to limit the range of effectiveness with which a message could be deployed. Lack of resources did limit effective persuasion, but could be overcome with a superior message, timing and strategy. The extent of the influence of resources is important to further development of power theory for communication, and a better understanding of the relationship between resources and power will enhance future theory.

I believe that the greatest shortcoming of the public relations theories that I included in the literature is a result of an overly narrow focus. For very good reasons, most scholars are primarily concerned with power within an organization. In large organizations, where the public relations function is formalized, practitioners often struggle to gain organizational power. While the study of this form of power is extremely necessary, it is too limited to provide much interpretive value to the data collected as part of this study.

I believe that this limitation can be overcome by extending power theory beyond the internal power struggles of large organization. A theory that explains the role of power between organizations, and between organizations and publics, would greatly expand and enhance current research. Such a theory would also help situate the role of power within an organization in the broader context of power between organizations, and between organizations and publics. I am convinced that the current public relations

research on power is very valuable to the extent that it has been developed. I believe, however, that the primary reason that situational theory of publics, relationship theory, and issues management theory were not useful in my interpretation of data is due to a lack of comprehensiveness, rather than due to any inherent flaws in the research itself.

In addition to the PR theories of power that I included in the literature, I expected to find Scott's (2001) map of power to be useful for analysis, but this expectation was not realized. Although I did find many of the forms of power that Scott describes evidenced in the data, his structure for these forms was not apparent. Scott's description of power as domination and counteraction was too limiting to fit with the findings. For him, counteraction involved action "against the leadership" (p. 26). For the human rights advocates I interviewed, this combative mentality was rarely evident. Rather than working to fight domination, human rights advocates saw themselves as needing to promote a cause, encourage action, persuade a decision maker or overcome the *status quo*. For my participants, power was seen as a series of steps, in which other power holders were seen as necessary allies for long term change. This does not indicate that domination and counteraction are not a part of power, or in some cases provide a useful map of power. However, my results did not lend any additional support to this framework for understanding power.

Additional Useful Theory for Public Relations and Power

Initiative, resistance and nodes of power. Additional theories of power found outside of public relations provide examples of broader conceptions of the subject, that can then be applied to narrower applications, such as power in advocacy. Barbelet's (1985) work was the best example of this. I found that his more general approach to

power was useful in application to this study. The general concepts of initiative, resistance, and nodal points of power were very much consistent with the results of this research, and provide a potential starting point for the development of a more comprehensive theory of power for public relations.

The participants in this study suggested that they take initiative to solve human rights violations through persuasion of key decision makers. They face numerous forms of resistance, generally embedded in the *status quo*, but at times they also face the intentional resistance of other active publics. Initiative power is again displayed after decision makers are persuaded to decide in favor of a particular policy, as the human rights public encourages the exercise of enforcement power. In this case resistance takes the form of both non-compliance, and any reason that the policy is not enforced.

Similarly, Barbalet's (1985) suggestion that in democratic systems power is found in numerous nodal points was consistent with the idea of various types of power held by advocates, decision makers and enforcers. This support for Barbalet's analysis suggests that its merit may be useful to additional studies of power, and may have a place in a larger theory of power. Again, while not suggesting a complete view of power for public relations, this study does lend support to the concepts of initiative, resistance and nodal points of power as likely components of a complete theory. Berger's (2007) work suggests that these concepts would likely be consistent with theory developed to explain the role of power in its specific application within organizations as well.

Persuasion as a basis of power. I believe that one of the key contributions of this study to theory is the emergence of various forms of persuasion as the primary tool

of advocacy power. Persuasion theory is a well-developed field, and may be adapted to contribute to power theory. This study does not provide a detailed analysis of persuasion theory, or incorporate persuasion literature. In retrospect, a more full treatment of persuasion theory would have assisted with formulating and interpreting additional research. The data suggests that advocates are able to exercise influence over the nodes of power primarily through the use of persuasion. A major implication for power theory is the potential overlap between these two areas of research, and the likelihood that persuasion theory can be used to develop a better understanding of the extent of persuasion as power. Although I failed to anticipate the important role of persuasion at the outset of this study, I believe that the data clearly demonstrates the critical role of persuasion in overcoming resistance. I think that additional focus on persuasion in studies of this kind will be able to clarify the link between persuasion and goal achievement.

The various forms of persuasion suggested by the participants in this study included moral appeal, personal appeal, and threat to decision makers. Various intermediate forms of persuasion were used as well. Members of less active publics were persuaded to become more active, to donate money and to donate time. The relationships of these various forms of persuasion, as well as their motivation seem intimately related to power. Thus a more complete theory of power for active publics might include both the persuasive techniques used to achieve goals, but also the various targets of persuasion, to describe how persuasion is used to enhance an advocate's overall power. By incorporating the literature on persuasion from the outset, interview

questions might anticipate additional methods of persuasion, and more effectively probe to ensure a more complete description of persuasive power as exercised by advocate.

Political metaphor for organizations. One concept that this research touched upon was the complexity of power in relationships between various publics and organizations. In most cases described by the participants, power was exercised in a series of steps. One form of power, persuasion, was used to access other nodal points of power. These nodal points included government decision makers, corporate policy makers, and people and organizations with the power to enforce human rights policies. Interestingly, there was a somewhat circular flow to the exercise of persuasive power. Advocates spent considerable effort persuading less organized or active publics to mobilize. Once mobilization was achieved, it was used to enhance an advocate's ability to persuade decision makers. The implication being that persuasive power in one relationship can enhance an advocate's persuasive power in relationships with decision makers.

Once persuasion of decision makers was achieved, another form of power, decision making, was exercised. This decision making, in turn, encouraged the activation of enforcement power. Although this theme was not fully developed due to the exploratory nature of the research, it does suggest that any final theory of power may need to include an understanding of how various types of power interact and relate through different power holders. Additionally, this theory will need to further develop the place of persuasion in relation to the other forms of power.

The literature reviewed at the outset of this research was not sufficient to help me interpret this complicated web of power relationships. I believe that an inclusion of

Spicer's (1997) political conception of organizational interactions might provide the framework for understanding these relationships, and the role of power within them. As Spicer points out, "The political metaphor guides us to examine certain critical aspects of organizational life that other metaphors exclude, most notably, power and conflict" (p. 109). Reflecting the definition of power supported by this research, Spicer (1997) also noted that "organizational politics is...the vehicle through which individuals and groups achieve their goals and needs" (p. 130). I believe that this concept of a political metaphor may provide a firm and broad framework for understanding the play of power between public and organization in a way that can incorporate various nodes of power, including decision making power, enforcement power, persuasion power, and development power. While the public relations theories of power that I included in the literature review were not generally useful for interpreting the data, Spicer's political metaphor for organizations seems very consistent with my findings, and in retrospect, would have been useful in the formulation of this study.

Empowerment Effects of the Internet

Beyond media circumvention. The existing scholarship on the effects of the Internet on advocacy has suggested that the by providing an alternative to mainstream media and increased democratization, active publics will gain greater ability to influence organizations. Scholars have focused on one particular way in which empowerment might occur. Holtzhausen (2007) argued that active publics "have to essentially rely on the media to realize their goals" (p.359).Porter and Sallot (2003) and Woo-Young (2005) both suggested that the Internet would empower active publics by giving them voice to express opinions outside of traditional media outlets.

This particular prediction appears to be partially correct, but does not offer a broad enough view of other ways in which the Internet might empower active publics. While many of the human rights advocates I spoke with did believe that the Internet did allow them to bypass the media, they did not generally feel that this led to a greater ability to achieve their objectives. To the extent that circumventing traditional media is an objective, the Internet has empowered the advocate. However, for many participants, this ability for increased expression has not led to great empowerment for their cause. While the Internet has allowed for greater expression, it has had this effect on all individuals and organizations equally. While the human rights advocates that I spoke with agreed with Porter and Sallot (2003) that the Internet does provide “access to any and all who come online”, they did not universally agree that as a result, they “possess greater power to advance their causes and complaints.” Though access to the Internet is nearly universal, the ability to voice opinions rarely translates to greater success for the cause. As a result of universal access, the Internet has become so filled with opinion, voices, and causes, that it is as if traditional media sources are still the only outlets for information. Thus, while some advocates expressed a belief that the Internet improved their ability to be heard, most expressed that such success still required strong messages, a good strategy, and had not resulted in blanket empowerment for human rights advocates. In effect, while the gate keepers may have changed, the obstacles to reaching an audience are still relatively unchanged.

For most participants, the media was seen as only one channel for exercising the power of persuasion. In fact, publicity was seen as one of the most indirect ways to exercise power. For the advocates in this study, power is found in the ability to

persuade key decision makers. Building a coalition of like minded members of an active public helped build resources and reputation to persuade these decision makers. For most advocates, the media and publicity was seen as a way to activate members of a public, merely a first step toward persuading decision makers. For most participants in this study, while circumventing the media was important, it was seen as a relatively minor part of their ability to exercise power.

A comprehensive understanding of the empowerment effects of the Internet on active publics must go beyond media empowerment. Other ways in which the Internet enhances the persuasive capabilities of must also be examined, and hold potentially powerful implications for theory. The ability to coordinate efforts, the ability to cut costs, the ability to form global partnerships and the ability to solicit new ideas through cultural integration all should be studied as potentially empowering effects of the Internet.

Power system is unchanged. The fact that the fundamental system of power is unchanged carries with it great implications for theory. While the Internet has clearly revolutionized the day-to-day activities of active publics, it seems to have had little impact on changing the nodal points of power. Since the decision makers have not changed, it is questionable how significant the empowerment effects of the Internet may be. While this lack of substantial change does not mean that empowerment has not occurred, it may hold important implications for additional research examining the extent to which empowerment may have occurred.

Empowerment most likely to be found through facilitation. For some advocates, change can best be achieved through the facilitation of development efforts. Rather

than attempting to persuade decision makers to change policies to end human rights abuses, these advocates saw new opportunities for progress through the their ability to organize information sharing and dialogue between development organizations and citizens of underdeveloped nations. This research provided a brief glimpse of how such efforts might be a rapidly growing opportunity for a new means to effect change. This potentially empowering effect of the Internet may, upon further research, provide a realization of expectations of empowerment thought the Internet.

This finding is particularly interesting for public relations, as the real empowerment occurs entirely through communication. This includes remote online skills training to promote new job skills, education to promote local networking for skill sharing, global symmetrical communication between development organizations and aid recipients, the promotion of democracy, and the encouragement of local solutions to local problems.

Practical Implications

For Researchers

Use of the word power. One of the most interesting findings of this study was the variety of ways in which the word, power, is used. I expected participants to use the word to describe their ability to achieve human rights goals. This definition proved to be valuable for analyzing the effects of the Internet on advocate empowerment. Surprisingly, when used by the advocates themselves, the words power and empowerment were particularly misleading.

Because many advocates use the words to describe a feeling, which is more closely aligned with a sense of efficacy or recognition than with their ability to achieve

goals, researchers should be careful not to misunderstand the meaning of the word. A misunderstanding could lead to exactly the wrong conclusion about a participant's ability to achieve strategic goals. The implication for researchers is that when researching advocates, use of the word power should be clarified, to ensure that meaning is clearly established. Advocates do think about power in terms of goal achievement, however, such thinking is not always reflected in their use of that word.

Difficulty arranging interviews. Based upon my experience in this project, researchers should expect a very low rate of participation, and in fact, should not even expect a response to requests for interviews. Human rights advocates face severe personnel limitations, and so have limited time to participate. Large advocacy organizations also get a large volume of requests for research assistance, and so may refer requests to their website. Less than half of the participants I contacted for interviews were willing or able to meet. Among those that were willing, usually several emails were required to secure an appointment. All told, each interview required approximately 5 hours of actual work to identify an organization, negotiate an appointment and identify the participant. The availability of participants also seemed seasonal, as I had almost no success in arranging interviews in the summer, and much more in the fall.

Additionally, the snowball technique was generally unsuccessful. This may have been due to the nature of my particular research, or a hesitation to talk about other organizations. While my experience may have been isolated, other researchers should expect this resistance to request for interviews, and plan accordingly. Researchers should be assertive, dogged and flexible to gain access.

For Advocates

As an ethical researcher, I feel that it is important to see the participants in this study as an end in themselves, rather than merely a means to information. Thus, I have attempted to identify themes that are relevant to the participants as well as to communication scholars and organizational communicators. The results of this study hold several implications for members of advocacy organizations.

Strategy. First, advocates may find it helpful to understand the organization of power in human rights advocacy. This research suggests that it is useful for members of an active public to recognize who the key decision makers are for their particular cause. In some cases this may be a particular branch of the government. Advocates can build a strategy by determining if their objectives can be best achieved through the courts, legislature or an executive order. Depending on the human rights issue, other potential decision makers include corporations and foreign governments. After the key decision making body is determined, this research suggests that advocates should identify key members of that body, and develop strategies to persuade that individual to act or decide on their behalf.

Once these decision makers are identified, all other functions should contribute to influencing these decision makers, or to encourage enforcement of existing policy. Several examples of how this can be done are shown in the results section, but include building reputation, establishing a base and networking with other organizations. Based upon this research, advocates should be careful not to confuse these functions with ends, but recognize them as means to an end.

The risk for many advocates is a false sense of empowerment. By focusing on their attempts to persuade, advocates can avoid the false sense of goal achievement that comes with the realization of intermediate goals, such as gaining publicity, acquiring resources, or reaching a new segment of the population. While such gains are important, their ultimate empowerment value lies in their transformation into increased persuasiveness, or increased ability to encourage systemic development to facilitate human rights objectives.

Value of the Internet. Some of the uses of the Internet discovered by others may also be of practical use to advocates. First, the Internet provides a useful means of making an organization and a cause more personal. Several participants suggested using the Internet to tell stories and to solicit support based on specific cases. The Internet allows organizations to highlight specific campaigns or efforts. This focus allows advocates to generate excitement for their membership, by turning an abstract cause into a meaningful story. This story can then be transformed into an interactive experience for an organization's base. Among other suggestions, some participants believed that giving for a specific interactive cause can be magnified, as donors are more likely to give to support a specific case, and feel personally involved in an issue.

Several participants suggested that the use of video is surprisingly effective at reaching an audience at a much more personal level than through text on a web page. When combined with other functions, such as a blog, requests to membership become much more personal and effective. Thus an organization's membership becomes more loyal and forms a stronger relationship with the organization.

The participants in this study also suggested that the Internet provides new opportunities to solicit potential solutions to problems. Online forums provide an opportunity for more than just dialogue, but also as a place to solicit suggestions to specific questions from membership and victims themselves. Best practices and solution sharing are far more achievable than ever before, and if properly used, the Internet can allow organizations to avoid repeating each other organization's efforts and research.

Limitations

Limited Cultural Viewpoint

One important limitation to this study is that I only included participants based in the United States. This limits the findings to a particular cultural context, and means that the opinions of several potentially valuable contributors were not obtained. A more complete study would include an international array of advocates, such as European advocates, and members of active publics from developing nations. As a result, the views of power and advocacy obtained in this study are incomplete, and may reflect nothing more than one minor aspect of these subjects.

Limited Advocacy Types

This study included only a narrow type of human rights advocacy. All of the participants were associated with official, small to medium, non-profit organizations. To my knowledge, all of the participants were paid. This means that additional types of advocates, such as volunteers, independent advocates, and the membership of organizations were not included. As a result, it is not clear that the views included in this study offer a comprehensive view of all human rights advocates, or only a very

narrow one. Most probably, the results of this study would be altered by the inclusion of a more diverse participant pool.

Future Research

Because this research focused so heavily on the exploration of empowerment, my greatest hope for it is that it will be useful to future research. I hope that it serves in the capacity to fulfill the purpose described by Boyatzis:

In the early stages of exploration of phenomenon, often so little is known or understood that even articulating a dependent variable or appropriate independent variable is difficult. There are also times at which the researcher is seeking to describe a person, group, culture or event. Thematic analysis helps in making that description clearer and in making the themes or code developed potentially useful to other researchers (p. 53).

In light of this hope, I will propose several areas that I believe present the greatest need or opportunity for further development. While I am confident that the themes that emerged from this study are fully reflective of the interviews that I conducted, further development of each is required to determine the extent of their value to the field of communication.

Four Types of Power

Although I found the four types of power suggested by the participants to be compelling, and a particularly interesting way to view power, their value must be much more firmly established. This typology of power needs to be examined in additional contexts to determine if it is applicable to other human rights advocates, other types of advocates, and the organizations involved in the issue. Additionally, the relationship

between these types of power needs to be researched. It is not clear if these are the only forms of power in advocacy, or even if my thematic development of these types can be repeated in additional research.

Link Technologies to Persuasive Value

I believe that additional research is needed to find the specific value of each Internet technology. The participants in this study expressed a strong sense of doubt about the effectiveness of technologies, or how specific applications can be applied. I believe that research to link a particular technology to a particular persuasive technique would provide value to both scholarship and advocates. While the participants in this study did suggest some linkages, such as the relationship between blogs and storytelling, additional research could attempt to substantiate this link, and explore the relationship further.

Development Communication

The idea that the Internet affords new opportunities for advocates to facilitate global dialogue in development efforts is particularly interesting. However, a more specific study of this trend is needed to determine its usefulness and its effects on human rights. It is unclear from this research if any real link between networking and communication sharing and development success can be established. I believe that this is a particularly exciting prospect for melding advocacy and Internet empowerment. However, this study was too cursory to study the viability of these efforts in any real depth.

Implications of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of active public meaning making about power, and to explore the empowerment effects of the Internet on advocate power. In each case, I believe that this study was successful. The views of the participants in this study did provide a useful perspective on power, and laid a foundation for additional research. Their views highlighted a strategic approach to power that relies upon persuasion to build alliances with other power holders.

While the empowerment effects of the Internet were not absolutely determined by this study, I do believe it provides a first step towards more decisive findings. Clearly, the majority of advocates believe that they are able to share their message with more people, more effectively as a result of the Internet. To that extent, advocates have been empowered by the Internet. This is particularly true of a new found ability to communicate with a global audience, and to network with international partners.

What is not clear, however, is if these new abilities have resulted in any real change in the global human rights situation. There are two reasons for this. The “nodal points of power” have not fundamentally changed as a result of Internet growth. As a result, it seems unclear that fundamental empowerment of active publics has occurred. Certainly the participants in this study could offer no clear indications that advocacy as a whole has experienced relative empowerment.

It is not clear that sharing a message with more people results in more action. As several participants noted, the Internet does bring like minded people together. But there is no real data to indicate that this has had a democratizing effect, that it has allowed the movement to move forward or achieve greater results. In fact, some felt quite strongly, that within a decision making context, it impedes dialogue and results in

reduced progress. Thus in the mind of some, the Internet has actually decreased the democratization of the advocacy environment.

Advocacy relies upon persuasiveness to succeed. According to the participants in this research, in most cases, an advocate needs to convince a decision maker to decide in their favor. While the Internet can be used to mobilize, communicate, and organize, the message must still be persuasive, either through threat, moral appeal, etc. This suggests that while the Internet has not had a wholesale empowerment effect on advocacy, individual advocates and organizations may be empowered through particularly effective leveraging of the Internet. In that respect, the Internet has changed little. None of the advocates I spoke with attributed an advocacy victory to the Internet. Although they used the Internet to implement various strategies, the victory was always attributed to a new, improved, or reformulated strategy.

Despite some limited instances of empowerment, primarily in the case of small organizations and new causes, the overall effect of the internet on advocate empowerment has been negligible. While the internet has increased efficiency and organizational reach, this has primarily had the effect of making advocates feel more powerful, but has done very little to advance the state of human rights around the globe. More than anything, the internet allows advocates to identify and excite like minded individuals, to mobilize its supporters, and at times, to achieve short term goals. I found no consistent evidence to support the idea that end goals and any fundamental change in empowerment has occurred as a direct result of the internet. While individual advocates may be able to use the internet to advance a particularly effective message, the internet itself appears to have no obvious or inherent empowerment effect on advocacy.

Instead, as a tool, the internet appears to only be as useful and empowering as the messages and ideas that it is used to convey.

Perhaps, additional research will find that over the long term, the increased flow of communication around the globe that has resulted from the internet will improve human rights conditions. In some indirect sense, this may be interpreted as empowerment for publics. It will take quite a long time for such an effect to emerge, and in any case, will not likely demonstrate an empowerment effect of the internet on traditional advocates. While no absolute conclusions can be reached on the basis of this study, I was unable to find any consistent support for the idea that human rights advocates have been empowered through and increased ability to implement real change to global human rights conditions as a result of the internet.

Despite these somewhat ambiguous and inconclusive results, I believe that the study did result in several interesting findings. By beginning to explore advocate power, it opens the door to future research. Perhaps more sophisticated future studies will help clarify the effect of the Internet on active publics. By continuing to develop a communication theory of power, researchers can develop increasingly precise methods for examining the fascinating subjects of public-organizational relationships.

Appendix

Interview Protocol:

Name of Participant:

Organization:

Date of Interview:

Time Started:

Time Ended:

Pre Brief:

- _____ Thank the informant for participating
- _____ Introduce the study
- _____ Ask member to sign confidentiality agreement
- _____ Reconfirm audiotape permission.

1. What does a typical day of work look like for you?
2. What is your education and work background?
4. What motivates you to focus your time and energy on human rights issues? (RQ1)
5. What are your objectives in working on these issues? (RQ2)
6. What obstacles do you face in achieving your objectives? (RQ1)
Probe: What are the specific impediments: culturally, politically, and organizationally?
7. What is do you see as the best strategies and tactics for achieving your objectives? (RQ2)
8. What other groups do you interact with (both in support and opposition) while trying to achieve your goals? (RQ2)
9. Which of these groups do you see as more powerful than your own? (RQ2)
Follow up: If not groups, what forces do you see as more powerful than your movement

Follow up: What has prevented you from achieving your goals?
10. How do you use the Internet to achieve your goals, both directly and indirectly? (RQ3)
11. How has the Internet changed the way you communicate about human rights? (RQ3)

12. Which functions of the Internet have been *most* useful to achieving your goals?
(RQ4)

13. To what extent has the Internet hindered your achievement of goals or been used in ways that harm your cause? (RQ4)

14. How has the Internet altered your relationships with other groups that you interact with? (RQ4)

15. How has the Internet helped you mitigate or overcome disadvantages in power?
(RQ4)

Closing:

Are there any questions that I didn't ask you that you think might be important to my research or understanding your approach to advocacy?

Thanks for agreeing to this interview. If you would like to see a copy of my final report, let me know and I can email or mail it to you. Would you mind if I email you with any follow up questions I might have?

Who else that is involved in human right issues that you would you recommend that I interview?

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